Connection Lost

A qualitative study of how and why a person detoxes from social media in a digital age

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Abstract

In a world where social media is playing an increasingly large role in many facets of our lives, some are consciously choosing not to partake in it. The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of those who have made this decision, in order to understand how and why a person intentionally limits their consumption of social media. These experiences were gathered through ten qualitative interviews, and the given answers were analyzed with the help of previous research. The answers given by the respondents indicated that there is an anxiety related to the hunt for gratification via social media, as well as a frustration with the amount of time one spends connected instead of working towards goals. By stepping away from social media, the desire for gratification was somewhat alleviated, but the frustration with time management remained. In addition, other issues emerged during their disconnect, such as loneliness, boredom, and difficulty connecting with friends. These findings can suggest a course of action for marketers, as they highlight not only what drives people away from social media consumption, but also what can draw them back in, which gives a pointer for how they can improve user-retention and wellbeing.

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1. Introduction

The following part describes the background, problem formulation, purpose, the research question and delimitations of the study.

1.1 Background

It is estimated that there are over 4.6 billion people using social media around the world, a number which grew by more than 10 percent between 2021 and 2022. The purposes for which these users are on social media vary. The biggest motivator is to stay in contact with family and friends, but other factors like keeping up to date with the news, or doing research and networking for work are also strong draws (Datareportal, 2022). Social media seems to have grown into a natural part of many people's everyday activities, and can act as a useful complement to their private and professional life.

Despite the potential offered by engaging in social media, there are those who deliberately choose to step away from various social media platforms for periods of time. The choice of disengaging with social media is a phenomenon that is part of a trend called *digital detox* (Lawler, 2021). Lawler describes that digital detoxes are not limited specifically to social media, but can also include people who periodically abstain from using digital devices, such as not using smartphones, computers, or screens. Taking part in a digital detox can entail excluding only some aspects of ones' digital involvements, such as taking a break from using specific applications, such as a game or social media platform, or not using a phone at specific times.

The rise of digital detox has, in part, been born out of a resistance to constant connectivity. While the use of digital devices becomes increasingly intertwined with everyday activities, some feel that constant use of digital devices stands in the way of human interactions and authenticity. This has created a desire to return to a more simple life without the negative consequences associated with the use of digital devices (Trine and Gunn, 2019). Proponents of digital detoxes argue that there are numerous other benefits to the practice, such as improved mental health, reduced stress and better sleep (Cherry, 2020).

1.2 Problem formulation

As the usage and popularity of social media has risen, various problems have arisen in tandem with this development. Some examples of these concerns come in the form of issues related to personal productivity, as well as issues regarding mental health.

Despite the broad use-cases of social media, it does not come without its drawbacks. In organizations and companies for example, where the employees stand for a majority of the production and are an integral part of the organization and productivity, the problems of social media usage can become increasingly palpable. Through previous research, it has been found that social media usage in the workplace has increased among employees (Munene and Nyaribo, 2013). Additionally, while this has brought some positive influence, the negative effects on work-related productivity were more prevalent, meaning that social media as a whole is detrimental to productivity.

It should be noted that the ability to let oneself be distracted by social media at work varies between occupations. In industries where access to social media is limited or even impossible, such as in factory or construction work, these problems are likely not as persistent. However, in occupations where access to social media is more prevalent, such as many desk jobs, the barrier between work and social media usage is significantly thinner. Because of this, companies will likely try to pursue ways to get their employees off of social media, at the very least during working hours. In addition, the productivity related consequences of social media use are not necessarily limited to the workplace, as social media use can impact personal productivity as well (Alblwi et al. 2019). For some, spending significant time on social media can decrease focus on other important aspects in life, such as exercise, cleaning, or maintaining relationships.

Another area of concern comes in the form of mental health related issues contiguous with social media usage. People who have previously participated in research regarding these kinds of issues have stated that they feel that usage of social media can be directly linked to unwell states of mental health, such as depression (O'Reilly et al. 2018). Other, more palpable aspects regarding this issue come in the form of cyberbullying via various forms of social media, which in turn also had a detrimental effect on the mental health of the participants. Problems such as sleep

deprivation in cooperation with addiction to social media also has an effect on an individuals mental health, and this link is also something which has been clinically proven and recognised by professionals in the relevant field. Given the rise of social media, digital detoxing, as well as the above-stated problems commonly associated with them, we wanted to investigate whether our respondents have had similar experiences, and how a digital detox might affect them.

Given the rising usage of social media, the connection between personal productivity, mental health, and social media have been studied in various ways. What we came to find however, was that the underlying psychological reasons, both for using social media and consequently choosing to detox from it, was something that had not previously been adequately studied. Therefore, we found it valuable to research these underlying psychological reasons and furthermore draw conclusions from our findings.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of the study is to gain a broader insight into how and why people, in this increasingly digital society, choose to not consume social media during varying periods of time. In other words, understand why people choose to commit to a digital detox, how they choose to go about it, and what their experience was like.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to add new knowledge regarding the reasons as to why people engage in digital detoxes, and what the experience is like. In the future, this is something that can turn out to be useful both for marketers, as well as people and companies acting in digitized avenues of the market.

1.4 Research question

How and why do people limit their consumption of social media despite its importance in modern society?

1.5 Delimitations

Although digital detoxes can come in various forms and durations, we have limited our research to detoxes specifically centered around those who completely detoxed from social media. This

decision was made due to the central role social media consumption often plays in modern life, and the challenges and experiences of avoiding it could be both interesting and valuable.

In addition, this study does not focus on the connection between social media consumption and other forms of consumption, or whether decreased consumption of social media has any effect on how and when people consume other products and services. Instead, we have solely focused on consumption, or anti-consumption, of social media itself.

2. Previous research

The following part describes previous research regarding digital detox. This research will be used as the foundation for the study and the theoretical framework.

2.1 Motivations for detoxing

Other studies have looked at the driving forces behind the digital detox phenomenon as a whole, and focused on those who have undergone total digital detoxes, i.e., completely shutting out tech. By studying a group of people spending four days at a digital-detox camp, Karlsen (2020) found that these people were primarily motivated by a desire to achieve focus. In addition, they were motivated by a desire to be creative, free, and shielded from the stress brought on by tech use, which they viewed as being in the way of a more authentic life. The level of commitment people have towards a digital detox varies, and the aforementioned group were on a rather serious end of the digital-detox spectrum. As such, motivations might look different depending on how extreme a person is when deciding to do a digital detox.

2.2 Digital Detox and mental health

As digital detox has become more widespread, numerous studies have been conducted to understand the phenomenon. A particular subject that has been of interest in multiple studies is how digital detoxes affect mental health. For example, one study found that limiting social media access to 10 minutes per day had a significant positive impact in terms of loneliness and depression (Hunt et. al. 2018). However, a clear causation between reduced social media consumption and mental health has not been conclusively proven, as another study found no link

at all between the two. As such, the psychological consequences of a social media detox are not entirely understood.

2.3 Social Media Addiction

Our increased digital presence has opened up many new avenues for people to get addicted, and social media itself has, for some, become an addiction to a degree where one ignores personal responsibilities in favor of browsing their feed. Research on social media addiction suggests that the addiction is varied in nature, and the reason one gets addicted to social media is heavily dependent on personal qualities. One study suggests that social extroversion versus social introversion is a major divider in how a social media addiction manifests itself (Kuss, D.J, Griffiths, M.D. 2011). For extroverts, social media can become addicting due to the appeal of enhancing their social status, whereas extroverts get addicted when attempting to compensate for their perceived social inadequacy outside of social media. The varying factors behind excessive social media use could likely suggest varying motivations behind the reason to step away from social media, as it could entail a broad range of reasons one might feel the need to decrease their usage.

2.4 Social media and productivity

As mentioned previously, there are some drawbacks with social media in spite of its many benefits. One of these drawbacks come in the form of productivity related issues. When we refer to productivity, we do not only refer to productivity from a company perspective, but also personal, where social media might hinder a person from being productive in their workplace or at school (Munene and Nyaribo, 2013). The study conducted by Munene and Nyaribo showed a strong correlation between increased, mismanaged social media usage and decreased personal productivity. However, the authors also found that social media could be a very useful tool in a workplace. The foundation for this claim came from the human predisposition to create networks and communities which could be helpful, for example in a corporate landscape. Through properly managed social media, these kinds of networks in the workplace could be of great help. These positive aspects of social media in the workplace could showcase a potential challenge of taking part in a detox, as stepping away from social media will mean losing out on these connectivity-related benefits.

The issue with social media and decreased productivity appears when the usage of social media is not well-managed. Given the vast amount of user created content available on the internet in general and social media in particular, it is easy to be drawn towards areas of social media that are not strictly related to workplace responsibilities. With aspects such as this in mind, the importance of well-balanced social media usage that positively affects the workplace, instead of deteriorating it, cannot be stressed enough.

2.5 How social media can shape consumption patterns

An additional aspect which is influential in the social media landscape is the impact various social media platforms have on the general consumption in society (Webster, 2010). With the vast amounts of information and data that is readily available through social media today, the marketing and consumption landscape has gone through tremendous changes. The large reach (and flexibility) of social media platforms has opened up entirely new possibilities for marketers to reach customers, and the potential of social media as a marketing tool has been stressed in marketing research (Kumar et al., 2016). These emerging patterns of more data have led to more online-driven consumption than before, showcasing how social media can change the patterns of consumption, and the ability of marketers to incentivize it.

2.6 Anti-consumption

With modern consumption patterns under scrutiny, some have turned toward the act of anti-consumption, which has become a phenomenon in its own right. In business- and marketing research, there are two main types of anti-consumption among consumers (Iyer and Muncy, 2007). The first type of anti-consumer are those that attempt to avoid consumption to the highest degree they can, and these are divided into two types; global impact consumers, and simplifiers. Global impact consumers are drawn to anti-consumption due to societal concerns, due to factors such as climate change, or the environmental impact our consumption has on the planet. On the other hand, simplifiers reduce their consumption due to personal concerns, such as experiencing stress, or feeling distracted by consumption in general.

The second type of anti-consumer are those that only reduce consumption of specific products or brands, and these are again divided into two types; market activists, and anti-loyal consumers. Market activists, similar to global impact consumers, are motivated by societal concerns (Iyer and Muncy, 2007). This often means boycotting specific brands that they feel are acting unethically or unsustainably. Anti-loyal consumers, similarly to simplifiers, are motivated by personal concerns. An anti-loyal consumer chooses not to consume specific products or brands due to a personal negative perception of it, or a previous bad experience with said product or brand.

Those engaging in a digital detox could be described as taking part in a form of anti-consumption. Where could these people be placed in the anti-consumer spectrum? As previously shown, social media use can have a significant effect on personal factors such as mental health, suggesting that a detox from social media is likely motivated by personal rather than societal factors. In addition, a digital detox from social media does not necessarily have to coincide with decreased consumption of other products and services. These factors would suggest that one undergoing a digital detox can be placed in the "anti-loyal consumer" category.

2.7 Social media and consumer culture

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) is the study of how consumption decisions relate to both social and cultural factors. Arnould and Thompson (2005) outline four major areas covered by CCT; Consumer Identity projects, Marketplace Cultures, The Sociohistoric Patterning of Consumption, and Mass Mediated Marketplace Ideologies. Consumer Identity Projects concerns the way consumers create their identity using the output of marketers, where consumers are seen as "identity seekers", who essentially latch onto concepts and ideas created by marketers. Marketplace Cultures expands this by considering the influence consumers themselves have on producing and altering culture.

An example of these two areas through the lens of social media could be how brands use digital marketing to propel their products into cultural relevance. First, a brand produces marketing material that attracts hype and interest. If done right, this can lead to consumers building communities around the consumption of said products, for example by posting images of

themselves wearing a designer brand, thus not only building an identity around marketer-produced content, but also shaping culture themselves. If an influential social media user posts themselves wearing a certain brand, or eating at a certain restaurant, they are leveraging their platform to essentially shape culture, without the help of marketers.

The third major area in CCT, The Sociohistoric Patterning of Consumption, considers the role social factors have in consumption, such as age, location, and socio-economic status. The fourth, and final, major area of CCT is Mass Mediated Marketplace Ideologies, which concerns consumer ideologies, and their tendency of following established cultural expectations and norms - but also how some might rebel against these expectations and form counter-cultural movements, which are commonplace in various subcultures on social media. In addition, social media has offered new opportunities for people to organize communities with like-minded people, which has made it easier for these counter-cultural movements to form.

3. Theoretical framework

The following part will introduce the theoretical framework of the study.

The chosen theories are largely focused on the psychological aspects tied to social media consumption or non-consumption. The main focus will be on the gratifications provided by social media, the belongingness it offers, and procrastination. Together, these theories might bring further understanding of the digital detox phenomenon.

3.1 Uses and gratifications theory

This theory assumes that people make active and motivated choices regarding their social media usage, rather than passively consuming whatever passes them by, and consumers are assumed to be actively looking for ways to attain gratification via the media they consume. The specific ways in which people use social media is dependent upon which type of gratification they are looking to get out of it, and the specific needs from one individual to another. (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1973)(Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Whiting & Williams (2013) researched the most common motivations, or gratifications, behind social media consumption. They concluded that there are 10 main gratifications driving social media use; Social interaction, information seeking, pass time, entertainment, relaxation, expression of opinions, communicatory utility (using social media as a means to gather conversation topics), convenience utility (using social media due to it being easy to access at any time), information sharing (to share information regarding one's life), surveillance/knowledge about others (to gain knowledge about what people around them are doing). The different social media platforms offer ways for a person to attain any combination of these gratifications, which can be a strong motivator for social media use.

In the analysis, this theory will be used to analyze how big of an impact the search for gratification is when it comes to social media usage, and how these gratifications might be met when they cannot be attained through social media. The 10 main gratifications driving social media use can assist us in understanding not only what might lead a person to excessive social media use, but also what might draw them away from social media altogether.

3.2 Belongingness theory

This theory suggests that there people have a strong desire to form relationships and belong with different groups, in order to fulfill an underlying need of belonging (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). According to Baumeister and Leary, the need for belongingness plays a central role in human psychology, as humans place a high importance on attaining and maintaining social relationships.

In order for these relationships to be meaningful and fulfill the need for belonging, two requirements need to be met (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). First, the contact between two people in a social relationship needs to be frequent. In other words, they have to keep in contact on a regular basis, which is often helped by attending the same school, working at the same job, or being connected on social media. Second, this frequent contact needs to feature regular displays of affection and caring - and it is essential that these displays are reciprocated. If these requirements are only fulfilled by one of the people in the social relationship, the other one is likely to feel unfulfilled.

If the need for belongingness goes unfulfilled, it can have serious implications for a person's well-being, as Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggest that belongingness could even be a necessity to feel happiness. Additionally, the effects of insufficient belongingness can reach beyond the scope of mental health, and lead to a broad range of consequences, such as weakened immune system, higher risk of antisocial behavior, and higher risk of getting into car accidents. The broad range of effects that can stem from not feeling belongingness suggest the importance of maintaining meaningful relationships. In addition, it highlights a significant risk when choosing to detox from social media, as a person who fulfills a significant part of their social needs through social media might put their well-being into jeopardy if they choose not to consume it.

The Belongingness theory will be of help in the analysis when it comes to evaluating the responses connected to issues of relationships and being part of a group. As previously stated, social media can play a role in maintaining relationships and fulfilling the need for belongingness. As such, it can be valuable to understand how these needs are impacted by detoxing from social media.

3.3 Self-Determination theory

This theory presents the idea that people are driven towards growth and change by two main factors - intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Ryan and Deci, 2000). These two types of motivation, with intrinsic motivators being underlying and inherent factors from within yourself and extrinsic factors being aspects from your surroundings affecting you, drive the need to fulfill three main psychological needs. These three are autonomy, competence and relatedness. Autonomy is the desire to feel in control of one's own decisions, competence is the desire to feel skillful enough to attain goals, and relatedness is the desire to feel like you have a connection to other people.

This theory will be of use in the analysis in gaining further understanding of what motivates a person to undergo a digital detox, and whether that motivation is born out of intrinsic or extrinsic factors. In addition, understanding the role that autonomy, competence and relatedness play in one's motivation to detox will offer a deeper understanding of the psychological factors behind the phenomenon.

3.4 Procrastination theory

This theory concerns the act of *procrastination*. Procrastination is when a person disregards responsibilities, such as work or school duties, managing relationships, or chores, by engaging in "unproductive" behavior such as social media, gaming, or similar passive consumption of entertainment. Alblwi et al. (2019) defines three types of procrastination; avoidance, escapism, emergence and mood modification. Avoidance procrastination is when one simply attempts to avoid tasks that they do not enjoy. Those engaging in avoidance procrastination will often turn to Social Networking Sites (SNS), which they perceive to be more enjoyable and rewarding than the task they are avoiding. Escapism procrastination is when one procrastinates to escape negative feelings, such as anxiety or loneliness, by engaging with a digital world in which these problems are not present. Emergence procrastination is when one loses focus on a current task, such as working on school- or work-related tasks, or listening to a lecture, by engaging with SNS. Finally, mood modification procrastination is when one procrastinates to attain positive feelings, by intentionally using SNS to change their current negative feelings or mood.

The Procrastination theory will be helpful in providing insight to the connection between being productive and doing the task you should be doing, and increased social media usage leading to procrastination. With the help of avoidance, escapism and emergence, deeper understanding can also be achieved when it comes to the underlying reasons for detoxing from social media.

With these theories in mind, we think that they will help provide further understanding into how and why people choose to shield themselves off from social media, and what their experience is like. However, it is also important to go into more detail regarding how these actually can be of use. This will be discussed in the following section concerning our method, along with the collection process of the empirical material of the study.

4. Method

The following part will present the method and argue why this particular method was used throughout the process of the study.

4.1 Choice of method

The starting point of our study came through an interest in the reasoning behind, and the experience of, a commitment to reducing social media use. This led to a search both for suitable litterature for the subject as well as a suitable method for the purpose of the study. In doing this, particularly valuable aspects of the process was to identify fitting theories for the forthcoming analysis and gain further insight into the subject (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In order for us to obtain suitable empirical material and eventually understand why people choose to digital detox, a qualitative research method was chosen. Our reasoning for this choice boils down to this method being the one which offers the best possibility of gaining a deeper understanding of the respondents, and their more intrinsic reasoning when commiting to a digital detox. This is in turn suitable for the purpose of the study (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

The empirical material used for the study was then gathered through the use of interviews, with a focus on less structure than in quantitative research. The reasoning behind this is to provide the opportunity to ask follow up questions and such, for us as interviewers to ask specific questions to the individual respondents to further the knowledge about their specific situation. What this means in practice is that we will use a semistructured structure, with a set of pre-decided questions with the possibility of follow-ups (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Furthermore, the interviews were done with the help of ten respondents. In addition to the empirical material, secondary sources of literature were gathered in order to support the material received from the interviews. This secondary research mainly came in the form of scientific articles.

Whilst this kind of qualitative research with the help of semi structured interviews is common, conducting qualitative research in the area of psychology is still a rather new and young research venue. Because of how short the lifespan of qualitative psychological research has been up until now, there have been some hazards throughout this study which we have had to take into consideration (Brinkmann, 2014). One such hazard in qualitative psychological research is

increased standardization of the research, which goes against the fundamentals of both qualitative research as well as the science of psychology. This problem can for example occur when putting together the interview structure, where an issue might lie in asking the exact same questions to all respondents. This does in turn promote too much of standardization in terms of what the research aims to achieve. Standardization in itself entails increased efficiency, predictability and control, but when the aim of qualitative psychological research is to dive deeper into underlying reasons, this becomes a problem. Given how differing reasoning and values can be from one person to another, it is much more beneficial to shape a qualitative interview for instance with the specific individual in mind. This can, for example, be done through semi structured interviews, where follow up questions can be asked with each respondent's thoughts specifically in mind. Staying away from this type of standardization is something which we continuously have been working towards, thus giving us as good empirical material as possible.

4.2 Interviews

There are a few different ways in qualitative methods to conduct the research, however we settled on interviews as previously mentioned (Alvehus, 2013.) Our reasoning for this is that interviews in this context are regarded as the best option for really understanding the feelings, thoughts and actions in different situations. Through these properties of qualitative interviews, we think this method is a suitable way to obtain a clearer understanding of both how and why people choose to avoid different social media.

To support the semi-structured nature of the interviews, an interview guide was prepared before interviews were conducted. The questions were of open nature and primarily based on aspects such as psychology and mental health (Alvehus, 2013). This was done in order for us to garner as much relevant material as possible in the context of the purpose and research question of the study. The openness of the questions asked comes down to this providing the best opportunity for us as interviewers to both gain an initial understanding of the respondents feelings surrounding a particular question, as well as the option for follow up questions. This once again points back to granting us the ability to really understand the feelings, thoughts and actions of the individual respondents.

In addition to our desire to access knowledge about the respondents feelings, thoughts and actions, these aspects of human nature of course exist for us as interviewers as well (Bryman and Bell, 2011). With this in mind, aspects such as certain biases and values that could turn out to be detrimental to the interview process need to be handled accordingly in order for us to avoid affecting the answers provided by the respondents. Whilst totally ignoring your own thoughts and values is almost impossible, the issue at hand instead comes down to being able to suppress them enough to grant a venue for the respondents to present entirely truthful answers.

4.3 Selection

In the selection process for the study, many of the respondents were chosen from preexisting friendships, resulting in a bit of convenience selection on our part (Alvehus, 2013). In terms of time-management for the study as a whole this is a positive aspect, meaning that the search for relevant respondents was made much easier. This type of convenience selection could also prove to be fruitful when it comes to the actual interview process. Given the preexisting relationship, the respondents can come into the interviews more relaxed from the start and therefore hopefully be able to provide more truthful answers. However, none of the respondents had such a strong relation to us that we would know what they would answer beforehand, which could have affected both the questions and answers during the interview.

It is also worth noting that we have had to be quite limited in our search for suitable interviewees, since the respondents had to have already committed to a digital detox prior to the selection process. This is because the respondents needed to be able to provide relevant information for the purpose of the study, meaning that far from everyone who might have been interested in partaking in such a study would be suitable.

4.4 Respondents

Included in the table below are the respondents names, age, occupation, nationality and method of detox. Their location is not specified beyond country of origin, and their real names have been replaced by a pseudonym to respect their anonymity. Additionally, while all respondents have at

some point chosen to entirely detox from various social media, the method in which they went about it differed to some degree. Due to this, their chosen way of detoxing is specified in the table below.

Table 1

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Nationality	Method of Detox
Noah	22	Student	Swedish	Locked all social media usage using software for 2 weeks
William	23	Student/Entrepreneur	Finnish	Left phone at home while going on a 10 day long military excursion
Liam	22	Student	Swedish	Deleted all social media from phone for 2 years, still ongoing
Hugo	23	Student	Swedish	Deleted all social media from phone for a few weeks, as well as periodically restricting social media use to 5 minutes per day
Lucas	22	Student	Swedish	Replaced smartphone with an older, simpler phone without social media capabilities for 4 months
Adam	25	Engineer	Swedish	Periodically removes all social media apps, usually for about 3 months at a time
Oliver	22	Military	Swedish	Deleted all social media before going on 6-month long military excursion, 8 month detox in total
Matteo	20	Student	Swedish	Deleted all social media

				from phone for 2 months
Alice	31	Banker	Swedish	Deleted all social media from phone for 6-12 months
Frans	22	Student	German	Deleted all social media from phone for 3 months

4.5 Transcription

We commenced with the transcription of each interview right after they were completed, in order for us to spread out the workload as much as possible to avoid having a mountain of material to transcribe at the end of the writing process.

After the transcription process, the process of analyzing the material could begin. To facilitate this process, the method of coding the transcribed material was used (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In this method, the empiric material is analyzed down to the smallest elements and studied to find certain similarities and differences in the responses received. In doing this, it will be easier to group similar responses from different respondents together for further analysis in accordance with our theoretical framework. This process also provides a very thorough review of all the collected material, which in turn means that the possibility of missing relevant information lessens significantly (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

4.6 Discussion of the method

Previously in this chapter, the discussion regarding our choice of qualitative interviews has mainly dealt with the positive aspects and how this is suitable for our study. As with almost everything, there are both negative and positive aspects with processes such as this (Bryman and Bell, 2011). One negative aspect with the methods we have chosen is that they tend to be quite time consuming. Regarding the interviews, both the preparatory work of finding fitting respondents and setting up interview appointments and the actual interview in itself can take more time than one might have expected beforehand. In addition to this, the possibility of us as

interviewers misinterpreting some of the responses we receive might lead to skewed results and therefore empirical material which is not entirely reliable. These same problems can present themselves when it comes to the transcription and coding of the interviews. The process in itself of analyzing and studying all the material can take a lot of time, with the same problems of misinterpretation present as well.

If these problems were to occur in our study, particularly those regarding the misinterpretation of information, the question of trustworthiness regarding the study could also be raised. The concept of trustworthiness refers to the level of confidence which can be put into the empirical data, the methods used as well the interpretation of the data in qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness is in itself divided into four main characteristics, each tasked with ensuring confidence in the study: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility ensures that the research was both conducted and presented in good faith, in accordance with scientific practice. Transferability handles how easily the results of qualitative research can be generalized or used in different avenues, whilst dependability means that enough data is collected and kept to ensure reliability. Lastly, confirmability handles issues with personal values and such of the researcher and is there to ensure that the researcher has not allowed these personal thoughts to affect the conducted research.

To ensure credibility in the research, we recorded each interview with consent from each interviewee, and the quotes we received from the respondents are presented unaltered both in Swedish and English. This was done to ensure that the research in itself was conducted in good faith, as well as the latter presentation of said empirical material. In order to provide transferability, the findings of this study has to be able to contribute to differing scientific avenues. Whilst this aspect was not something that we had in mind through the conduction of the research, the findings in the empirical material could still prove to be of use in other instances.

Dependability was established in the study with the help of the length of the interviews, combined with the number of respondents partaking in the study. This ensured that enough empirical data was collected, which in turn means that reliability in the study could be ensured.

The confirmability was handled through us as researchers, where we kept our own thoughts and beliefs at bay during the interviews to ensure truthful answers from the respondents. This also enabled the respondents to give more insight and thought into their answers, thus providing us with more in depth information.

In addition to the collection of empirical data, this data also needs some backup from previous research and scientific articles to strengthen its credibility. In this case, the previous research mostly came in the form of how social media has affected areas of peoples day-to-day life, such as productivity in the workplace as well as issues between social media usage and the general wellbeing of people. In our selection process for the specific research and articles for this study, we have had to be thorough in our search for theories and such which we think would be suitable for the study and the analysis of our empirical data. This does of course contain a great deal of critical viewing of the sources at hand, and we think that we have done a good job of selecting credible sources which would enhance the study as a whole. However, all these things granted, the possibility does of course still exist that we have made an oversight in some way. Whether that be our own biases coming in the way, or some misinterpretation of the sources we used, the possibility still stands that we may have made an error in these processes.

5 Results and analysis

In the following part, the results from the interviews we conducted will be presented and analyzed in the context of our chosen theoretical framework.

The answers from our respondents will be analyzed using the *uses and gratifications, belongingness, self-determination* and *procrastination theories*. Quotes from the respondents will be provided to contextualize the discussion. If a quote has been translated from Swedish, the original quote is available in the appendix.

5.1 Detoxing and wellbeing

In our interviews, we tried to put focus on figuring out the underlying motivations from the respondents in their decisions to detox from various social media platforms. In addition to this, we also tried to gauge the main consequences of their decisions.

Many of the motivations and consequences were related to a search for gratification. In regards to motivations for detoxing, our main findings from the responses we received came in the form of issues related to stress, anxiety and a frustration with seeing others' leading "perfect lives", as well as an opposition to the societal obsession with seeking gratification through likes and attention. In terms of the consequences of doing a digital detox, multiple respondents reported issues with communication, a growing desire to escape reality, and feelings of being left out. These recurring motivations and consequences from our respondents will be analyzed using the 10 gratifications behind social media use found in the uses and gratifications theory (Whitings and Williams, 2013).

Stress and Anxiety

The most common motivator behind a detox from social media was related to the stress and anxiety caused by the search for gratification on social media, both from seeing others seeking gratification, but also through wanting to attain gratification for oneself. While surveillance and knowledge about others was one of the most important gratifications motivating social media use among respondents, this surveillance often led to comparing one's own life to friends' lives (Whitings and Williams, 2013). Many respondents felt anxiety when seeing their friends post pictures of themselves looking happy and leading seemingly problem-free lives, and as a result, felt that their own lives were dull and uneventful compared to the lives of people around them. One respondent described the feeling like this:

"When one tries to create a perfect life. Like, oh, you're doing this and that and it's so damn perfect. I think it creates a fake perception of reality. That's why I've heavily reduced [using social media]."

-Oliver (1)

Most respondents considered comparing their own lives to others' as unfair, and believed their friends' social media feeds only included the highlights in their life, which were curated in order to create a "fake reality", in an attempt to gain gratification in the form of information sharing (Whiting and Williams, 2013). Despite believing that others' posts on social media might not accurately reflect reality, the anxiety from comparing lives seemed to persist as long as they kept seeing the anxiety-causing posts. One respondent described the conflicting ideas like this:

The feeling is that your life is just boring. Even though I do a lot of stuff, like climbing, traveling, my job is eventful, a lot of laughs, life is eventful. But due to being overwhelmed by apps with lots of info in a short period of time you feel like, am I living a boring life?"

-Adam (1)

For some, such as Oliver and Adam, this anxiety was seemingly enough to motivate them to detox from social media, as their aversion to the "fake reality" presented by friends drew them away from engaging with social media platforms.

On the flip side, other respondents reported that these feelings of inadequacy and its accompanying anxiety had an almost opposite effect, as their desire to attain gratification through social media increased. Multiple respondents described having deliberately and strategically attempted to attain social media followers and likes in order to match their friends' activity, and receive the gratification that they felt they were missing out on.

"The first goal was to get 100 likes. Get more followers. To see how it feels to be active, I wanted to make it work. Chase attention. Feel appreciated. Stand in the limelight, show yourself doing something fun."

-Liam (1)

While the case of Oliver and Adam exemplifies that seeing others attain gratification via social media is often enough to motivate a detox, those similar to Liam felt that this anxiety motivated them to go the opposite route. In these cases, the motivation to detox came later, once they had made a serious attempt to attain gratification via information sharing. Another respondent said that once they were active on social media, the feelings of inadequacy persisted as they were anxious that their posts did not make them seem attractive enough, or did not present an image of

their life that was interesting. Through comparing the responses from Oliver and Adam to those similar to Liam, it could be argued that while the routes to their detox looked different, anxiety and the search for gratification is ultimately a strong motivator behind many peoples' decision to detox.

Communication

Many of our respondents stated that they had troubles regarding their communication among friends and family after their detox from social media. For example, when prompted with the question of what some of the main consequences of detoxing from social media were, one respondent stated:

"One negative effect I guess is that you are not as connected to other people, and lose the connection with some people. That is something that I perhaps felt, a bit. "

- Oliver (2)

Similar notions as this one was presented to us from many of our respondents, pointing towards the difficulty of keeping in touch with people who perhaps had moved far away thus prompting difficulties in maintaining contact in person. On the contrary, many of our respondents also stated that the main purpose of them using social media was to stay connected with friends in different ways. For example, one of the people we interviewed stated the following when asked about the primary functions of social media:

"It depends on what app, but mainly to communicate with friends. For example Snapchat, that is only used for communication"

- Liam (2)

With these aspects in mind, why did these respondents choose to quit social media given the difficulties in carrying out the very reason as to why they used social media in the first place? In addition to this, two of the main gratifications driving social media use presented in the theoretical framework is the social interaction that comes with social media, as well as the convenience of social media due to its accessibility at any given time (Whiting & Williams, 2013). This goes hand in hand with the responses presented to us by our interviewees. So, why did they quit?

We think that major contributions to this decision comes in the form of the stress and anxiety connected with social media, in combination with the frustration of seeing other people's perfect lives. What this means in practice is that despite the many uses of social media in their terms of facilitation of social interaction and continuous accessibility, these important aspects face too much of a drawback from the negative aspects of social media. Although it can be very easy to utilize a social media platform to communicate with people far away, it often comes at the expense of being exposed to warped realities which seem impossible to live up to. This cost becomes too much of a burden in comparison with the benefits, thus prompting a desire to get away from these negative feelings.

A desire to escape reality

Apart from the issues related to communication with friends and family, many of the respondents also expressed that a big consequence of social media was that it became too much of an escape from reality and that it became too much of a nuisance.

For example, one of the respondents gave this answer when asked about the main consequences of detoxing from social media:

"Reality became more melancholic. When I did not have anything to receive my doses of dopamine from, life did sort of become grayer, I would say."

\- Lucas (1)

Another respondent had this thought regarding the matter:

"It was like a habit, that you are used to stimulating the brain, that it has to do something. When I watch football now for example, I try to put my phone away just to focus on something."

\- Hugo (1)

As previously mentioned, many of the respondents had similar thoughts as these. A general consensus was also presented, in terms of extended amounts of screen time providing a much too prolonged escape from actual reality and that this was detrimental to the general mental health. These notions also tie in to our theoretical framework, in regards to the main gratifications driving social media consumption (Whiting & Williams, 2013). For example, social media

provides entertainment, platforms to express one's opinion, as well as a means to pass time. These aspects of social media use ties in well with the general image amongst the respondents regarding how social media can provide an escape from reality. However, as stated before, the respondents also felt like this escape from reality provided more negative effects than positive. Our thoughts on this approach from the respondents comes from an underlying desire among the respondents to live more in the present, and avoid spending too much time on social media and escaping reality in that manner. This is something which also can be exemplified with a quote from one of the interviewees:

"The first years that social media came, you were addicted. You understood that it was not good for you. I think that humans are not made to receive so much information in such a short time. Social media relies on dopamine-release prompting euphoric sensations, and you are used to receiving large amounts of information in a short amount of time. That makes life outside of social media boring, because it is not as eventful as the apps."

- Adam (2)

This quote provides insight into why too much of an escape from reality can be detrimental, and it also provides valuable information towards the sensations of melancholy and a grayer world outside of social media. In commencing with a detox from social media, the scales would presumably shift towards a more balanced worldview were the lessened wave of continuous information from social media and therefore more time to live in the present.

Feelings of being left out

Lastly, many of the respondents also felt that a rather big consequence of detoxing from social media was the feeling of being left out. The general consensus among the interviewees who put forth such feelings was that the detox was detrimental to the connection primarily with their separate friend groups, and that it was difficult to stay connected with the dynamic of the groups. One example of such an instance was presented like this:

"I felt a bit left out, I missed stuff. Initially I was very much intertwined with that world, so i missed out on some stuff"

- Liam (3)

Another respondent put forward a similar image:

"If it was relevant for me, someone would come and ask me "Have you seen what has been going on in the group conversation?" And then they would instead tell me in real life. Everything became a slower way of communicating, I think."

- Lucas (2)

As previously mentioned, and exemplified through these quotes, missing out on group related activities and such was a big consequence rendered from the avoidance of social media. Aspects such as these also tie in with various features concerned with the main gratifications driving social media use (Whiting & Williams 2013). The social interactions gained from a friend group, the entertainment and relaxation from being around people you enjoy the company of, platforms for information sharing regarding each other's lives as well as a way of having knowledge about others are all characteristics of friend groups that were highlighted with the help of social media. With all these aspects of gratification having the possibility of being fulfilled through interactions with your friend groups (which in turn were made easier through social media), why would you choose to detox from social media in this context? Once again, we think that this connects back to the stress and anxiety intertwined with the very nature of social media. Aside from the positive aspects of friend groups and their connection with social media, the stress of seeing how these very friends lead their perfect lives presented in a warped fashion compared to reality can become quite anxiety-inducing. These aspects of being presented a warped, overly positive view of the world can also tie in with tiredness of the fakeness of social media which also was presented by many of our respondents. Therefore, despite the many positive aspects of social media interaction combined with friend groups, these drawbacks would in all these cases prove to be too overbearing.

Another aspect that was presented to us from the respondents in the interviews, which is somewhat also connected to the feelings of being left out, was the desire to create relationships with people and feel a belonging to a group (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). These desires often stem from an underlying self-motivation of being part of something greater, and this belonging could in turn prove to have quite favorable effects on the mental health of the individuals

involved. In the interviews conducted by us, there were interestingly enough largely differing views on the importance of social media in this context.

On one hand, many of our respondents stated that it was difficult without social media to connect with their friend groups and to feel that they belong there. This ties back to the aforementioned feelings of being left out, where respondents felt that it was difficult to keep up with their friend groups with the absence of social media. One of the respondents, when prompted with the question whether the detox got in the way of anything, gave this response:

"Well, it comes down to priorities. [The detox] got in the way of the social interactions that I usually have. People would write to me and ask if I wanted to play League of Legends or jump into a Discord call, and stuff like that. I can say that it was two pretty lonely weeks."

- Noah (1)

Here we see a fitting example of the struggle of feeling disconnected from your group of friends, in this instance because of lessened social media usage, can be detrimental to the overall feeling of wellbeing for an individual. Through this periodic isolation, the particular individuals expressing these feelings would miss out on reaping the benefits of the relationships that they have cultivated over the years, which in turn proved to be detrimental.

On the other hand, interestingly, one of our respondents provided an entirely contrasting viewpoint compared to the interviewees who expressed that the detox was destructive towards their sense of belonging. This respondent stated that he felt that he belonged better with his friend group despite cutting down on social media usage, and provided the following insight as to why he had these thoughts:

"I have a much more established friend group now, in which I do not feel the falseness that I felt in high school maybe. I do not feel the need for social media in the same way. I feel much more comfortable with most of them."

"What was interesting, and which confirmed my frustration, was that when I removed social media there was not any difference with the people that I liked to hang out with. Social media was not needed in order to stay in contact with them"

\- Hugo (2)

With this response, we are provided an entirely different point of view as to how important social media is to keep in touch with your friend groups. Taking a bit of a deeper look, what are the underlying reasons for these vastly differing opinions?

Starting from the angle of avoidance of social media being detrimental to the desire of belongingness, this could very well be connected to the underlying needs of gratification that has been established to be extensive throughout social media usage (Whiting and Williams, 2013). With some of the features of gratifications driving social media use being aspects such as outlets for social interaction, expression of opinions, information sharing as well as knowledge about others, a strong case could be made that these very same characteristics also drive the feelings of belonging. The desire for relationships and belonging to a group are in many ways similar to the fundamentals of gratification, in manners such as wanting confirmation from your peers and requiring social interaction with said peers (Baumeister and Leary, 1995**)**. With these theories sharing some many attributes, it is plausible to state that an underlying need for gratification also affects the desire for belonging.

From the angle of avoidance of social media being beneficial to the desire of belongingness, we think that this viewpoint is more connected to the aspect of being tired of the fakeness of social media. In this situation, the aforementioned tiredness provides too many destructive prospects to be perceived in a favorable manner for the desire of belonging. What this in turn means is that the friendships and relationships that have managed to be built and can withstand avoidance of social media are perceived in a much more favorable nature. When the fakeness of people you do not particularly like have been removed from the equation, the remnants can fulfill the desire of belonging by themselves.

5.2 Detoxing and self-control

From inside or outside?

When asked what role extrinsic factors (such as influence from friends with detox-experience, or exposure to the digital detox trend) had played a role leading up to their decision to detox, all but one respondent insisted that their decision to detox had come almost entirely from themselves and their personal, intrinsic motivations. However, after asking follow-up questions, multiple respondents reported having had friends who had previously gone through digital detoxes, but almost every respondent claimed this did not have any particular influence in their decision to detox. Two respondents said they had got the idea to detox from a friend, but one of them questioned if this played a major role in their decision:

"I got the idea from a friend who had done the same thing. At the same time, I don't want to say that… For me, it feels obvious that if [social media] is banned I will likely study more. That doesn't feel like an external factor, it feels like that comes from the inside."

-Noah (2)

However, there is a case to be made that knowing someone who has undergone a detox is influential. Two respondents, both in the military, reported getting groups of 5-10 other colleagues to detox from social media alongside their own detox. Adding to that, a majority of respondents claimed that one or more people they knew had been impressed with their decision to detox, and showed interest in detoxing themselves (Ryan and Deci, 2000). These experiences would argue for the influence knowing someone who has participated in detoxing can have, and put into question whether all respondents were as steered by intrinsic motivations as they let on. Naturally, it can be difficult to estimate the role extrinsic factors play in any decision, and according to the self determination theory, possessing autonomy over one's own decisions is an important part of feeling motivated to commit to a decision, potentially leading to respondents underestimating the amount of influence they had from friends and other extrinsic factors.

As for the role the digital detox trend played in their decision, half were aware of the trend, but nobody reported having made a particular effort to become knowledgeable or involved with the trend itself. In other words, no participant seemed to have made an active decision to participate

in a detox as a part of the digital detox trend, and their decision to step away from social media happened to fall in line with the existing trend.

The respondents also stated that excessive social media usage had in the past led to reduced productivity in different situations, where procrastination was a main aspect of this (Albwi et al, 2019). One aspect of this procrastination put forth by the respondents was that they spent too much time scrolling on their phones, thus lessening productivity in that way. However, some of the respondents also put forward thoughts regarding procrastination not only being a direct effect of excessive social media usage, but rather that it is a more multifaceted issue.

Too much scrolling
Starting off with the aspect of spending too much time scrolling on various social media leading to procrastination, the issue at hand seems to be that social media has such a strong attraction in terms of social media being an outlet which has a much easier way of providing stimuli for the brain through dopamine release. One respondent shared his thoughts regarding the issue like this:

"After I downloaded those apps again, (after the detox), I have at different times deleted Instagram and Facebook because I have found myself spending too much time scrolling through those apps, more so than other apps."

"Recently I have found myself at times spending too much time just scrolling on those apps again, which have led me to delete them."
- Hugo (3)

Here we get an example of how a respondent felt that social media usage got in the way of the levels of productivity he wished to live up to. Another respondent had similar thoughts regarding how social media dampens productivity:

"During the two and a half hours that I spend on social media, Tiktok, am I being productive? No! What happens is that you get a flow of information that goes into one ear, straight out of the other, when you in fact could spend that time being productive."

"I have a personal philosophy. That is that when you get too much information per day, then you cannot perform. So I try to take in as little information as I can each day. What I realized when I removed social media, and did not receive this redundant information, was that I got more productive at work."

- Adam (3)

Here we are provided with another example of how social media was detrimental to the overall productivity of an individual, and the immediate spike in productivity which can be received when removing said disturbances. This was a notion which was generally quite widespread among the respondents, and at first glance seems to be a valid reason for quitting social media. Still, however, many of the respondents still chose to come back to social media even whilst knowing the benefits of reduced usage. Why? Let us look at some of the major reasons connected to why people get drawn towards their screens, social media and away from productivity and instead favoring procrastination.

Looking back to the theoretical framework, four types of procrastination are presented: avoidance, escapism, emergence and mood modification (Albwi et al, 2019) Some of these types can be used to great effect in order to understand why the issue of procrastination can become so palpable. Avoidance, meaning the attempts of avoiding tasks which are perceived as unenjoyable, this seems to be of particular importance among the respondents. Most of the interviewees stated that it was much easier to just grab your phone and start scrolling through social media rather than studying or working, which is also exemplified through the quotes above. These are prime examples of how easily the expected dopamine-releases from social media can sway you from doing tasks that you should be doing, but instead choosing to cave in towards procrastination.

The escapism type of procrastination is very much connected to the previously mentioned desire for belonging. Escapism in itself is the innate desire to flee towards social media in order to escape negative feelings such as loneliness, which in turn can be helped by reaching out to friends or family via social media (Albwi et al, 2019). This does naturally connect to the desire for belonging, where the main focus lies on creating relationships and belonging to a group. Whilst none of the respondents specifically stated that the desire of escaping loneliness was a

part of procrastinating, we think that this venue in some ways also was involved, perhaps subconsciously. This analysis purely comes down to the strong connection between escapism and the need for belonging, which previously in the study has been established to have been a driving force behind social media usage. The first, actual thought in many of the respondents' heads may have been more connected to avoidance aspects, but with characteristics of escapism also involved.

Emergence could also play an important role in understanding procrastination. This act of procrastination, where the respondents simply lose track of the task at hand and instead turn to social media, also seems to be apparent among the respondents (Albwi et al, 2019). This is very much connected to how easy it is to just scroll through social media on your phone, thus losing focus on what you actually should be doing.

Whilst these different types of procrastination all provide valuable insight as to why the respondents choose to avoid productivity and instead turn towards social media, it is also important to understand that the very same types also provide insight as to why the respondents choose to avoid social media and instead be productive (Albwi et al, 2019). From what we have understood from the respondents, many of them were very much aware of the issues surrounding procrastination and how easily it could influence their productivity. Whilst maybe not using the exact same terms that we use in this study, they were still well aware about issues such as how easy it can be to avoid what you should be doing, or just losing focus on what you are doing in a specific moment. From these realizations, the respondents have made efforts and active decisions to avoid what we in this study call avoidance, emergence and escapism. These efforts have often culminated in lessened social media usage, thus providing us with more insight as to why they choose to quit social media apart from the stress, anxiety, tiredness of fakeness, the desire of belonging as well as the self-determination aspects which have previously been analyzed.

Some respondents reported spending up to 20 hours per week on social media, although this varies between respondents. As having more time and focus on tasks and responsibilities was a goal among nearly every respondent, this begs an important question; how do they fill the time they "gained" by detoxing? In addition, was it used towards the goals they had going in? Most

respondents reported that they were not satisfied with how they had utilized the time they gained, in the sense that they did not fill it as well as they had expected before the detox. Only two respondents reported having successfully used their time, such as Oliver, who went into his detox partially due to wanting more time for hobbies. He put it like this:

"I got up faster in the morning. I could fill it with a light workout. I could fill the evening with some form of activity, movement. I could increase my other hobbies, in a different way. The level is different."

-Oliver (3)

However, most did not feel that they used their newfound time as well as Oliver. A common consequence of the detoxes was boredom, and feeling that they had "too much time", which they initially did not know how to fill. One respondent described his free time during the detox like this:

"I was mostly sitting around looking. Like, looking at my environment, and had conversations in my head, with myself."

-Lucas (3)

In response to this boredom, many found themselves spending more time doing things they had previously been putting off, and most respondents considered themselves more productive during their detox period, in the sense that they felt that they spent their time more wisely than when they were procrastinating on social media. However, this increased productivity did not necessarily come in the ways they had hoped or expected. One respondent that illustrates this is Noah, who underwent a detox to have more time to focus on studying for an important exam. When asked if his detox achieved that goal, Noah responded:

"Not as well as I hoped. I thought I would be able to sit hyper focused, as if I were on adderall or something, but that was absolutely not the case. I tried to find things that were fun in the real world instead. I almost always did productive things instead of studying, but I did not study as much as I expected. It led to me reading a book instead, or maybe cleaning or something. So the effects were not as good as I hoped."

-Noah (3)

Overall, most did not feel that the time they gained was spent as wisely as they had hoped. Many respondents felt that the issues standing in the way of their productivity and responsibilities did not alleviate simply due to quitting social media, but instead found new ways of manifesting themselves. Noah illustrates this, as the time he previously spent on social media to distract himself from studying was instead spent being distracted by something else. Similarly, Lucas, who is an art student, did not feel the increase in inspiration for his projects that he had hoped, and continued struggling with his designs. It seems despite having set clear goals, they continued to partake in procrastination. This result is in line with previous marketing research, which has suggested that having a set goal could actually lead to increased procrastination (Jain, 2009). It could be argued that cases like these exemplify that social media itself was not what was causing them to be distracted, but that there are other underlying factors that are hampering their productivity, and that these issues just happen to manifest themselves through social media due to its ease of access.

To summarize this chapter, the most important aspect to remember is that whilst social media can be a fantastic tool with many great characteristics and uses in today's society, there still are some major drawbacks which need to be acknowledged. These drawbacks include features such as the perpetual spread of gratification hunting intertwined with social media. Whether this hunt comes in the form of stress and anxiety, a desire to escape reality or the desire of belonging to something, it is ever present and connected to social media. In addition to this, problems regarding productivity and procrastination are also something to be aware of. Given how easy it can be to be distracted from social media when there are other things you actually should be doing, it is definitely something to be aware of.

6 Conclusion, discussion and implications

In the following part, the findings from the Results and Analysis chapter of the study will be discussed. In addition to this, some implications for marketers, society and further research will also be discussed.

6.1 Conclusion and Discussion

How and why do people limit their consumption of social media despite its importance in modern society? From our responses and subsequent analysis, there are two core motivations fueling the desire to detox from social media, and these motivations also shape the experience whilst actually undergoing a detox. The first of these is an aversion towards the hunt for gratification on social media. As presented earlier in the study, the hunt for gratification can turn out to be exceedingly large and made much easier through usage of social media. The constant search for affirmation from your peers through media such as Instagram, in the search of gratification, can in itself be both stressful and anxiety inducing. This is in no way helped by the warped presentation of everyday life on these platforms, which can present a picture which is very hard to live up to and thus also very hard to reach gratification from. In addition to this, this same need for gratification seeps into the other aspects commonly associated with social media. Through communication with your friends you are seeking gratification through contact with people, and through the desire to escape reality the seeking for gratification continues, this time in terms of entertainment venues and such. The search for gratification also takes place when it comes to feelings of being left out and the desire for belongingness. The need for relaxation, entertainment, knowing what other people do on a daily basis, forming relationships and being part of a group are some of the venues in which gratification is hunted for in these areas. All in all, this desire for gratification so vehemently connected to social media seems to have left the impression on the respondents that this hunt is much too detrimental to their overall health and well being. This pursuit in some ways or another left the respondents with a bad self image, a general feeling of not living in the now enough, and ultimately a desire to feel gratification and belongingness outside of social media. What this would mean in practice is that all these previously mentioned searches for gratification through social media usage, such as a desire to escape reality and the desire for belongingness, would instead be pursued through contact with people in real life.

The second core motivation behind the decision to lower one's consumption of social media comes from a desire to increase personal productivity. For many, using social media platforms consumes multiple hours per day, which frustrates users as they largely consider this time to be non-productive, since their time on social media often entails passive consumption of entertainment. In addition, they feel that this heavy usage stands in the way of many personal goals, such as exercising more, studying more, or spending more time with friends and family. The desire to work towards such goals, and, in general, utilize one's time more effectively, incentivizes people to minimize non-productive behavior. In effect, this can mean that cutting down, or entirely shutting out social media use is an attractive option to "regain" time.

However, once a person commits to a detox, it is not common that they spend the time they gained in the ways that they intended. While most experience a general increase in what they consider productive behavior, they do not increase time spent towards the goals they originally wanted to focus on when commencing the detox, since their time was still spent elsewhere. As such, even if a person feels a strong motivation to minimize social media consumption to gain control of their time and focus, they do not feel like a detox contributes to the goals they are working on. The conclusion we draw from this is that even if people feel that social media is keeping them from working towards their goals, removing social media from one's daily activities will not necessarily lead to an increased motivation to pursue those goals, and whatever is keeping them from working towards their goals might be something different altogether.

6.2 Implications

To conclude this study, we would like to discuss some of the implications of our findings connected to marketers, society as well as for further research.

Implications for marketers

As for the implications for marketers, the results of this study present a dilemma for marketers. On one hand, the hunt for gratifications via social media is something which could be utilized in the marketing field, as many were initially drawn to social media in pursuit of likes and social status. Marketers could push social media apps towards being more centered around needs such

as gratification and the need to belong to a social group, which could make them more addictive. On the other hand, there is an ethical and financial risk in pursuing this, as it might not only increase anxiety stemming from social media, but also lead more people to quitting social media altogether.

If marketers were to further ingrain these psychological needs into social media platforms, there are numerous options at their disposal. For example, they could push social interactions towards being increasingly online, thereby encouraging people to satisfy their need for belongingness digitally. There is arguably already a movement in that direction, through efforts such as the Metaverse, which is an initiative by various tech companies to build a virtual reality where one can live, work, and socialize (Ravenscraft, E. 2022). By offering new ways for users to access gratification and deep social desires through the use of social media, social media would not only become more addictive, it would also become increasingly interwoven and unavoidable for one's social life to function. This would make a detox even more challenging than it is today, and further incentivize social media consumption.

As previously stated however, there is a clear risk in pursuing some of these opportunities. Our results showed that there is dissatisfaction with how embedded social media is with our modern social life, and it is already causing stress and anxiety. Further marketizing people's need for gratification and belongingness could exacerbate the existing negative perception of social media, and cause further criticism and aversion to it. Marketing research has pressed on the importance of maintaining good customer relationships, which means marketers would be playing a dangerous game if they are not careful (Ryals, L., 2005). As our analysis showed, many respondents chose to give up on the search for gratification via social media, and instead aimed toward gratification from real life, often due to a distaste of the way social media offers its gratification. If more people stepped away from social media, following the same reasoning, it could lead to social media having less of an impact on society as a whole. Thus, marketers have to walk a fine line between further marketizing these psychological needs, while still offering a service that does not cause enough psychological harm to motivate a detox.

Implications for society

When it comes to implications for society, we think that the insights from this study can become quite an eye opener for many people concerning their screen- and social media consumption. Not only in terms of how much time is spent on social media each day, but also the ramifications of this exaggerated usage. As has previously been discussed quite substantially in the study already, the constant hunt for various forms of gratification facilitated by social media is what we have deduced to be the main underlying reason for the digital detox among our respondents. On a societal view, we think that the reasons for increased social media usage, i.e the hunt for gratification, are the same. Therefore, the actions the respondents took for their respective detoxes could prove to be quite successful in society as well, should society at large come to have the same desire to cut down on social media consumption.

There could also be societal implications related to our productivity-related findings. As many choose to use social media as a means of procrastinating, there are two potential consequences for society at large. First, many reported a frustration with almost compulsively using social media instead of focusing on work, school, or other responsibilities. This leads them to using social media for hours every day, leaving them with less time to focus on these responsibilities as they feel they would like. Second, many feel under-stimulated by regular day-to-day activities as gratification comes easier through social media compared to "real life". If these experiences are to be applied on a societal scale, it could lead to a generally lower rate of productivity. This could affect not only productivity at work, but also personally, as people might put less time and effort into personal relationships, exercise, and other important responsibilities, as social media can lower the amount of time one spends on these, as well as one's willingness and interest in taking part in them. However, social media is a relatively new phenomenon, it can be hard to predict if these issues will be persistent and widespread enough to cause notable harm to society, or if society at large will learn to manage their social media use in a more balanced way.

Further research

Given the vast importance of social media in today's society, as well as its significant implications on productivity and mental health, there are quite a few aspects from our study which could prove to be interesting for further research. One such aspect could be to gather more

respondents who have previously digitally detoxed to some extent, in order to receive more data and therefore more insight into the matter.

While this study focused specifically on a detox from social media, a digital detox can come in many forms. Some might take a more dedicated approach than our respondents, and undergo a complete detox from all screens and digital devices, or detox for a significant amount of time, such as a year or longer. Due to the varying nature of detoxes, it might be of interest to study other types of detoxes, and examine the motivations and outcomes from these, as a year-long detox from all digital devices could show different effects than a shorter, social-media oriented detox. As many of our respondents quit their detox when it became a hindrance to managing their everyday life, the consequences of a more dedicated digital detox might be of interest, to understand how one makes a completely screen-free life possible in a time that is so dependent on staying connected.

Given the difficulty of carrying out such a detox, another form of detox that would also be valuable to understand is one that is less committed, such as avoiding screens at specific times during the day, or limiting screen usage to a specific amount of time each day. Understanding the effects of a detox like this would give insight into the degree to which one should participate in the digital detox trend while still feeling its positive consequences, if one can attain their goal with a detox without suffering the social consequences of a complete detox.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Interview guide

Intro

-Age?

-Country?

-Occupation/studies?

-What do you do in your spare time? Hobbies?

General screens:

-How much do you use screens in a day? What type, phone/computer? For what?

-How much do you use your phone? What do you primarily use it for?

-Do you use screens for school/work? Do you use screens for any other productive purposes?

-How much do you use screens for entertainment purposes?

-Where do you most often use screens? At home/work/school/other?

-Over the last 5 Years, how would you say that your screen-usage has changed?

Social media:

-Which social media platforms do you use?

-When you do use social media, what do you use it for?

-How much do you use it on a normal day?

-Do you need it for school/work?

-Do you use social media for any hobbies?

-Is social media important for your social life? How?

-Do you need it to keep in touch with friends?

-Are your friends active on social media?

-Is social media important for you to make your life work?

Detox:

-In what way did you detox from social media?

-All social media or some specific platforms?

-For what amount of time? Periodically or just once?

-Have you ever done something like this before?

Motivations

-What was your main motivation for quitting?

-Were there any other, smaller motivating factors?

-Was there a moment where you decided or did it build up over time?

-Did you feel that social media was in the way of anything? In what way?

-Have you heard of the digital detox trend before? Do you know someone else who has undergone a similar detox?

-If yes, where did you hear about it? Did it influence your decision?

-If not, did your decision to detox come about entirely without outside influence?

Consequences

-What were the main consequences of you quitting social media?

-Did quitting social media lead to the intended effects?

-What impact did it have on your social life?

-Was it harder to keep up with friends? Trends? News? How?

-What impact did it have on your work/study life?

-How did you fill the time?

-Did others react to your detox?

-Overall, was the digital detox a positive or negative experience for you?

-Would you do it again?

8.2 Original Quotes in Swedish

Below are all quotes that were included, as they were before translation from Swedish.

Oliver 1

"När man försöker skapa att man har ett perfekt liv. Jaha, du gör det här och det här som är så jäkla perfekt. Jag tycker det skapar en fake bild av verkligheten. Därför har jag kraftigt reducerat det."

Adam 1

"Känslan är att ditt liv bara är tråkigt. Även om man gör en del grejer, som att jag klättrar, reser, mitt jobb är händelserikt, mycket skratt, livet är händelserikt. Men på grund av att man blir överväldigad av apparna med mycket info på kort tid känner man "lever jag ett tråkigt liv"?"

Liam 1

"Första målet var att skaffa 100 likes. Få fler följare. För att se hur det kändes att vara aktiv, jag ville få det att funka. Jaga uppmärksamhet. Känna sig uppskattad. Hamnar lite i rampljuset, visa upp att man gör nåt kul."

Oliver 2

"En negativ effekt blir väl att man inte är lika uppkopplad till andra människor, och tappar kontakten med vissa människor. Det kände man ju att man kanske gjorde, lite."

Liam 2

"Beror på vilken. Men främst interagera med kompisar. Typ snap, det används bara till kommunikation."

Lucas 1

"Verkligheten blev mer melankolisk. När jag inte hade någonting att få dopamindoserna så blev liksom hela livet lite gråare, skulle jag säga."

Hugo 1

"Det var liksom en sån vana, att man är van vid att stimulera hjärnan, att den måste göra någonting. När jag kollar fotboll nu exempelvis försöker jag lägga bort mobilen, just för att koncentrera sig på någonting."

Adam 2

"Dem första åren sociala medier kom var man beroende, man fattade inte att det inte var bra för en. Jag tror att människan inte är gjord för att få in så stora mängder information på så kort tid. Sociala medier bygger på att utlösa dopamin som gör att man får lyckorus, och man är van vid att få stora mängder info på kort tid. Det gör att livet utanför sociala medier blir tråkigt, för det är inte lika händelserikt som apparna."

Liam 3

"Kände mig lite utanför, missade grejer. Inledningsvis så var jag väldigt inne i den världen, så missade lite grejer."

Lucas 2
"Om det var relevant för mig så kom någon och frågade "Har du sett vad som händer i gruppkonversationen?" Och då berättar dom det istället i verkligheten. Allting blev ett långsammare sätt att kommunicera, tror jag."

Noah 1
"Ja, det handlar ju om prioriteter, den kom ju i vägen för sociala interaktioner som jag vanligtvis har. Folk skrev ju till mig och frågade om jag ville köra lol eller hoppa in i discord och såna grejer. Jag kan väl säga att det var ganska ensamma två veckor."

Hugo 2
"Har en mycket mer etablerad kompisgrupp, som jag inte känner den här falskheten som var i gymnasiet kanske. Behöver inte sociala medier på samma sätt. Känner mig mycket mer bekväm med de flesta."

"Det som var så intressant, och som bekräftade min frustration, att när jag tog bort sociala medier blev det ingen skillnad på dem som jag ändå gillade att hänga med. Dem behövdes det inga sociala medier för att ha kontakt med."

Noah 2
"Jag fick ju ideen av en kompis som gjort samma sak. Samtidigt vill jag inte säga att.. För mig låter det så uppenbart att om allt det här är bannat kommer du antagligen plugga mer. Det känns inte som en extern faktor, det känns som det kommer inifrån."

Hugo 3
"Efter att ha laddat ner dem apparna igen, så har jag vid vissa tidpunkter tagit bort Instagram och Facebook för att jag slöscrollar mer på dem än andra. På senare tid har jag kommit på mig själv med att slöscrolla, och tar därför bort dem."

Adam 3
"Under de 2,5 timmar jag sitter på sociala medier, tiktok, är man produktiv? Nej. Det som händer är att man tar in informationsflöde som går in i ena örat, ut genom andra, när man i själva verket kan utnyttja tiden till att vara produktiv."

"Jag har en personlig filosofi. Det är att när man får in för mycket info i huvet per dag, vecka, då kan man inte prestera. Så jag tar in väldigt lite info per dag. Det jag märkte var att när jag tog bort sociala medier, och inte fick den här överflödiga infon, då blev jag mer produktiv på jobbet."

Oliver 3
"Man var snabbare upp på morgonen. Kunde fylla det med ett lätt träningspass. Man kunde fylla kvällen med någon form av aktivitet, rörlighet. Jag kunde öka mina andra hobbies, på ett annat sätt. Nivån är annorlunda."

Lucas 3

"Jag satt mest och kolla. Sådär, kolla på omgivningen, och hade konversationer i huvudet, med mig själv."

Noah 3
"Inte lika bra som jag tänkte. Jag tänkte jag skulle kunna sitta där hyperfokuserad som att jag var på adderall eller något, men så var det absolut inte. Jag försökte hitta saker som var roliga i verkliga världen istället. Jag gjorde näst intill alltid produktiva saker istället för att plugga, men det blev inte lika mycket plugg som man tänkte sig. Det ledde till att man läste en bok istället, eller kanske städar eller någonting. Så effekterna var inte lika bra som jag tänkte mig."