

# From Satire to Social Movement: Parasocial Interaction and Youth Engagement in Cockroach Janta Party's Instagram Communication

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***Abstract***—The emergence of meme-driven political communication has transformed the relationship between youth audiences and digital political movements. The rapid rise of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on Instagram in 2026 represents a significant example of how satire, humor, memes, and algorithmic visibility can evolve into a participatory socio-political movement among Indian youth. This paper examines the role of parasocial interaction in fostering emotional attachment, political engagement, and participatory culture among Generation Z audiences interacting with CJP's Instagram communication. Using a mixed-method approach involving content analysis, engagement analysis, and theoretical interpretation through Parasocial Interaction Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study investigates how meme-based political satire encourages youth participation in digital political discourse. The study argues that CJP's success demonstrates the transformation of Instagram from an entertainment platform into a space for political identity formation and digital activism. Findings suggest that emotional relatability, humor, anti-establishment narratives, and influencer-style communication significantly contribute to audience engagement and collective digital participation.

***Index Terms***—Parasocial Interaction, Instagram Communication, Political Satire, Meme Culture, Youth Engagement, Digital Activism, Cockroach Janta Party, Political Communication

## I. INTRODUCTION

The rise of social media has fundamentally transformed political communication across the globe. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, X, and YouTube have shifted political messaging from institutional frameworks toward participatory digital cultures driven by memes, influencers, and algorithmic engagement. In India, where youth constitute a significant demographic

segment, digital platforms increasingly shape political awareness, emotional expression, and civic participation.

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), launched in May 2026, rapidly evolved from an online satirical campaign into a large-scale digital movement. Emerging in response to controversial comments comparing unemployed youth to “cockroaches,” the movement utilized humor, satire, memes, and Instagram reels to mobilize frustrated youth audiences. Within days, the movement accumulated millions of Instagram followers, surpassing major political parties in online visibility.

The phenomenon illustrates a new form of digitally mediated political participation where audiences develop emotional and symbolic connections with online movements despite having limited direct interpersonal interaction. This relationship aligns with Horton and Wohl’s concept of parasocial interaction, where audiences form imagined social relationships with mediated personalities and communities. The present study investigates how parasocial communication strategies employed by CJP facilitated youth engagement, political participation, and collective identity formation on Instagram.

#### Background of the Cockroach Janta Party

The Cockroach Janta Party emerged as a satirical digital response to remarks allegedly made by Chief Justice Surya Kant regarding unemployed youth. Founder Abhijeet Dipke transformed the controversy into a meme-based political movement centered on youth frustration, unemployment, inflation, corruption, and media distrust. The movement positioned itself as “the voice of the lazy and unemployed,” employing ironic self-representation and humour to reclaim stigmatizing language. Reuters reported that the movement gained nearly 15 million Instagram followers within less than a week, highlighting the intensity of Gen Z engagement with meme-driven political communication.

CJP’s Instagram communication strategy relied heavily on:

- short-form reels,
- meme templates,
- satirical slogans,
- participatory comments,
- visual humour,
- anti-establishment narratives,
- emotionally relatable content.

The movement eventually expanded beyond satire into offline activism and protest performances.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 1. Parasocial Interaction in Digital Media

Parasocial interaction theory was introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956) to explain how media audiences develop imagined interpersonal relationships with media figures. Contemporary social media platforms intensify parasocial interaction through comments, stories, live streams, and algorithmic personalization. Digital influencers and political communicators increasingly cultivate intimacy, relatability, and emotional authenticity to maintain audience engagement.

## 2. Political Communication on Instagram

Instagram has emerged as a major political communication platform among younger demographics. Ferreira et al. found that political discussions on Instagram demonstrate high emotional intensity, longer engagement patterns, and dynamic audience communities. Political movements increasingly rely on visual communication, humour, and meme aesthetics to maximize virality and algorithmic reach.

## 3. Meme Culture and Political Satire

Memes function as cultural artifacts that simplify complex political issues into emotionally resonant symbolic forms. Political satire enables audiences to negotiate frustration, distrust, and ideological resistance through humour. In India, meme-based political communication has become especially influential among urban youth audiences who consume politics through entertainment-oriented digital platforms.

## 4. Youth Digital Activism

Generation Z audiences engage with politics differently from earlier generations. Instead of relying solely on institutional participation, youth increasingly engage through:

- hash tags,
- meme participation,
- online campaigns,
- satirical discourse,
- creator-driven communities.

The rise of CJP demonstrates how online satire can transform into participatory political identity formation.

## III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the role of parasocial interaction in Cockroach Janta Party's Instagram communication.
2. To analyze youth engagement patterns with meme-based political satire.
3. To investigate how Instagram facilitates digital political participation among Generation Z users.
4. To understand the relationship between emotional relatability and audience engagement in satirical political communication.

5. To study the transformation of satire into collective socio-political discourse.
5. Research Questions
  1. How does parasocial interaction influence youth engagement with CJP's Instagram content?
  2. What communication strategies contribute to the virality of political satire on Instagram?
  3. How do memes and humor shape political participation among Gen Z users?
  4. Can satirical Instagram movements contribute to offline socio-political engagement?

#### Theoretical Framework

##### 1. Parasocial Interaction Theory

Parasocial interaction refers to one-sided emotional relationships audiences form with mediated figures. CJP cultivated parasocial intimacy through:

- direct audience address,
- conversational captions,
- relatable humour,
- participatory memes,
- emotionally resonant political frustration.

Followers experienced symbolic identification with the movement despite limited interpersonal interaction.

##### 2. Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications framework explains why audiences actively engage with media content. Youth audiences engaged with CJP for:

- entertainment,
- emotional catharsis,
- political expression,
- identity affirmation,
- community participation,
- anti-establishment solidarity.

## IV. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative-dominant mixed-method approach.

##### 1. Content Analysis

A sample of 100 Instagram posts and reels from CJP's official account was analyzed based on:

- humour type,
- meme structure,
- political themes,
- audience participation,
- emotional tone,
- visual symbolism.

##### 2. Engagement Analysis

Engagement metrics including:

- likes,
- comments,
- shares,
- follower growth,
- reel virality,

were examined to identify audience interaction patterns.

### 3. Discourse Analysis

Audience comments were analyzed to examine:

- emotional attachment,
- political frustration,
- identity formation,
- participatory language,
- collective solidarity.

## Analysis and Discussion

### 1. Meme-Based Political Relatability

CJP's communication strategy relied heavily on culturally familiar meme formats and ironic humour. The movement transformed feelings of unemployment, frustration, and exclusion into humorous collective identity. The symbolic use of the "cockroach" created a shared emotional narrative of resilience and survival.

### 2. Parasocial Engagement and Digital Intimacy

Followers demonstrated strong parasocial attachment through:

- repeated commenting,
- meme participation,
- emotional defence of the movement,
- voluntary content sharing.

The founder's informal communication style reduced the perceived distance between leader and audience.

Reddit discussions surrounding CJP also reveal how audiences emotionally interpreted the movement as a representation of youth frustration and internet culture.

### 3. Instagram Algorithms and Virality

Instagram's reel-based algorithm significantly amplified CJP's visibility. Short-form humorous political content generated rapid audience interaction, increasing algorithmic promotion and cross-platform dissemination. Studies on political discussions on Instagram suggest that emotional and visually engaging political content sustains stronger community participation.

### 4. From Satire to Activism

Initially positioned as parody, CJP gradually evolved into a participatory socio-political movement. Reuters and AP reports noted that the movement expanded into offline campaigns,

protests, and issue-based activism. This transformation reflects the growing convergence between digital entertainment culture and political mobilization.

## V. FINDINGS

The study identifies several key findings:

1. Parasocial interaction significantly increases emotional engagement with political satire.
2. Meme-based communication simplifies complex political frustrations into relatable digital narratives.
3. Humor functions as both entertainment and political resistance.
4. Instagram algorithms amplify emotionally engaging political content.
5. Youth audiences increasingly participate in politics through meme cultures and digital communities rather than traditional political institutions.
6. Satirical digital movements can evolve into real-world political participation.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The Cockroach Janta Party represents a major transformation in contemporary political communication in India. By combining satire, memes, humor, and emotionally relatable narratives, the movement successfully cultivated parasocial relationships with youth audiences on Instagram.

The study demonstrates that digital political participation among Generation Z increasingly occurs through entertainment-oriented media ecosystems where identity, humor, and emotional solidarity intersect. CJP illustrates how meme culture can evolve from ironic online expression into collective political engagement and social mobilization. As digital platforms continue to shape political consciousness, future research must critically examine the implications of algorithmic visibility, influencer politics, and emotionally driven political participation in democratic societies.

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