

Indian Prime Minister most followed, most effective leader on Instagram

'World leaders on Instagram' is Burson-Marsteller's latest research into how world leaders, governments and international organisations communicate via social media.



Leading the world is Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has taken over Barack Obama's position as most followed world leader on Instagram with 6.8 million followers. In second place is President Donald Trump, with 6.3 million followers.

The study found that 73 heads of state, 38 heads of government and 28 foreign ministers have personal pages on Instagram, which tend to get better engagement than institutional accounts. It also found that 140 of the 193 United Nations member states maintain an official Instagram account, four more than in the 2016 study.

Pope Francis is in third place with 3.7 million followers, ahead of the White House account with 3.4 million followers. Indonesia's President Joko Widodo has seen a 673% growth in his followers over the past 12 months, putting him in fifth position with 3.4 million followers.

Instagram activity analysis

The study analyses the activity of the 325 Instagram accounts of heads of state and government, and foreign ministers over the past 12 months using aggregate data from Facebook's CrowdTangle tool. As of 1 April 2017, the accounts have a combined 48.7 million followers and published 61,281 posts in the past 12 months, which have garnered 371.7 million interactions (comments and shares).

Modi, who has only posted 53 photos during that period, is also the most effective world leader on Instagram, considering that each of his posts receives an average of 223,000 interactions (comments and likes).

Trump loses White House followers

On 20 January 2017, the White House Instagram account set up under President Obama in January 2012, and all its 1,747 posts were archived on the @ObamaWhiteHouse Instagram account. A new @WhiteHouse Instagram channel was set up for the Trump administration, which started with a clean slate yet kept the 3,586,458 followers accumulated under Obama. So far the Trump administration has only posted 33 times, and since the transition the account has lost more than 100,000

followers as Obama's supporters have unfollowed the Trump White House Instagram account.

President Trump tops the most interactive world leaders, ranking with 114,554,016 total interactions. He is followed by Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in second place, with 89,090,894 interactions and then Pope Francis with 45,408,641 interactions.

Selfie replaces handshake

World leaders have taken to Instagram's new video feature – sharing video posts has more than doubled over the past 12 months and videos receive an average of 2,027 more interactions than simple photo posts.

They use Instagram to get their messages across in interesting and creative ways, tapping the full range of Instagram features. They create breaking Instagram stories and use grand picture collages; they even post so many videos that now one in 10 posts contain them. The selfie has now taken the place of the traditional handshake photo, clearly signalling the new diplomatic environment in 2017.

The research builds on Burson-Marsteller's annual Twiplomacy study, which is now in its fifth year. In 2016, the Twiplomacy study was expanded to cover all key social media platforms.

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