

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Faith in the Feed: Students' Perception of Devotional Social Media Content

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## HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Arpita S Kandpal, Debanjana Mukherjee. Faith in the Feed: Students' Perception of Devotional Social Media Content. J Soc Welfare Manag. 2026; 18(1): 43–46.

## ABSTRACT

This survey is aimed to analyse the perception of students towards devotional social media content and the influence of famous Gurus such as Premchand Ji Maharaj on the youth. The study encompasses the opinions of students from different backgrounds, age groups, degree programmes, gender, and thoroughly studies their perception with the help of a questionnaire. The study shows that the students consider devotional content as a serious need of the hour, as it provides motivation and stress relief in times of distress. Even though many do not actively follow any content, but most are aware of the benefits of such content and are exposed to such channels.

## KEYWORDS

• Study • Content • Students.

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of social media has significantly transformed the way individuals access information, communicate, and express their beliefs. Along with entertainment, education, and news, social media platforms have increasingly become spaces for religious and devotional expression. Devotional content in the form of short videos, live

discourses, motivational talks, and spiritual messages is widely shared across platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, especially among young users.

For students, social media plays a central role in daily life, influencing attitudes, emotions, and behavior. Exposure to devotional content can serve multiple purposes, including providing spiritual guidance, emotional

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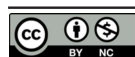
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➤ Received: 29-12-2025 ➤ Accepted: 30-01-2026



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comfort, stress relief, and moral values. At the same time, concerns related to misinformation, commercialization of religion, emotional manipulation, and blind following have also emerged. Therefore, understanding students' perceptions of devotional social media content becomes important in assessing its influence on their beliefs, mental well-being, and digital behavior.

Students today are navigating academic pressure, social expectations, and personal challenges, making them more receptive to content that offers emotional support and a sense of meaning. Devotional social media content often presents spirituality in a simplified and relatable manner, making it easily accessible to the youth. However, the level of engagement and acceptance varies depending on individual beliefs, social influences, and critical awareness.

The present study aims to examine the perception of students towards devotional social media content by analyzing their usage patterns, preferred platforms, reasons for viewing such content, and associated concerns. By exploring students' attitudes and experiences, the study seeks to provide insights into the role of digital devotional content in shaping students' spiritual outlook and media consumption behavior.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research design** - Firstly a set of questions were prepared and circulated among the students to collect as much information as possible.

**Sampling and data collection** - Data was collected from around 32 students. Then it was sampled and segregated. Main focus was on-exposure of students to such content, actively following devotional channels, it's impact on their daily routine.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The demographic profile of the respondents indicates a diverse yet predominantly postgraduate sample. In terms of gender, female respondents formed the majority, accounting for 68.8% of the total sample, while male respondents constituted 31.3%. This suggests a higher participation of female students in the study.

With respect to age distribution, most respondents belonged to the 22–24 years age

group (46.9%), followed by those in the 20–22 years category (37.5%). A smaller proportion of respondents were below 20 years of age (6.2%), while 9.4% were aged 24 years and above. This indicates that the respondents were largely in the early to mid-twenties age range.

Regarding the degree programme, a substantial majority of the respondents (78.1%) were enrolled in postgraduate programmes, whereas undergraduate students constituted 21.9% of the sample. No Ph.D. scholars participated in the study. Overall, the demographic data reflect that the study primarily represents postgraduate students, with a greater proportion of female respondents within the 22–24 years age group.

**Table 1:** General Information

| Particulars             | Respondent no. | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>Gender</i>           |                |                |
| Male                    | 10             | 31.3           |
| Female                  | 22             | 68.8           |
| <i>Age Group</i>        |                |                |
| Below 20                | 2              | 6.2            |
| 20-22                   | 12             | 37.5           |
| 22-24                   | 15             | 46.9           |
| 24 above                | 3              | 9.4            |
| <i>Degree Programme</i> |                |                |
| Undergraduate           | 7              | 21.9           |
| Postgraduate            | 25             | 78.1           |
| PhD                     | 0              | 0              |

**Table 2:** Perception of Students towards devotional social media content

| Question                                  | Respondent no | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <i>Most used social media</i>             |               |                |
| WhatsApp                                  | 28            | 87.5           |
| Instagram                                 | 23            | 71.9           |
| <i>Average time spent on social media</i> |               |                |
| <1 hr                                     | 0             | 0              |
| 1-2 hrs                                   | 15            | 46.9           |
| 2-3 hrs                                   | 7             | 21.9           |
| >4 hrs                                    | 10            | 31.3           |
| <i>Frequency of devotional content</i>    |               |                |
| Very frequently                           | 7             | 21.9           |
| Frequently                                | 10            | 31.3           |
| Sometimes                                 | 7             | 21.9           |
| Rarely                                    | 8             | 25             |

table Cont...

| Question                                             | Respondent no | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <i>Aware of Premanand Ji Maharaj</i>                 |               |                |
| Yes                                                  | 24            | 75             |
| No                                                   | 3             | 9.4            |
| Maybe                                                | 5             | 15.6           |
| <i>Watched any videos related to him</i>             |               |                |
| Yes                                                  | 25            | 78.1           |
| No                                                   | 7             | 21.9           |
| <i>Actively follow which religious channel</i>       |               |                |
| Premanand Ji Maharaj                                 | 8             | 25             |
| Others                                               | 2             | 6.2            |
| Sadhguru                                             | 1             | 3.1            |
| None                                                 | 21            | 65.6           |
| <i>Preferred social media for devotional content</i> |               |                |
| Instagram                                            | 7             | 21.9           |
| Facebook                                             | 2             | 6.2            |
| Youtube                                              | 8             | 25.1           |
| None                                                 | 2             | 6.2            |
| <i>Time spent on devotional content</i>              |               |                |
| <1 hr                                                | 28            | 87.5           |
| 1-2 hr                                               | 4             | 12.5           |
| 2-3 hrs                                              | 0             | 0              |
| >3 hrs                                               | 0             | 0              |
| <i>Reason to watch</i>                               |               |                |
| Spiritual interest                                   | 13            | 40.6           |
| Emotional comfort                                    | 12            | 37.5           |
| Social Influence                                     | 4             | 12.5           |
| Others                                               | 3             | 9.3            |
| <i>Alluring aspect of the content</i>                |               |                |
| Simplicity                                           | 16            | 50             |
| Story telling style                                  | 3             | 9.4            |
| Relevance                                            | 11            | 34.4           |
| Others                                               | 2             | 6.2            |

The findings reveal that WhatsApp (87.5%) and Instagram (71.9%) are the most widely used social media platforms among the respondents, indicating their dominance in students' daily digital engagement. In terms of average time spent on social media, nearly half of the respondents (46.9%) reported spending 1-2 hours per day, while 31.3% spent more than 4 hours, reflecting a high level of social media usage among students.

Regarding the frequency of exposure to devotional content, responses were fairly distributed. About 31.3% of students encountered devotional content frequently,

while 21.9% reported very frequent exposure. A considerable proportion (25%) experienced such content rarely, suggesting varying levels of engagement with devotional material across respondents.

Awareness of Premanand Ji Maharaj was found to be high, with 75% of respondents indicating familiarity with him, and 78.1% reporting that they had watched videos related to him. However, active following of religious channels was relatively low, as 65.6% of respondents stated that they did not actively follow any religious channel. Among those who did, Premanand Ji Maharaj was the most followed (25%), followed by other religious figures and Sadhguru in smaller proportions.

When asked about preferred platforms for accessing devotional content, YouTube (25.1%) and Instagram (21.9%) emerged as the most favored platforms, while a small percentage reported no preference. The time spent on devotional content was generally limited, with a large majority (87.5%) spending less than one hour, indicating that devotional content forms only a small part of overall social media consumption.

The primary reasons for watching devotional content were spiritual interest (40.6%) and emotional comfort (37.5%), highlighting the role of such content in fulfilling emotional and spiritual needs. Social influence (12.5%) and other reasons played a relatively minor role. In terms of appealing aspects, simplicity of presentation (50%) was the most attractive feature, followed by content relevance (34.4%), suggesting that clarity and relatability strongly influence viewer engagement.

## CONCLUSION

The study shows that, the students of GBPUAT share a positive perception on the role of Premanand Ji Maharaj and other gurus on shaping young minds. They think that the messages in such content uplifts them spiritually, mentally, and academically. The simple language, captivating story telling approach, makes the content easy to understand.

However, certain areas need attention, like many students feel that the authenticity of such message is very low. The increasing commercialization of devotions and overusing of emotional vulnerability of people is a major

concern. Moreover, social media also spreads misinformation as well.

In summary, the students feel like credible Gurus like Premanand Ji Maharaj plays an important role in positively shaping the young minds.

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