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INSTAGRAM: A PLACE TO SHARE, LEARN, AND GROW

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Abstract: In the digital age, Instagram is increasingly one of the most used social networking platforms. The great thing about Instagram, though, is it is not only an entertainment tool for many individuals; it acts as a strong vehicle for communication, knowledge sharing, and self-growth. Instagram for learning, info sharing and self development is what this paper looks at. Users can express ideas, share experiences, and communicate with an audience through features like posts, stories, and reels. Lastly, Instagram also has various educational resources such as resources for language learning, academic content, and professional development. The platform also stimulates personal development by fostering creativity, promoting self-confidence, and fostering personal branding and entrepreneurial activities. Users of Instagram are using Instagram to profile their talents, build professional networks, and to open up new businesses. But even so, issues such as misinformation, platform abuse and unhealthy social comparisons are still present. Hence individuals need to be responsible users of Instagram. Overall, Instagram is a valuable tool for communication, learning, and personal growth.

Keywords: Instagram, social media, digital learning, knowledge sharing, personal development, communication.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies have impacted the way in which we communicate, knowledge access, and develop our social identities tremendously. Of the multitude of digital platforms we have today, Instagram has emerged as one of the most potent social media platforms for younger generations. Globally, Instagram is used by 2 billion users a month, placing Indonesia in the 4th position when seen by its number of users according to data provided in January 2023, by We Are Social and Hootsuite (We Are Social & Hootsuite,

2023). Such numbers alone might mean little, however what it means is an overall use and penetration of Instagram within our life. Instagram isn't just another platform that lets students upload pictures of travel or their personal lives for students as they are today. It has enabled them to display what they are working on academically, gain new skills in other sciences, and find people in their job journeys' early stages of life. Instagram serves as a huge part of the communication, knowledge, growth, and achievement that college students everywhere have in the present day.

The new features such as Reels, Stories, Broadcast Channels, and theme accounts allow Instagram to change from the platform for social network to be something more exciting and informal such as learning. Instagram is not just for fun, after all. In this case, people working in a professional or entrepreneurial capacity have begun to adopt for themselves Instagram or share in the community to set themselves up an Instagram brand to be a help for others. Although Instagram offers promise, it is not often used to reach out to students, who are using it solely as entertainment, and unaware of strategic use opportunities in this area (Putri & Maulana, 2022), with several studies indicating that excessive use of social media, and uncontrolled usage can change one's focus when studying, cause self-confidence problems and lower one's academic productivity (Twenge & Campbell, 2019).

This essay will address three major problems with Instagram as a great platform for share, learn and grow. The first thing is how Instagram enables people to share content with each other. The second is examining how Instagram can be used by us as a place for informal learning. The third purpose is to determine how Instagram can allow the process of self-development (growth). Proper usage on Instagram will allow individuals to develop not only personally but also professionally.

INSTAGRAM AS A PLACE TO SHARE

Instagram has become one of the most engaging social media platforms in the digital era. This application allows users to share photos, videos, and stories easily and attractively. The elements like filters, captions, hashtags, reels, and stories allow users to show their content with a creative touch. In terms of accessibility using mobiles, Instagram can be easily accessed at any time from any place. "Social media refers to web-based applications that provide users opportunities to interact, engage in dialogue, and share information with one another." (Handayani, 2016).

Apart from being a platform of content sharing, Instagram acts as a means of communication as well. With the help of various communication options available on the app such as direct messaging, video calling, voice calling, and live streaming, users can have face-to-face conversations. With the live element of Instagram, two-way conversations can take place through this platform in an interactive way. Far from just capturing milestones and moments, the authors that Instagram has altered the ways people communicate and share, while also creating new approaches to marketing, advertising, politics and the design of spaces and venues. (Leaver and Abidin, 2020)

Furthermore, Instagram supports users in expressing themselves through posts. Every piece of content shared can reflect a person's identity, personality, and perspective. Individuals are able to express themselves in a creative manner using appealing pictures, inspiring captions, and even short video clips. This not only enables the building of self-confidence but also allows the person to be valued and understood by others. Moreover, Instagram provides individuals with the chance to network and associate with others sharing similar interests. Participants were interviewed on why they choose to post such content online and what was their experience behind that decision. Motivations for posting pictures online were mainly social (connecting, disclosure, communicating), while self-focused reasons like documenting NSSI or recovery were also mentioned. (Brown and Plener, 2020)

On the other hand, Instagram becomes a space for sharing daily life. Activities such as studying, working, and exercising are often displayed to show users' routines. In addition, various hobbies such as photography, cooking, traveling, and music are widely shared. In addition to being entertaining, it is also inspirational to others. Given the importance of social media in our lives, it should be noted that social media and Instagram as a culture is the source of information people turn to as well as means of raising motivations. (Amanah and Anuar, 2020)

Instagram also acts as an important medium of capturing memorable instances in one's life such as their birthdays, graduation ceremonies, success, vacations, and other milestones. Posts will help users not only record their memories but share their joy as well. Recent empirical studies show that there is an emerging pattern among young adults who use Instagram for news (Wang, 2021). As it continues to develop, Instagram is used in various fields, including education and business. In education, this platform is used to deliver information and learning materials in a brief and engaging way. In business, Instagram becomes an effective digital marketing medium

because it can reach a wide audience quickly. Digital Life on Instagram is an online ethnography fit for the modern age of social media. (Kross and Ybarra, 2021)

INSTAGRAM AS A PLACE TO LEARN

Instagram is a site that can be used as a learning platform and a means of spreading information, providing informative content. The platform provides an easily accessible variety of content. On the site, users can learn different academic disciplines and life skills. Furthermore, the information is readily available and therefore easy for users to interact with different topics. Visual-based sites are more interesting and comprehensible than text-based platforms. Kevin Arceneaux & Laura Dinu (2018) found that visual-based sites are better at information recall than text-based sites, thus improving information acquisition. Furthermore, Instagram can be a learning site as the use of visuals can increase student engagement in classwork (UNJ, 2023).

Besides, Instagram offers flexible learning which means people can access educational content anytime and anywhere. Thus, it can be used by those who cannot physically attend classes. According to UNESCO (2022) informal learning is a learning process that occurs in real-life situations in which a person acquires information during daily interaction with the internet. In addition, the use of digital technologies offers flexible and accessible learning environments (OECD, 2021). “Therefore, Instagram is an educational site for users of all ages”.

Moreover, Instagram has a broad range of educational content covering many areas from languages, education tips, self-improvement to motivation content. There are numerous users who create educational content that helps to understand various topics in an interesting way, utilizing short video clips, infographics, and carousel posts to make information easy to comprehend. It is based on the idea of multimodal learning which combines visual and textual components to aid in the process of communication and understanding of content (Gunther Kress, 2010). As a consequence, users may gain knowledge more efficiently (UNJ, 2023).

Instagram not only offers educational content but also provides motivational and selfimprovement content as well. There is much content concerning productivity tips, goal setting advice, and other useful information for individuals that encourages people to change their everyday behaviors. Research states that social media helps to motivate people to study and participate in educational activities making the learning process interactive and productive

(Pew Research Center, 2024). Moreover, Instagram was defined as a new learning resource in the modern world (Educause, 2021).

The users can also acquire new knowledge by following different accounts that are concerned with different topics like education, technology, health, and business. This will expose them to new thoughts and ideas that help them understand different aspects of life. The algorithm of Instagram helps in recommending different contents based on user interest and enables them to learn different educational materials (Statista, 2024).

Furthermore, Instagram promotes autonomous learning, which means that users learn independently without relying on anyone else. According to research, there are numerous cases of students using Instagram as an additional source of learning to enhance their knowledge and skills (UINSI, 2023). Additionally, Instagram plays a significant role in promoting language learning and enhancing student engagement in online digital spaces (Hania Farhana, 2020). Through continuous interaction with various accounts, the users can acquire new knowledge continuously.

INSTAGRAM AS A PLACE TO GROW

Instagram is an essential tool for users to grow both personally and professionally. One area of growth is creativity. This provides users with the option to produce content using their photos, videos, reels, and stories. The app motivates users to create engaging and purposeful content. Images are selected, videos edited, and captions are written by the users, helping them learn how to communicate creatively. Through this exercise, the user becomes a competent digital content creator. Hence, Instagram can be considered as an informal learning space where creativity is fostered through constant practice and experimentation (Leaver et al., 2020).

Along with creativity, Instagram can also build users' confidence. Sharing their work, opinions and daily life helps people to develop a sense of identity and to express themselves. Likes, comments, and shares from other people can be encouraging and motivating. Although users shouldn't rely too heavily on online answers, positive interactions can boost their confidence. As users become more comfortable in sharing content, they become better at communicating and expressing their ideas clearly in public (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Instagram is also useful for developing personal branding. Frequent content posting in accordance with their interests, skills or academic activities will help users to set a clear and recognizable identity. Instagram is a great place for university students to display their skills and accomplishments in a digital portfolio. Students can, for example, share academic projects, creative work or organizational experiences. This not only records their progress but also helps them to differentiate themselves in academic and professional contexts. Possessing a solid personal brand through Instagram may give you access to networking, collaboration, and career development (Kemp, 2023).

Additionally, Instagram offers opportunities for starting a business and getting inspired. Instagram is one of those tools which can be utilized by individuals to start businesses, advertise their goods or services. This platform has features like the Instagram Shop and reels which help individuals reach out to more people. This process helps to develop important skills like marketing, communication and interacting with customers. At the same time, Instagram is an inspiration. Follow creators, educators, and professionals to share ideas, knowledge and experience. Exposure to various content types can also help users change their perspectives and motivate them to continue to better themselves (Kemp, 2023; Leaver et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Instagram goes beyond entertaining people through social media. The application offers its users a platform for sharing experiences, creativity, and communicating with other users. Various tools present in the application help the users share their thoughts and forge connections with other people within the online community.

Additionally, the platform has been shown to provide a great source of information and education for many users. Users get a chance to learn about new skills and acquire knowledge from different perspectives. Instagram also helps users foster creativity, improve selfconfidence, create a personal brand, and build careers.

However, despite all the advantages offered by the app, one needs to understand that it should not be abused. Overusing the application may have negative impacts on the users if not handled carefully.

Overall, Instagram can yield positive results if used correctly and effectively. Users will have an opportunity to enjoy all benefits provided by the platform when using it in a smart manner.

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