

Educational Use of Social Media by Distance Education Commerce Students in Delhi: A Comparative Study

ABSTRACT:

This study aims to determine the use, vitality, purpose, significance, and challenges that distance mode students of commerce at School of Open Learning (SOL), University of Delhi (DU), Delhi and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Delhi face while utilizing social media for educational/learning purposes. Social media is a type of platform for conversation and communication that takes place online. Blogs, microblogs, photo-sharing websites, wikis, texting, video-sharing sites, widgets, virtual worlds, and podcasts are some examples of social media. It refers to internet resources and platforms that let people make, share, and engage with user-generated content. In the digital age, it completely changed how people connect, communicate, and exchange information. With the help of social media tools users can express themselves, interact with others, and create virtual communities. A sample of 200 participants who are distance learning commerce students of IGNOU and SOL, DU is chosen for collection of data for the studies. Simple arithmetical and statistical techniques have been then utilized to analyze and derive results from the data collected. The study reveals that social media platforms influence its uses and behaviours of users' on education. The students have shown their familiarity with the social media and mobile phones are taking lead as the most utilized tool for social media usage over the laptops and tablets. The platforms such as Youtube and Whatsapp are being widely utilized for educational purposes and students are putting almost three hours a day on social media platforms. Practical explanation of the contents is what making the students to incline more towards these platforms and it is very safe to say that these are becoming important educational tools amongst the student community more precisely for distance learning students. The study reveals that that the commerce students of SOL, DU are leading the board for utilizing social media for academic purposes.

Keywords: Distance Learning, Social Media, Commerce education, IGNOU, SOL etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of social media has significantly transformed the way students communicate, access information, and engage in learning activities. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn have become integral tools for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and professional networking. Social media is defined as internet-based application that allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content, enabling interactive communication beyond traditional boundaries as stated by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) in their research study. The social media is emerged as informal yet influential learning resource, specially for students in providing them academic support. The distance mode education has gained prominence in India due to its numerous advantages like, flexibility, affordability and accessibility. According to Boyd & Ellison (2007) there are some challenges that commerce students of distance mode education faced are, limited personal interaction, lack of peer engagement, limited access to institutional academic support but because of social media platforms these gaps are bridged by sharing study material, facilitating virtual interaction, participating in academic discussions and career-related information. Social media plays a vital

role in developing awareness about market trends, financial news, and professional opportunities towards the students.

New Delhi, is a major educational and commercial hub and it hosts a large population of commerce students pursuing education through distance mode from universities such as IGNOU, DU (through its School of Open Learning aka SOL), and other regional campuses of open learning institutions. The social media usage has increased among these learners due to widespread availability of smart phones and internet connectivity. However, while social media offers academic and professional benefits, excessive or unstructured use may lead to distractions, reduced academic focus, and time management issues (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Therefore, understanding the patterns, purposes, and impact of social media usage among commerce students in distance mode education in Delhi is essential. This study aims to examine how social media is utilized by these students and its influence on their academic engagement and learning experience.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The increasing usage of social media has significantly influenced the students' learning behavior. Students enrolled with distance education are often relying on digital platforms for academic knowledge due to lack of personal interaction with teachers. Although, there are widespread adoptions of social media among students, however there is still limited empirical evidence specially examining how commerce students use social media for academic purposes, pursuing distance education in institutions in Delhi. There are numerous studies done on social media usage for academic purposes but, the extent to which social media usage supports or hinders the academic engagement of commerce students in distance education remains untouched. Hence, the problem addressed in this study focuses on lack of systematic understanding of the patterns, purposes and academic implications of social media usage among commerce students of distance education institutions in Delhi. This study is identifying how commerce students use social media, importance of using it and challenges they encounter. This research paper is essential for educators and institutions to effectively integrate social media as a supportive learning tool while reducing its negative impact.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social media usage research in academic contexts highlights both its potential benefits and possible disadvantages for academic and learning performance. Social media platforms have emerged as unavoidable tools for communication, collaboration and learning support. Abdullah, et. al (2025) emphasized that the academic impact of social media is highly context-dependent, usage pattern shaped, instructional design, and psychological variables, and calls for longitudinal and experimental research to better understand casual relationships and effective pedagogical strategies. Gong et al. (2025) focused on the factors such as multitasking, reduced attention span, social anxiety, and fear of missing out (FoMO) which highlights negative associations between excessive or recreational social media use and academic performance. Muhamad (2025) showed that structured integration of social media into teaching practices promotes interaction and active learning, particularly when aligned with clear pedagogical objectives. Sakhieva et al. (2024) studied that social media usage can enhance students' sense of belonging and academic

motivation when guided properly by instructor. Overall, the existing literature suggests that social media usage among students in distance education mode represents a double-edged phenomenon; it offers valuable opportunities for enhancing engagement, collaboration, and access to learning resources, yet its influence on academic performance varies across contexts and depends on how students integrate social media tools into their study practices. Further, for commerce students in Delhi pursuing education via distance mode, this literature review highlights the need to explore both perceptions and actual usage pattern to better understand how these tools contribute to their academic experience.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to:

- examine the extent of social media usage among commerce students enrolled in distance mode education in institutions in Delhi, i.e., IGNOU and SOL.
- analyse the purpose for which social media is used, such as learning support, information sharing, communication and career guidance.
- identify the major social media platforms used by commerce students of distance mode for academic purpose.
- study the impact of social media usage on academic engagement of commerce students in distance education.
- identify the challenges and problems associated with social media usage among commerce students of IGNOU and SOL.

5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study focuses on the usage of social media platforms for academic and learning-related activities by distance mode UG/PG students of commerce field from IGNOU and SOL, DU. Hence, this study examines social media usage patterns, perceptions and challenges associated by distance mode commerce students in Delhi. The findings are based on the data collected during the study and are confined to the geographical boundaries of Delhi with a sample size of 100 students from each university.

6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study is conducted to know how social media is being used by commerce students in distance mode education. The findings of the study may help educational institutions, faculty members, students and policy makers for designing strategies to effectively integrate social media into distance learning programs. Furthermore, it can also assist students in adopting more productive and balanced ways for academic purpose social media usage, particularly focusing on commerce students in Delhi that has received limited research attention.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine pattern, purpose, and impact of social media usage among commerce students enrolled in distance mode education in Delhi. After reviewing literature related to social media academic usage, a structured questionnaire is prepared to collect data from under graduate and post-graduate commerce students enrolled in distance mode educational institutes in Delhi. A population size of 200 students enrolled in

central universities i.e. DU and IGNOU offering distance education in Delhi was selected using convenience sampling technique. Present study has taken into consideration both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire consisting closed-ended and Likert-scale questions related to social media usage, academic engagement and associated challenges. Further, secondary data were gathered from books, journals, research articles and online academic sources related to social media and distance education. Finally, after collecting data, it is being analysed using simple statistical tools like, percentage analysis, frequency distribution and tabular representation to draw meaning conclusions.

8. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The below sections shows the analysis and interpretation of data collected from commerce students enrolled in distance education programmes in Delhi. The responses were obtained from students of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and School of Open Learning (SOL), University of Delhi. The purpose of the study is to understand students' familiarity, usage pattern, perception, associated challenges and educational relevance of social media in distance learning.

8.1 Profiles of the Respondents

The demographic information of the sample selected for the study is tabulated below. Students pursuing commerce courses through distance mode from IGNOU and SOL, University of Delhi, were chosen to ensure balanced representation and comparability between the two major distance education institutions in Delhi.

Table 1: Profiles of Respondents

Particulars	Universities	Number of Respondents
Name of University	IGNOU	100
	SOL, DU	100

Table 1 above shows that a total number of 200 respondents were selected for the present study, comprising 100 students from IGNOU and 100 from SOL. Both institutions ensures uniformity in the sample for equal representation and reliable comparative analysis. This balanced distribution also helps to draw meaningful conclusions regarding the educational use of social media by distance mode commerce students in Delhi.

8.2 Students' Familiarity with the term Social media learning

It is very important prerequisite to be familiarity with the concept of social media for its effective educational use. In this section, examination of awareness among distance mode commerce students about social media as a learning tool is being enquired.

Table 2: Familiarity with the term of Social media learning

Digital device	IGNOU (Out of 100)	SOL (Out of 100)
Yes	77	89
No	23	11

The finding reveals that 89% of SOL students and 77% of IGNOU students are familiar with social media as learning tool. This means there is high level of awareness among distance learners specially among SOL students. However, few students in both institutions are not familiar with social media learning tools, suggesting the need for orientation programmes to formally introduce social media as an academic learning platform to enhance their skills.

8.3 Social media learning Devices

It is extremely important for students to be familiar with the digital devices with the help of which they can access various social media platforms for their academic learning. Hence, this section analyses the types of devices used by students for accessing social media for academic purposes.

Table 3: Familiarity with the devices of Social media learning

Digital device	IGNOU (Out of 100)	SOL (Out of 100)
Mobile Phone	98	100
Tab	64	73
Laptop	83	92
Desktop Computer	81	85

The data indicates that Mobile Phones are the most widely used device, with 98% of IGNOU and 100% of SOL students using them for social media learning because of its high portability. Moreover, Tablets are comparatively less used device. This highlights the importance of mobile-friendly educational content on social media platforms.

8.4 Perception towards learning from social media

To evaluate social media's acceptance as an educational tool, it is important to understand students' perception towards learning through social media. Hence, section below presents the data whether students are willing to learn from social media platforms or not.

Table 4: Perception towards learning from social media

Like to learn	IGNOU	SOL
Yes	90	97
No	10	03
TOTAL	100	100

The findings show that most of the students from both institutions are willing to learn from social media platforms as 90% of IGNOU and 97% of SOL students respond positively. This overwhelming positive response suggests that social media is widely accepted as a supportive learning medium among distance-mode commerce students and plays a significant role in supplementing formal education.

8.5 Social media platforms Consulted by Students to Find Information

There are various social media platforms available which offer learning opportunities to students. Hence, section below presents the responses of students which social media platform attracts those most to learn.

Table 5: Platforms Consulted by Students to Find Information

Social media sites	IGNOU	SOL	Total Responses (%)
Facebook	10	09	19 (9.5%)
YouTube	78	84	162 (81%)
WhatsApp	17	18	35 (17.5%)
Twitter	01	01	02 (1%)
LinkedIn	01	07	08 (4%)
Skype	00	01	01 (0.5%)
WeChat	00	00	00 (0%)
Instagram	12	14	26 (13%)
Other	01	00	01 (0.5%)

The findings indicates that YouTube is the most preferred social media platform, as 81% of total respondents using it for education purposes, while WeChat is not used at all. The dominance of YouTube highlights the importance of video-based learning for commerce students in distance education.

8.6 Frequency of using social media sites for learning purpose

The frequency of using social media indicates its integration into students' regular learning practices. The section below analyses how often students use social media for academic learning.

Table 6: Social media is essential for educational for educational Institution

Frequency of using social media	IGNOU	SOL	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Daily	70	83	153	76.5%
Weekly Once	11	07	18	09%
Monthly Once	05	04	09	4.5%
Only exam time	14	06	20	10%
Total	100	100	200	100%

Table-6 reveal that most of the students are using social media on daily basis for education purposes, while only 4.5% using it monthly. Moreover, around 10% respondents use social media only during exams. This indicates that social media has become a routine academic resource rather than a tool used only occasionally. Daily usage demonstrates the growing dependence of distance learners on social media for continuous learning support.

8.7 Total Number of hours spent on social media sites for educational needs per week

To know the extent of educational utilization of social media, it is necessary to know the time spent on them for educational purposes. The section below examines the number of hours students spend on social media for learning per week.

Table 7: Number of hours spent on social media sites for educational needs per week

Number of hours per week	IGNOU	SOL	Number of Respondents (%)
0-3 hours	73	87	160 (80%)

4-7 hours	20	07	27 (13.5%)
8-11 hours	05	05	10 (05%)
12-15 hours	02	01	03 (1.5%)
Above 16 hours	00	00	00 (00%)
Total	100	100	200 (100%)

Table-7 reveals that most of the respondents spend 0-3 hours per week on social media for educational purposes. Moreover, only few students spend more than 12 hours per week on these platforms. This indicates that social media is used primarily as supplementary learning tool with formal study material.

8.8 Perception of students on availability of course related content on social media platforms

The availability of quality course-related content indicates effectiveness of social media as learning tool. This section examines students' perception regarding the relevance and usefulness of commerce-related content on social media.

Table 8: Availability of course related content on social media platforms

Availability of course related content	IGNOU	SOL	Number of Responses (%)
Learning content are clear to relate my course	27	33	60 (30%)
Commerce course content are explained practically	30	33	63 (31.5%)
Commerce subject experts are available to connect online and they are helpful to clear subject doubts	32	14	46 (23%)
In commerce course content in social media, updated with latest information	11	20	31 (15.5%)
Total	100	100	200 (100%)

The findings reveal that Commerce course content are explained practically (31.5%) and these content are clear to relate with the course (30%). Out of them 23% respondents acknowledge that commerce subject experts are available to connect online to clear their doubts while only 15.5% respondents agree that commerce course content available on social media is latest and updated. These findings suggest that social media provides practical, interactive, and updated learning resources, though there is scope for improvement in content relevance and expert availability.

8.9 Perception regarding importance of Social media for Educational Institution

The section below evaluates the students' opinion on importance of social media for educational institutions, especially in the context of distance mode education system.

Table 9: Perception on importance of Social media for educational Institution

Essential for Educational Institutions	IGNOU	SOL	Total Responses	Percentage
Yes	89	96	185	92.5%
No	11	04	15	7.5%
Total	100	100	200	100%

The results shows that most of the students (92.5%) believe that social media is essential for educational institutions especially for distance mode to enhance their learning abilities. This strong consensus highlights the growing recognition of social media as a vital educational support system, particularly for distance-mode learners who rely heavily on digital platforms for communication and learning.

8.10 Challenges faced by Students with Social media Usage

Although social media has become a popular educational support tool for distance mode education, even though some challenges like distraction, time mismanagement, and limited academic interaction etc. can reduce the effectiveness of social media as a learning aid.

Table 10: Challenges faced by students

Challenges	IGNOU	SOL	Total Response (100%)
Distraction from non-educational content	83	79	162 (81%)
Lack of structured learning	93	91	184 (92%)
Misinformation and Unreliable sources	96	100	196 (98%)
Overdependence on short-term content	82	69	151 (75.5%)
Digital fatigue and Eye stain	100	98	198 (99%)
Time Management Issues	74	77	151 (75.5%)
Limited interaction with Teachers	59	49	108 (54%)

The data in the table above shows that Digital fatigue and eye stain is the most common reported challenge with 198 respondents to its impact. Challenges like overdependence on short-term content and time management issues were reported by 75.5% respondents each, indicating that brief and instant content formats affect deep learning and disciplined study habits. Lastly, limited interaction with teachers was reported by 54% making it the least reported challenge, yet significant due to the importance of academic guidance in distance education.

8.11 Cumulative Summary

It is important to know whether the students of both the institutions have same perception and believe about social media, its importance and challenges or are having different observations. Hence, in Table 11 a comprehensive summary of the findings related to the various aspects important to compare both the institutions are presented. By systematically comparing both institutions and assigning rankings, the table highlights similarities and differences in students' awareness, acceptance, and utilization of social media as a learning tool, providing a clear basis for interpretation and conclusion.

Table 11: Cumulative Summary

S. No.	Indicator	IGNOU (%)	SOL (%)	Comparative Observation	Institutional Rank
1	Familiarity with the term <i>Social Media Learning</i>	77	89	SOL students show higher conceptual awareness than IGNOU students.	SOL – I IGNOU – II
2	Access to Digital Devices for	High (Mobile 98, Laptop	Very High (Mobile 100,	Both institutions have strong digital access;	SOL – I IGNOU – II

	Social Media Learning	83, Desktop 81)	Laptop 92, Desktop 85)	SOL marginally better across all devices.	
3	Positive Perception towards Learning from Social Media	90	97	Acceptance level is high in both, but SOL shows stronger preference.	SOL – I IGNOU – II
4	Preferred Social Media Platform (YouTube Usage)	78	84	YouTube dominates in both institutions; SOL usage is higher.	SOL – I IGNOU – II
5	Daily Use of Social Media for Learning	70	83	Regular academic engagement through social media is significantly higher among SOL students.	SOL – I IGNOU – II
6	Time Spent (0–3 hours/week – Majority)	73	87	SOL students show greater consistent engagement, though mostly supplementary in nature.	SOL – I IGNOU – II
7	Availability of Relevant & Practical Course Content	89 (combined indicators)	80 (combined indicators)	IGNOU students report slightly better access to experts and practical explanations.	IGNOU – I SOL – II
8	Perception of Social Media as Essential for Educational Institutions	89	96	Overwhelming agreement in both; SOL students express stronger conviction.	SOL – I IGNOU – II

273 **Table 12: Overall Institutional Ranking (Based on Aggregate Performance)**

Rank	Institution	Justification
I	SOL (School of Open Learning)	Higher awareness, better device access, more frequent usage, stronger preference, and greater acceptance of social media as an essential educational tool.
II	IGNOU	Strong engagement and comparatively better perception regarding expert availability and practical content, but slightly lower awareness and frequency of use.

275 9. MAJOR FINDINGS

- 276 a) **High Awareness with Institutional Variation:** A majority of distance-mode commerce
277 students are familiar with the concept of social media learning; however, SOL students
278 demonstrate higher awareness (89%) compared to IGNOU students (77%), indicating
279 stronger exposure and orientation towards digital learning tools at SOL.

- b) **Mobile Phones as the Primary Learning Device:** Mobile phones are the most commonly used device for social media learning in both institutions, confirming that mobile-based learning dominates distance education and plays a crucial role in academic engagement.
- c) **Strong Acceptance of Social Media as a Learning Tool:** Students from both institutions show a highly positive perception towards learning through social media, reflecting widespread acceptance of social media as a supplementary educational medium.
- d) **YouTube as the Most Preferred Platform:** Among various platforms, YouTube emerges as the most frequently consulted social media site for educational purposes across both institutions, highlighting the growing importance of video-based learning content for commerce students in distance mode.
- e) **Social Media Recognized as Essential for Educational Institutions:** An overwhelming majority of respondents (92.5%) consider social media essential for educational institutions, emphasizing its strategic importance in supporting learning, communication, and academic continuity in distance education systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Formal Integration of Social Media into Academic Frameworks:** Educational institutions, especially IGNOU, should formally integrate social media platforms into teaching–learning processes through structured guidelines, official academic channels, and curriculum-linked digital content.
2. **Orientation and Digital Literacy Programmes:** Regular orientation and digital literacy programmes should be conducted to familiarize students with the academic use of social media, ensuring effective and purposeful utilization beyond informal learning.
3. **Development of Quality, Course-Specific Content:** Institutions should encourage faculty and subject experts to create and share practical, updated, and commerce-specific content on popular platforms such as YouTube and WhatsApp to enhance learning effectiveness and student engagement.

CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that social media has emerged as a significant and supportive learning tool for commerce students pursuing distance education in Delhi. The findings reveal that social media has become an essential supplementary learning tool for distance-mode commerce students of IGNOU and SOL, Delhi. A high level of awareness, accessibility, and positive perception towards social media learning is observed, with SOL students showing comparatively higher engagement and acceptance. However, the study also indicates the need for more structured, authentic, and regularly updated academic content. Overall, the research highlights that when effectively integrated and guided, social media can substantially enhance the quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of learning for distance mode commerce students.

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