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**User behavior and motivations
on social media platform BeReal**

Master's thesis

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Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 30.04.2024

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References

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Abstract

This master's thesis delves into the motivations and experiences of BeReal social media platform users, aiming to understand why individuals opt for BeReal over other platforms and how this choice impacts their overall satisfaction. Grounded in the Uses and Gratification theory, the study adopts a qualitative approach, employing semi-structured interviews with regular BeReal users. The theoretical section provides an overview of the topic related to the study, examining authenticity and privacy in the social media sphere. The theoretical framework also explores the broader context of social media use and the psychological factors that influence user behavior. The practical section of the thesis details the research methodology, introducing the research sample and questions. It explains the rationale for choosing qualitative methods, particularly semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, to gain a deeper understanding of users' motivations and experiences on BeReal. Additionally, it delves into the topic of research ethics and self-reflection regarding the research process, ensuring that ethical considerations are addressed throughout the study. The subsequent research segment is structured into subchapters aligned with hypotheses and research questions. Through analysis, the study identifies key themes and patterns in the data, shedding light on the complexity of factors that drive users' engagement with BeReal. The discussion chapter integrates interview findings with theoretical insights, providing a comprehensive analysis of the research results.

Abstrakt

Tato magisterská práce se zabývá motivací a zkušenostmi uživatelů platformy BeReal na sociálních sítích s cílem pochopit, proč se jednotlivci rozhodli pro BeReal místo jiných platforem a jak tato volba ovlivňuje jejich celkovou spokojenost. Studie, která vychází z teorie užitku a uspokojení, využívá kvalitativní přístup a využívá polostrukturované rozhovory s pravidelnými uživateli BeReal. Teoretická část poskytuje přehled tématu souvisejícího se studií a zkoumá autenticitu a soukromí ve sféře sociálních médií. Teoretický rámec rovněž zkoumá širší kontext užívání sociálních médií a psychologické faktory, které ovlivňují chování uživatelů. Praktická část práce podrobně popisuje metodiku výzkumu, představuje výzkumný vzorek a otázky. Vysvětluje důvody pro volbu kvalitativních metod, zejména polostrukturovaných rozhovorů a tematické analýzy, s cílem získat hlubší porozumění motivacím a zkušenostem uživatelů na BeReal. Kromě toho se věnuje tématu etiky výzkumu a sebereflexe týkající se výzkumného procesu, čímž zajišťuje, že etické aspekty jsou zohledněny v průběhu celé studie. Následný segment výzkumu je strukturován do podkapitol sladěných s hypotézami a výzkumnými otázkami. Studie prostřednictvím analýzy identifikuje klíčová témata a vzorce v datech a osvětluje komplexnost faktorů, které ovlivňují zapojení uživatelů do služby BeReal. Kapitola diskuze integruje výsledky rozhovorů s teoretickými poznatky a poskytuje komplexní analýzu výsledků výzkumu.

Keywords

BeReal, social media, Uses and Gratification theory, communication, authenticity, privacy

Klíčová slova

BeReal, sociální média, Teorie užití a uspokojení, komunikace, autenticita, soukromí

Title

User behavior and motivations on social media platform BeReal

Název práce

Chování a motivace uživatelů na platformě sociálních médií BeReal

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1. Introduction

BeReal has become a standout platform in the ever-changing social media landscape by emphasizing real-life moments and authenticity. Users have plenty of options when navigating the digital world when it comes to sharing their experiences, ideas, and feelings on various platforms. Figuring out the motivations behind people's choice of BeReal over alternative social media platforms is essential to comprehending the complexity of user behavior in the digital era. This thesis takes a broad approach to its investigation, combining an examination of user motivations with an emphasis on social media privacy and authenticity.

This study's primary research question is: What factors influence individuals to choose BeReal over other social media platforms in order to share real-life moments? This main inquiry explores BeReal's distinct appeal and aims to identify the underlying causes of users' preference for this platform. We examine this question while also evaluating the ideas of privacy and authenticity on social media.

This study explores supplementary research questions that shed light on the complex dynamics of user behavior and experiences on BeReal, in addition to the main research question. One such follow-up question focuses on the main reasons behind BeReal users' actions and how those reasons affect their level of satisfaction with the platform as a whole. Through an analysis of user motivations, we hope to identify the underlying factors that shape users' choices and, in turn, their degree of satisfaction with BeReal.

Additionally, this study emphasizes the importance of privacy and authenticity on social media. Authenticity becomes crucial in a time of carefully chosen content and perfected self-portrayals. We explore the issue of whether people on social media represent themselves truthfully as well as the effects of authenticity on user interactions and experiences. Furthermore, we investigate the complicated landscape of online privacy, looking at how people strike a balance between protecting their right to privacy and sharing real-life personal moments.

1.1. Context of the study and research objectives

The foundation for this research was laid during the Winter semester of 2022/2023 within the framework of lectures Media and Socialization. These lectures provided a foundational understanding of the role of media in shaping social interactions, behaviors, and identities. Intrigued by the complexities and nuances discussed in these sessions, the author was motivated to delve deeper into this topic and conduct a more comprehensive examination.

The context of this study is embedded within the broader landscape of social media platforms and their increasing influence on modern society. With the emergence of platforms like BeReal, individuals are presented with new ways for communication, self-expression, and social connection in virtual environments. This shift in social behavior reflects evolving norms and practices in digital communication, raising questions about authenticity, privacy, and social interactions in online spaces.

At the heart of this research are the motivations and experiences of users on the BeReal platform. By exploring why individuals choose to use BeReal, the study aims to uncover the underlying factors driving user engagement and interaction. This includes investigating the role of social connections, the perception of privacy, and the quest for authenticity in online interactions. Through a detailed examination of user behaviors, preferences, and perceptions, the research seeks to contribute valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between social media usage and individual experiences in society.

1.2. Scope and limitations

The primary objective of this study is to discern the underlying factors motivating individuals to select BeReal over alternative social media platforms for the purpose of sharing authentic life moments. Specifically, the study aims to gain a nuanced understanding of the distinct attributes and functionalities of BeReal that attract users and contribute to their overall satisfaction levels. Employing qualitative research techniques such as surveys and interviews, the study endeavors to gather comprehensive insights into the motivations, experiences, and perceptions of BeReal users.

Given practical constraints such as limited time and resources, the study may encounter a modest sample size of BeReal users, potentially constraining the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. This limitation is duly acknowledged within the study, and the resultant insights are carefully contextualized within the sampled population.

One potential concern pertains to response bias, whereby participants may furnish responses influenced by social desirability or their perceptions of the platform. To mitigate bias, the study adopts open-ended data collection techniques and employs objective analytical methods.

Furthermore, the depth of analysis and insights derived from the study may be circumscribed by the availability of specific data and analytics from BeReal or other social media platforms. Nonetheless, the study rigorously ensures the validity and reliability of its results within the constraints of available data sources.

External variables, such as evolving user preferences, technological advancements, and shifts in social media trends, may also impact the study's results and recommendations. These external influences are duly considered, and the study interprets its findings in light of the dynamic and ever-changing digital communication landscape.

In light of these scope and limitations, this thesis endeavors to offer a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the determinants shaping user preferences and experiences on BeReal, thereby making a substantive contribution to the realm of digital communication research.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Communication

Social media has grown to be a crucial component of modern society communication, greatly influencing how people connect and engage with one another. For this reason, it is essential that we define and comprehend the meaning of communication in this context. Communication is not just a tool but an essential aspect of our daily lives, forming the very foundation of our interactions and relationships (Střížová, 2010). It is through communication that we convey our ideas, beliefs, emotions, and experiences, allowing us to connect with others on various levels (Fiske, 2010). In the modern era, the landscape of

communication has evolved significantly, with technological advancements enabling instantaneous sharing of information and widespread access to a plenty of media sources.

Communication is a complex concept that defies simple definition. It is an essential aspect of existence for all living beings, necessary for functioning effectively within society. The breadth of communication is vast, encompassing various disciplines and serving as a vital link between them. According to media theorist John Fiske, communication is a familiar yet challenging concept to define comprehensively (Fiske, 2010). However, it is universally acknowledged as a process that reveals aspects of our emotions, thoughts, and social interactions.

The term "communication" originates from the Latin word "communicare," meaning sharing or participation, emphasizing the collaborative nature of the communication process (Střížová, 2010). This process involves conveying and exchanging meanings, values, and information, which can occur not only through spoken or written words but also through silence and active listening (Vybíral, 2013). Each communicative exchange serves a purpose, whether it's to inform, persuade, entertain, or connect with others on a deeper level.

Every communication exchange fulfills a variety of purposes and adds to the complex fundament of interpersonal relationships. Zbyněk Vybíral asserts that communication serves numerous essential purposes in our day-to-day existence. These features not only make information sharing easier, but they also have a significant impact on how we interact and relate to others (Vybíral, 2013).

The first and perhaps most obvious function is providing information. Communication serves as a conduit for sharing facts, ideas, news, and knowledge among individuals and groups. Another essential function is giving instructions or guidance. Communication is often used to convey directions, guidelines, procedures, and advice to help others understand what needs to be done and how to do it effectively. Persuasion is yet another function of communication. People use communication to influence others' beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors. Negotiation is a key function in situations where conflicting interests need to be resolved or agreements need to be reached. Communication plays a central role in bargaining, compromise, conflict resolution, and decision-making processes. Entertainment

is also an important function of communication. Through storytelling, humor, music, art, and various forms of media, communication serves to entertain and engage audiences (Vybíral, 2013).

In addition to these primary functions, Vybíral introduces two additional functions: contact and self-presentation. Contact communication involves efforts to attract attention, initiate interactions, and establish connections with others. Self-presentation communication focuses on creating a positive image, managing impressions, and showcasing one's personality, skills, and qualities.

For centuries, people have worked hard to improve communication techniques. These initiatives, along with the ensuing technological developments, have brought us to a point in time where we no longer have to wait weeks or months for responses. Instantaneous responses to our questions and messages are now commonplace, revolutionizing how we engage and communicate in modern society.

2.2. Social media

Social media has completely changed how people interact with one another, exchange information, and communicate in today's world. With billions of users worldwide, social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter have become extremely popular in recent years. Social media's ascent has revolutionized interpersonal interactions and opened up fresh possibilities for interaction, cooperation, and relationship-building.

The concept of "social network" was first introduced in J. A. Barnes' book "Class and Committees in Norwegian island parish" in 1954. In this work, the sociologist explored social relationships within a Norwegian fishing village. He proposed the notion that social life can be visualized as a series of interconnected nodes forming a network of relationships (Barnes, 1954).

Boyd together with Ellison (Boyd, Ellison 2007) define social media as:

“web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”.

Kaplan and Haenlein (Kaplan, Haenlein 2010) have already published one of the widely accepted definitions of social networks, characterizing them as an assortment of Internet-based applications that *"are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and which enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content."*

In a sociological context, social networks can be seen as dynamic groups that interact and interconnect. Whether it is family ties, shared interests or professional collectives, these networks shape our lives and influence our thinking. These platforms act as systems that allow us to build and maintain a list of contacts, share information and present ourselves online. We create virtual profiles that reflect our interests and identity and connect us to people around the world (Pavliček, 2010). They are becoming a tool for sharing ideas and things, building relationships and disseminating information, thereby influencing the way we communicate and perceive the world around us (van Dijk 2020).

2.2.1. History of social media

The debut of Sixdegrees.com, the first well-known social networking site, in 1975 marked a turning point in the history of social media. By enabling users to create friend lists and profiles, Sixdegrees.com established the idea of online social connectivity. Despite having millions of users, Sixdegrees.com eventually ran into financial difficulties and shut down in 2000.

Ryze.com, a professional networking site, came on the scene in 2001, right after Sixdegrees.com. However, Friendster was the first social networking site to gain significant traction. The distinctive method of Friendster, which links "friends of friends," helped explain the platform's quick ascent to fame. Over time, despite its early success, user engagement decreased due to social and technical issues.

Myspace first appeared in the mid-2000s and quickly became popular among young people and artists. Myspace gained prominence due to its open accessibility and active user community, which resulted in its acquisition for a substantial amount in 2005. However, Myspace also came under fire from the public and security authorities for incidents involving interactions between adults and minors.

While Myspace dominated headlines, other social networks gained prominence globally. Platforms like Friendster found footholds in specific regions, showcasing the diverse landscape of social media adoption. Facebook, originally designed for Harvard students, expanded its reach exponentially, becoming a ubiquitous social network used worldwide by various demographics (Boyd, Ellison 2007).

The evolution of social networking reflects a dynamic interplay between technological innovation, user behavior, and societal norms. Each platform's journey contributes to the broader narrative of how social media has transformed communication and connectivity in the digital age.

2.3. Communication and digital media

Most commentators concur that we are currently amidst a media revolution, propelled primarily by the internet's connectivity and transmission capacities, along with the proliferation of digital media devices and infrastructures (Couldry, 2012). This revolution has precipitated a fundamental shift in the structure of connections, artificial memories, and the reproduction of content within technical communications (van Dijk, 2020).

The emergence of digital media has brought about a complete transformation in how we communicate, interact, and share information in today's interconnected global landscape. We have transitioned from an analog to a digital environment, which has significantly impacted the appearance and functionality of new media. New media platforms seamlessly integrate mass communication, telecommunications, and data communication, thus forming a dynamic and interconnected ecosystem (van Dijk, 2020).

Initially, social media platforms were heralded as tools that would empower individuals to express their unique needs, interests, and perspectives. However, as users delved deeper into these platforms, many came to realize that their true power lay in fostering a sense of compulsive attachment. In the past, people found stability and shared experiences through stable social relationships, cultural traditions, and consistent routines in the physical world. The rise of the Internet disrupted this sense of stability, challenging individuals to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. This disruption prompted the development of new strategies for navigating the complexities of modern life. Today, social media not only enables personal expression but also creates a pervasive sense of connectedness and the fear of missing out (FOMO). This fear drives a desire to stay constantly connected to what others are doing, fostering addictive behaviors and shaping how individuals engage with the digital world (Danesi, 2020).

2.4. Authenticity

Authenticity permeates diverse spheres of our lives, manifesting as a ubiquitous yet elusive concept. It is a term that finds widespread usage across academia, popular culture, and everyday discourse, shaping our perceptions and interactions. From navigating supermarket aisles to engaging with digital media, the discourse of authenticity constantly surrounds us, influencing our decisions and judgments (Heřmanová, Skey, Thurnell-Read 2023).

Authenticity, a concept deeply ingrained in human perception and behavior, has intrigued scholars and thinkers across epochs. From the philosophical musings of ancient luminaries like Socrates and Aristotle to modern-day psychological investigations, the notion of authenticity has remained a compelling subject of exploration. (Reinecke, Trepte 2014)

Throughout history, across traditional and modern usage, authenticity has been associated with the notion of truthfulness and genuineness. The essence of authenticity lies in the alignment between the outward appearance or representation of a subject and the underlying realities that are not contrived or fabricated. This fundamental understanding gives rise to an abstract noun derived from the adjective, reflecting a state or quality of being that resonates with authenticity (Malaníková, 2014).

Marie Heřmanová, a prominent social anthropologist, points out that the multifaceted nature of authenticity defies a simplistic definition, as it encompasses a spectrum of meanings and interpretations. At its core, authenticity embodies notions of genuineness, trustworthiness, and alignment with one's true self. It represents the harmony between external appearances and internal realities, serving as a benchmark for assessing the integrity of individuals and experiences (Heřmanová, Skey, Thurnell-Read 2023)

The etymology of the term "authentic" adds depth to its meaning. Derived from the Latin "authenticus," which finds its origins in the Greek "authentēs" meaning "acting independently," authenticity conveys a sense of autonomy and integrity. This linguistic journey underscores the timeless and universal relevance of authenticity as a fundamental aspect of human existence and communication (Holub et al., 1992).

2.4.1. Authenticity on social media

Authenticity on social media mostly refers to the accuracy or uniqueness of the posted content. According to Krelling research (Krelling, Meier, Reinecke 2022) authenticity is perceived here as a social construct, in which an individual is assessed in terms of their own authenticity by others in their environment.

In her article, Krelling also refers to Knoll (Knoll, Meyer, Kroemer, Schröder-Abé 2015). According to them authenticity comprises two essential components: *authentic self-awareness* and *authentic self-expression*. The former involves exploring and understanding one's identity, while the latter is particularly relevant in the context of social media. It entails presenting oneself in a manner consistent with one's self-perception. Achieving authentic self-expression involves aligning one's actions with their values, preferences, and needs. This necessitates being genuine and true to oneself across various situations, guided by an awareness of one's internal states and the ability to express them authentically in behavior and emotion. (Knoll, Meyer, Kroemer, Schröder-Abé 2015)

The findings of Krelling et al. (2015) underscore the significance of authenticity in shaping individuals' experiences and interactions in digital spaces. Research has shown that cultivating authenticity in online interactions can lead to increased psychological well-being, satisfaction with social connections, and a sense of fulfillment in one's digital presence.

In Kirsti McGregor's dissertation, she delves into the complex notion of authenticity on social media, highlighting the delicate balance between portraying the positive and negative aspects of one's life. She points out that to be authentic on social media is to balance between the good and the bad, instead of making a narrative of your own life and not mentioning the negative aspects of it. (McGregor, 2015)

2.5. Privacy

In today's digital era, social media platforms have become an integral part of our daily lives, enabling us to connect, communicate, and share experiences with others across the globe. However, this convenience and connectivity come with a trade-off – the erosion of privacy. This chapter delves into the complex interplay between privacy concerns and social media usage, exploring the challenges, implications, and evolving perspectives on privacy in the digital age.

The precise meaning of privacy changes based on the perspectives of multiple individuals, societies, and time periods. Thus, it becomes difficult for people to establish boundaries around privacy in a variety of social contexts, such as the workplace, social and familial circles, and the world of technology.

Stein and Sinha offer one possible definition, linking privacy with rights of individuals to enjoy autonomy, to be left alone, and to determine whether and how information about one's self is revealed to others (Lievrouw, Livingstone 2006).

As Slavík and Pospěch mention, privacy is an extremely broad and fluid concept (Slavík, Pospěch 2019). Privacy is indeed a universal social phenomenon that manifests differently based on the unique cultural contexts within which it operates. This variability in its form, structure, and function across diverse cultural settings provides researchers with a valuable opportunity to examine privacy through the lens of various social groups and communities (Slavík, Pospěch 2019). By studying privacy in different cultural contexts, we can gain deeper insights into how individuals, families, communities, and societies navigate the complexities of privacy, interpersonal boundaries, and information management within their respective cultural frameworks. This comparative approach allows for a more nuanced

understanding of privacy practices, norms, and expectations, highlighting the dynamic interplay between cultural values, technological advancements, social norms, and individual preferences in shaping the concept and experience of privacy across different cultural landscapes.

Westin delineates several categories or functions of privacy, each serving as distinct analytical dimensions that are nevertheless intricately interconnected in practice:

a) Personal Autonomy: Privacy serves as a foundational pillar for individuals' desire to maintain exclusivity as autonomous subjects. It offers a platform to delineate meaningful boundaries of accessibility, regulating the relationships and interactions within the various spheres of the self. Westin conceptualizes these spheres as concentric circles enveloping our "core self," emphasizing the importance of defining and safeguarding personal autonomy within interpersonal dynamics.

b) Emotional Release: Privacy creates a sanctuary where individuals can temporarily shed the myriad roles they play in their daily lives. It provides a space for unmasking and relaxation, allowing individuals to express and process their emotions authentically without the constraints imposed by societal expectations or external pressures.

c) Self-Evaluation: Building on the concept of emotional release and role distance, privacy facilitates the critical process of self-evaluation. It enables individuals to introspect, analyze, and integrate their experiences and emotions into coherent and meaningful patterns. This reflective aspect of privacy contributes to personal growth, self-awareness, and the development of a cohesive self-identity.

d) Limited and Protected Communication: Privacy acts as a fundamental prerequisite for effective communication and social interaction. It allows individuals to selectively disclose information, choosing what aspects of themselves they present to others and to whom. This selective disclosure fosters trust, intimacy, and relational depth, as individuals navigate the

nuanced dynamics of social distance and intimacy within various relationships (Westin, 1967).

2.5.1. Privacy on social media

This study is focused on the users motivations on why they use a certain application. Privacy on social media plays a huge role in deciding on what to follow, share and contribute. In today's digital era, social media platforms have become an integral part of our daily lives, enabling us to connect, communicate, and share experiences with others across the globe. However, this convenience and connectivity come with a trade-off – the erosion of privacy. This chapter delves into the complex interplay between privacy concerns and social media usage, exploring the challenges, implications, and evolving perspectives on privacy in the digital age.

boyd's text "Social Network Sites: Public, Private, or What?" delves into the specifics of social networks that can alter perceptions of privacy and subsequently influence the regulation process. According to boyd (boyd, 2007), social networks serve as mediated public spaces characterized by several key attributes: persistence, searchability, replicability, and invisible audiences. These attributes play a significant role in shaping the way privacy is perceived and managed within social networking environments.

Persistence refers to the lasting nature of data storage within social networks. Information shared in seemingly instantaneous, situational communication can remain accessible for many years, contributing to the concept of a digital footprint. Searchability complements persistence by enabling the quick retrieval of data through key phrases, facilitating immediate access to desired information without extensive searching and sorting. Replicability allows digital data to be copied, modified, and further disseminated within social networks. This capability means that online content can be taken out of its original context and altered, often without the ability to verify the accuracy or authenticity of the information. The visibility of content on social networks extends to a wider audience, potentially encompassing anyone with internet access. The combination of persistence, searchability, and replicability expands the audience to include individuals who may not have been present at the time of the information's creation. The absence of a clear context,

which is crucial for handling information appropriately, is a notable aspect within social networking environments. Users tend to create mental images of specific audiences they are communicating with, often relying on the illusion of privacy provided by friend lists and privacy settings within their personal profiles. These befriended profiles typically represent the intended audience from whom users expect access to their content and engagement (boyd, Ellison, 2007).

2.6. BeReal - the application of real-time moments

BeReal, a social media platform founded by developers Alexis Barreyat and Kévin Perreau, has revolutionized the digital landscape with its emphasis on authenticity and genuine human connection. Launched in December 2019 in France, BeReal quickly captured the attention of users worldwide by offering a refreshing alternative to traditional social networking sites (Curry, 2024). Unlike platforms that prioritize polished and curated content, BeReal encourages users to share unfiltered moments, candid thoughts, and raw emotions, fostering a community built on real-life experiences and meaningful interactions.

The year 2022 marked a significant milestone for BeReal, witnessing an unprecedented surge in user adoption and engagement. In January 2022, the platform boasted a monthly user base of 920,000 individuals, reflecting the growing interest in its authenticity-centric approach. However, as the year progressed, BeReal's popularity soared to new heights, with the number of active users surpassing 73.5 million by August 2022 (Curry, 2024). This exponential growth underscored the widespread appeal of BeReal's mission to create a digital space where users could express themselves authentically without the pressure of filters or curated personas.

Despite its remarkable success in 2022, BeReal experienced a slight decline in popularity and user engagement in subsequent years. By January 2024, the platform's active user base had stabilized at around 23 million users, signaling a shift in user behavior or preferences within the dynamic social media landscape. However, BeReal continues to attract a dedicated community of users who value authenticity, genuine connections, and unfiltered self-expression, maintaining its position as a significant player in the evolving digital sphere.

2.6.1. How does BeReal work?

BeReal is a social media platform designed for photo sharing, often juxtaposed with Meta's Instagram. However, it is crucial to perceive these platforms not merely as direct competitors but as distinct paradigms in the realm of social media. Unlike Instagram, which prioritizes maximizing user engagement and curating highlights of individuals' lives, BeReal embraces authenticity, simplicity, and candid portrayals of everyday moments in user photos.

The platform operates by sending random notifications to users throughout the day, prompting them to capture a snapshot of their current activity within a strict 2-minute timeframe. This unpredictability ensures that users cannot pre-plan their content to showcase only the best moments, thereby fostering an environment that encourages sharing mundane or "ordinary" aspects of daily life. Users may capture moments such as shopping, working, waiting for transportation, or dining, emphasizing the authenticity and unfiltered nature of their experiences (Davis, 2022).

Upon receiving the notification, the app activates the phone's camera, engaging both front and rear cameras simultaneously. This intentional design choice aims to enhance the authenticity and sincerity of the captured moment. Notably, BeReal refrains from incorporating filters or editing tools that alter users' appearances, opting for a raw and unaltered representation. While users have the option to retake the photo if dissatisfied, they must adhere to the 2-minute timeframe, emphasizing spontaneity and immediacy in content creation (Davis, 2022). Failure to meet this deadline may result in a perceived loss of authenticity, as indicated by the platform's notification system.

Following the capture of a daily photo, users gain access to view their friends' contributions. Each photo includes location tagging on a map, facilitating contextual understanding and engagement. Users also have the option to add comments or reactions to photos, with emoticons uniquely crafted by users upon their initial use. This distinct approach replaces traditional cartoon emojis with personalized icons featuring images of friends, further reinforcing the platform's commitment to genuine and meaningful interactions .

2.7. Theory of Uses and Gratification

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, a fundamental idea in media psychology and audience research, serves as the main theoretical foundation for this thesis. The Uses and Gratifications approach, which has its roots in psychologically oriented media use research, has changed over time to accommodate shifting media environments and consumption trends. Even though it has been criticized, it is still relevant to comprehending the reasons behind media consumption (Trültzsch-Wijnen, 2020).

Fundamentally, the theory challenges the traditional view of media's passive, one-way influence by proposing that people actively choose and consume media based on their unique needs and goals. The theory acknowledges people's agency in making conscious decisions that are in line with their preferences and goals, as opposed to seeing media as a single, all-powerful force that shapes audiences. (Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch, 1973)

The theory's essential question is to investigate how and why individuals interact with media, moving the emphasis from media effects to audience motivations. Although Katz et al.'s research in the American journal *Public Opinion Quarterly* contributed to popularizing the idea in the 1970s (Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch, 1973), the idea's origins can be found in previous research on the consumption of media and audience satisfaction.

The theory's ability to adjust to modern media environments is one of its strongest points; it provides an angle through which to look at the expected advantages as well as outcomes of media engagement. Through an examination of people's intentions, preferences, and habitual patterns, the theory facilitates research into a range of outcomes that include attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions.

The primary objective of the research is to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework that explains the various factors that influence audience media consumption. A typology of "media-personal interactions" or media satisfaction was proposed by McQuail, Blumler, and Brown, building on empirical studies of radio and television audiences. This typology includes categories like social connectivity through personal relationships, self-awareness

through personal identity, escapism through diversion, and information gathering through surveillance (MCQUAIL, Antonínová 2009)

2.8. Critiques of the Uses and Gratifications Theory

Bertrand and Hughes highlight several critiques of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, shedding light on various challenges encountered in audience studies:

1. Issues with Audience Responses:

- Researchers often encounter difficulties in accurately discerning audience motives, characterizing program purposes, and distinguishing them from the general satisfaction derived from television viewing. This challenge is exacerbated by the predominant focus on television viewing within these studies.

2. Terminology Ambiguities:

- The theory relies heavily on the usage of ambiguous terms such as satisfaction, needs, use, and gratification, assuming a shared understanding of their meanings. However, the interpretation of these terms can vary significantly, leading to potential inconsistencies in research findings.

3. Evaluation Assumptions:

- There is a tendency to treat responses from diverse participants as synonymous, facilitating their statistical analysis and interpretation. However, this assumption overlooks the nuanced differences in individual perspectives and experiences, potentially oversimplifying the complexity of audience motivations.

4. Logical Limitations:

- Studies may fall short in providing comprehensive solutions that address every conceivable scenario. This assumption of universality overlooks the diverse and multifaceted nature of audience motivations and behaviors, potentially resulting in oversimplified conclusions.

5. Contextual Oversights:

- Researchers often neglect the broader social and cultural contexts within which media

consumption occurs. Instead of considering the larger social milieu, studies tend to focus solely on the social and psychological characteristics of individual audience members when seeking explanations for media engagement. This oversight may lead to a narrow understanding of audience motivations and preferences.

These critiques underscore the need for a more nuanced and contextually grounded approach to understanding audience behaviors and motivations within the framework of the Uses and Gratifications Theory. By addressing these challenges, researchers can enhance the validity and applicability of their findings, offering deeper insights into the complex dynamics of media consumption (Bertrand, Hughes 2007).

McQuail claims that this method has not been able to adequately explain media choice and usage. He contends that media consumption is situational and has little motivation of its own. As a result, this strategy might be most effective when combined with certain kinds of content, such as news, erotica, or political content, where motivation is possible. The consumption of media can be impacted by the individual's personality characteristics as well as their immediate surroundings and interactions with social forces (social context). In fact, there is rarely a clear direction of interaction and a very weak correlation between access to media and media use behavior. It is challenging to establish a rational, consistent, and orderly relationship between the elements of liking/preference, actual choice, and subsequent evaluation. The typology of motives frequently does not match the effects of actual choice or use (MCQUAIL, Antonínová 2009).

2.9. Social media and uses and gratification theory

Uses and gratification theory is still relevant in the 21st century and can be used on the internet and specifically social media, regardless of the criticism. The use of the internet and rise of new media and following blending of digital and mass media has changed the approaches how the audience use and are exposed to the consumed content.

According to the article *Why people use social media: A uses and gratifications approach* the main themes, that are discussed as why people use social media are:

- social interaction: The definition of this usage theme is interacting and

- communicating with people through social media.
- information seeking: Using social media for information seeking or self-education.
 - pass time; to occupy time and relieve boredom, “using internet when there is nothing else to do”
 - entertainment: Using social media for entertainment, pleasure and enjoyment
 - relaxation: This theme is defined as using social media to provide relieving to stress
 - communicatory utility: The definition of this type of social media use is sharing information with others and facilitating communication.
 - convenience utility: This theme discusses that social media is bringing individuals convenience or effectiveness.

This article provides a brief overview of research findings that clarify the reasons behind people's use of social media platforms. Although some methodological limitations were present, most notably a small sample size in the interview section, the study nevertheless represents a solid preliminary investigation of the topic (Whiting, Williams 2013).

The analysis reveals striking similarities between the ways that people use and enjoy social media today and how those uses and pleasures have been tracked in previous research, as Sundar and Limperos mentions. Despite the constantly changing technological environment, the consistent resemblance of user motivations over time highlights the enduring nature of some basic patterns in people's interactions with social media (Sundar, Limperos 2013).

Sundar and Limperos defined four categories of potential new media technology-induced gratification:

Modality:

The various presentational methods are referred to as modality. The internet provides users with experiences linked to fashionability, novelty, and intense presence through the provision of content in multiple formats, including text, images, audio, and video also referring to as multimedia.

Agency:

The ability to actively contribute to online content enables people to improve content, create communities, become more well-known, filter or edit content, and feel a feeling of ownership.

Interactivity:

Users have the opportunity for interaction, activity, fast responses, and dynamic control over content when they can directly affect media in real-time.

Navigability:

Users are free to move around the internet environment. One way to do this is by clicking links. This mobility encompasses browsing and varied exploration, employing navigational aids and incorporating playful and entertaining elements (Sundar, Limperos 2013)

Authenticity, according to Users and gratification theory, on social media can be understood as expressing one's true identity and one's real opinions and feelings. People who try to be authentic on social media often do so in order to satisfy their need for social interaction and their need for self-realization.

Of course, not all people who are on social media are trying to be authentic. Some people may only share edited photos and videos that show an ideal version of themselves. These people may be satisfying their need for escape or their need for social approval.

Overall, it can be said that the uses and gratifications theory can be a useful tool for understanding why people use social media to express their authenticity.

3. Methodology

This research study centers its investigation on the prevalent usage of BeReal and its user base. The principal aim of this research is to clarify the reasons behind people's use of this platform and the particular forms of satisfaction that it can provide. A key focus of inquiry involves an exploration into the concept of authenticity within the BeReal platform, as well as the maintenance of user privacy within this digital environment. In addition, the research project's secondary goal is to identify the comparisons users make between BeReal and other social media platforms in order to clarify why users choose and utilize BeReal instead of its competitors.

The methodology chapter of this study delineates the research design, sample selection criteria, data collection methods, techniques for secondary analysis, and ethical

considerations. Each subchapter explores a different aspect of the research project, guaranteeing a comprehensive and methodical exploration. The research design offers a broad view of the approach and framework adopted. Sample selection elucidates the procedure for identifying and enlisting participants. The section on secondary analysis elucidates the data examination process and methodologies employed in this study. Ethical considerations underscore the significance of adhering to ethical guidelines and safeguarding participant well-being.

3.1. Research design

The initial groundwork for this master's thesis was laid through a preliminary research project conducted as part of the Media and Socialization course during the winter semester of 2022/2023 at Charles University. This preliminary study provided valuable insights into the BeReal application and user responses, serving as a catalyst for deeper investigation and analysis within this thesis.

Drawing from the foundations established in the seminar paper, this master's thesis seeks to expand upon the initial research findings, delve deeper into the intricacies of BeReal, and provide a comprehensive analysis of user interactions and perceptions within the platform. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, this study aims to uncover valuable insights that contribute to a better understanding of user engagement and satisfaction on BeReal.

The author selected a research methodology that integrates quantitative inquiry through surveys with qualitative investigation using semi-structured interviews. This combined approach is chosen for its ability to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic. As Hendel suggests, the mixed-method approach brings about a richer understanding that can support both theoretical frameworks and practical applications (Hendl, 2016).

The advantage of this mixed-method approach lies in its ability to leverage the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative research focuses on analyzing large datasets and examining broader trends or patterns, while qualitative research delves into a detailed exploration of individual phenomena, cases, and experiences (Sedláková, 2014). This combination allows for a deeper exploration of the research

questions from multiple perspectives, providing a more holistic view of the phenomenon under study.

Before semi-structured interviews with application users were conducted, a questionnaire survey was used as a preliminary measure. This methodological approach provided the groundwork for the later stages of the examination. It was also essential in adjusting the identification and investigation of particular phenomena that were the focus of the ensuing qualitative analysis of the interviews. The upcoming chapters will present a thorough explanation of the research questions along with a detailed analysis of the methodological complexities present in the two survey approaches.

3.2. Research questions

The primary research question for this study revolves around exploring the factors that lead individuals to opt for BeReal as their preferred social media platform for sharing genuine life moments:

What factors influence individuals to choose BeReal over other social media platforms for sharing real-life moments?

To complement this main research question and gain a more comprehensive understanding, several supplementary research questions have been formulated:

- 1. What are the primary motivations of BeReal users, and how do these motivations contribute to their overall satisfaction with the platform?**

This question explores the fundamental factors that lead people to select BeReal as their go-to social media network. It seeks for the main motivators, like the need for genuineness, deep connections, or particular characteristics that make BeReal stand out. This study hopes to learn more about these motivations and how they affect platform user satisfaction.

Users' satisfaction levels may be higher on a platform that emphasizes genuine interactions and real-life moments than on platforms that place more emphasis on curated content or superficial engagement.

2. Do people on BeReal portray themselves in a way that is true to themselves?

The concept of authenticity and self-presentation on social media, especially BeReal, is covered in this question. It investigates whether users accurately reflect their identities, passions, and life experiences on the platform. The study could examine the degree to which users present authentic facets of their lives as opposed to a curated or idealized representation of themselves. Comprehending this element is essential in evaluating the genuineness of interactions and content on BeReal, in addition to the user experience in its entirety. It also links to more broad discussions regarding online personas, digital identities, and how authenticity is viewed in virtual environments.

These supplementary research questions are designed to delve deeper into the underlying motivations, behaviors, and perceptions of BeReal users, shedding light on the unique aspects of authenticity and self-presentation within the digital realm. By addressing these questions, this study aims to unravel the complexities of user engagement, satisfaction, and authenticity on BeReal compared to other social media platforms.

3.3. The formulation of the hypothesis

The hypotheses in this study represent theoretical expectations about the behavior of the phenomenon being investigated, grounded in existing knowledge derived from theory or the researcher's own experience (Sedláková, 2014).

These hypotheses were developed based on insights gained from prior studies, particularly those focusing on social media and user behavior. A significant body of research has explored the motivations behind social media usage, providing valuable insights into user preferences and behaviors.

Here is an expanded overview of the hypotheses for the quantitative research conducted in this study:

H1. Entertainment Value Hypothesis: BeReal is primarily used for entertainment purposes.

H2. Authenticity Appeal Hypothesis: BeReal users engage with the platform due to the authenticity of its content.

H3. Privacy factor Hypothesis: BeReal is a private social media platform

H4. Social Network Formation Hypothesis: BeReal serves as a social network for creating a close circle of followers.

H5. Enhanced Interaction Hypothesis: Users on BeReal interact more with each other compared to other social networks.

The analysis and interpretation of research findings in relation to BeReal's user motivations, engagement patterns, and the platform's overall dynamics are guided by these hypotheses, which act as foundational frameworks. They offer a methodical way to comprehend the fundamental elements affecting user behavior on BeReal and facilitate the discovery of important details about the functioning and interactions of the platform.

In order to make sure that the research closely follows these theories, an interview guide was created. The guide was created to reflect the main ideas and expectations mentioned in the hypotheses, enabling participants to respond appropriately to questions that are specifically directed at them. The study sought to collect data that directly addressed the hypotheses by organizing the interview guide in this way, thereby improving the validity and reliability of the research findings.

3.4. Quantitative research

One of the methods used in this study to collect data was a questionnaire survey.

A number of considerations led to the choice to use a questionnaire survey as the main means of gathering data. First of all, the uniform collection of data made possible by a questionnaire guarantees that participants' answers will be consistent. Second, it makes it easier to collect important sociodemographic data, like gender, age, and nationality, which is necessary for creating user profiles for BeReal users. Furthermore, the questionnaire functions as a means of pre-selecting participants for follow-up interviews, therefore enhancing the effectiveness of the comprehensive data gathering procedure.

Gathering basic sociodemographic information from BeReal users is the main goal of the questionnaire survey. Their demographics, usage habits, and platform preferences are all included in this data. The survey specifically seeks to determine the age range, cultural

diversity, and gender distribution of BeReal users. In addition, the survey is used to determine how familiar participants are in BeReal's features and platform.

One benefit of using a questionnaire is that it can provide fairly straightforward access to a lot of information from a plenty of individuals in a brief period of time for a relatively low cost (Disman, 2021). This technique makes it possible to quickly and efficiently collect data, which makes it a time-efficient way to get information from a broad spectrum of participants. Moreover, questionnaires can be spread electronically, which eliminates the need for physical assets and increases accessibility and reach to participants in various geographic locations.

The questionnaire doesn't directly examine objective reality; instead, it focuses on individuals' perceptions of social reality, their thoughts about it, their attitudes towards it, and their reflections on their own behavior (Sedláková, 2014).

The author aimed to make the questionnaire clear and straightforward. The first question, asking if the respondent uses BeReal, determined whether they would continue with the questionnaire or not. Since the questionnaire was followed by qualitative research, it did not include questions specifically about using BeReal itself. Since the entire study revolves around social media and the behavioral patterns exhibited by users on these platforms, the primary medium of dissemination was through a social network, particularly Instagram. While the author had originally planned to distribute the questionnaire through BeReal, this platform regrettably does not have the ability to share links, which further reduces the complexity of the app. The author selected to use a Google Forms template to create the questionnaire. Its attractive design and straightforward graphics, along with its simple sharing and viewing features, were the main factors in this selection. When no new responses were submitted to the questionnaire, the data gathering phase came to an end. After the data collection was stopped, the author carried out the following analysis. The outcomes obtained from this procedure were considered sufficient for the assessment of data.

3.4.1. Sample selection

The author used an approach to distribute the questionnaire more easily by employing well-known social media sites like Facebook and Instagram. First, the author used their own

personal Instagram account as a direct line of communication with possible responders. Facebook groups were then used to reach a wider demographic and interact with a variety of people. Understanding the value of networking, the author also asked their friends to help by spreading the questionnaire among their own networks of BeReal users. By increasing the number and variety of respondents, this cooperative effort aimed to improve the level of accuracy in the data collection process. BeReal has the potential to be a useful sharing platform, but its restrictions on sharing internet links made it impossible to use this platform for distributing questionnaires.

According to the participant criteria, using the BeReal application actively was required before answering the questionnaire. This criterion made sure that participants were knowledgeable about the features of the platform and could offer useful input on their experiences using it.

A total of 51 individuals responded to the questionnaire. A total of 4 respondents from the questionnaire pool were chosen for semi-structured interviews afterward. This qualitative approach allowed for a deeper exploration of user motivations, behaviors, and perceptions regarding BeReal.

3.5. Qualitative research

There isn't a single, universal method for characterizing or carrying out qualitative research because different researchers may use quite different approaches. Qualitative research is a process of seeking understanding based on diverse methodological traditions related to specific social or human issues (Hendl 2016). It involves creating a comprehensive picture by analyzing various text types, understanding participant perspectives, and conducting research in natural settings. Qualitative research is particularly adept at exploring a few cases in detail to gain insight into what is happening within a particular segment of social reality.

In order to provide a more thorough examination of quantitative results, qualitative studies frequently come before or in addition to quantitative surveys. According to Macek, qualitative approaches are ideal for researching socio-technical or social changes, like how social media is incorporated into daily life. From a social science perspective, these

alterations usually introduce unpredictable phenomena that have received minimal scientific attention (Macek, 2012).

Although qualitative research can reveal a wide range of phenomena, its goal is not to provide a comprehensive overview but rather to gain a deeper understanding or generate new insights for additional research. For this study author chose a semi-structured interviews. Reichel's description of this technique as one of the best ways to collect data comes from the way it combines structured surveys with informal conversations (Reichel, 2009). This combination allows researchers to get a wide range of viewpoints and insights from participants, which improves the richness and depth of the data that is collected. Through the combination of open-ended interviews' flexibility and the structured questionnaires' accuracy and structure, researchers can more clearly explore a wide range of subjects, delve into complex experiences, and identify underlying themes. This comprehensive approach is a useful and adaptable tool in qualitative research methodology because it not only helps interviewers and respondents establish a more natural rapport, but it also makes it easier to explore research objectives in greater detail.

3.5.1. Sample selection

The primary objective of this study is to delve into the behavioral patterns of users within the BeReal social network. The criteria for participant selection primarily revolve around their active involvement with the BeReal platform, characterized by regular usage at least once per week. Although additional selection criteria were not explicitly outlined, the goal was to assemble a diverse sample group encompassing varying demographics.

Regarding the age range of participants, it was not strictly defined, allowing for a broad spectrum of contributors. However, the majority of respondents fall within the 20-30 age bracket, as this demographic predominantly engages with BeReal.

The process of recruiting and obtaining responses from participants spanned a duration of three months, from February to April 2024. Initial outreach efforts were facilitated through a preliminary survey, which also served to collect contact information for subsequent interview invitations. Furthermore, additional participants were identified through referrals from initial respondents contacted via the survey, broadening the diversity of the sample.

This process used to choose participants is known as "snowball sampling," which Reichel (Reichel, 2009) describes as an efficient and successful method. In order to create a "snowball" effect in recruitment, snowball sampling requires first choosing participants who fit particular criteria and then requesting them to recommend other possible participants. Snowball sampling can be regarded as somewhat representative since it enables the inclusion of a variety of perspectives and experiences within the selected network of participants, even though qualitative research usually does not require a strictly representative sample (Reichel, 2009).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a selected group of 10 respondents. The decision on the number of interviewees was guided by the concept of theoretical saturation, indicating that data collection continued until no new significant insights emerged. This approach ensured a comprehensive exploration of user experiences and behaviors within the BeReal platform.

The sample group encompasses individuals from diverse geographical locations, educational backgrounds, fields of study, and occupational sectors. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or in online calls in conducive environments, recorded for accuracy, and later transcribed verbatim for thorough analysis. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their contributions, reinforcing ethical standards and trust in the research process.

Tereza, 25 years old living in Prague, currently on study exchange in Australia, studying Strategic Communication at FSV UK and works as a social media manager. She usually engages with BeReal 2 to 3 times a week.

Kristina, 28 years old living in Prague, originally from Nebušice. She is a master student of physiotherapy at the Second Faculty of Medicine at Charles University, also works part time as a physiotherapist in hospital. In her free time she likes to climb and plays piano. Kristina has been using BeReal for nearly 2 years and interacts with it almost daily.

Anna, 25 years old, is from Vrchlava, studies and lives in Prague. She is a medicine student and also works part time in hospital. She uses BeReal for about a year and a half nearly everyday.

Magdalena, 24 years old, initially studied anthropology and art studies in Olomouc before transitioning to international relations in Prague. She currently works part-time as a bartender in a champagne bar. Magdalena has been using BeReal for approximately a year and a half, engaging with it several times a week.

Miša, 26 years old, born in Domažlice is ethnically Vietnamese, now living in Prague where she studies accountancy and works part time in accounting company. She uses BeReal for almost 2 years and engaging with it almost every day.

Petra, 27 years old, from Zlín, living in Prague almost 7 years now. She studied economics and is currently working full time in marketing agency. She usually uses BeReal once in a week.

Jiří, 26 years old, studied computer science and statistics at VŠE, now full time employed. He likes information technology, sport. Currently living in Prague, originally from Most. Jiří uses BeReal several times a week, although not on a daily basis.

Šimon, 26 years old, originally from Most, moved to Prague to study physics. He is a PhD. student in optoelectronics, works in tech company. Šimon uses BeReal everyday.

Viki, 21 years old, from Vandsdorf and now living in Prague, currently working in advertising agency as a customer care specialist. She plays basketball in free time. Uses BeReal every day for nearly 2 years.

Simona, 25 years old, from Jičín, but now lives in Prague, studies architecture at ČVUT while working part time in a project office. Simona has been BeReal for almost 2 years, engaging with it almost every day.

3.6. Self-reflection and research limitation

Self-reflection and acknowledging research limitations play pivotal roles in the successful execution of any study. In the context of this research, these aspects have been carefully considered to ensure transparency, validity, and a nuanced understanding of the findings (Quan-Haase, Sloan 2022).

The motivation for conducting this study comes from the researcher's own experience using BeReal. An enhanced understanding of the platform's features, dynamics, and user

interactions is provided by this first-hand experience. Additionally, it makes it possible for the researcher to pose meaningful questions that connect to the real-world experiences of BeReal users. It's important to understand, though, that this insider perspective might also bring biases or preconceived conceptions, which were actively tracked and dealt with during the research process.

A number of limitations were found throughout the study, despite great efforts to preserve methodological rigor and validity. A significant drawback concerns the sample size, which, although sufficient to achieve the study's goals, might limit how broadly the results can be applied. The emphasis on a particular user group or demographic highlights the need for caution when extrapolating the findings to larger populations or environments. Furthermore, the scope and timing of the study placed limitations on how deeply specific aspects of BeReal usage and user motivations could be explored. This restriction raises the possibility that BeReal's user dynamics contain unidentified nuances or complexity that call for further investigation.

3.7. Ethical considerations

During the course of any study, it is imperative for researchers to carefully consider the ethical dimensions involved. Each case should be approached with a focus on ethical principles rather than just adhering to rules. This includes taking into account factors such as consent, anonymity, and avoiding undue harm to participants (Quan-Haase, Sloan 2022). In the context of this research, the findings are presented in relation to participants' perspectives on research involving social media, particularly focusing on core ethical principles.

One key aspect of ethical consideration is obtaining informed consent from participants. Prior to their involvement in the study, all participants were thoroughly introduced to the research topic and the nature of the study itself. This ensured that they had a clear understanding of what their participation would entail. Furthermore, each participant provided explicit consent for their interviews to be recorded, demonstrating a commitment to transparency and respect for their autonomy. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, only their first names and demographic information were used during the

analysis and reporting of findings. This approach was designed to safeguard their identities and ensure that they could not be specifically identified based on the information provided.

4. Analysis of finding and interpretation

4.1. Method on analysis

Even though there are various approaches to organizing and evaluating data, for this research the author chooses to use thematic analysis method, considering it is the most suitable method for this purpose.

The data gathered during this research are used to identify patterns and repeating themes throughout the collected data. Braun and Clarke are describing it as *a technique for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (or themes) in data* (Braun, Clarke 2006).

Thematic analysis stands out for its inherent flexibility, a quality that sets it apart from other data analysis methods like interpretative phenomenological analysis or grounded theory. Unlike these approaches, which are deeply rooted in specific theoretical frameworks, thematic analysis offers researchers a remarkable degree of freedom. This method allows for the exploration of participants' experiences, interpretations, and realities, culminating in the development of a detailed, comprehensive, and nuanced report of the data collected (Braun, Clarke 2006).

According to Braun and Clarke, a theme represents a certain level of an answer to the research question. Understanding these themes allows the identification and understanding of the connections between the main research topics, resulting in an in-depth overview of the study. What's crucial is that the final outcome includes a summary—though not overly detailed—of what tasks were undertaken and the rationale behind them (Braun, Clarke 2006).

Both authors provide an outline guide, which contains six phases:

- Familiarizing yourself with your data
- Generating initial codes
- Searching for themes
- Reviewing themes
- Defining and naming themes

- Producing the report (Braun, Clarke 2006)

Finding new patterns and potentially interesting themes in the data is the first step in thematic analysis process. In order to gain deeper insights, the researcher proceeds with a methodical process of data analysis and interpretation as these patterns and themes emerge. This entails going through every segment of the dataset—including the ones that have already been coded—and compiling the results into an extensive report. The final output of thematic analysis clarifies the main conclusions drawn from the data by providing a thorough explanation of the content, significance, and meaning of the themes that were found.

For the analysis, the author chose software Atlas.ti, web version of the qualitative tool. This software was chosen because its frankly easy interface. It was useful mainly in coding data. Following the transcription of interviews, the author meticulously examined the data, marking significant segments with appropriate codes. Each interview was subjected to multiple coding rounds to ensure comprehensive analysis. Utilizing software, categorization of these codes into themes corresponding to the research inquiries followed. Ultimately, the author synthesized the final report by establishing connections within these themes, all while adhering to the research objectives and questions.

4.2. Definition of themes

Each individual interview put a different value on why they use BeReal platform are form of sharing their experiences. Throught the interviews certain themes started to consistently repeat in greater or lesser extent. In each individual interview, participants expressed different reasons for using the BeReal platform as a means of sharing their experiences. As these interviews progressed, certain themes consistently emerged, in greater or lesser extent. The themes that appeared frequently were:

- Friends
- Close circle
- Genuine connections
- Absence of filter
- Privacy
- Authenticity

- Unique features

4.2.1. Using BeReal because of friends

The significance of friends and family in users' decisions to install and use the BeReal platform emerged as a recurring theme in the interviews. A crucial aspect that propelled users' initial engagement with BeReal was the influence exerted by their social circles and close relationships. Word-of-mouth emerged as the predominant method through which participants became acquainted with BeReal. Tereza, during the interview, reflected on her experience, stating:

“I relied on word of mouth. My first encounter with BeReal was through various sources. It was primarily my mother-in-law who recommended BeReal to me. Additionally, my colleagues at work were avid users and talked about it frequently, sharing their BeReal moments. Furthermore, my friends were also using BeReal, which further encouraged me to join the platform.”

Participants were introduced to BeReal by friends, family members, or acquaintances who encouraged them to join by sharing their positive experiences. This organic and personal form of recommendation sparked the interest and curiosity of potential users. Moreover, individuals were driven to start using BeReal due to their desire to stay connected within their social circles. The allure of staying connected and the fear of missing out were fueled by observing their friends, family, or peers actively using the platform.

The fear of missing out, especially during the initial stages following the app's launch, was a significant motivator for users. One expressed, “...if you don't take a picture, if you don't have BeReal, it's like you're missing out on life or something.” (Jiří) This fear of being left out further heightened users' curiosity and drove them to join BeReal to actively participate in the shared experiences within their social circles.

4.2.2. BeReal is a close-circle platform

Another reason that emerged from the interviews for participants' frequent use of BeReal was their desire to maintain close connections and stay updated within their social circles, building upon the previous theme of why participants installed the application primarily due to their friends and family members. But the reason they kept using them was a deeper need to maintain close relationships with their inner circle of friends and acquaintances.

The participants expressed a strong inclination towards using BeReal to nurture meaningful relationships with their closest friends and family members. Unlike other social media platforms where users may follow celebrities or brands, BeReal was predominantly used as a platform to engage with individuals they personally knew and cared about.

Interestingly, the majority of participants in the study emphasized that their BeReal usage was exclusive to interactions with people they had real-life connections with. Some only use the application with just a handful of people, just like Jiří: *“I have it installed, I have three people there, it's my mom, brother and girlfriend.”*

They valued the platform as a means to stay updated on the lives of their close friends and share personal moments. Contrary to platforms where celebrity culture and brand endorsements dominate, BeReal stood out as a platform primarily centred around personal connections. Only one of participants (Míša) mentioned following celebrities or famous brands on the platform. The focus remained on connecting with individuals within their immediate social circle.

Beyond maintaining existing relationships, BeReal was also utilized as a means to stay in touch with friends and family members who might the users do not see that often. *“I have a lot of people there who I just meet once in a while, like once in a year or so. And I think it's really great. ... I think it comes from the fact that it, like, strengthens those interrelationships.”* (Kristina). BeReal serves as a platform for keeping touch with a long distance relationships, as Kristi said: *“I am using BeReal because of the fact that I have two friends overseas, Gábi and Klára. And I thought, hey, it's just a super thing because we see each other only few times a year maybe and we write to each other about what's new with us and so on. And it's such a super update on your friends, that you basically know what they are doing and so during the day.”*

The platform facilitated real-time updates and shared experiences, bridging the gap and fostering a sense of connection despite physical distances.

4.2.3. BeReal builds genuine connections online and offline

BeReal's ability to foster genuine connections in the virtual world is a significant advantage of the platform. Users appreciate having a space where they can share authentic moments from their lives, and these interactions often translate into meaningful connections beyond the digital realm. The platform's emphasis on real-time sharing and unfiltered content plays a crucial role in building trust and intimacy among its users.

Viki's experience highlights how BeReal serves as a topic of conversation among friends. They often discuss reactions to posts, sharing laughter and engaging in conversations sparked by BeReal content. This not only strengthens their bond but also adds a layer of enjoyment to their interactions.

For Kristi, BeReal serves as a tool for connection in real life, especially related to her hobby of boulder climbing: *“I know that other friends who have BeReal, they go climbing and they comment: You are now on the wall, I'll go there maybe I don't know, in an hour, so it's kind of like a meeting point.”*

The platform's daily notifications serve as a prompt for users to connect and engage with each other, adding an element of excitement and fun to their interactions. Simona's experience with this kind of engagement in real world as she describes: *“Even when we're somewhere at a party, on that camp, the BeReal comes, and everyone pulls out their phones, and it's so much fun, when suddenly everyone starts screaming BEREAL BEREAL, and we just start overlapping, so that everyone is on every BeReal and we need to take the photo in those two minutes, and it's quite fun, you know.”*

Tereza together with Kristina say basically the same thing - that for them with BeReal they started to share content on social media more regularly. Even though they have other social media, their contribution on them was very little. With BeReal, they started to share their everyday life more often.

I think I am more active, I have never posted like stories on Instagram or so. I was just not interested. I am overall more active and interested. An I think I am more comfortable to share on BeReal.

4.2.4. BeReal without filter

Absence in filters means not only the fact that a users cannot enhance or add anything to photo they have taken before posting it online on BeReal, but also the fact that the user have a very limited time to choose what to post, so they have a very limited sources to actually enhance the photo make a set up the environment.

Tereza is comparing this approach to another famous social platform, Instagram. She mentions that for her on Instagram the content is like a showcase of the best moment that the person experienced. On the other hand, BeReal is not like that, BeReal is trying to capture everyday life to keep you from comparing.

For some, it means the intimacy of sharing a content that they would not share anywhere else than BeReal. For Anna, it can be posting an ugly face photo with a social bubble on BeReal knowing, that the person will not get any shame or judgement from another person. *“They post and ugly face photo of themself there, which I think they would not post anywhere else than BeReal. ... Including me. I do it too. I guess you can do it only on BeReal.”*

Viki describes it as capturing something unusual that a person would not normally think to take a photo of and post. From her experience, it could an unexpected moment of her friend being caught in a funny situation, where her shower head broke while taking a shower.

4.2.5. BeReal is a private social network

BeReal stands out as a private social media platform, providing users with a space to share moments with a select audience. Unlike other social media platforms that prioritize public visibility, BeReal focuses on privacy. Users have the option to customize their privacy settings. This allows individuals to share personal experiences, thoughts, and emotions without the pressure of public eyes.

Even though it is possible to share content on BeReal publicly, so basically anyone can view it, none of the respondents share their content like that. In addition to the fact, that BeReal is an app mostly to share your experience with your close ones, the vast majority of respondents mentioned, that they trust BeReal or do not find a reason why not to trust it. Tereza even compare it with social network TikTok: “I don't want to download TikTok and I don't want to be on it ..., but also because it's just a dangerous application and I don't want to have it in my cell phone. While BeReal is a French application, so I trust that these security risks should be limited, or not that major.”

The private nature of BeReal fosters a sense of trust and closeness among users. People feel more comfortable sharing vulnerable moments. This privacy feature also attracts users who value keeping their online presence limited to a smaller, trusted circle.

4.2.6. BeReal is an authentic social network

BeReal as a social media platform launched with a vision of fostering authenticity and genuine connections. At the core of BeReal's authenticity lies its design and features. Unlike traditional social media platforms that prioritize curated and idealized content, BeReal encourages users to share unfiltered, real-life moments. BeReal's spontaneous photo prompts, which require users to capture moments in real-time, contribute to the platform's raw and genuine appeal. BeReal's emphasis on authenticity extends to the content shared by its users.

Jiří: I would say that it (BeReal) supports the authenticity of most of the applications that are now, or that we know. Precisely because of the notification and that people want to see what others are doing at that given moment.

Some respondents said, that even though they would describe BeReal as the most authentic compared to other social media, it is still not fully authentic as the perception of authenticity is discussed through the interviews in broader scale.

Petra: I think that if you compare it to other social media, for example Instagram, I think it's a little more authentic. But when you have other photos, the additional ones, you can prepare for it in some way. And it can be, for example, exaggerated more. Authenticity is probably

higher on BeReal than on other social networks, but it's probably not 100 percent authentic either.

For Tereza and Kristina, BeReal has become a platform where they feel comfortable and encouraged to share moments from their everyday lives more frequently. Both express that since joining BeReal, they have become more active in sharing content regularly compared to their engagement on other social media platforms. While they may have accounts on various social media platforms, their level of contribution was minimal until they discovered BeReal.

4.2.7. BeReal have specific feature like no other social network

BeReal stands out among social networks due to its unique and distinctive features, which serve as a major draw for users.

One of the standout features of BeReal is its real-time sharing capabilities. This feature allows users to share updates and moments instantly as they happen, fostering a dynamic and immediate connection with their friends. The spontaneity and freshness of real-time sharing make BeReal a preferred platform for those who value timely and relevant content.

Another noteworthy feature of BeReal is its ability to capture photos using both the front and back cameras simultaneously. This unique function provides users with content captured from two different perspectives, resulting in more relatable and authentic posts. From technical perspective, there is no other social media app that would provide this kind of feature.

Additionally, BeReal offers a gallery of posts that serves as a digital diary of memories for users. This feature allows individuals to revisit past moments and reflect on their experiences. Kristina expresses her appreciation for this feature, stating, "I really like this map of memories. It gives me a gallery, a check of what I actually did. I'm glad it's not just the same photo every time."

BeReal also introduces a unique way of reacting through RealMojis. Instead of using standard emojis, RealMojis enable users to react with their own facial expressions. Míša shares her positive experience with RealMojis, saying, "I really like those emojis, the

RealMojis. It's really cool that you can take a photo of yourself and send that kind of reaction."

These distinctive features, including real-time sharing, dual-camera capture, the gallery of posts, and RealMojis, contribute to BeReal's appeal and set it apart from other social media platforms. Users find these features intriguing and engaging, making BeReal a part of their daily social media experience.

4.3. Validity of hypothesis

At the beginning of this research the author conducted five hypothesis about how and why would users use BeReal. Not all of these hypothesis are true. The author would like to pin point the fact, that the research result are not valid for all users of BeReal, but only for a fraction that have been studied in this research.

Hypothesis 1: Entertainment Value Hypothesis: BeReal is primarily used for entertainment purposes.

The hypothesis posited that BeReal is primarily used for entertainment purposes. However, insights from the interviews revealed that while users do find some content on BeReal amusing or entertaining, the primary reason for using the platform is to stay connected with peers and observe what others are doing. This indicates that the entertainment value is not the central driver of BeReal usage.

Hypothesis 2: Authenticity Appeal Hypothesis: BeReal users engage with the platform due to the authenticity of its content.

This hypothesis suggests that BeReal users engage with the platform due to the authenticity of its content. The interviews substantiated this hypothesis, with most respondents considering BeReal as one of the most authentic social media platforms available. The absence of aesthetic expectations for content on BeReal adds to its appeal, as users feel more comfortable expressing themselves genuinely.

Hypothesis 3: Privacy factor Hypothesis: BeReal is a private social media platform

The hypothesis that BeReal is a private social media platform was confirmed. While BeReal does offer ways for accounts to be open to everyone, the majority of respondents

opted to keep their profiles private, allowing only selected individuals access. This underscores the platform's emphasis on privacy and selective sharing.

Hypothesis 4: Social Network Formation Hypothesis: BeReal serves as a social network for creating a close circle of followers.

This hypothesis posits that BeReal serves as a social network for creating a close circle of followers. The research findings validated this hypothesis, indicating that BeReal is primarily used by individuals to stay in touch with friends and family members rather than amassing a large number of followers. The platform's focus on fostering meaningful connections within existing social circles was evident among the respondents.

Hypothesis 5: Enhanced Interaction Hypothesis: Users on BeReal interact more with each other compared to other social networks.

Contrary to the expectation that users interact more on other social networks, the hypothesis suggests that BeReal users interact more with each other. This hypothesis was supported by the research findings, as BeReal users, who typically have close friends as followers, find it easier to engage and interact with their inner circle compared to other social media platforms where interactions are often passive, in the form of scrolling to pass free time.

4.4. Answering the research questions

1. What are the primary motivations of BeReal users, and how do these motivations contribute to their overall satisfaction with the platform?

BeReal users have a variety of main reasons for using the platform, but they tend to revolve around its emphasis on real-time sharing, unfiltered content, and the opportunity to meaningfully connect with friends and family. BeReal is a popular platform among users who are driven to use it in order to maintain social connections, share intimate moments, and get immediate feedback from their peers. The authenticity of the platform and the chance to emphasize real experiences have a big impact on how satisfied users are overall. Users enjoy and engage with BeReal more when they can share real-life moments without the pressure of perfection or aesthetics found on other platforms.

2. Do people on BeReal portray themselves in a way that is true to themselves?

The question of authenticity on BeReal is complex and subjective. While some users may present themselves authentically, others may curate their posts to appear more interesting. The absence of aesthetic expectations on BeReal allows for a more relaxed and authentic portrayal of life's moments, yet users may still sometimes adjust their surroundings to appear in a more polished way. Overall, authenticity on BeReal varies among users and is influenced by individual motivations, but compared to other social media platform, on BeReal users portray themselves in the most authentic form.

What factors influence individuals to choose BeReal over other social media platforms for sharing real-life moments?

Factors that influence individuals to choose BeReal over other social media platforms for sharing real-life moments include the platform's unique features, such as real-time sharing, unfiltered content, and the ability to connect with close friends and family. BeReal's emphasis on authenticity, privacy, and real-life connections distinguishes it from other platforms and appeals to users seeking a more genuine and meaningful social media experience. Its simplicity—the absence of any other unsettling elements—contributes to its appeal. Additionally, word-of-mouth recommendations and peer influence play a role in choosing BeReal as another social media, as individuals are often introduced to the platform by friends, family, or acquaintances who value its unique features and benefits.

Discussion

This study is rooted in the Uses and Gratifications theory, which posits that media choices are rational and driven by specific goals and satisfaction. However, it's important to note that users may not always consciously recognize their motivations or the role of media in fulfilling their needs, as suggested by the limitations of this theory.

The research aimed to delve into the motivations behind why people choose to use BeReal over other social media platforms. One of the key findings was the significant influence of word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and close connections. This organic introduction to BeReal often led to users maintaining a selective circle of close contacts on the platform, contributing to the formation of genuine and meaningful connections both online and offline. Unlike some other social media platforms that are often used passively,

BeReal was seen as a space for active engagement and authentic sharing of real-life moments.

The real-time connection aspect of BeReal emerged as a prominent factor driving user preference. The platform's emphasis on unfiltered content resonated with users who valued sharing their experiences without any alterations or embellishments. Additionally, BeReal's privacy settings, which allow users to control who sees their content, contributed to a sense of security and authenticity, encouraging users to share more genuine and personal content.

Furthermore, specific features such as the front and back camera capture, the gallery of memories, and RealMojis were highlighted as reasons why BeReal stood out as an attractive option among social media platforms. These features not only enhance the user experience but also contribute to the platform's appeal in fostering genuine connections and meaningful interactions.

Summary

The master's thesis examines, within the context of the Uses and Gratification theory, the significant influence that the social media platform BeReal has on modern communication interactions. The study is based on the knowledge that media consumers make rational decisions about what to consume in order to fulfill particular needs and feel satisfied. It explores the reasons why people choose BeReal over other social media sites and looks at the special features and capabilities that set BeReal apart in the online world. BeReal's real-time sharing features, which enable users to share moments as they happen and post updates instantly, are one of the main topics covered in the research. This feature increases user satisfaction and engagement by bringing spontaneity and freshness to interactions. Users also find the platform's emphasis on creating authentic content appealing because it allows them to express who they really are without feeling constrained by the aesthetic standards that are frequently present on other social media platforms. BeReal's personalized interactions made possible by RealMojis—which let users respond and interact with each other with their own facial expressions—are another notable feature of the platform. This unusual mode of communication improves the user experience and strengthens the bonds between users. The study also emphasizes the importance of word-of-mouth recommendations in encouraging the use of BeReal, since users are swayed by positive

experiences that friends and family members share. The study also discusses the broader effects of digital media on perceptions of privacy, social interactions, and the development of sincere connections. It looks at how BeReal provides a means of keeping in touch with a select group of people and fostering close relationships, which helps to foster real and significant connections both online and offline. The study also discusses how digital communication norms and practices are changing, which throws light on how social interactions are evolving in the digital age.

The study offers important insights into the changing nature of digital communication and the influence of social media platforms like BeReal on modern communication patterns through thematic analysis of user experiences and motivations. It provides a thorough examination of the driving forces, encounters, and effects of BeReal on users' lives, advancing our knowledge of the dynamics of digital communication in today's world. To sum up, despite the fact that digital media affects every aspect of our lives these days, I'd like to end this thesis with a quotation from one of the respondents:

It's better to be real than to be on BeReal. - Jiří

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Master's Thesis Summary

SCHVÁLENO

25.3.23

[Signature]

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism FSV UK Master Thesis Statement									
THIS SECTION IS FILLED OUT BY THE STUDENT:									
Surname and name of the graduate student: Tereza Krátká	Stamp of the mailroom: <table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Univerzita Karlova Fakulta sociálních věd</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Došlo dne:</td> <td>15 -03- 2023 -1-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Číslo:</td> <td>109 Příloh:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Přidělena:</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Univerzita Karlova Fakulta sociálních věd		Došlo dne:	15 -03- 2023 -1-	Číslo:	109 Příloh:	Přidělena:	
Univerzita Karlova Fakulta sociálních věd									
Došlo dne:		15 -03- 2023 -1-							
Číslo:		109 Příloh:							
Přidělena:									
The matriculation year of the graduate student: 2021									
Faculty e-mail of the graduate student: 90072532@fsv.cuni.cz									
Study programme/form of study: Media studies/full-time									
Thesis title in Czech: Zkoumání popularity a výhod BeReal: Chování a motivace uživatelů									
Thesis title in English: Exploring the Popularity and Benefits of BeReal: User Behavior and Motivations									
Expected completion date (semester, academic year - model: WS 2022/2023) (The thesis may be defended no earlier than six months after the thesis is approved): WS 2023/2024									
Characteristics of the topic and its development so far (max. 1800 characters): BeReal is a popular social media platform that allows users to share real-life moments with friends and family. This thesis aims to explore the reasons behind the platform's popularity, as well as the ways in which users interact with it and the benefits they derive from using it. Through in-depth interviews, this study will examine the behaviors, motivations, and attitudes of BeReal users. The research will focus on several key questions, such as: why do people choose BeReal over other social media platforms? How do they use the platform, and what kind of content do they share? What benefits do they derive from using BeReal, both in terms of individual well-being and social connections. The study will also examine the potential downsides of using BeReal, such as privacy concerns and the risk of social comparison. By analyzing user feedback and engagement patterns, the research aims to identify opportunities for improving the platform's features and addressing user concerns. Overall, this thesis will contribute to a better understanding of the role that social media plays in people's lives, and the ways in which platforms like BeReal can be used to promote social connections, well-being, and authentic self-expression.									
Assumed aim of the thesis, or formulation of the problem, research question, or hypothesis (max. 1800 characters): BeReal is a popular social media platform that is known for promoting authenticity and real-life moments. However, despite its popularity, there is a lack of research on why people use the platform, how they interact with it, and what benefits they derive from it. Additionally, there are concerns about privacy and social comparison on the platform. Therefore, the problem that this thesis aims to address is: What are the motivations and behaviors of BeReal users, and what are the benefits and downsides of using the platform? Research question: In order to address the problem formulation, the following research question will guide the study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do BeReal users behave and interact on the platform, and what motivates their use of the platform? • What are the benefits and downsides of using BeReal, both in terms of individual well-being and social connections? 									

- How can the platform be improved to address user concerns about privacy and social comparison, and promote more positive user experiences?

These research questions will be explored through in-depth interviews with BeReal users. The study will contribute to a better understanding of the role that social media plays in people's lives, and the ways in which platforms like BeReal can be used to promote social connections, well-being, and authentic self-expression.

The expected structure of the thesis (division into individual chapters and subchapters with a brief description of their content):

1. Introduction
 1. Background and context of the study
 2. Research questions and objectives
 3. Significance and contribution of the study
2. Literature Review
 1. Overview of social media and its impact on society
 2. Comparison of different social media platforms
 3. Key features and benefits of BeReal
 4. Theoretical framework for understanding BeReal's popularity and user behavior
3. Methodology
 1. Research design and approach
 2. Sampling and data collection procedures
 3. Data analysis methods
4. Results
 1. Overview of the sample and demographics
 2. User behaviors and motivations
 3. Content analysis of BeReal posts
 4. User perceptions of benefits and downsides
5. Conclusion
 1. Summary of key findings
 2. Implications for social media research and practice
 3. Limitations and future research directions
6. References

Definition of the supporting material (e.g. title of the periodical and period analyzed):

Analyzed period: The study will focus on the period from January 2022 to December 2023. This timeframe was chosen because it allows for an analysis of BeReal's popularity and usage patterns over the course of two years.

Sample of interviews: The study will include five interviewees between the ages of 20 and 40 years old. Participants will have a minimum high school education and will be students or working people. The sample will include both men and women from diverse cultural backgrounds, including internationals. The participants will be recruited through a combination of methods, including social media, personal networks, and advertisements.

Interview guide: The interview guide will be developed based on a thorough literature review and will aim to explore a range of topics related to BeReal usage and experiences. Possible areas of focus may include user motivations for using the platform, the impact of BeReal on social connections, and perceptions of the platform's authenticity.

Methods (techniques) of material processing:

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews will be analyzed using qualitative methods, such as thematic analysis. This will involve identifying key themes and patterns in the data, and exploring how these relate to the research questions and objectives. The analysis will also consider any variations or differences in experiences and perspectives based on participant demographics, such as gender or cultural background.

Basic literature (at least 5 most important titles on the topic and its method; for all titles a brief annotation of 2-5 lines is required):

1. Rohlinger, D. A. (2018). *New media and society*. New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18574/9781479859566>
A sociological method for analyzing the social effects of new media. A sociological perspective is offered in the book *New Media and Society* to help readers comprehend how new media affects our interactions, our experiences, and our institutions.
2. Trültzsch-Wijnen, Christine W. (2020). *Media literacy and the effect of socialization*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-56360-8>
The book examines how media literacy is socially and personally influenced, focusing on the key issue of how to analyze and assess people's media use. The book argues the case that media literacy is necessary for people to comprehend and engage with media messages critically, and that socializing is important in forming media literacy abilities.
3. Couldry, N. (2012). *Media, society, world: social theory and digital media practice*. Polity.
The implications of social theory for comprehending media are the main topic of the book. It's critical to comprehend the implications of how the media is evolving as a result of the expansion of platforms, content, and producers in the digital media era.
4. Hendl, J. (2008). *Kvalitativní výzkum: základní teorie, metody a aplikace* (Druhé, aktualizované vydání). Portál.
The book *Qualitative Research* is already a standard textbook for qualitative methods research. It introduces the primary research designs that are applied in the field and displays the sources of qualitative research methodologies.
5. Kaya, M., & Alhaji, R. (2019). *Influence and Behavior Analysis in Social Networks and Social Media*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02592-2>
In the larger context of social network applications and social media, this timely book focuses on influence and behavior analysis.

Other articles:

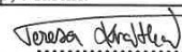
6. Huseyin Bicen, Nadire Cavus, Social network sites usage habits of undergraduate students: case study of Facebook, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Volume 28, 2011, Pages 943-947, ISSN 1877-0428, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.11.174>.
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Master's theses and dissertations on the topic

1. FARRIER, Ellie. The Experience of New Social Media. Prague, 2019. Diploma thesis. Charles University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Historical Sociology. Thesis supervisor Dudová, Radka.
2. MAUDR, Zuzana. The influence of social media on humans. Prague, 2022. Bachelor thesis. Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Media Studies. Thesis supervisor Soukup, Martin.
3. WOJNAROVÁ, Daniela. The Intergenerational Differences between Users in the Field of Social Networks. Prague, 2021. Bachelor thesis. Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Media Studies. Thesis supervisor Wolák, Radim.
4. PAUZOVÁ, Tereza. Interconnection of online and offline social spaces: the impact of social networks on users. Prague, 2023. Diploma thesis. Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Media Studies. Thesis supervisor Soukup, Martin.

Date / Signature of the graduate student:

13.03.2023


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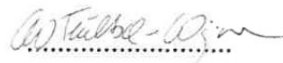
THIS SECTION IS FILLED OUT BY THE TEACHER:

Recommendations on the topic, structure, and technique of the material: The topic and structure of the planned thesis has been discussed with the student and recommendations have been included in this application

Possible recommendation of other titles of literature assigned to the topic: Also the recommended literature (as starting point for further research) has been included in this application.

I confirm that I have consulted the above-mentioned thesis with its author and that the topic corresponds to my field of specialization and the area of professional work that I am doing at FSV UK.

I agree to be the supervisor of this work.


.....

Surname and name of the teacher

Christine Trültzsch-Wijnen

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THESES ARE APPROVED BY THE HEAD OF THE RELEVANT STUDY PROGRAMME.

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Appendix no. 1: Interview guide

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How often do you use BeReal?

Why did you choose BeReal over other social media platforms?

What specific needs or desires does BeReal fulfill for you?

Can you describe the process of deciding what content to share on BeReal?

Are there specific types of moments or experiences you prefer to share?

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How do you like the recent updates of the app?
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Appendix no. 2: Interview with Tereza (sample)

T1: First I'll ask you about the BeReal app. If you can remember, how did you learn about BeReal? Or how did you find out about it?

T2: I used the word of mouth. I think that the first time I learned about BeReal was from a combination of sources. It was definitely my mother in law who recommended me BeReal. They were my colleagues at work, who talked about it a lot, and at the same time, they took pictures of BeReal, and last but not least, they were my friends, and, based on that, I also started using BeReal.

T1: How often do you use BeReal right now?

T2: In the moment I do not use BeReal that often, definitely not everyday, even though I would like to start posting everyday again. But I think I use it like once in 2 or 3 days, how it turns out.

T1: Why BeReal? Why do you use it?

T2: There are several reasons. First, it is because it is some kind of a trend I wanted to try. Second, because I like the aesthetics of BeReal, that it's something new in that it captures the front and back of the camera. Which I think is really great, that no other application can do it, or, I don't know if any other application could do it. The third reason is that, I share the information or the photos only with my closest ones. I only have a few of my, like, closest friends there, friends that I know. For example, I am willing to share my privacy with them. The fourth reason is the safety of the application, because, for example I don't want to download TikTok and I don't want to be on it for health reasons, because of mental health, but also because it's just a dangerous application and I don't want to have it in my cell phone. While BeReal is a French application, so I trust that these security risks should be limited, or not that major.

T1: Are there any needs or desires or motivation that BeReal fulfill as a social media?

T2: Because I want to stay trendy, of course, because I want to keep up with trends. I think that these things are changing very fast, and so I have to to keep up with the flow and to try new things. So, that's why. Secondly, like I said in the previous question, I like the aesthetics of BeReal, that I like the fact that it's being captured with a front and a back camera, which gives you a slightly different view of the backstage of some photos, or some atmosphere, or some situation, that it's just something original. And I really like the way the BeReal looks in the finale. And I think it's an interesting format. And how does it meet my other needs, I would definitely mention security and the circle of people I'm in contact with on BeReal

T1: Ok, great.

T2: Yes, and one last reason. Yes, I think it's great that you can actually see all the photos from every day. So it's a nice memory album, where you say, yes, that time I did something. So I think it's great that it's such a book for memories. I think it's great to have it in one app, where only me and no one else can see it.

T1: If you could describe the process of deciding when you post the content, what kind of content you post?

T2: Well, BeReal, or the main thought behind BeReal is supposed to be real. It's supposed to be like real. So, I think that from a certain part, or rather the minor part, I'm trying to be really real and post there a picture of what I'm doing here and now, um, so that it fulfills the rules of the application.

But at the same time, I'm trying to make sure that I like to have a BeReal, for example, on some a better, more special occasions that can take hold during the day and that I want to document through BeReal. And then, the final image I like to share with my family. I think it's a nice and interesting way and I will share it with my family and John (my partner) as well as often.

T1: Do you prefer to share specific type of moments or experiences on Bereal?

T2: Yes, definitely yes. Because you still try to follow the rule, like on all social networks, that you try to show the best of your life. Even though the app, or the other social networks, are trying to be authentic, I still need, and I say this openly, I want to make the reality better, to be it still realistic, but I usually choose a time of day when I do something interesting.

For example, I go to a volleyball game, or I go on a trip, or I go out with someone, or I go out to eat some good food. So I'm kind of choosing this situation. And also, when you asked me about the content of the photos I take, I'm trying to make sure there's no sensitive information or data about me. I took a few pictures of the kitchen in my apartment or something, but I definitely wouldn't put any sensitive information there.

I don't know, just like number of my ID. Or maybe at the beginning I had a problem, even though I was doing something for work, so I would rather hide it on my computer and I would take a picture, for example, I'm writing a diploma because I don't care if other people see it, because I don't find it as touching as when someone sees, for example, that I'm preparing some post for social media, and those people could read it, because I know that some people are such stalkers, that they really watch it and that, so I'm trying to pay a little attention to that.

T1: Yes. Thank you, Now we're going to move on to the authenticity in general, and I'd probably be interested in how you would actually define authenticity, that term.

T2: That's a very difficult, that's a very difficult and complex question, but it's probably a very difficult question. But I think it is capturing the reality just like it is without anything else. That is something real, without any addition or filters and true.

T1: What does authenticity mean to you on social media?

T2: It's a difficult question, because I feel like, even though there's a lot of talk about authenticity, and that authenticity is the most trendy thing, and people are interested in it the most, I feel like, it's absolutely in conflict with social media, because there's rarely anything authentic. But I feel like, If I had to name a specific content, it would definitely be some kind of behind the scenes, or something that happens behind the scenes, behind the scenes content, or photographing a situation that took place in some spirit. Something like that and I'd say mainly background information.

T1: What does authenticity mean on BeReal?

T2: When a person follows the rule that you take a photo at the moment in the real time. At least that's what I think, it's one of the first apps that tries to be authentic. And even with the same rules, you're forced to be authentic and take pictures of yourself, even if you look good, even if you look bad, even if you're in the bathroom, even if you're at work or in bed. So I think it's a unique format, that it at least trying to document the life as it is. I don't know if I'm answering the question correctly.

T1: Yeah, you can't answer it wrongly or correctly. It's just something about you. That's just the way it is. Do you think BeReal is more authentic compared to other social media?

T2: Compared to social media which I use, it is certainly the most authentic.

T1: OK. And in which way? Why is that?

T2: I think it is mostly in setting the rules on that platform. For example on Instagram you post just the beautiful experiences, it is like a showcase of the best moment that the person experienced. On the other hand BeReal is not like that, BeReal is trying to capture the everyday life to keep you from comparing or comparing validation or something like that. So, I think that, Instagram is a storage space. Facebook has some elements of authenticity, where you can go and write how you feel. But I think it's not a trend anymore. It was something that worked 10 years ago, maybe 15 years ago. And it's possible that it works in other countries. For example in America, because it's something that's very popular among my friends in America. But I would never go to Facebook and write there some of my deepest feelings if it wasn't for some literally essential thing that, for example, I don't know, people now pronounce it as Ukraine or same sex marriage something that I literally shouldn't have to shout out to the world I just won't put it there. And that's why I think

BeReal which is aiming to capture everyday attraction of some basic activities is the most authentic compared to the rest of the social network.

T1: How does Be Real support the expression of authenticity, or some kind of authentic experience?

T2: I think that, with the rules, and the thinking, or vision, mission, which is behind that project. That's definitely the first one. I think the brand is associated with it. The name already tells you that it should be something real, realistic. And then I guess that, um, the rules also help with that. You have two minutes to take a picture. Those, those are the rules. You have the limit that you have to take a photo in two minutes. And then, for example, some other bonus features open up. Like bonus photos. But probably, probably, like, these are the kinds of things that help it. But, like, the most important thing is for me the vision and mission and with what, with what purpose the project was even created.

T1: How do you approach the creation and sharing of the content in order to express your own authenticity or some real moments in your life?

T2: Well, generally, I have a bit of a problem with playing on things or, like, embellishing something in that regard. I don't like to pose or anything like that. I don't like it at all. It's not my thing. But when I take a photo of BeReal I usually try to take a photo of what I'm doing right now. For example, I go to school or work or something. And just to remind me, what was the question again?

T1: How do you approach the creation and sharing of the content on BeReal, so that it really reflects the authenticity or your everyday life moments?

T2: Yeah, so I definitely don't make any pause, and when the camera, like, takes a picture of me, I don't pause. I'm not trying to improve myself or anything. I'm just taking pictures of myself in a given way, mimicking the gestures, the way I am. And it seems to me that it's my expression of authenticity. I'm just taking pictures of the way I am, without the need to improve myself or position myself or anything.

T1: Is there any content on BeReal that you think is more authentic than any other content on BeReal?

T2: I'm thinking about what my other friends share on BeReal and what I share. But since I haven't encountered any paid advertising or anything that happens on other social platforms, it seems to me that there isn't any. I don't even know why people are taking pictures of how the notification comes and goes or how they notice that it was Be Real. But other than that, I don't think it would change or something like that.

T1: How do you balance the fact that you share those real, authentic moments on BeReal so that you actually keep them private?

Well, that's a good question. For example, I don't share my address there, or at least I don't know that I would have that address there, I don't think I allowed it, so that's the first thing, for example, it's pretty dangerous when someone have it there.

T1: Wait, do you mean the address as an address, or?

T2: Location. Yeah, I mean location. And secondly, I always try to do it so that it's not recognizable. Even though people who know me know that when I post something they recognize that it is at my work or in my flat. But, um, I don't take pictures of any private stuff, but from my biggest private thing or home, I'm most willing to take pictures of the kitchen or the living room. But I probably wouldn't take a picture of anything else. I wouldn't take a picture of anything else. I even had a problem at the beginning of taking photos of my face because I try to not present it on social media at all. It just comes from the point of view of security. It seems to me a little bit dangerous. But I said to myself that I would make an exception for a while. Well, and, um, As I said, I would never share any sensitive information or unpleasant situations. So I always try to be careful about that. So that it's never, I don't know, like, my address or my ID. Because I have, for example, Of course, I don't know if anyone would be able to extract, like I mean like a third party, information from it.

But for example, I have a friend who always scroll the content from top to bottom and she always laughs at what I write my diploma, or what kind of seminar essay I am writing or something like that. Which is, for example, something that I would not have thought of watching in my life, but some people are like that, so I try to pay attention to that.

T1: Do you have some kind of concerns about your privacy, during the time when you're actually sharing the content on BeReel?

T2: Yes, definitely, considering that now, or not now, but in general, the security of TikTok was discussed, so I was quite suspicious but due to the fact that it is a French application, I trust that it is subject to some kind of European norms and that it should be fine and that someone should not go and, as it were, misuse the data of third parties. Although of course I never know. So that's the thing that bugs me a lot. I'm not a fan of publicizing my face, and sometimes I'm offended by someone publicizing the location, because I feel like it's, um, of course, I don't have any strangers there, so it shouldn't be seen by anyone who doesn't know me, but I just don't know, maybe it's a coincidence, or you know, so these are probably some of my security fears.

T1: To what level do you think BeReal is affection for your privacy? Is it somehow affecting you in terms of trust towards the platform or some kind of satisfaction?

T2: I am not aware of any cause or problem. And as I said, I believe that it is based on some European standards and norms. So from this perspective, I think BeReal is relatively safe and I don't have any concerns about using it.

T1: Have you ever had a problem with anything when you were deciding what to share authentically?

T2: Yeah, definitely, yeah. Of course, at least a few times. For example, when you take a picture of something, you want to be authentic, you don't want to overdo it. Or that I would be like, yeah, well, I just have to put on a jacket here, or I just don't do it.

But when I take a picture where I look obviously like shit, pardon. So I just, so I just redo it. So I just redo it. Or, you know, when you go out with someone and they all have their eyes closed or eyes closed, you just press it like that again.

T1: How do you manage to keep some of your privacy on that platform?

T2: I definitely don't share any sensitive information or moments. A friend of mine sent me a message, that some of her friends shared a photo on BeReal, where he is lying next to some girls in bed after a very difficult night. This is the type of situation that I would never share in my life. Not on any social media, including BeReal. I'm trying to create the content so that my face is visible, but from the back camera it is relatively anonymous, so you can't really identify it. Yes, you can identify the kitchen, but you can't identify that it's this kitchen, here in this house, exactly. So, um, I'm trying to not put, literally, something extremely personal in there. And I'm trying not to put anything extremely sensitive in there.

T1: Do you think that BeReal affected your authentic social interactions on the internet?

T2: Yeah, definitely. I think I started to post more. So more of my friends know what I'm doing. Even though it's a very limited circle of friends. But, I think they have a better overview of what I do, what I'm doing, and so forth. So definitely, definitely, definitely it was more positive. Positively, and as I say, I have my own personal gallery of these memories, which is also very nice. And in the last but not least, I can share it with my family and loved ones. And there you can see the double view, which is definitely also great. So it was very influential and rather in more than a positive way.

T1: Have you ever had some positive feedback? Or some kind of interaction with others?

T2: I don't have a lot of them, but yeah, I do. From my most recent ones, I get likes, or comments, or something like that. So yeah, definitely. And now there's even this new feature, where you can add people to your photos or something like that. So that's also cool, that you can group people together.

T1: Great. Have you ever experienced any bad emotions connected to BeReal? Or any stress or something like that? When you are sharing or when you saw the content or something like that?

T2: I don't think so. When I scroll on Instagram, I often get these feelings of inferiority, because, of course, I compare myself to all these influencers and I don't know what. Which here, on BeReal, of course, I can't avoid comparing myself to them, but I don't have such a bad feeling about it, because I actually see how many times that even people I look up to or think about, in the end, they solve similar problems or look as stupid as I do.

So, it actually calms me down that it's okay. And I didn't have any negative experiences. The only thing I would point out is that I hate uploading, because it takes a long time. And how many times do I make it in those two minutes? But they don't make it, because they're slowly getting bored. So then they give me two more photos, and that annoys me a lot. But that's probably the only thing I would point out.

T1: Do you think that you sharing authentic content, somehow helped you to get closer to others on BeReal? Or does it have any value for you?

T2: Well, for example I am following a friend from high school that is now expecting a baby and I really like to see and watch their journey and I find it beautiful.

T1: How do you react to other people's content?

T2: Well, I react to the content of my closest friends. So I mostly react to friends from university. But otherwise, for example, I don't know why at all, but I have a few people added that I don't need to react to is. So, like, I react to it, for example, I comment on something there, mainly just a heart or some funny emoji but there are also people I don't need to comment on, I don't need to interact with them in any way.

T1: Have you made a new connection or strengthened existing ones?

T2: I think it is nice to keep in touch with my friends from uni. Because I think like two of my closest friends from uni went to Erasmus last semester. And it was nice to keep touch with them, like friends, or some kind of connection in the distance. Because sometimes you don't have the need to text someone. But when you have an overview, when you see a picture, when you see that the person is alive, I feel good. And, um, now when I'm in Australia, they support me, like me, and keep their fingers crossed. And I maintain this friendship with people. But yeah, we know each other and we're in touch.

T1: Have you noticed any changes in the reactions to your posts regarding the authenticity of your post?

T2: I think that people tend to react to something interesting. For example when I am out for dinner with my siblings. I think people tend to like it more than when I post a stupid photo of me writing another crap for work. And they just see a stupid photo of me doing something with it, something unknown. I think that people like to react to things where they see a situation, an atmosphere, something, rather than when they see something every day, even if it's a little bit in contrast to BeReal.

T1: Do you notice that you compare your life to others on BeReal specifically?

T2: Yes, definitely, definitely, yes. Especially when I left my last work, I had one of my colleagues and, of course, I was very interested in her in how she is still doing in the company and how she enjoys it or not. And, in fact, I was very happy when she seemed to be suffering a lot in those photos. Because, I think it was a good sign for me that I ran away from that company. But, yeah, of course I have something to compare myself to. And even more so with the people I am about the same age. Even though it's not that important. But, yeah, I compare myself.

T1: Do you think the comparison somehow affects you? Like some of your emotions?

T2: Yeah, I think it is affecting a little bit my mood. And, yeah, there are situations when I say to myself "Damn it, this girl has just a great photo or just a great atmosphere and I say to myself, maybe it inspires me to do something." But, or when I see someone doing something great and I'm sitting at home and doing my stupid shit I would say I should do something interesting or productive. Definitely, it's not in such a negative dimension, like, I feel it on Instagram. It certainly doesn't evoke as many negative feelings in me as Instagram, for example.

T1: When we gonna talk about BeReal, what is the best feature on BeReal in your opinion?

T2: I'm definitely connecting the front and back cameras. That's MWAH! I love it.

T1: What do you think about the latest updates that you've noticed, uh, and what do you think about them and what are they like?

T2: Well, honestly, I don't know what to think about some of these updates. For example, how you can take pictures with the other people and then repost it. That's a bit of a hassle for me. Like, not only do I understand that when you're in front of a group of people, you want to have that memory, but on the other hand, it seems to me that it's starting to develop in a more commercial way, even though, of course, there are no ads yet, or I haven't registered any ads yet. But it seems like it's slowly starting to develop in this direction, and we'll see where it goes. For now, it's like in the early stages. But I was a little surprised about that, you know.