

Understanding the Personalized Social Experience: Expanding User Agency when Visualizing Personal Social Media Use

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Abstract

Social media plays an ever-increasing role in our lives, and its effects continue to shape the social and mental health of its users. To explore the social media field, I consulted a variety of existing research and resources and conducted studies to gather and test my own data. There appears to be a gap between the effect social media platforms may have on their users and the tools currently available to understand these effects. The social media experience varies widely depending upon the platform and the content is ever changing ensuring no two sessions will be the same. Currently, the most popular tools for understanding one's social media overlook these changes as they present each platform and session simply by the duration. This document overviews my design journey and proposes a new design intervention that allows additional agency for social media users through tagging the emotional impact of each session and then provides a reflective visualization of the emotional and session data.

Introduction

Our lives are interwoven with social media at different layers: our personal life is displayed through photos or messages, our professional life is found through various accomplishments or job applications, and our widespread culture behind news and entertainment is prominently displayed through headlines and news stories across the platforms. With such a profound use of technology, it's no surprise we rely so heavily on social media to communicate, and this reliance grew even deeper during the strict COVID-19 quarantine which stuck many people isolated in their homes with social media providing a popular method of social interaction at a safe distance. While providing an avenue of social interaction in a digital environment these platforms are not without their drawbacks. Research reports have outlined the negative mental health effects stemming from social media addiction, the fear of missing out, or the spread of misinformation [1][2]. What was it about the popular social media platforms which provide this valuable space for interpersonal interaction but also plague its users with these negative effects? Alter outlines many of these negative aspects along with why the design philosophy behind their inclusion [3].

Initially, I hypothesized a need for a reimagined social platform that could trim away design elements with negative responses from users of popular social media, such as Facebook or Twitter, while maintaining the positive social elements. However, after my initial survey along the research process I found with how personalized social media is currently, and this personalization will most likely continue to grow, it is difficult to prescribe a healthy use of social media for an individual. The way someone would describe frequent social media use varied person to person from hourly use all the way up to once per month, and the causes of a negative experience in social media varied greatly among the respondents as well.

The experience of social media varies greatly from person to person and session to session, so it is more advantageous to provide tools people may use to understand their use of social media better and draw

their own conclusion. My design intervention invites users of social media to participate in visualizing their social media use across existing platforms and for them to draw their conclusions through reflecting upon the visualized data.

Literature Review

In 2007 Danah Boyd defined Social Networking Sites (SNS) as web services allowing users to create public or semi-public profiles, make connections with other users, and be able to search through lists of their connection's connections [4]. The number of people on social media has risen steadily since Danah Boyd's study of MySpace, and with the increased number of adopters comes an increased social impact [5][6].

People are herd creatures with a desire to subscribe to groups and interact with each other [7]. There is a detriment to our physical health if we do not maintain our social wellbeing which would explain the attraction to a convenient digital method of socialization. This attraction is even more pronounced in younger audiences which are historically the pioneer groups when it comes to digitizing social interaction [5]. As mobile devices grow more popular, SNS's effect on their users will compound as they interact with them more frequently throughout the day.

SNS offer many benefits, a few including connecting with friends and family long distance, managing schedules and social gatherings, increased interaction with others through messages and image sharing. These benefits draw users to the platforms. There is also a great deal of social pressure within social groups to subscribe to the same SNS others are on as those who opt out will miss discussions and plans managed online. Even those who may traditionally abstain from interacting heavily with SNS may find themselves using them in some capacity. However, the platforms only go so far to meet these social needs which is especially concerning consider their broad impact.

Based on studies by the University of Pennsylvania, when it comes to managing engagement in SNS moderation is key, and the benefits of SNS are diminished through its addictive effect on many users [8]. Too often through dark design, addictive design, or simple oversights, the social media platforms fail to advance the users social lives, but rather plague them with depression, the fear of missing out (FOMO), and a negative self-image [1][2]. These side effects of design often arise through intention to capture the user's attention for as long as possible [3].

During my research process, conversation regarding the negative effects of social media addiction and especially the power it holds in radicalizing its users entered mainstream discussion through the Netflix Documentary, The Social Dilemma [18]. The documentary spotlighted interviews with many of the initial creators behind the popular social platforms that dominate our virtual communications today such as Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc. They discussed the seemingly altruistic motivations behind these divisive features. For instance, the creator of the infinite scrolling feed, a page feature that automatically loads additional content as you reach the bottom, shared he had not predicted how effective this feature would become at keeping users addictively scrolling through the many platforms that adopted it.

The creator of the documentary, Tristan Harris, references topics discussed in his previous authorship where he heeds users to reflect deeply about human nature on social platforms [19]. In the film, he

challenges the audience to look at their iOS Screen Time data as a tool for reflection and to possibly consider altering one's social media habits based on the data they see.

Considering the necessity for reflection when understanding our personal social media habits, I explored a variety of methods for presenting reflective data visualizations. I consulted *Living with Tableau Machine* for methods on effectively visualizing data through abstraction for better reflection [17]. The tableau machine depicts prime examples of integrating a data visualization tool into daily life for further reflection. The authors recount valuable reflective insights when discussing the abstract shapes with respondents. They even reported a level of enchantment with the displayed data as some would opt to engage with the abstract visualizations over watching a TV program. There were also a few drawbacks as some groups found it difficult to relate to specific visualizations and see how their interactions were situated inside the artifact representations. This especially prepared me for the initial difficulty I found when presenting my abstracted design intervention in one-on-one interviews as the visualization method was certainly foreign. Throughout the discussion, however, I was pleased to find a similar outcome as the Tableau Machine with increased levels of engagement and understanding about the emotional data I had visualized.

I also consulted *Feminist Data Visualization* to better understand how to present data visualizations ethically and engage potentially frequently marginalized communities [9]. The authors call for researchers to consider whose data gets left out when creating averages or removing outliers. While their responses or numbers may seem out of place in a "normalized" data set, the data represents persons who deserve to have a voice and great care should be taken to consider all responses wholistically. I strove to adopt this mentality when analyzing my response data and using it to create an effective design intervention for the whole audience.

To gain more insight into these effects of social media on users I created an initial survey to gain further explore user's overall understanding or opinions of social media.

Methods

This document outlines my research process along each step as I moved through the various steps of the research process. I started by conducting an initial survey to better understand overall social media usage. I created each question to help define how people use social media platforms and discuss some of the grievances they have with their current forms. I used Qualtrics to create the survey and analyze the response with visualizations. The response data is found at the end of this document. To gather responses, I reached out to friends, family, colleges, and peers on Microsoft Teams, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook and I was pleased to receive 96 responses.

After receiving the survey responses, I brainstormed solutions to the variety of problems currently plaguing various social media platforms as defined by their users. Next, I sought to combine all of the design solutions into a proposed new social media platform that could navigate the presented pitfalls. One key component was providing tools for users to analyze their own social media habits and draw their own conclusions. I decided to look into this specifically as I researched what persuasive data looked like and explored how to present someone's personal social media usage data to themselves effectively.

To explore the visualization strategy, I analyzed various other platforms that visualized personal data such as fitness and health apps. For me to explore visualizing social media data, I gathered real social

media usage data from respondents. I did so through having respondents keep a journal twice a day for two consecutive days where they reflected upon their social media use on each platform with a few sentences and summarized it through an emoji. Respondents would then also provide a screenshot of their screen time report so I could visualize the intersection between their duration data and their responses.

Next, I brainstormed many different visualization strategies on how to present this combination of duration and emotional response data. Using the real data to narrow down the potential visualization strategy, I focused on two main solutions and wanted to hear feedback on each. The first solution was more a control as I integrated the emotional response data into the iOS screen time report all my respondents were familiar with. The second solution I presented in my interviews was the more abstracted version informed through reviewing the Tableau research [17]. I conducted one-on-one interviews online with another set of respondents to glimpse the conclusions people could draw from these visualizations. I started each interview to a few questions regarding the respondent's social media use to understand their experience with the various platforms, their opinion of how to engage with social media in a healthy way, and if they had ever attempted to limit their social media use. Then, I presented the two visualizations and gathered feedback on each.

Finally, I iterated on the designs based on the one-on-one interviews to create the current form of the design artifacts. Manageable feedback was integrated in the designs, such as tweaks to the text and clarity, while larger suggestions have been documented in the future work section.

Social Media Survey

After reviewing existing research, conducted a survey provided additional data to better understand the way people use social media platforms and how they may be negatively affected by their features. To ensure an ethical study I completed the Georgia Institute of Technology Institutional Review Board training and had my survey along with follow up interviews approved by the board.

The survey set out to understand overall use of various social media platforms along with space to discuss any of these negative features outlined in the literature review. The aim was to better understand what aspects of social media most noticeably and negatively affect their users.

After outlining the considerations and defining the questions I ran the survey and had an astounding 96 people respond.

Some notable considerations when planning the survey:

- To obtain high levels of engagement and ensure respondents could give focused and accurate answers to each question, I kept the overall length short to about 10 questions. I didn't offer any compensation for completing the survey either, so a long in-depth study was not an option. This method opted to capture a more diverse wider base of respondents with a quick survey as opposed to a smaller audience with more detailed responses. I'd save the detailed responses for the one-on-one interviews to come later in the process.
- When considering the IRB requirements for identifiable information, I opted to have no demographic questions that could later be used to trace back and identify specific individuals. Had I included demographics questions I could have made insights about different audiences based on age or gender alignment. I was more interested in other insights with social media

engagement data, so demographic questions were left out and this could also assist in a faster approval through the IRB board, so I could do more surveys and interviews in the limited timespan.

- My main method of acquiring respondents was through posting an IRB approved recruitment message on social media sites and personally reaching out to peers. With the COVID-19 lockdowns occurring during this time, going on campus or out into my local community was not an option, so I opted for the online community instead. Searching for respondents on social media was ideal as well as this ensured my base of responses only consisted of those that used social media. However, this also limited my response base to people in my networks on online communities.
- To ensure respondents did not feel forced to respond to questions they were not comfortable answering, every question was made optional. While 96 people responded to the survey, each question didn't get 96 responses.

Social Media Survey – Most Notable Findings

The survey received 96 responses, and I was pleased to see many answered the free response section giving more detail about their social media experiences. Through response review I grew aware of a discrepancy in how each person defines their social media habits. I also decided to look further into the varied experience people have on each social media platform as the content displayed is specifically selected and organized based on the individual. Social media is an incredibly personalized experience from person to person and platform to platform. Creating broad sweeping definitions of frequency or healthy use of social media fails to account for such a uniquely personal experience and could needlessly marginalize communities that deviate from the norm [9].

Moving forward, I decided to explore what sort of tools are available for people to better understand their own relationship with social media, so they can be more equipped to decide for themselves what healthy social media use looks like for them.

Below are the key findings from the survey that guided the next steps. The question data, 'Q1' being 'Question 1' etc, is located at the end of this document.

'Frequent social media use' has a unique definition per person: In Q2 I asked respondents which social media platforms they used frequently. Then to get additional insight, I asked them 'How often do you consider "frequently"?' and there were a range of responses from hourly to monthly. You will see this range when attempting to search for a definition online as well as defining what it means to "use social media" carries a different connotation per discussion. Some sources measure the frequency of posts, but many times people will simply consume social media content rather than create. When asking this, I wanted to see how people defined for themselves the frequency of their social media use. While there are trends displayed in the data, this variety in definition is important as it shows that everyone is not in agreement on a common definition as to frequency of social media use. This shows the difficulty found in discussing overall social media health as the definition of the terms are in flux.

People tend to spend more time on social media than they initially intended: In Q4 I asked respondents "Do you ever catch yourself spending more time on social media platforms that you intend?" from 1 being 'never' and 6 being 'always.' There was a clear trend towards the 'always' side of the scale meaning people are aware of the duration of their social media sessions and are spending more time on

the platforms than they wish. This may signify an imbalance in the time they spend using social media and the perceived benefit they experience. It also outlines the effect of the many addictive design choices we discussed in the initial research. Also, because the responses weren't binarily 'never' or 'always' we may be seeing the significance of variables present at the time of social media use that would cause someone to spend more than the intended time on occasion but not consistently. These variables may include time of day, user's emotional state, type of engagement experience, content displayed, or social media platform used.

Most of the negative responses to social media discussed an issue with the content, not the features of the platform: Q5 asked, "After spending time on any social media, do you feel dissatisfied or feel a negative impact to your self-esteem/self-image?" If someone replied with a value greater than 'never,' Q6 would be revealed and asked, "What social media platform were you using, and what aspect of social media do you feel causes this negative response?" Interestingly, the data for Q5 trended toward 'never' meaning respondents on average did not feel negatively impacted by social media frequently. On reflection, I would have preferred the question to ask "negatively impacted" to be more general as opposed to "self-esteem/self-image." Negative impact to self-image is only one-way social media may negatively affect someone, if I were to conduct another survey, I would be more general to capture a wider understanding of overall negative response. Of those that did receive Q6 and responded, we can use the word cloud to see the most common words within the free responses. The largest words are the social media platforms Facebook and Instagram, but the surrounding words consist of the aspects that cause their negative response. Rather than technical functions of the platforms, almost all the trends in the word cloud discuss the content, and we can see a wide variety in the type of content respondents chose to spotlight.

Existing Material

Following the survey, I explored the tools individuals could use to make judgements about their own social media use asking the question "What design solutions are available to aid people in deciding what healthy social media use means for them?" I found that many of the popular methods of managing or visualizing social media use focuses on tracking social media usage time or limiting access to certain platforms. These applications operate under the assumption that people are spending excess time on social media and focus on visualizing the duration and reducing the time someone spends on social media platforms. However, centering the design interventions around duration fail to account for the varying experiences found on each platform and each session.

We mentioned social media experiences are unique to each individual through each person's friends list driving the content and usage patterns feeding into algorithms which decide the ordering and targeting of content and ads. These factors mean that social media experiences are not only unique to the individual and the platform, but also each individual session themselves. The content is constantly being created and ever changing as. There are also a variety of affordances on each platforms user can interact with in some sessions but not others.

Each session is not equal and measuring everything simply by duration fails to account for this.

Below are the existing tools for monitoring someone's personal social media usage that are currently available.

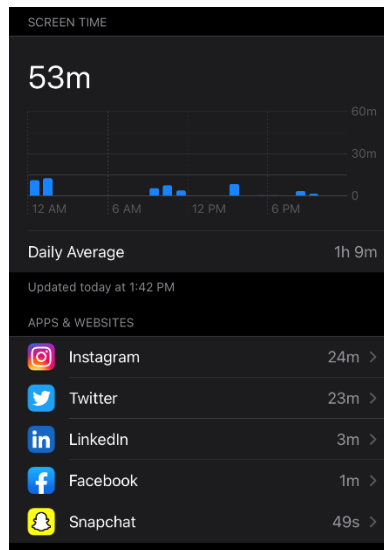


Figure 1 Screenshot of an iOS Screen Time social data report.

iOS Screen Time [10]: This tool is the most common resource referenced during my interviews when discussion methods for reducing or monitor social media use. It is unsurprising as it comes built into the iPhone's operating system by default. Other phone operating systems, such as Google's Anrdoid, often support similar service as well such. Screen Time's functionality centers on duration recording and display. It tracks all the apps someone has open on their screen and how long they interact with them across a variety of sessions. It also offers additional restrictive tools and lock outs which block the use of specific applications or category of applications when a usage limit has been reached. Finally, a user can view their data as a bar graph to see the various sessions durations broken down by topic and platform. For the sake of this research, I focused on the "Social" category of phone applications.

Offtime [11]: This application's philosophy centers around the idea that people spend too much time on their phone and miss out on meaningful interaction or events in person. Users can set up "offtime" which turns off their notifications similar to that of a "do not disturb" mode. It also allows the creation of "offtime" groups, so users can encourage others to take a break from their notifications as well. We can see that Offtime is similar to other apps through its main focus of limiting use with social media and keeping duration to a minimum. Its pro level also comes with the ability to block certain apps.

Moment [12]: This tool centers around reducing users' screen use and helping them "put [their] phone down and focus on the moments that matter the most." Similar to those featured offered within the iOS Screen Time, Moment comes equipped with a suite of session tracking and visualization tools. However, it provides additional tools through a free coaching on how to disconnect from social media and personalized friends or family accountability groups. Still, its overall aim is to track the overall duration someone has an application open on their phone.

Social Fever [13]: This tool is a "screen tracker for Android makes sure that you use your phone for a confined time frame & instead invest time to embrace an offline hobby." While still centering around the idea of locking and blocking certain applications after someone reaches their defined time limit, Social Fever attempts to encourage its users to replace that time with other hobbies or goals to receive

Stay Free [14]: Stay Free focuses on many of the features frequently found in apps designed to assist in healthy social media use. It tracks users' phone usage and allows for the altering or blocking of platforms after exceeding the user defined usage limit. Through centering around limiting time and access, Stay Free hopes to help users reduce their overall social media use duration.

masters Thesis Sketches

Allow posts to display Chronologically	Set all notifications to be displayed at one time	Activity is listed along your user name	Updated photos is random from your photos
Remove from homepage posts	Set lockout hours	Set more use time per day	Send message in proximity when it is close
Center based among friends for best use	Circle of friends - not a private group	Only have 10 minutes	No one feed show part between 2 people
Spreads out	Like, share, comment, post, repost	Only allow activity on new post	Add local friends based on GPS

Following the initial survey regarding overall social media use, the first step was brainstorming a wide variety of methods which could help solve the negatives outlined by the respondents. This list included a wide variety of solutions such as giving an alert when usage exceeded a set limit to help reduce the frequency of sessions with excessive duration or, the more extreme, uploading a photo requires users to also upload a current selfie to show how they really look that exact moment to help reduce the sharing of heavily edited photos that are out of touch with reality. After working up a few dozen, I combined many of the most promising features into new social media platform concept that was fully designed to reduce the negative impact on the users.

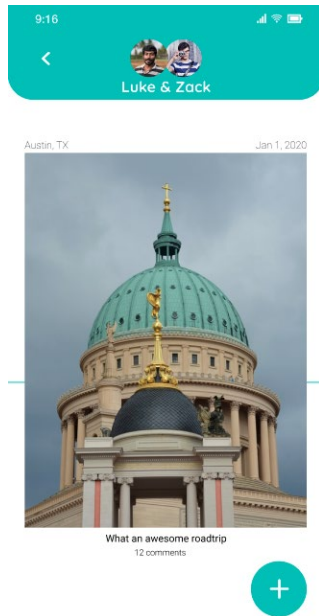


Figure 4 More personal social feed between 2 users without time sensitive posts or endless scrolling.



Figure 5 Statistics page outlining personal social media usage of the platform.

The new platform included features such as removing time sensitive content to reduce anxiety and addiction (figure 4), giant feeds would be replaced with more personal timelines between smaller groups of people (figure 4), detailed, personal usage stats would be easily accessible within the application itself (figure 5). Through building out the various features of this new platform, it was imperative to dive deeper into the statistics page. Questions had to be answered regarding, what information should be tracked? What is the specific goal of the data? What does it look like to present the data effectively?



Figure 6 Initial designs regarding the type and presentation of the usage data.

To answer these questions, I examined what persuasive data presentation looked like and which platforms displayed persuasive data. I considered the charts and graphs found within apps such as fitness monitoring software as it tracks detailed health reports or apps that track a users' journey to quit smoking and break an addiction. Through analyzing persuasive data presentation in other fields and examining how the current social media tracking platforms gathered and displayed their data, I explored the additional data may be useful in allowing users to feel empowered to meet their social media health goals. Figure 6 shows an early concept of this personalized data. There are elements of competition to drive engagement and help users keep each other accountable in meeting their goals, and I included additional data layering so users could not only zoom into their social media use by platform, but also by a subset of data specific to those platforms. These data subsets would include displaying specific channels on YouTube, subreddits on Reddit, or groups on Facebook. With this additional layer of knowledge, people could better understand not just what apps they used and how long, but they would get a better picture as to how they used these platforms.

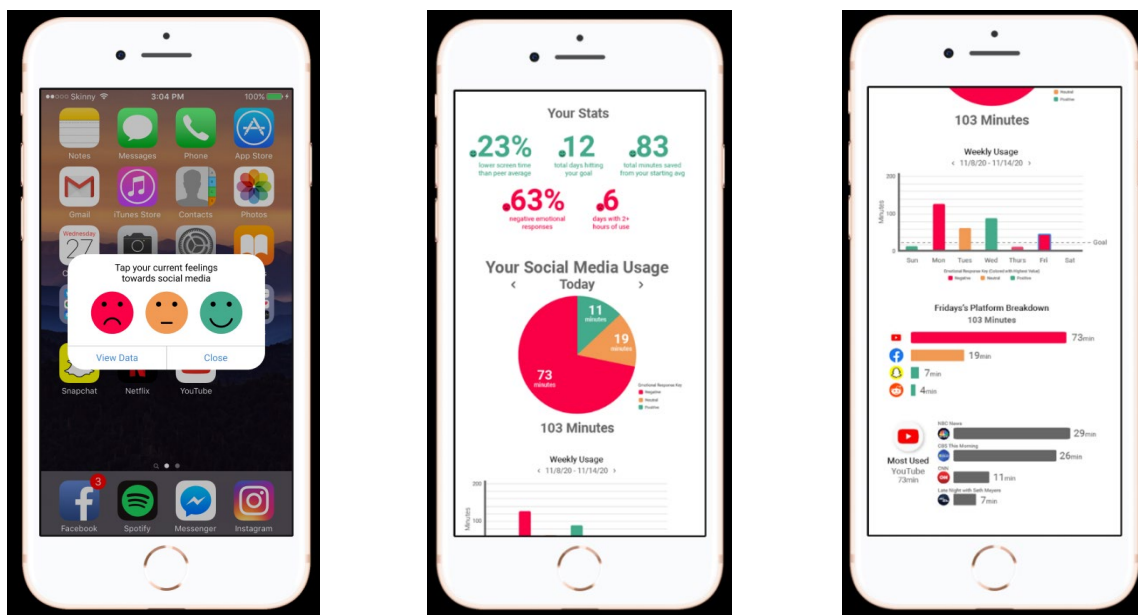


Figure 7 The flow depicting the post-session survey and representing that information in the visualizations.

After considering the value in showing users data on how they use these platforms, I started questioning how I could gather and present not only how they used social media, but what effect did that use have on them? This sprouted the integration of a post-session survey to capture a person's emotional relation to social media in that moment. Then, I integrated the emotional feedback into the data visualizations as presented in figure 7. Finally, I further explored which data should be represented for effective visualizations and different visualization strategies that culminated into the current design intervention outlined below.

Final Design Intervention

Recognizing that duration data alone did not tell the whole story, my design intervention aims to improve on the popular systems and allow users to tag their duration data with information to classify various session. This would give people agency to participate in the collection of their own usage data

and give reflection points along the way for people to consider how they are interacting with social media platforms.

The first part of the intervention is a brief survey following a social media session asking the user to tap the icon which symbolizes “their current feelings toward social media.” As the session duration data is already captured inside the default screen time applications, the survey response captures someone’s opinion of social media follow the session and tags the answer with the session duration data. Doing so, helps to provide a much greater layer of nuance and depth when reflecting upon social media use.

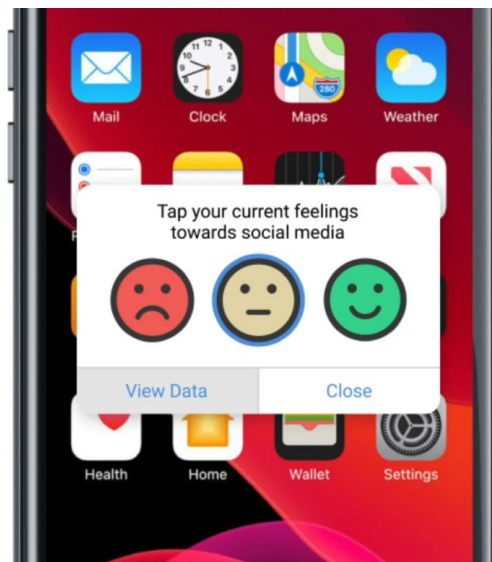


Figure 8 View of the emotional exit survey with the neutral face selected.

Major considerations when deciding as to how users would provide their feelings toward social media are speed and interrupting flow. Cellphones are built to be extremely streamlined and responsive, so adding an additional survey every time someone closes a social media session could feel clunky and cause people to opt out of use. Considering this, I simplified the response survey to a quick three symbol response, shown in figure 8, much akin to those seen inside airport bathrooms of the world’s busiest airport, Hartsfield Jackson [15]. A busy airport operates on a strict time schedule and frequently has people rushing to their terminal, so a quick survey that does not interrupt flow is essential. A respondent simply taps one of the smiley faces (frown, neutral, or smile) which represent the cleanliness of the restroom, or in the case my design intervention, their feelings about social media based on the influence of the previous session.

I had considered implementing an AI powered emotional response tracker that could automatically read a user’s emotional changes through their camera but decided against it. In my later one-on-one interviews concern was expressed about the data being collected and its security. By having users enter the data themselves they know what data is being collected, and the short survey collects drastically less data than camera processing. There is also concern regarding the effectiveness or ethics of AI powered emotional tracking [16].

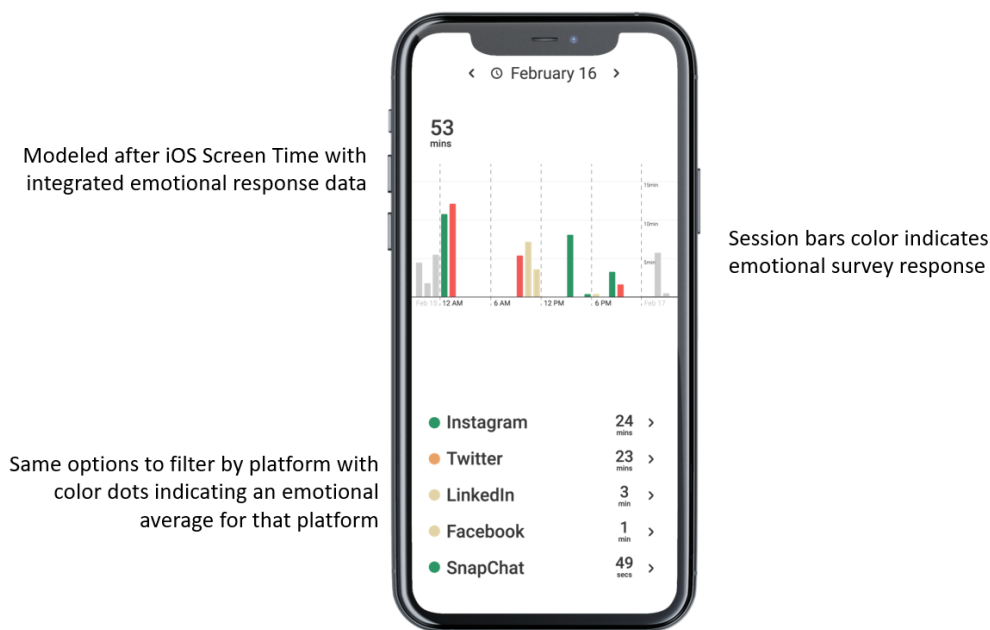


Figure 9 The initial visualization based largely off iOS Screen Time's design.

The next step in the design intervention was exploring how to visualize the duration and emotional exit survey response data for the user to draw effective conclusions regarding personal definitions of healthy social media. For this first version I kept with the existing iOS Screen Time model to serve as a framework. People are often already familiar with the presentation of the iOS Screen Time graphic, so adding the emotional exit survey data to it would allow for focused discussion on the additional data tagging without requiring interviewees to familiarize themselves with a new visualization method.

To build these visualizations with real data I collected a handful of social media journal exercises from respondents. For these exercises I contacted three people to journal their feelings toward social media per platform at least twice a day for two days. For each platform respondents would select one of the three faces in the emotional exit survey followed by a one to two sentence written explanation. Finally, they would submit screenshots of their social media Screen Time data for the two days they completed the journal. These data served as real usage data and brought greater depth to the visualizations.

After acquiring the social media journal data, I visualized the duration data in a similar manner to the iOS Screen Time application and colored the bars representing the session durations with the corresponding color to represent the emotional responses. Next to the list of platforms at the bottom, a dot of color is placed by averaging the emotional response colors for each of that corresponding platform's sessions, weighted by duration. In figure 9 for example, the platform Twitter has a slightly off red color adjacent dot as the sessions tagged with a frown (represented by red) response have a greater total duration than the sessions tagged with a neutral face (represented by yellow grey).

Once the initial mockups were completed based on the iOS Screen Time structure, it was time to reimagine another version for visualizing these two data sets (duration and emotional response). The iOS Screen Time format is designed to display duration, so at its top level, the duration data is the most

important. Even in figure 9 with the emotional exit survey data visualized along side it, the emotional data takes a back seat within the structural hierarchy. How could these data be visualized differently while having the emotional response data take the lead? To explore this direction, I consulted the abstract output of the Tableau Machine and the value it added to the reflection process [17]. Through turning raw data from cameras around a house into more abstract forms they were able to output artifacts which supported reflection over the space occupied in the house and the interactions within those spaces. Because the Tableau Machine did not simply output raw data, they found a great amount of engagement with the respondent as they could reflect upon their data in a unique way.



Figure 10 *The design intervention visualizing social media duration and emotional data in an abstracted way for reflection.*

Implementing the lessons from the Tableau Machine into my design intervention created figure 10. By visualizing the same data from figure 9 in a more abstract manner the visualization provides the emotional response data at the top level. The data is still present, but it is not quantified to the user on this top-level overview depicted in figure 10. Each dot represents a social media platform the user has interacted with, the color of each dot being the average of the emotional response data for each session on the corresponding platform, the size of the dots indicates the total duration spent on that platform, and the drop down changes the timeframe of data to display. This view serves as a fully zoomed out tool to reflect on one's own social media use and it filters out all the quantifiers that may get in the way of the overall reflection. To dive deeper into the data, users simply pinch the screen to zoom into a platform and reveal the underlying session data, figure 11. Zooming in even further, the data is finally quantified and the session duration and time the session occurred is displayed, figure 12.



Figure 11 Mid-level: session data for the Twitter platform displayed after pinching to zoom in.



Figure 12 Lowest level: data is quantified and the session duration and time the session occurred displays.

After creating the two visualizations to gather feedback I conducted one-on-one interviews to hear firsthand with what sort of reflections and conclusions people responded. At the start of each phone interview, I would ask a few questions to get a baseline understanding of each respondent's relationship with social media before diving into the design intervention review. In these conversations I continued to learn more about how individuals use social media and confirmed earlier research from the survey. A key insight from these questions was a frequent discussion around limiting social media use, as all respondents were either limiting or had limited social media usage. When prompted to limit social media use, many referenced using screen time to view the duration of their sessions and decided to make a change.

When discussing the visualization portion, many respondents expressed a great deal of interest and excitement in tying together duration and emotional response data. One respondent felt a need for the reflective aspect of the designs and stated, "people don't take the time to think how social media made them feel." Another claimed that when they used their screen time data to make a decision they have to try and simply remember the overall effect a social media platform has on their mental wellbeing, so having a tool to record it would greatly improve that process.

While there was overwhelming support for the additional emotional survey and visualizing these two datasets, there was a mix of conversation around the success or preference of the two forms of visualization. In each conversation I would walk respondents through the original, iOS Screen Time based, visualization of figure 9 and the more abstract version of figure 10 to hear what they concluded. The response was as I hypothesized, as often people would feel most comfortable and made initial statements that they "liked the bar graph more." This was something considered within the design as a bar graph is a much more traditional visualization, so it is easier to approach the data in a more common form. However, opinion shifted later in the conversation after diving deeper into the more abstract visualization as respondents became more familiar with the new form of presentation.

It is worth noting, when conducting these interviews, although the visualizations depict real data gathered from people, the data is not visualizing their data. The habits and responses are foreign to

them. If someone were to have used this platform and responded at the end of each social media session, they would have a much greater personal connection to the visualizations and most likely have greater points of reflection when viewing the abstracted data. I was able to conduct an interview with a respondent who also provided their social media data, so I visualized their data in this form for our conversation. When discussing the design intervention with them they dramatically preferred the abstract solution when viewing their own data as they felt it was much easier to comprehend and compare the different platforms.

Conclusion

Through surveys and design exploration, I have explored the affect social media use and the displayed content has on users. Inside those conversations, I found the definitions of frequent social media use and what a healthy use social media means may be unique to the individual and found reason to believe social media is so personalized it is best to empower users to reach their own conclusions rather than searching for one standard of healthy social media use. Tools that simply track the duration of social media use do not account for the differences in content, interactions, or other variables that change the experience of social media from session to session and have shown a possible need for tools that allow further tagging of social media sessions for future reflection and understanding. As a tool of personal reflection, my design intervention abstractly visualizes social media duration per platform, per session with a survey that follows the session where users can input their emotional state after using social media. Respondents that experienced the design intervention saw great value in both the space for emotional response following a social media session and the abstract visualization method of these data.

Future Work

Some considerations for future work are listed below.

Emotions are too nuanced for only three symbols: There was a few discussions raised in the interviews regarding the three basic options on the emotional exit survey. Emotions are a complex topic with a wide range of potential responses so adding additional choices or moving to a 'slider' based system could allow for more nuance within the system. Any value of additions must be compared to the value in quick response time as clogging the exit survey could create a negative load on the user.

Integrating what time, a session takes place into the form of the visualization: Currently duration, platform, and emotion are represented through the form of the abstract visualization, figure 10. In an interview, some respondents enjoyed analyzing what time a session took place to better understand how social media use changes throughout their day, so representing the time a session takes place could add value to the visualization and assist in comparison between sessions.

Acknowledgments

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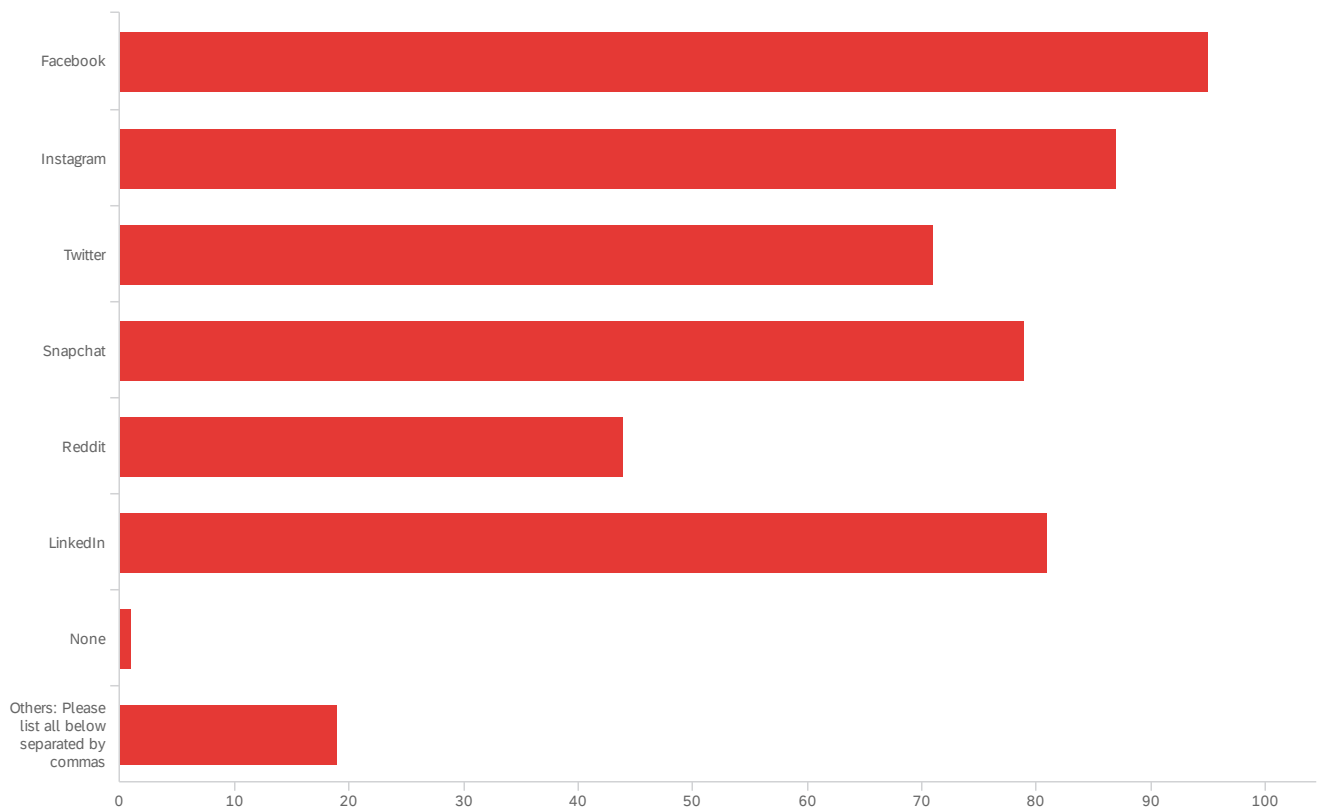
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MS DM Project: Social Media Design Survey

April 24, 2021 1:47 PM MDT

Q1 - Which social media platforms have you registered for an account on?

(regardless of use)

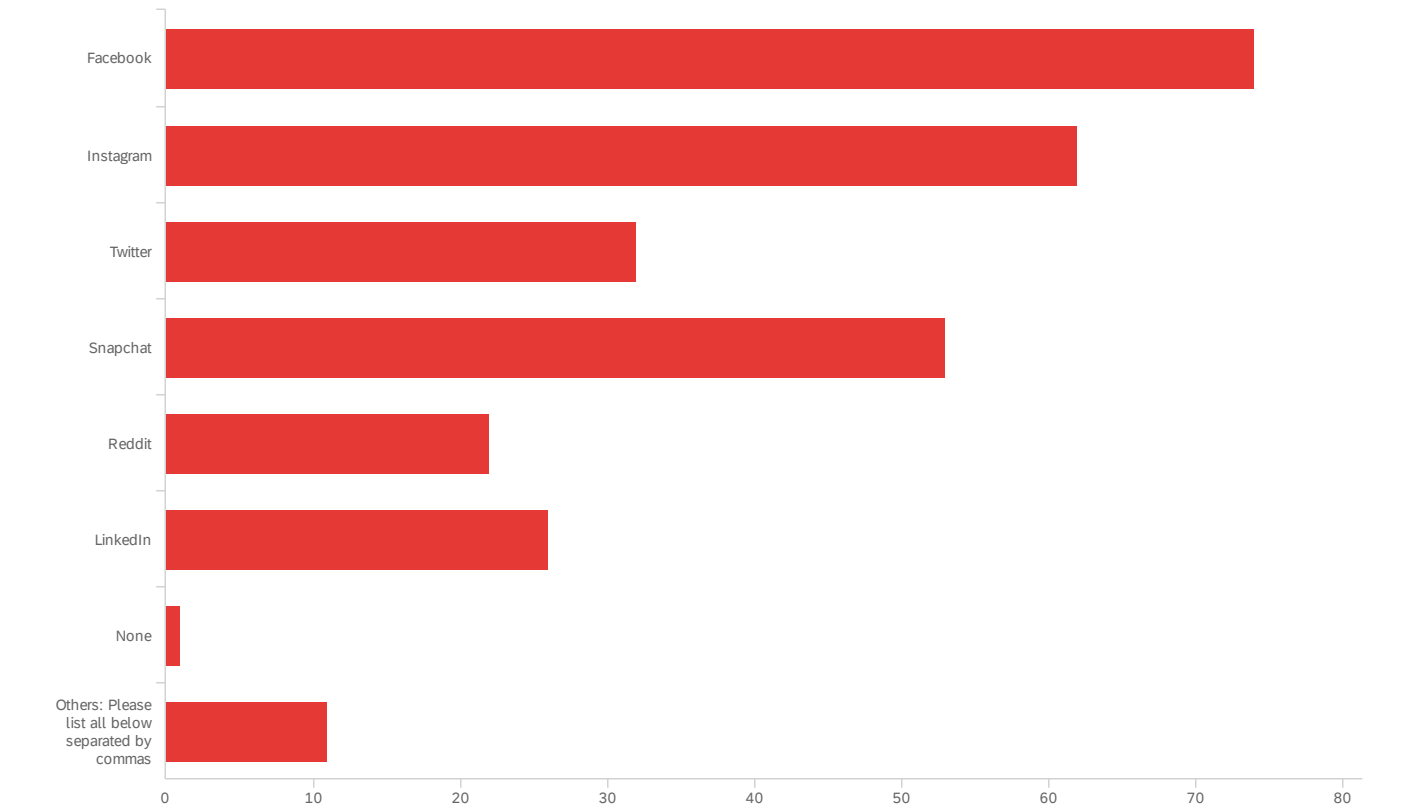


#	Field	Choice Count
1	Facebook	19.92% 95
2	Instagram	18.24% 87
3	Twitter	14.88% 71
4	Snapchat	16.56% 79
5	Reddit	9.22% 44
6	LinkedIn	16.98% 81
7	None	0.21% 1
8	Others: Please list all below separated by commas	3.98% 19

Q1 Others: Please list all below separated by commas

Others: Please list all below separated by commas
TikTok, Discord
Tiktok
Tik Tok
Tik tok, VSCO
TikTok, 500PX
TikTok
Tumblr
tumblr, pinterest(?)
TikTok
Marco Polo, Tik Tok, Pinterest
TikTok
Tik tok
WhatsApp
League of Legends, Tik Tok
Tumblr, Pinterest, TikTok, DeviantArt, Discord
TikTok, Quora
tik tok
Tumblr
Pinterest, Tumblr, Deviantart, Discord

Q2 - Which of those platforms do you frequently use?



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Facebook	26.33% 74
2	Instagram	22.06% 62
3	Twitter	11.39% 32
4	Snapchat	18.86% 53
5	Reddit	7.83% 22
6	LinkedIn	9.25% 26
7	None	0.36% 1
8	Others: Please list all below separated by commas	3.91% 11

Q2 Others: Please list all below separated by commas

TikTok, Discord

Tiktok

Tik tok

TikTok

TikTok

Tik Tok

Tiktok

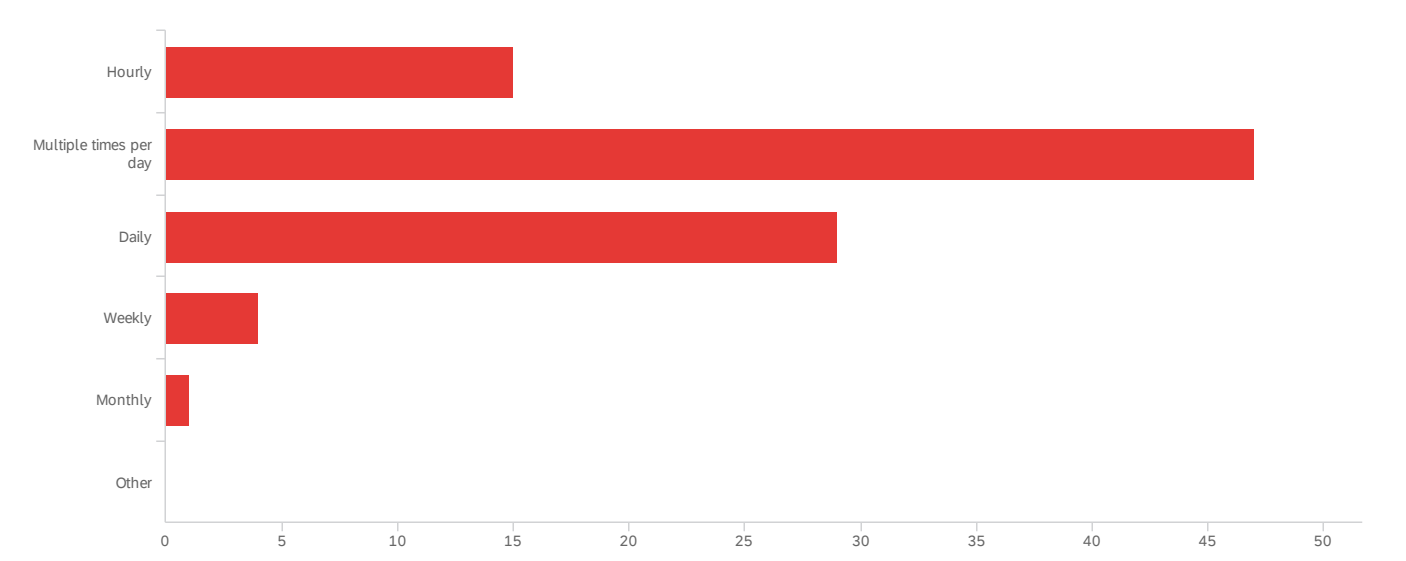
TikTok, Tumblr

TikTok, Quora

Tumblr

Pinterest, Discord

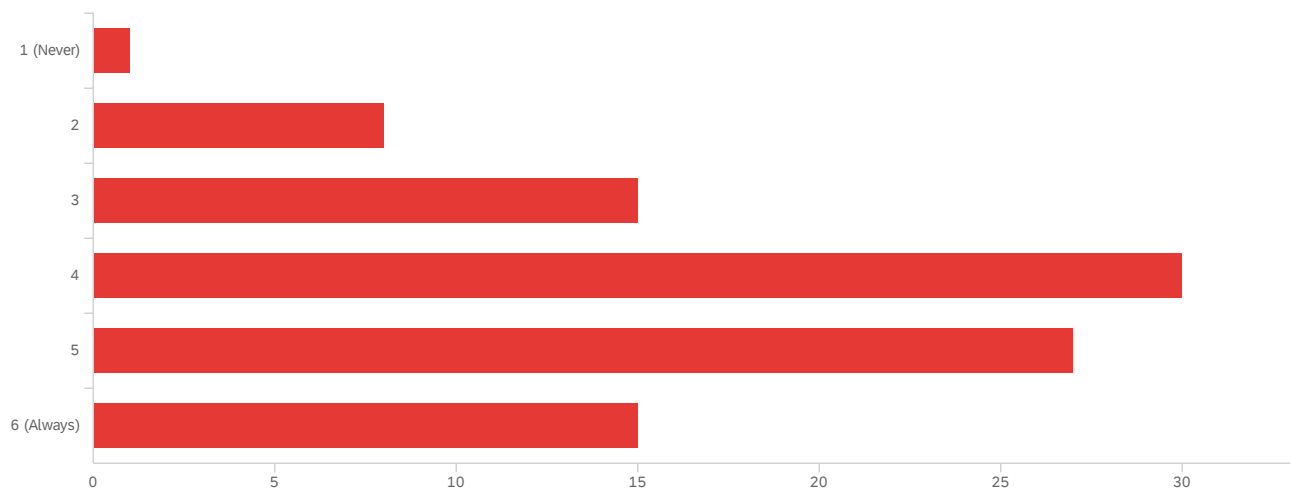
Q3 - How often do you consider "frequently"?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How often do you consider "frequently"? - Selected Choice	1.00	5.00	2.26	0.81	0.65	96

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Hourly	15.63% 15
2	Multiple times per day	48.96% 47
3	Daily	30.21% 29
4	Weekly	4.17% 4
5	Monthly	1.04% 1
6	Other	0.00% 0

Q4 - Do you ever catch yourself spending more time on social media platforms that you intend?

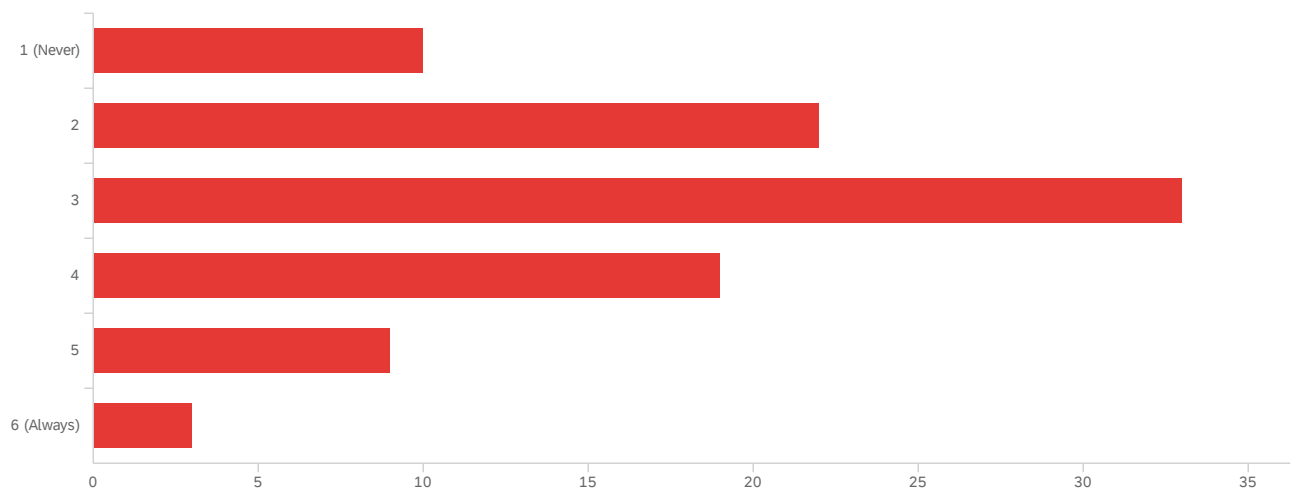


#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Do you ever catch yourself spending more time on social media platforms that you intend?	1.00	6.00	4.24	1.20	1.43	96

#	Field	Choice Count
1	1 (Never)	1.04% 1
2	2	8.33% 8
3	3	15.63% 15
4	4	31.25% 30
5	5	28.13% 27
6	6 (Always)	15.63% 15

96

Q5 - After spending time on any social media, do you feel dissatisfied or feel a negative impact to your self esteem/self image?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	After spending time on any social media, do you feel dissatisfied or feel a negative impact to your self esteem/self image?	1.00	6.00	3.04	1.22	1.50	96

#	Field	Choice Count
1	1 (Never)	10.42% 10
2	2	22.92% 22
3	3	34.38% 33
4	4	19.79% 19
5	5	9.38% 9
6	6 (Always)	3.13% 3

Q6 - What social media platform were you using, and what aspect of social media do you feel causes this negative response?

What social media platform were you using, and what aspect of social media...

Twitter: Can cause a lot of anxiety due to feeling overwhelmed by all of the information bombarding you constantly. Instagram: Classic FOMO from seeing friends and others hanging out. Especially during a pandemic

Instagram, comparing my life and success to others

unreal comments of others

Facebook

Facebook

Reddit is just an endless scroll of mildly interesting things. It's easy to get sucked in but you don't come out any better so it's basically a waste of time.

Instagram's ad targeting as well as different "stories" that might make people feel stressed always about different issues

Instagram and snapchat

Facebook Politics, family, racism, homophobia

My Instagram and LinkedIn feed is usually not that negative. What stresses me out is seeing my friends enjoying their life and all settled down in life, where as here I am struggling to figure out my stuff. This is something I have faced on Facebook a lot, so I reduced it's usage, but sometimes you would want to see such news and connect with old friends by congratulating, it's a tricky situation honestly. And different people might handle things differently. Oh and the news definitely has a negative impact! That happens wherever I go.

I am usually on Reddit. Political news is the main contributor to my negative feelings.

facebook

I was using Instagram and I think the negative response that I had towards it was just from the fact that I was on it for so long. I find it very easy to scroll and get lost in the content so by the time I am done I feel like I have wasted an incredible amount of time.

Facebook—pressure to progress in life at the same pace as my peers

On LinkedIn, I see other members' certifications, titles that I don't have

LinkedIn, though I'm happy for all the people who have gotten offers, it stresses me out and makes me feel less confident because I am not able to land jobs or positions that I have applied for.

Facebook (primarily) and Instagram. Social media becomes a more negative presence in my life especially around important political event times, like the upcoming election.

Twitter

What social media platform were you using, and what aspect of social media...

Instagram tends to lead to a feeling of FOMO or inadequacy in one's own life

Either one (FB or Insta), and the negative aspect was mainly feeling like I had wasted too much time somewhat mindlessly scrolling through content. Less frequently, the negative feeling came from the content: just being exposed to a lot of bad news.

Facebook; comparisons to those you know from high school, college, or colleagues.

Bullying on any platform (telling people they are horrible people if they have different views)

Often, nearly everyone online is having more fun and/or doing "cooler," more interesting and/or more successful things than I am.

Facebook and Instagram can project unrealistic images of life.

Instagram. I feel left out when I see my friends post about hanging out without me.

Instagram. I stopped getting on as frequently because of seeing everyone else's "perfect" images. It's a lot of perfectly-seeming snapshots into people's lives but never tells the whole story. It can be really misleading and cause fake perceptions

I think it's mostly Instagram that makes me feel the most negative when I do, because it showcases only the highlights of people's lives, and makes you think your life is more boring than it is

Facebook or Instagram

Instagram - the ad models were not representative of my body type

Reddit and Twitter. Usually I feel negative when I see a bunch of things I consider evil going on in the world, and it feels like there is nothing I can do to stop it. Or I get frustrated with how many people are closed minded

Instagram; trendy expectations for women's body shapes. Ex: it's trending for the smallest point of a woman's waist to be right under the bellybutton, which physiology is not naturally possible.

Instagram, comparing self to others, can increase body image issues for some

Facebook. Comparing my life to others who seem to be passing milestones more quickly than I am.

Instagram. Jealousy.

Usually Instagram. "Perfectly curated" lives - filters, photoshop, etc.

LinkedIn, seeing others' success while I have nothing to show

Twitter

Instagram

Facebook, seeing the highlights of others' lives.

Instagram - beauty standards & perfect life look

What social media platform were you using, and what aspect of social media...

I don't feel a negative response unless I see that nobody is paying attention to my posts.

The negative responses are usually because the amount of time I feel like I wasted

Twitter is fine because it's very casual and less pictures. As a woman, Instagram leaves a negative feeling a lot of the time, but that is because of societal standards of women's bodies. I hate Facebook because it's full of old, white republicans ranting about democrats.

Instagram & tiktok, many posts portray an unrealistic idea of what people are "supposed" to look like.

Instagram

Most platforms make me feel boring or unattractive, the use of it itself makes me feel like I'm addicted/reliant on it and am wasting my time/can't control my impulses

Facebook and Instagram...perceived perfection of everyone else's existence.

I use Instagram the most. Sometimes it's hard not comparing yourself to what others post and you want to post better stuff to make yourself look good.

insta & seeing other people's lives

Probably Facebook. I don't have friends and people are always shouting out their friends

Instagram, feel negative about my body

Facebook, I feel the rude comments left on public forum.

Evenly across Facebook, Instagram, and Reddit

I think it's comparison. It's hard to keep a healthy self image if I'm always comparing myself to others, even if I know that these are fictionalized accounts of people's lives (as most social media is).

Facebook and LinkedIn, comparing my accomplishments to others (work updates, medical school acceptances, etc)

I just feel that I could have used the time better, like to practice a skill or to study

Instagram, comparing my life/appearance/finances to those of others.

Instagram, I think comparing yourself to other people or being a waste of time

Instagram, I think it usually comes from when I see on my discover page or ads from places not in my local vicinity. I came from NY after undergrad back home to GA, and it sucked not having the same comfort in knowing places to go or things to do here like I did in NY. So many times I would compare my setting to city setting of NYC or Chicago or LA. I felt that GA really had nothing to offer. Because social media looks a lot of your searches, I feel it would help best if it combined your searches and geocaching.

It feels like eating candy. Fine in small doses, but too much and it feels like a waste

Instagram/ the "perfect" posts that I see on my timeline and how it makes me feel like I'm less than that

Instagram - Only seeing the positive parts of someone's life, comparing them to my own.

Facebook; Not sure if it is facebook specifically or just social media in general but its being online and seeing things others are accomplishing and having a feeling of inadequacy.

Facebook got me into some really nasty arguments with people who hurt me in the past - since then, I've deactivated my account and restricted my other social media use to focus only on people and things I care about, rather than just "everyone I've ever met"



Q7 - Please describe the most recent time you felt negatively impacted by social media.



Please describe the most recent time you felt negatively impacted by social...

I don't know I've filtered it to mostly memes less people

This week

Just now when I spent two hours on TikTok when I could have been doing something productive

Embarrassing but I saw a pic of Kylie Jenner in a swimsuit the other day on Instagram that made me feel like absolute crap about myself lol

Probably today since it's distracting me during work!!

Probably within the last week from seeing people post their engagement or marriage photos.

I'd had a good day but logged into twitter and saw all the reactions to the news and it was pretty tough on my emotional state

Yesterday/ the negative impact feels greater when I am already sad or down

Downloading instagram to check something and seeing someone else's happy moment.

Anytime politics appears on my dash. Recently it was the debate. Outside of politics its basically seeing the same posts over and over about people who I considered my equal doing much better than me in their careers.

Soemone I graduated with posted they bought a house and had a baby recently while I'm no where near that stage of life

Got into a political argument with an ex-friend (whose friendship to me was somewhat toxic and harmful) who made an really good point but followed it immediately with an insult. I was already of pretty tired of having to defend myself to loads of people, and that was the last straw. I deactivated wthat weekend.

Refer to above response

Please describe the most recent time you felt negatively impacted by social...

Getting on Twitter and seeing constant arguments causes me to feel like everything is always a conflict. I know this is not true but sometimes it is easy to feel that way.

Seeing a post of someone appearing to have an over all better and more put together life than me

Last week

Trolls, anarchists, and libs tearing Facebook apart.

Just ended up scrolling through a subreddit for like two or three hours after work and ended up missing dinner and going to bed late

Yesterday

The presidential debate

Most recent times would be when I saw the list of side effects of covid posted by Bloomberg.

It was today. I was looking at election polls, which made me anxious about the future.

This morning as I laid in bed looking at social media when I should have started my day

A few weeks ago

This morning lol

LinkedIn.

Today

Reading about trump is depressing

One time I saw friends hanging out without me

One recent example is after watching "The Social Dilemma" on Netflix.

Seeing someone from my hometown graduate with a graduate degree, and feeling bad about the fact that I haven't returned to school to further my education.

There was a large Zoom reunion of a group of friends I thought I was on the inside of, but I was not invited to this call. Seeing so many people I thought I was close to without even being invited was deeply hurtful.

Someone I go to school with and tolerate pretty well just announced their support for Q Anon. The sheer amount of crazy on Facebook makes my head hurt.

Yesterday! My friend had a party and I didn't get to go and saw their posts about it afterwards.

Today

I got into a disagreement with someone who posted a sexually explicit meme in a group chat where a couple of minors could see it. I felt impacted by this because the girl kept tearing me down for telling her not to post that stuff days later.

Waking up in the morning to see the latest political news across all social media channels and email.

Please describe the most recent time you felt negatively impacted by social...

Every summer girls start posting pictures at beach/at the pool in swimsuits. I'm always comparing myself to the way they look and then feeling negatively about my own body if it doesn't look close to theirs. It felt overwhelming this past June, July, and August seeing so many revealing photos.

I don't think it's an active, apparent sense of negative affect, but a very dull, passive sense of negativity that just kind of lingers

A girl I know posted negative things about a guy friend of mine. I don't know if any of it was true but it made me sick, to think about her being a liar or him doing what she said.

Today during lunch

After the Presidential Debate. I felt like so many people took away the wrong things. One person summed it up like this: It doesn't matter who won the debate, America lost.

This summer when it was "beach body" season.

Concern about appearance in bathing suit photo

Seeing my fellow peers get great jobs after college. While I'm having to work from the bottom up.

My husband and I were moving and wanting to buy a house, however at that moment we just didn't have the finances to get a home that we would want. Then someone who wasn't even married to their partner yet bought a new-construction house and changed everything in it (the counter tops, the cabinet hardware, the lighting, the siding, etc.). I was jealous because they could buy a house and we couldn't, but then not only did they buy a house, I didn't feel that they appreciated the fact that could even do that by changing the whole house.

Today - saw a person my age, seemingly "living large" with a new house and car with no job, while I haven't figured out what I'm doing yet.

LinkedIn seeing people being successful

Political stuff. Keep your opinion to yourself

Seeing old friends hang out and knowing they don't miss you at all

Seeing the good times had by other people happening on facebook

Perfect life style of celebrity, people only posting positives

When others express opinions opposite mine and are denigrating my view point and me.

I am always annoyed with the way Instagram shows you pictures. MAKE THEM IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER FOR FUCKS SAKE. I'm sick and tired of seeing the same influencer's posts all the time (even when i don't follow them).

Last night

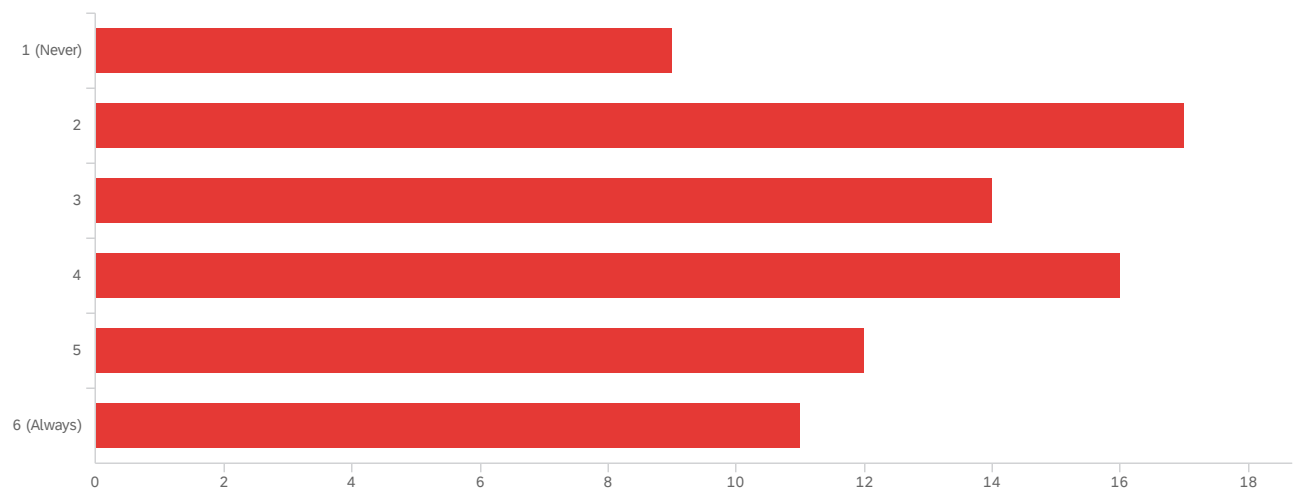
Looking at Instagram

Just generalized envy...seems many have it so much better, so much easier...the political tones are killing me right now...

It's hard to say specifically, but I posted something recently and it didn't get the response I was hoping for.

Particularly when I see my peers (people I graduated high school, college, masters, etc.) advancing and moving up in life while I perceive that I'm staying in place.

Q8 - After posting, I frequently check my post to see how many likes or responses I receive.



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	After posting, I frequently check my post to see how many likes or responses I receive.	1.00	6.00	3.48	1.58	2.50	79

#	Field	Choice Count
1	1 (Never)	11.39% 9
2	2	21.52% 17
3	3	17.72% 14
4	4	20.25% 16
5	5	15.19% 12
6	6 (Always)	13.92% 11

79

Showing rows 1 - 7 of 7

Q9 - The space below is provided to share any additional thoughts or opinions you have about social media, its features, or its effects on your life or culture.

The space below is provided to share any additional thoughts or opinions yo...

I enjoy social media, it is a fun way to spend time and get human interaction especially when it sometimes gets hard. I honestly feel like the main issue is simply spending too much time on social media.

i find it for the most part to fill with untrue and advertising

Facebook sucks donkey balls but it is the only decent place for legit community groups outside of reddit.

Now gaming on social media is addictive.

For us it became an advertising & political platform rather than the fun of keeping up with friends. We have stopped using the social media for this reason. Now we hear of more controls and censoring of the conversations between people. This just makes these platforms more unappealing. People should be able to talk and know that they should not believe everything they see and read. Much like seeing a movie or watching TV.

People should really read *The World Beyond Your Head* by Matthew Crawford if they really want to understand the challenges of distraction in the modern world. Its a book that I'd really recommend.

Different platforms cause different effects. Facebook for me has the most negativity associated to it. Instagram has the most positivity associated with it.

I think especially with the pandemic, the news is definitely on a very negative spin. On top of that, you have the personal issues to deal with, so it all adds to it. Having a more supportive community with more positive spin to coming out of difficult times might be helpful, but I'm not sure about it.

Social media can have both positive and negative attributes. However, it is usually the negative that gets the most attention.

I find that social media can be a powerful tool to share knowledge and grow your network but the negative aspect of it comes only when we look at it too much.

I deleted my Facebook and Instagram last week after watching the documentary "The Social Dilemma". It was a great film and very informative.

It makes me feel more socially connected and better informed. It helps me take real world political actions.

I feel as though the fine line between productive and harmful social media is usually hard to distinguish and it is easy to find yourself slowly falling into the harmful side over time.

I really enjoy the ability to maintain easy (or, it could be viewed negatively as "low investment") connections with friends and acquaintances, especially those who live far away. I also like being able to share my photos and view the photos posted by others. From the negative side of things, I really don't like how easily misinformation and inflammatory propaganda can spread widely via social media.

I like that social media allows me to see how life is for people I never would have otherwise. I also like to share aspects of my own life with my friends. However, I do find that I compare myself to other more frequently while using social media, and I am very conscious of how my posts are perceived.

The space below is provided to share any additional thoughts or opinions yo...

I think social media can be both beneficial and harmful depending on how it's used. I do enjoy using Facebook because it keeps me connected with co-workers and family members, allows me to shop through marketplace and find really budget-friendly deals, and I'm able to swap work schedules, connect to foster family groups, etc. Social media only becomes harmful when we use it as a comparison tool to other people's lives and start wishing we had what they have instead of being happy with the things we already are blessed with.

I neither like nor dislike social media.. I just wish it were different

Social media has its positive uses such as connecting people who otherwise would never know each other. But too many people focus their lives around social media, and I think that's unhealthy.

I use the time limit functionalities in Instagram and Facebook to notify me when I've gone over the limit I've set for myself (30 min and 10 min respectively). It's helped me stay focused and waste less time by being in them.

It is such a huge distraction. I wish people would put their phones down more often to experience what is going on around them, rather than what is going on in cyber world.

Sometimes it sucks

I am hooked and I'm not sure that I like it.

Social media sucks and I wish I grew up in the 90's when none of this mattered. Now i'm too addicted.

I love body positivity movements.

Would love to give it up but I admit to a mild case of FOMO.

Likes aren't everything, and I know that but I'm still obsessed with it.

I like it as it provides me entertainment when I'm walking to class or doing chores. Plus if I see someone I haven't seen in a while I still kind of know generally what's happened in their lives since we last met

I think social media has created a culture of doing things not because we enjoy them or for our happiness, but so that we can post it and "show off" our lives. We are so caught up in making sure others know we are having a good time that we actually forget to have a good time.

I do feel like when I was younger I used to be a lot more negatively impacted by social media because I was less confident. Probably why it can be really bad for people in high school and college who are still trying to figure out who they are and still care what people think.

I think social media is a great outlet for information and most of our negative perceptions are internal problems like within ourselves. I normally don't have any problem or I have come a long way from comparing myself and thats by finding peace within myself and limiting my social media use and elevating what I look at (wellness, positive lifestyle, funny memes) for myself to look at especially bc algorithms run social media.

I think instagram is probably the worst out of all of the social media platforms when it comes to negative feelings because it is so geared towards highlighting only the best moments and the most picture worthy moments. I deleted the app for that reason. Apps like twitter are less about presenting your life for the entire world to see and more about memes in my opinion.

Censorship is a major issue on social when it comes to politics. If I dont respond to a post (comment,like, etc) I don't really want to see it over and over again when I refresh my feed.

Good for staying connected with people especially if they are overseas but definitely negative when it comes to self worth

yikes yikes yikes yikes yikes

