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# Navigating News: The Rise of Political Posts on Social Media

**Malavika Brijesh , Volunteer Reporter**

Swipe, like, repost: the three most common commandments guiding the social media world. In an era where information is spread quicker than the bat of an eye, social media plays a big role in providing content to users that they may otherwise not intentionally indulge in. While it may be an effective way to share interesting, entertaining or possibly important information, the question arises: how accurate is the news circulating on social media? Particularly in the realm of politics, social media users are increasingly developing new posts featuring the latest events. Are platforms like Instagram built on a foundation of verified facts? Or do they risk the spread of misinformation?



Kay McHugh

These days, especially for Gen Z, there is statistically less motivation to open the news app when the option of scrolling through Instagram is at their fingertips. The increase in political Instagram accounts plays a factor in this, as they craft each of their posts, polls and stories to be eye-catching.

Accounts such as “impact” and “mattxiv” contain posts with colorful and unique designs, encouraging their viewers to read their news. These types of accounts can attract a wide range of people because of their simplicity and accessibility. The use of common ideology and well-known terms is also helpful for younger viewers to comprehend.

However, these posts tend to carry bias and propaganda. Many accounts tend to stick to one political party, causing all their news posts to include hidden opinions. This creates a gray area where information is being presented as factual, but may not entirely be accurate. If one individual sees a post they find intriguing, they repost it for others to see, causing a chain of reposts. It is rare that they invest time to conduct background research and determine its factual basis.

Sebastian Gomez, a first-year nursing major, doesn't think social media accurately presents political news.

"Depending on the context of the news, Instagram or any other media platforms can be a source of news, but not a reliable source. Misinformation is common among those platforms, especially within today's media," Gomez said.

Not only are there biased accounts, but the algorithm of social media platforms are designed to feed users with similar content that they usually engage in. This means that if one person follows another user and likes multiple posts from their account, they will continue getting featured posts from other accounts that hold similar views. This causes people to consume content that is very one-sided and prevents the sharing of knowledge from diverse sources and backgrounds.

Dennis Young, adjunct instructor in political science at Seattle University, believes that social media algorithms don't allow people to engage with content outside of their beliefs unless they actively seek it out. Even then, it is difficult.

"At a different point in my doctoral research, I was working on a project about social media usage by anti-deportation activists. It was really hard to find those accounts. The algorithm would keep feeding me things that were more related to some of the bigger platforms that I had followed," Young said. "Consequently, that buried the lede on what I was actually looking for, which was the social media accounts for these detained activists."

One might ask then, how people should go about the intake of political news through social media. Should these platforms stick to being a source of entertainment rather than information?

Caitlin Carlson, an associate professor in the communication and media department, believes that viewers should challenge themselves to determine if their sources are trustable.

"People need to think about their media diet the way they sometimes think about their nutritional diet. Some sources are more unbiased or non-partisan than others. So, understanding whether the sources that you trust are partisan or not, can help determine what exactly you are consuming in terms of media," Carlson said.

Social media's influence on the field of politics is inevitable. In an age where content creation is increasingly becoming popular, it is expected to have become apparent in the political field. However, the rapid consumption of political content through social media raises concerns regarding reliability. While social media can be a platform that allows people to follow current events, whether that should be one's main source of information is uncertain.