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Is it time for a Social Media Detox?

Understanding the journey of intermittent
discontinuance of Instagram among Gen Y

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Abstract

Background: Even though the use of social media is one of the most popular activities of our time a decline in the number of active users can be observed at present. Users discontinue using social media platforms temporarily or stop the usage permanently. Thereby, the trend to do a social media detox has emerged, meaning users consciously take a break from social media platforms like Instagram, often for a set period of time. Instagram is one of the most widely used social media platforms of the younger generation, especially Generation Y, and is also noted for its addictive potential.

Purpose: Previous studies and scholars have primarily concentrated on the permanent discontinuance of social media, whereby users permanently stop using social media platforms without actively planning to return. Thereby, the focus of the research was often on the social media network Facebook. By studying the journey of intermittent discontinuance of Instagram, the purpose of this research study is to explore Generation Y's motivation before, experiences and feelings during and post-behavior after a 14-day detox by holistically representing the Instagram Detox Journey.

Method: To fulfil the purpose of this thesis being of exploratory nature, a qualitative research design was applied. Empirical data were collected over 4 weeks, beginning with a focus group discussion before, followed by diary research during and 15 in-depth semi-structured interviews after the detox, and concluding with another focus group discussion at a later time. Using an inductive approach, the data was decoded, analysed, and interpreted using thematic analysis.

Conclusion: The findings of the study show two main motivations before starting the detox: gaining back control and self-reformation. During the detox, five final themes were identified: mood & satisfaction, technological craving, mental well-being, physical well-being, and social relationships. Lastly, three different post-behaviors after completion were noted: the boomerang effect, conscious consumption, and an attitude change. The findings led to the development of the conceptual framework “Instagram Detox Journey”.

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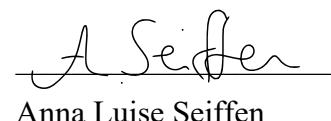
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Anna Luise Seiffen

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List of Abbreviations

D	Diary
e.g.	for example
et al.	and others
FG	Focus Group
Gen Y	Generation Y
i.e.	that is
IG	Instagram
I	individual Interview
p.	page
P	Participant

1. Introduction

The primary objective of the initial chapter is to introduce the reader to the context of the research topic. The first section begins with a brief background on why the research topic is relevant, followed by an explanation of the research problem. Further, the purpose of the study is explained, and the research questions are presented. As a final, the chapter ends with a presentation of the key terms used in this study.

"I want to give my mind and myself the opportunity to understand that we don't have to be perfect. Life isn't a race we have to win with envy and jealousy by posting our "best" moments, and we're not loved more if we have more followers than the others." – Diary Extract Participant 14

1.1. Background

The use of social media is one of the most popular activities of our time. Currently, over 3.5 billion people around the world use some form of social media, a number projected to increase in the next years to almost 4.41 billion in 2025 (Statista, 2022). Researchers have found that not only more people using social media platforms, but they have also become a bigger part of an individual's life during the past years by taking up to two hours every day on average (Cassandra, 2016).

Among the many different social media platforms that can be found on the world wide web, especially Instagram is one of the globally most popular platforms with about 1 billion monthly users. In particular, younger people between the age of 25 and 34, the so-called digital natives who belong to Generation Y, are the most active users (Barnhart, 2021; Bolton et al., 2013; Jorge, 2019). Furthermore, Instagram can be conceived as a virtual space for aesthetic visual communication due to the high variety of images, types, and content shared (Barrio Romera, 2018). Therefore, the platform has a reputation when it comes to addictiveness and intensity of use (Jorge, 2019).

At the same time, a decline in the number of active users can be observed at present, leaving the social media platforms in a dilemma: currently, numerous users reduce their

time spent online, disconnect from the platform temporarily, or even stop their usage permanently (Jorge, 2019; Zhou et al., 2018). In the literature, it is referred to a user's discontinuance of social media, which currently affects a wide variety of platforms. The discontinuance of an innovation was initially introduced by Rogers (1976) and is often considered as the permanent end of its life cycle, which implies that consumers stop using something permanently (Rogers, 1995). However, especially in the case of social media, a distinction can be made between permanent discontinuance and intermittent discontinuance. In the case of intermittent discontinuance, it is assumed that the user may leave or not use the platform for a certain period of time but re-adopt it at a later stage (Jorge, 2019; Zhou et al., 2018).

Detoxification – or detox – is a popular buzzword at the present. Originally, the term is well-known in the nutrition and health field and implies following a specific diet or using products and nutrition that claim to rid the body of toxins, improving physical and mental health and promoting weight loss (Van De Walle, 2019). Recently, more users tend to disengage and detox from social media temporarily for a certain period often set in advance (Kent, 2020). In 2022, on average people spend up to two hours and twenty-seven minutes on social media and particularly 29 minutes on the platform Instagram each day (Broadbandsearch, 2022). Accordingly, a social media detox belongs to intermittent discontinuance, as users only take a break from using social media (Zhou et al., 2018). Thereby, the idea of undergoing a social media detox is often a reaction to an increasing proliferation of digital technology and the individual's concern that this addictive form of sociality destroys meaningful or authentic connection. Users feel that they are combatting the moral dangers of modern digital technology by taking a social media detox as a reminder that life is not meant to be lived through the cell phone (Sutton, 2017). On the platform itself, this movement is taken up by users motivating each other to discontinue and telling each other about the experience they had during their own Instagram detox. Often this is underpinned by the use of tags such as #offlineisthenewluxury, #lessscrollingmoreliving, #disconnecttoreconnect, or #jomo (joy of missing out). Under these hashtags which are relatively popular, the movement of discontinuing using Instagram is narrated as needed to reach other and superior experiences by focusing more on offline activities (Jorge, 2019). By following those users

who decide to discontinue, various experiences and emotions within the journey of disconnecting and reconnecting may be explored and understood (Cai et al., 2020).

1.2. Research Problem

The trend on doing a social media detox is also reflected in the literature, as increasingly research reveals users taking a break or quitting from social media (Franks et al., 2018; Hanley et al., 2019; Pennington, 2021; York & Turcotte, 2015). As a result of the trend, the discontinuance of social media has become a relevant issue in research prompting scholars to explore the underlying motivation, the impact during the detox on the individual, and some of the behavior that follows a break or cessation (Pennington, 2021). However, in the literature, these three stages within the intermittent discontinuance of social media have only been considered in isolation from each other, rather than as a cohesive journey.

Research considers excessive use of social media as a form of internet addiction, which is becoming increasingly common among young adults (Cabral, 2011; Grau et al., 2019). In view of this, it is interesting to know for researchers how individuals deal with a break in their social media use, assuming a dependency due to an everyday use of those platforms. It is not known how individuals perceive and undergo a social media detox journey because the three stages were not explored sufficiently and holistically in previous research.

1.3. Research Purpose

Scholars have criticized the focus on permanent discontinuance of social media in previous research as there are only very few studies on intermittent discontinuance (Zhou et al., 2018). It is also striking that most discontinuance studies focus on the social network platform Facebook, whereas other platforms are almost neglected in research (Cho, 2015; Franks et al., 2018; Turel, 2015; York & Turcotte, 2015). Instagram, for instance, plays a particularly important role for younger generations and is one of the most widely used social media platform of the Gen Y (Barnhart, 2021; Jorge, 2019). This is where the present work is intended to pick up previous research and contribute to close the gap in literature. Thereby, the researchers of this work explicitly focus on intermittent discontinuance in the form of a social media detox on the platform Instagram among Gen

Y. The purpose of this work is to capture the journey of intermittent discontinuance by accompanying participants through an Instagram detox to gather personal insights. Therefore, the individuals' underlying motivation for the break should be uncovered, their feelings and experiences during the detox should be revealed in a tangible manner and their post- behavior should be explored. Based on the purpose of the research, the following three research questions emerge:

RQ1: What motivates individuals of Generation Y to discontinue using the social media platform Instagram intermittently?

RQ2: How do individuals of Generation Y experience the intermittent discontinuance of the social media platform Instagram?

RQ3: How is the post-behavior of individuals of Generation Y after the intermittent discontinuance of the social media platform Instagram?

1.4. Definition of Key Terms

For a better understanding of the research topic, the key terms used in this thesis are briefly described in the following.

Generation Y

Generation Y, also called Gen Y or Millennials, are described as digital natives because they are the first generation to have spent their entire life in the digital environment. Therefore, information technology affects how they live and work. In this paper, Gen Y is defined as all people born between the years 1980 and 2002 regardless of their circumstances (Bolton et al., 2013; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010).

Instagram

Instagram is a free social media platform for sharing photos and videos. On the platform, users can upload content to be shared with a selected group of friends or followers. In recent years Instagram has also become a popular way to interact and connect with brands, celebrities and thought leaders (Instagram, 2022).

Intermittent Discontinuance

Discontinuance was initially introduced by Rogers (1995) within its Diffusion of Innovations theory (DOI), whereby it involves the process of deciding to reject an innovation that was previously adopted (Zhou et al., 2018). Intermittent discontinuance includes the decision to stop using an innovation but to readopt it again later. Thereby, a break in the use of the innovation occurs and the discontinuance is only temporary (York & Turcotte, 2015; Zhou et al., 2018).

Journey

In the context of this paper, the term journey is not used to describe the process of travel from one place to another, but as an individual's experience of changing or developing from one state of mind to another (Collins, 2022).

Social Media

Social media is an integrated environment of websites and applications that focus on mass and interpersonal communication from which individuals can choose depending on their socio-technical purposes and needs. It offers not only a connection to the “world out there”, but also the possibility of interacting at an individual level (Kennedy, 2016).

Social Media Detox

A social media detox is a conscious elimination of social media use and consumption for a set period of time (Turel, 2015; Turel & Vaghefi, 2020).

2. Frame of Reference

The aim of this chapter is to provide a literature review of the current state of research by analyzing relevant journal articles and providing an overview that serve as a base for this study. Thereby, the chapter is clustered into three parts, starting with the key terminology and theoretical background followed by a subsequent chapter that incorporates the state of research on the journey of intermittent discontinuance in digital or social media. It encompasses the three stages: (1) motivation before the detox, (2) experiences and feelings during the detox (3) and post-behavior after the detox.

2.1. Social Media

Social media platforms and applications have become widely popular worldwide and across all industries for a variety of purposes (López-Carril et al., 2020). The term social media is defined by Kaplan (2015) as a group of internet-based applications. These applications build on the technological foundations of the Web 2.0 and further allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan, 2015). A similar definition is used by Rahman et al. (2020) who define social media websites as only technology platforms that connect individuals locally as well as internationally and which are mainly used to build relationships between the users.

2.1.1. Social Media Consumption

In recent years the use of social media platforms has become an integral part of the everyday life for many people worldwide, whereas in particular younger people spend a high amount of time on various social media websites to interact with others (Al-Gamal et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2020). Social media usage is one of the most popular online activities and used for a number of reasons, such as finding and sharing information, maintaining, managing and building relationships as well as to show and present one's own identity through uploading pictures, videos, posts or other forms of content (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019).

Technological and mobile devices can help to make aspects of an individual's life easy or easier, where, for example, one advantage of social media is that they foster

collaboration among students. Through platforms, individuals can work together intellectually and socially to achieve common goals (Faizi et al., 2013). In contrast, the use of social media platforms shows that many people, especially today's youth have become 'technology addicts' since social media platforms thrive on continuous connectedness and not the threat of interruption as it is not aspired that users spend less time there (Natale, 2017; Rather, 2013). This continuous connectedness has raised concern about users' physical health as well as mental health and well-being (Andrejevic, 2013). Therefore, several studies worldwide have explored the effects of social media usage on individuals' life with a special focus on younger generations and students. Regarding physical health aspects, temporally high usage can cause effects such as eyestrain, fatigue, lack of physical activity, low attention span, and sleeping disorders (Al-Gamal et al., 2016). Furthermore, the more time users spend on social media, the more likely they are to suffer from mental illness – with critical issues such as decreased self-esteem, anxiety or feelings of inferiority (Rahman et al., 2020). Additionally, an overuse of social media fuels a sense of unsettledness to encourage uninterrupted connectivity and generate quantifiable engagement (Lupinacci, 2021). All these negative effects on the physical and mental well-being have incited resistance movements such as maintaining a digital detox and temporary discontinuance using social media platforms (Jorge, 2019).

2.1.2. Instagram as a Social Network

One of the most popular, most-used and fastest-growing social network applications is Instagram (Moreau, 2022; Stapleton et al., 2017). Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to create a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system. Within this bounded system users articulate a list of others users which whom they might share a connection and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Essentially, the platform is a social networking app for sharing photos and videos directly from the user's smartphone that became a virtual place for visual storytelling (Moreau, 2022). Similar to platforms such as Facebook or Twitter, every person who creates an account has an own profile and a news feed. By posting a photo or video, the content is displayed in the user's profile and can be seen by others in their news feed. Similar to other social networks, users interact with others by following them, letting others follow

themselves, commenting, liking, tagging or sending private messages (Moreau, 2022). In this context, it is up to the users themselves whether they prefer to create content proactively, e.g., in the form of posting pictures or videos, or whether they consume it passively from others (Tiggemann et al., 2020).

In recent years, the platform has been popular especially for younger people sharing selfies and lifestyle content, e.g., recipes among food enthusiasts (Humphrey, 2016). However, the use and reach of the platform has changed. For celebrities and influencers, it has become the latest way to earn high amounts of money by promoting themselves and certain brands and products in form of collaborations. Moreover, for movie studios, directors and producers it became a platform to market upcoming events and projects. At the same time, many different news sites distribute the latest news through Instagram in quick time (Gardner, 2015).

2.2. Generation Y

2.2.1. Defining Generation Y

Generation Y is known as unique and fascinating consumer group, whose values and behavior are often discussed in the literature (Bolton et al., 2013; Powers & Valentine, 2013). Researchers have no consensus on the time frame of this generation, by using the term Millennials it applies to the period before the turn of the millennium (Solka et al., 2011). With reference to Schiffman and Kanuk (2010), the scholars of this paper refer to the time frame of people born in the years 1980-2002.

A clear distinction can be drawn between Gen Y and their characteristics compared to their predecessor generations (Hyllegard et al., 2010; Parment, 2013). This generation is known for being tolerant, open, respectful, and having a high self-esteem (Altinbasak-Farina & Guleryuz-Turkel, 2015; Furlow, 2011). With a strong sense of identity, autonomous action and being socially responsible they are compassed and aware of social causes. Gen Y is described as trendsetters and having a strong purchasing power which makes them an attractive target group for marketers (Gurău, 2012).

Being the first generation to spend their lives in a digital environment, the main characteristic of Gen Y is frequent use of technology (Bennett et al., 2008). Known as ‘digital natives’ they got introduced to the age of digital media, instant global

communication, and permanent connectedness at an early stage. Blogs, reviews, and social networks play a particularly important role for members of this cohort in expressing their interests and feelings (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

2.2.2. Generation Y and Social Media

Social media provides millennials with information, entertainment, as well as a sense of community. Especially, the need to interact with new contacts, friends, and family is a primary driver of social media use among the technologically savvy generation (Bolton et al., 2013). Therefore, 83% of the millennials state to use social media several times per week (VuMA, 2020) with an average use of 180 minutes per day (GlobalWebIndex, 2017).

Although social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube are undeniably popular and among the top three websites worldwide, there are certain sites or apps, mostly notably Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok, that have an especially strong following among young adults (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). Most frequently used by Gen Y is Instagram, with 62.2% of all users between the ages of 18 and 34 (DataReportal, 2021). Auxier and Anderson (2021) studied media use in the United States and found in fact that the majority of 18- to 29-year-olds use Instagram the most, followed by Snapchat and TikTok in second and third place. Rahman et al. (2020) reached a similar conclusion about the effects of social media use among students: with 41.4%, the most frequently visited social media platform is Instagram whereby millennials are generally very active social media and Instagram users.

As a platform to share and create photo and video content, people of Gen Y describe Instagram as a useful, trendy, and creative place. They use it to express their creativity and share visual moments from their lives (Clasen, 2019). Further, a majority of millennials use the social network to connect and interact, by following friends and personalities (58 %) and by keeping up with favorite celebrities, influencers (45 %) and brands (42 %). This makes people in this cohort particularly attractive for marketing measures on the platform like influencer campaigns (Gründel, 2018).

2.3. Social Media Detox

Unlike other electronic devices, smartphones can be used almost anytime and anywhere – a fact that also brings a variety of consequences for an individual’s daily life (Radtke et al., 2021). Previous studies show that the most used smartphone applications are social media platforms with a dramatically increased usage over the last decade (Brown & Kuss, 2020).

The term digital detox emphasizes the effort to raise awareness for an increased and excessive use of electronic devices (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). In 2012 the term was introduced for the first time (Felix & Dean, 2012) and is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as a period of time during which the user refrains from using electronic devices such as smartphones, regarded as an opportunity to reduce stress, boost self-optimization and/or to focus more on social interaction in the world outside the internet (Oxford Dictionaries, 2019; Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). Thereby the temporary renunciation is compared with “fasting”, where people decide to detoxify their bodies to get rid of toxins (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). Etymologically, detox implies a medical process to reduce toxins and substances which are not good for the body (Syversten & Enli, 2020). Besides the term digital detox, different other terms are used when it comes to the non-use of electronic devices, e.g., abstinence, break, disconnection, time-out or unplugged (Fioravanti et al., 2019).

In this movement there is a growing trend of detoxing from social networking sites since the multiplication of these platforms has led to increased frequency of use among young adults (El-Khoury et al., 2021; Turel & Vaghefi, 2020). While digital detoxification is a term widely used to address perceived overuse of the internet, social media detoxification applies the same principles: the conscious interruption and intermittent discontinuance of the use of social media platforms (El-Khoury et al., 2021). Therefore, the term “social media detox” is described as a subcategory and activity similar to a digital detox: people discontinue using one or more social media platforms, but not electronic devices in general (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019). Despite the distinction, the terms digital and social media detox are often used interchangeably in the literature (El-Khoury et al., 2020).

Nowadays this movement calling for abstinence from social media is increasingly popular since it is claimed to have benefits on mental well-being, social connectivity, professional productivity, and cognitive processes (Bell, 2017; Osterberg, 2016). Moreover, the movement has led to a growth of a self-help and rehabilitation conscientiousness (Sutton, 2017). However, these attempts of abstinence are not always successful because relapse may occur (Turel and Vaghefi, 2019).

2.4. Journey Perspective

Different journey perspectives exist within the literature in which the individual and its actions are observed and analyzed on the basis of different stages. One of the best known is the customer journey, which is widely used. Customer journey approaches are commonly applied especially in practical service management and design (Rawson et al., 2013). Due to a lack of a common customer journey terminology and reference literature, there seems to be no common understanding of what customer journeys are (Følstad & Kvæle, 2018). The term addresses the processual and experiential aspects of service processes as seen from the customer's viewpoint and is further described as a "walk in the customers shoes" to obtain the consumers viewpoint (Holmlid & Evenson, 2008).

As customers experience many interactions with organizations at different points in time, the customer journey is an important part of analysis. Hence, customer journeys are conceptualized as comprising stages that consumers go through over time. By doing so, consumers have different goals in the consecutive stages of their journeys (Demmers et al., 2020). Therefore, marketing scholars distinguish the journey into three generic stages: (1) pre-consumption, (2) consumption, and (3) post-consumption (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). In the pre-consumption stage the consumer recognizes a need and starts to acquire information before arriving at a set of different solutions and eventually selecting the preferred option. Further, when arriving in the consumption stage the customer experiences the benefits or drawbacks of the product or service. Lastly, the consumer evaluates the experience and sometimes shares personal thoughts or feedback with others and might establish a deeper relationship with the brand (Lin & Lekhawipat, 2016).

Driven by the current interest in customer journeys, various customer journey approaches have emerged whereas discontinue using Instagram for a certain time period has not yet been examined from a journey perspective in previous studies. A detoxification is seen

as a process and is often followed by individuals as a kind of program starting with an initial phase and the goal to change something positive and ends with the post-behavior stage where the process is evaluated and a stocktaking takes place (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). However, unlike a customer journey approach, the process of anti-consumption is observed and accompanied through the temporary discontinuance of Instagram by so-called users. Therefore, this thesis adopts a journey perspective, using it as a frame to explore the participants' Instagram detox journey. It starts with the pre-stage where the motivation why the participants feel a need to discontinue using Instagram is explored. The second stage of the journey encompasses the experiences and feelings during the detox and in the final stage the post-behavior is analyzed.

2.4.1. Stage 1: Motivation before the detox

This section presents the motivation for individuals to discontinue using digital or social media and start detoxing from these platforms presented in extent research. The motivation is clustered into three categories: (1) Personal Connection, (2) Time Control and (3) Self-Reformation.

Personal connection

Through digitalization many areas and offline processes of the individuals' life are transformed into online forms (Skivko et al., 2020). Social media platforms have become an undisputed part of the social life for many people all around the world. Even if it becomes easier to connect with other people, exchange information or share ideas these platforms are seen to directly challenge the individual's interest in non-mediated experiences, which are seen as more authentic (Jorge, 2019; Skivko et al., 2020). Individuals feel the desire for more meaningful personal social connection with others outside of the internet through media non-use and disconnection from social media platforms (Hardey & Atkinson, 2018; Jorge, 2019). Moreover, an exploratory study by Ganito and Jorge (2018) showed that most of the participants who tried to discontinue using the internet for a certain period of time, explained that their greatest motivation for attending this study was to do other things in their free time. Among other things they wanted to spend more time with family and/or friends outside social media platforms (Ganito & Jorge, 2018). Miksch and Schulz (2018) came to a similar conclusion: the participants emphasized the importance of "being in the moment" when spending time with friends and family. Hereby, to enjoy the time in the social as well as in the private

environment seemed to be one of the main initiators for starting the detox (Miksch & Schulz, 2018).

Time Control

One of the main reasons why people want to discontinue using social media platforms, investigated in previous research studies, is the time aspect (Brubaker et al., 2016; Ganito & Jorge, 2018; Jorge, 2019; Miksch & Schulz, 2018; Skivko et al., 2020; Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). Brubaker et al. (2016) found that one of the most-named reasons why people stopped using the dating app Grindr was to leave a constant source of distraction and rather take care of other things in their newly gained time. Similar, the study of Jorge (2019) revealed that the majority of participants intended to be more productive, being more focused and overall more in control of their time, e.g., by focusing on reading a book instead of having the feeling of “wasting time”. Similar, the research of Zhou et al. (2018) revealed that 18% of their participants left the social media platform Weibo because of limited cognitive resources such as time: the platform was too time-consuming and they wished to concentrate on other activities more (Zhou et al., 2018). Furthermore, Syvertsen and Enli (2020) described that digital tools and media occupy too much time and distract the user from what is valuable and essential for a good life. Instead, digital media disrupts the perception and the sense of time (Syversten & Enli, 2020). The ‘digital dieting’ is used for a specific reason, for a limited period to achieve better, more qualitative results in certain activities that are given higher priority. Thus, individuals go for a detox to create better quality and results while studying. A detox becomes also relevant when it comes to holidays and free time – switching off social media might help to focus more on the moment (Skivko et al., 2019). Moreover, Miksch and Schulz (2018) found that especially in a professional environment, where the individual has to perform tasks and stick to deadlines regularly, self-control is admired by focusing on these instead of being distracted by digital technologies.

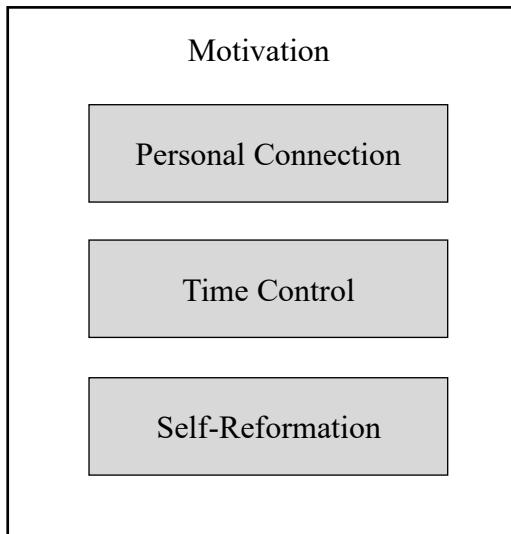
Self-Reformation

Another key motivation for users of social media to start a detox is a presumption of balance that is akin to mindfulness – a temporary break is seen as a chance to heighten consciousness and learn self-regulation with the overall goal to increase the presence in the here and now (Glomb et al., 2011; Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). Similarly, Kent (2020) found that the respondents needed “a break” from using the platform Instagram especially

when they had the overwhelming feeling that life was becoming too stressful, and they were particularly busy. For instance, when the personal and/or professional life was demanding, participants had the feeling that they could not contribute to optimal representations of healthy lives or view others on Instagram doing so. For many, looking at others on social media contributed to unpleasant feelings of comparative anxiety, inadequacy, and personal disempowerment (Kent, 2020). Furthermore, Miksch and Schulz (2018) described the motivation of their participants to self-reform by increasing their well-being within the professional environment by reducing the screentime. This refers to a satisfaction with work: reducing the usage of technology made the participants feel more satisfied, less stressed, and overall happier as they described (Miksch & Schulz, 2018).

Based on the findings, the primary stage including the motivation before the intermittent discontinuance of digital or social media can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 1: Stage 1: Motivation before the detox



2.4.2. Stage 2: Experiences during the detox

The middle stage of the journey of intermittent discontinuance of digital or social media encompasses experiences and feelings during the detox. These are clustered into five categories: (1) mood & satisfaction, (2) technological craving, (3) mental well-being, (4) physical well-being and (5) social relationships.

Mood & Satisfaction

Literature investigated people's mood and life satisfaction while undergoing a form of digital detox which revealed feelings such as boredom, motivation, stress, and loneliness (Fioravanti et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2021; Hanley et al., 2019; Hunt et al., 2018; Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019; Sheldon et al., 2011; Stieger & Lewetz, 2018; Tromholt, 2016; Turel et al., 2018; Vally & D'Souza, 2019; Vanman et al., 2018). Thereby, research has examined people's perceived **life satisfaction** linked to feeling happy and content. Several studies found an increase in the life satisfaction of people during the abstinence of social media, whereby stronger effects were shown among very active users of the platforms (Fioravanti et al., 2020; Sheldon et al., 2011; Tromholt, 2016). Contrary to this, Vanman et al. (2018) found people reporting on lower subjective well-being while being absent from Facebook over a 5-day period. Likewise, Vally and D'Souza (2019) showed that temporary abstinence from social media leads to a decrease in life satisfaction, which they attributed to the limitation of social contact that is inherent in human nature. In addition, other scholars found no significant impact on people's life satisfaction during a social media detox (Hall et al., 2021; Hanley et al., 2019). These opposing findings lead the researchers of this work to assume that perceived life satisfaction during the detox is individually dependent and need to be further investigated.

The experience of **boredom** is another feeling that may occur during a detox. Thus, Stieger and Lewetz (2018) showed higher boredom levels experienced by participants during a 7-day social media break which is described as withdrawal symptom from being absent. This is supported by Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel (2019) who noted students describing "without social media and the distractions that come with constant multitasking, [...] their day as passing by more slowly" (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019, p. 64).

Further, people are looking for substitute activities which is demonstrated by higher motivation for **productivity**. Thus, participants undergoing a 5-day social media abstinence reported on increased work-productivity which made them feel good (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019). In addition, people who take time out from social media tend to procrastinate less during this time. Scholars assume that social media often serves as a form of procrastination, which consequently disappears in the case of intermittent discontinuance (Sheldon et al., 2011).

Giving up on social media can lead to a decline in physiological **stress** which affects people's mood and satisfaction. Scholars found that an intermittent discontinuance of Facebook led to lower cortisol levels among participants which is a stress hormone (Vanman et al., 2018). Supporting these findings, Turel et al. (2018) found that a short-term and temporary abstinence from social media actually reduced people's stress levels. Further, the researchers stated that especially excessive users of social media experience great effect in the reduction of stress. However, there is also evidence that the perceived stress during detox is individual and can sometimes even increase. In fact, Vally and D'Souza (2019) found an increase, albeit to a lesser degree, in the perceived stress of people disconnected from social media.

Since there are limitations in social contact during a digital or social media detox, it is not surprising that researchers noted an increase in the feeling of **loneliness** during abstinence. Consequently, those who suffered from loneliness were unable to derive a corresponding sense of satisfaction from face-to-face interactions, if they occurred (Vally & D'Souza, 2019). Nonetheless, there are again studies with opposing results that found a decrease in the feeling of loneliness. Hunt et al. (2018) found a reduction among people who limited their social media use to 10 minutes per platform daily over four weeks. Besides, Hall et al. (2021) investigated different lengths of social media abstinence and found no impact on people's feeling of loneliness, regardless on the duration of the detox.

Technological Craving

During abstinence, the feeling of **craving** for a social medium is one of the most prominent effects as it belongs to addiction-related symptoms. If the craving is too strong during abstinence, relapse can occur, which involves an individual's loss of control over a behavior and the associated return to previous patterns (Fernandez et al., 2020).

Wilcockson et al. (2020) examined the impact on participants' craving for the smartphone when they stopped using it for 24-hours. They found that people undergo different levels of craving, that tend to increase with the progression of the detox period. Further, participants who considered themselves as frequent users of their smartphones experienced higher levels of craving (Wilcockson et al., 2020). Likewise, Stieger and Lewetz (2018) reported strong cravings of participants as withdrawal symptom during a one week social media detox.

Mental Well-being

According to the World Health Organization, mental well-being encompasses the mental health of an individual who “realizes his or her own abilities can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. If mental health is impaired, depressed moods and anxiety can occur (WHO, 2018). Research by Tromholt (2016) found that participants' mental well-being improved when they intermittently discontinued using Facebook, as they described feeling more positive emotions during the break. Likewise, Brown and Kuss (2020) also reported an increase in participants' mental well-being due to a 7-day social media abstinence.

Moreover, researchers found a decline in **depressive symptoms** when strongly limiting the use of social media over a short-term period. The effects were particularly evident in individuals suffering from stronger levels of depression (Hunt et al., 2018).

The occurrence of **anxiety** was shown to be reduced by limited social media use in the study by Hunt et al. (2018). However, other research found no change in the occurrence of anxiety of participants during a digital or social media detox (Wilcockson et al., 2020).

Physical Well-being

People undergoing a digital or social media detox also experience effects on their physical well-being such as their **sleep quality**. Literature showed that high smartphone use, especially by using social media, has a negative impact on sleep quality (Bianchi & Phillips, 2005; Demírcí et al., 2015). It is therefore surprising that the study by Dunican et al. (2017) about sleep quality during a two-day digital detox did not show any effects. It can be assumed that the research period was too short and need to be further investigated.

Moreover, the decrease in cortisol during a social media break suggests that social media use may have measurable effects on the body's response to stress. Therefore, researchers propose that such breaks could have a positive impact on **physical health** (Vanman et al., 2018).

Social Relationships

Several scholars explored social relationships during a digital or social media detox that compromise feelings of social connectedness, fear of missing out, social pressure or the urge of social comparing (Brown & Kuss, 2020; Eide et al., 2018; Elhai et al., 2018; Hunt et al., 2018; Lamblin et al., 2017; Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019; Lepp et al., 2014; Przybylski et al., 2013; Stieger & Lewetz, 2018; Vigil & Wu, 2015). The sense of **social connectedness** plays a great role in social media due to the importance of keeping authentic relationships among people. Social connectedness encompasses a person's emotional attachment to others, society, or oneself in order to maintain positive social relationships (Lamblin et al., 2017; Lee & Robbins, 1995). Particularly for younger generations, contact via social media is an expression of social connectedness. Therefore, it may be natural that fellow human beings act surprised or even shocked when people announce a digital or social media detox. Not being available via social media can not only affect social connectedness but also test existing friendships (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019). Brown and Kuss (2020) examined the role of social connectedness during a one-week social media abstinence and found different results depending on the individuals. Thereby, some participants stated to feel less connected to their online friends while others experienced greater connectedness and interest in their offline environment and friends during the detox (Brown & Kuss, 2020). Also, the number of face-to-face conversations may increase during the detox (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019).

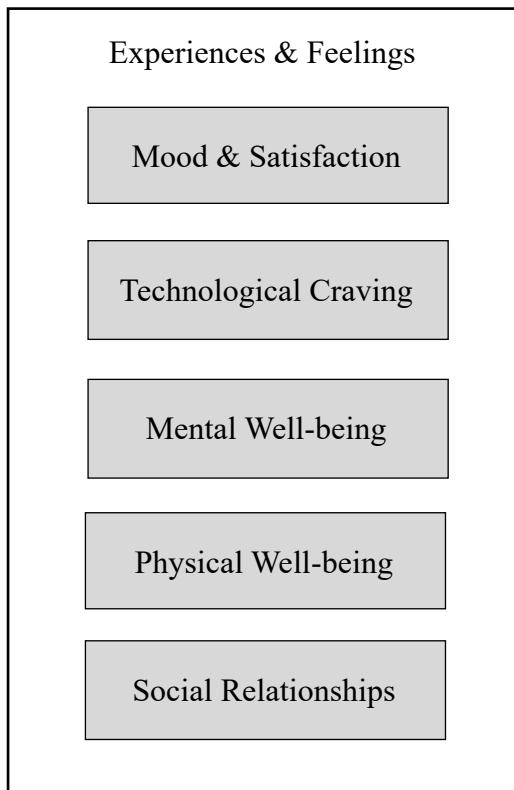
Fear of Missing out (FoMo) is described in the literature as a “pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent” (Przybylski et al., 2013, p. 1) and encompasses the fear of missing out on something, which is countered especially with social media by being constantly connected to other people. Several scholars examined studies on the appearance of FoMo during a digital or social media detox (Brown & Kuss, 2020; Eide et al., 2018; Hunt et al., 2018). Brown and Kuss (2020) found that the appearance of FoMo after a 7-day social media abstinence decreased during the detox. Even with limited but not completely restricted use of social media, Hunt et al. (2018) found a decline in the occurrence of FoMo as well. These findings support other research suggesting that social media use triggers FoMo in users and, consequently, fewer triggers are present when abstinence occurs (Elhai et al., 2018; Lepp et al., 2014). If FoMo decreases during a detox it could also develop to the

countermovement of so-called Joy of Missing out (JoMo). JoMo embraces the feeling of not being available and connected all the time. However, the literature draws only little connection between a social media detox and JoMo so far (Aranda & Baig, 2018). Contrary results to Brown and Kuss (2020) were found by Eide et al. (2018) noting that FoMo scores increased while participants followed a smartphone restriction. Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel (2019) justified the feeling of FoMo by the fact that people have more time available when being absent of social media and perceive time to pass more slowly. Therefore, they could not constantly perform such "microchecks" on social media which led to the feeling of missing out on something. However, with the period of detox, FoMo transformed into a more conscious perception and awareness, which was described as positive (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019).

Social media is known for creating high social pressure through the urge of constantly comparing oneself with others. Especially passive users, that mainly consume content than posting something, report the impression that others are better and happier than themselves (Vigil & Wu, 2015). This could lead to the assumption that **social pressure** and **social comparing** is reduced during a social media break. However, Stieger and Lewetz (2018) found participants in their study reporting on high social pressure to be present while having a one week social media break which goes closely in line with the findings of increased FoMo.

Although some scholars disagree on the occurrence of certain characteristics during a digital or social media detox, the literature reveals a pattern of experiences and feelings that occur during the detox and can consequently be illustrated as follows:

Figure 2: Stage 2: Experiences during the detox



2.4.3. Stage 3: Post-behavior after the detox

The last stage of the journey of intermittent discontinuance of digital or social media encompasses the post-behavior after the detox. Albeit the literature has not extensively investigated post-behavior, scholars note three different patterns of behavior: (1) overconsumption, (2) conscious consumption, and (3) attitude change.

Overconsumption

After a digital or social media detox, some people feel the urge to return to normality and familiar patterns of behavior. Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel (2019) found that after the detox, some participants first look through everything on social media that they missed during their abstinence. Even though the detox might proceeded without problems or difficulties, individuals portrayed a quick return to social media and described this as if they “would be addicted” (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019, p. 65). Also, they felt a sense of being uninformed during abstinence, which they quickly countered by doing so (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019).

Conscious Consumption

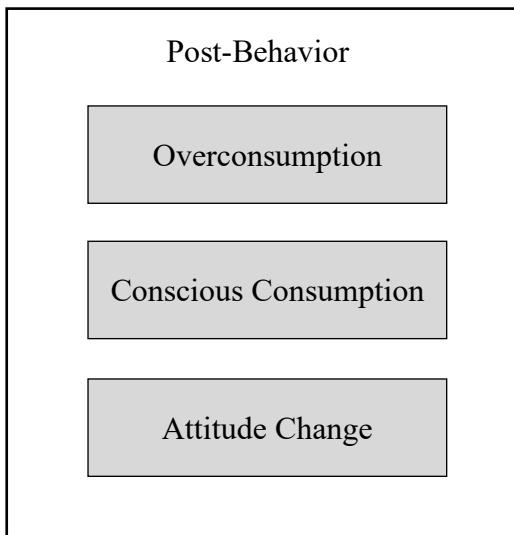
Contrary to overconsumption after the detox, individuals may react by striving for more conscious consumption of digital or social media. Thus, participants reported that they gained deeper insights about their informational needs and became aware of their invisible media usage patterns. It was found, the longer the detox period within the study, the more insight the participants gained about their own consumption. Further, the abstinence of social media helped people with their own self-reflection and tempted themselves to change and restructure life. Thus, some participants reported that once they had experienced the detox, they planned to take independent social media free periods in the future too (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019). Accordingly, scholars included greater awareness of media consumption in their implications after conducting a digital or social media detox study (Brown & Kuss, 2020; Hanley et al., 2019; Sheldon et al., 2011; Vally & D'Souza, 2019).

Attitude Change

Brown and Kuss (2020) found that participants in a social media detox felt morally better when they successfully abstained during the period. This feeling can lead to a change in attitude toward the individual's own social media consumption or specific platforms. Whereas participants previously accepted their own consumption and did not view it critically, they felt the need to undertake some changes after the detox with regards to the long-term. People have turned off the platform's notifications or moved the respective social media app out of their field of view, uninstalled it, or even stopped using it completely. Sorting out irrelevancies and unimportant confrontations was also realized by unfollowing people, groups, and pages within the platform (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019).

Based on the findings, the final stage after the intermittent discontinuance of digital or social media can be illustrated as follows:

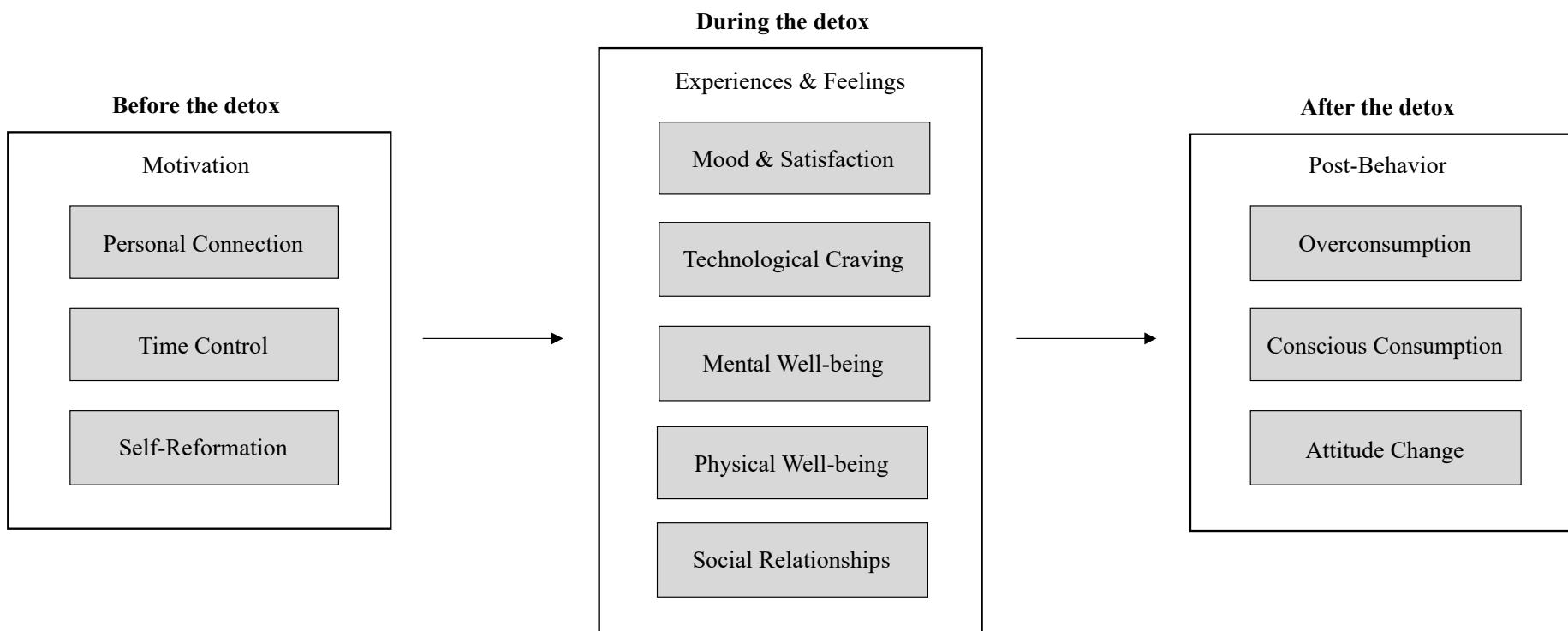
Figure 3: Stage 3: Post-behavior after the detox



2.5. Conceptual Framework: Instagram Detox Journey

Based on the current state of research regarding a digital or social media detox, 3 stages emerge, which represent the journey of intermittent discontinuance. It can be assumed that GenY will undergo correspondingly this journey during a 14-day Instagram detox. Based on the preceding literature review, the following model called “Instagram Detox Journey” emerges and serves as basis for the present study.

Figure 4: Conceptual Framework: Instagram Detox Journey



3. Methodology

In this chapter the methodology of this research is presented. For letting the reader understand why certain methods were chosen, argumentation and insights about each step is provided. Initially the chapter starts by presenting this study's research philosophy, followed by the research design, research approach, data collection methods that are distinguished in secondary and primary data, sampling and population selection and data analysis. The chapter ends with ethical considerations & potential research risks and trustworthiness.

3.1. Research Philosophy

The research philosophy comprises a clustering of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge in science (Saunders et al., 2019). To distinguish between the major research philosophies, their different underlying assumptions should be considered.

Ontological assumptions refer to the nature of reality while **epistemological** assumptions refer to the core essentials of knowledge (Byrne, 2017; Eisend & Kuss, 2019; Saunders et al., 2019). Both types of research assumptions can be found in this study, which on the one hand lead to assumptions about the understanding of the nature and reality of an Instagram detox and on the other hand help to gain knowledge about the experienced journey of the participants.

There are 5 major research paradigms such as positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism, whereby in this study an **interpretivist perspective** is chosen. Interpretivism is one of the most popular research philosophies in conducting marketing research and is particularly opposed to positivism (Eisend & Kuss, 2019; Nunan et al., 2020). It emphasizes the differentiation of human beings and their social environment, which cannot be explained by physical phenomena but requires interpretation and understanding. Interpretive research aims to provide new, broader insights and interpretations into humanity within social worlds and contexts, without using law-like generalizations (Saunders et al., 2019). From this perspective, reality is observed from a subjective nature that evolves over time and is influenced by the social

environment (Nunan et al., 2020). The interpretivism is suitable for this study for two main reasons: Firstly, the present study interprets the participants as individuals to reflect insights of their individually experienced Instagram detox. Thereby it aims to make phenomena in human behavior visible. Secondly, the study follows a purpose of interpretivist nature by exploring a process, in other words a journey, that cannot be made tangible by a positivist approach.

3.2. Research Design

The research design provides a framework or plan for the researcher in conducting a study. It specifies the steps that are necessary to solve the research problem and research questions. As part of this, researchers must demonstrate an understanding of the type of data needed, consider how participants respond to different techniques, and select the most effective research technique based on this understanding (Nunan et al., 2020). Research designs can be classified into exploratory and conclusive research. The latter requires clearly specified information to describe certain phenomena and test hypotheses (Silver & Wrenn, 2013). Conclusive research is characterized by measurement, structure, and a formal procedure. Often large, representative samples are used, and data obtained is analyzed quantitatively (Nunan et al., 2020). Exploratory research, on the other hand, seeks to provide insights and understanding that cannot be represented by a quantitative manner or measurements. An exploratory design is especially meaningful for topics that are not completely explored in research and require deeper comprehension, information, and investigation. Often the sample size is smaller, and the research process is more flexible and unstructured. Data in exploratory studies is collected either through quantitative or qualitative methods (Nunan et al., 2020; Silver & Wrenn, 2013).

As the topic of the study requires deeper understanding and insights to close the gap in literature **an exploratory design** to understand people's journey of an Instagram detox is considered most suitable. The journey of intermittent discontinuance of Instagram represents a consumer behavior phenomenon that is not clearly defined and sufficiently explored in previous research. Moreover, the research process is treated more flexible by the researchers and the sample size is kept small.

3.3. Research Approach

The research approach encompasses how researchers collect data to answer the respective research questions. There are different contrasting approaches to theory development within the design of a research, mainly known as deductive, inductive or sometimes abductive (Saunders et al., 2019). Deduction implies a form of reasoning whereby conclusions are derived from premises and must be true if all premises are also true. In other words, conclusions are based on measurements, figures, and facts. Further the approach builds up on testing existing theories expressed in form of hypotheses. Induction, on the other hand, implies a form of reasoning in which conclusions involve the generalization of repeated combinations of events. In other words, conclusions can be drawn without providing complete evidence. Within the approach theories and models are developed on the basis on the combination of events observed (Nunan et al., 2020). Abduction describes the approach to theory development that relates to an observed surprising fact. This fact serves as a conclusion on which premises are established and further investigated (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010; Saunders et al., 2019). In accordance with the interpretivist approach this study follows an **inductive approach**. As the study seeks to gather further understanding in the phenomena of taking an Instagram detox the researchers developed a conceptual framework themselves that illustrates the Instagram detox journey. The specifically developed model is therefore considered a strong argument for an inductive approach. Building on the already developed model, deeper insights and findings are to be gained that complement the current state of research by providing a revised conceptual framework after analyzing and discussing the findings.

Within the scope of a research, scientists collect quantitative or qualitative data depending on the research problem and research questions (Saunders et al., 2019). Quantitative methods aim to quantify and collect standardized data by often using measurements or statistical analysis. They are frequently used in positivistic and deductive research by testing derived theories and generating hypotheses (Nunan et al., 2020). As this does not correspond to the study purpose, the authors of the present research consider quantitative methods as not suitable. Opposed to a quantitative study, a qualitative study includes methods that collect information which is not expressed in numbers but rather expressed verbally (Eisend & Kuss, 2019). By capturing people's behavior, experiences, and feelings, it is used to understand consumers' behavior and to gain in-depth insights into a

research problem (Hox & Boeije, 2005). Qualitative methods are often used in interpretivist and inductive research by developing theories and frameworks (Nunan et al., 2020; Saunders et al., 2019). Since this study seeks to understand participants experiences in undergoing an Instagram detox by using a journey perspective, the researchers consider the approach of using **qualitative methods** as most suitable. By accompanying the participants in a real-time experience, their feelings, thoughts and emotions during the journey could be made visible and captured more clearly. Moreover, previous scholars exploring a digital or social media detox likewise used qualitative research methods, indicating the approach as appropriate for this study's purpose (Cho, 2015; Franks et al., 2018; Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019; Pennington, 2021).

3.4. Data Collection Methods

Secondary data are all data collected by other researchers for a purpose other than the present research problem (Hox & Boeije, 2005; Serra et al., 2018). This makes previously collected data relevant and reusable for new research questions (Vartanian, 2011). The researchers of the present study used secondary data for the introduction and theoretical background as well as for the model development of the “Instagram Detox Journey”. To identify the studies relevant to the present research topic a systematic search using the following keywords in various combinations was implemented: Generation Y, Instagram, Intermittent Discontinuance, Journey, Social Media, Social Media Detox. Based on the keywords, academic research channels as e.g., Google Scholar, Primo or Web of Science and databases as e.g., ABI/INFORM collection, JSTOR, Emerald, ERIC, ProQuest central or Oxford Academic were used. The thoroughly selected articles were based on quality requirements such as date of publication, English language, credibility of references like a peer review or the journal's ranking in the ABS list, number of citations in the article, and relevance of the article's content to the study purpose. Moreover, a further review of the reference lists of the identified articles revealed additional relevant literature.

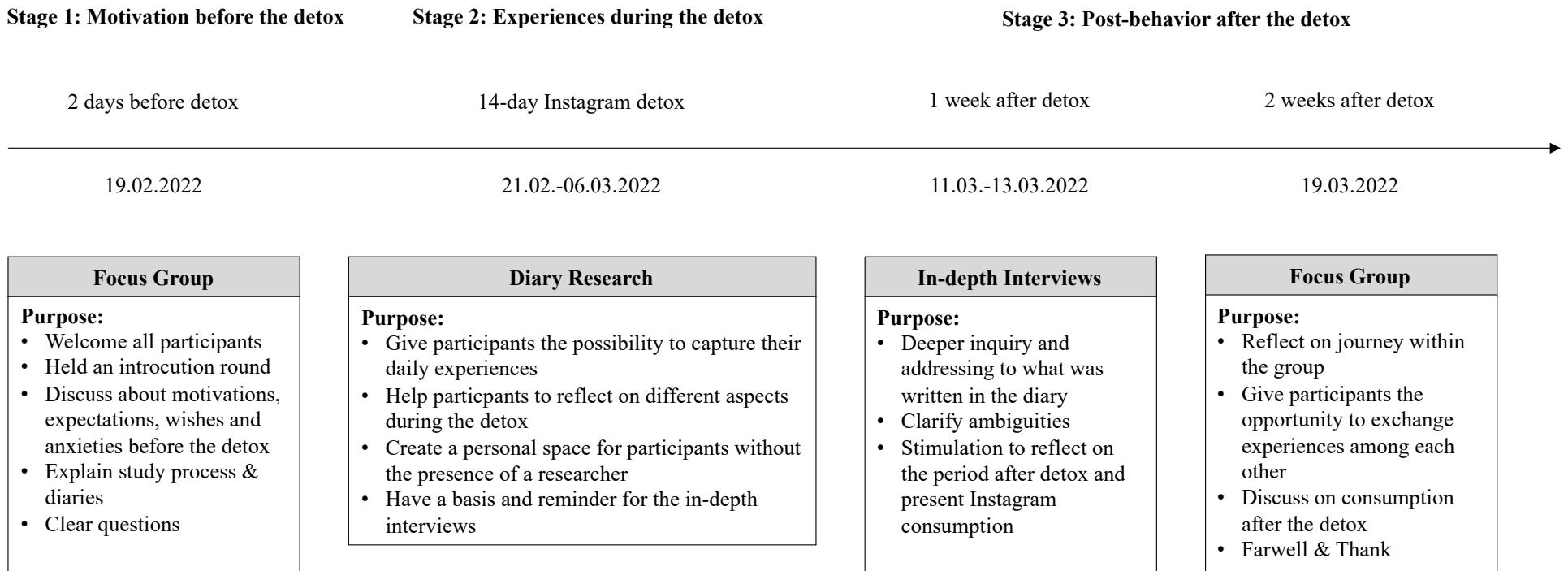
Primary data are all data collected by the researchers themselves for the solution and purpose of a specific research problem. Hence, primary data have the advantage of using methods of data collection and data analysis that are tailored to solve the research problem (Nunan et al., 2020). The researchers of the present study used primary data by

conducting a 4-week study using different qualitative research methods. In view of the study purpose to understand the journey of an intermittent discontinuance of Instagram, the researchers investigated a 14-day Instagram detox which was initiated specifically for the sake of this research. After the advantages and disadvantages of common qualitative research techniques were examined and evaluated, the use of

- (1) focus groups
- (2) diary research
- (3) and in-depth interviews

were considered as most suitable to gather insights and understanding of the participants by accompanying their individual Instagram detox journey. The entire study lasted 4 weeks and was conducted from 19.02.2022 to 19.03.2022. The schedule of the study, including the different research techniques, its purposes, and timings, can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 5: 4-week study schedule



Before the start of the data collection all participants were invited in a group on WhatsApp, an instant messaging service, to get in contact with each other and the researchers. In this way, it was possible to foster beforehand a personal and trusting relationship between the participants and the researchers and to convey the feeling that they were not alone during the journey. The WhatsApp group was used to communicate information, timings and reminders about the specific research methods throughout the whole study process. Moreover, the researchers regularly requested screentime proofs from the participants, that showed their weekly use of Instagram. This was solicited before the start of the detox, at the midpoint of the detox, at the end of the detox, and after the detox.

3.4.1 Focus Groups

Focus Groups comprise a discussion conducted by a trained moderator among a small group of participants in an unstructured and natural manner (Eisend & Kuss, 2019; Nunan et al., 2020). The research method seeks to understand consumers' behavior and perspectives by creating a forum where participants can freely discuss and talk about a specific topic (Silver & Wrenn, 2013). There should be between 6-10 group members, that are homogeneous in terms of demographic and socio-economic characteristics (Nunan et al., 2020). Focus groups have the advantage of generating a wider range of perspectives and ideas. Through snowballing participants trigger thoughts, opinions, and reactions among other group members. However, if the research topic is very personal, a discussion with others could inhibit people in what they say if they feel uncomfortable. Therefore, a trusting and harmonious atmosphere is crucial. If participants feel they are among their "equals", they are more likely to open up and reveal their true thoughts (Nunan et al., 2020; Powell & Single, 1996).

The present study used two focus groups, but due to a participant number of 15 people, they were in turn divided into two groups per discussion, resulting in a total of 4 discussions. The first focus group was held before and the second after the 14-day Instagram detox as indicated in table 1. The first two discussions, called "Instagram Detox Study Kick-Off", were held at the 19.02.2022 and took an average of 48 minutes. It was used to welcome all participants, introduce each other and explain the whole study process by answering questions and showing the diary form. Further, the researchers encouraged participants to reflect on their motivation, expectations, wishes and anxieties

before starting the detox. The other two discussions, called “Instagram Detox Study Kick-Out”, were held at the 19.03.2022 and took an average of 21 minutes. It was used to reflect on the Instagram detox within the group and give participants the opportunity to exchange experiences. Moreover, the post-behavior and consumption after the detox was discussed. Finally, the researchers used the occasion to thank and say farewell to the participants and to declare the study closed.

Table 1: Focus Group Matrix

	Instagram Detox Study Kick-Off	Instagram Detox Study Kick-Out
Timing	Focus Group before the detox	Focus Group after the detox
Date	19.02.2022	19.03.2022
Group 1 (8 participants)	11:00 am	11:00 am
Group 2 (7 participants)	12:00 am	12:00 am

The focus groups consisted of 7-8 participants each. For this purpose, the 15 participants were divided, whereby a balanced mix of different nationalities was considered. All focus groups were held online through ZOOM, an online communication platform, as the participants live in different countries and were not able to meet physically. The researchers acted as moderators of the focus groups, by leading the discussions with questioning and probing that followed a previously developed topic guide (Appendix 1). Through initial small talk and casual language, the researchers created a trusting and friendly atmosphere. Further, all discussions were audio-recorded with the consent of all participants and then transcribed and anonymized.

3.4.2 Diary Research

Diaries can serve as a data collection tool that can be used to capture participants' personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to events (Snowden, 2015). In this way, individuals record specific activities that are expected to bring about changes. The research method aims to capture personal data that is difficult to collect using other techniques (Robson & McCartan, 2011). Participants should be encouraged to consider the diary as their own and as a space to make sense of vent emotions and experiences by

opening up using their own words. Structured or solicited diaries are often used in health research as they include specific space to reflect on pre-determined aspects (Combe, 2005). On the other hand, unstructured or unsolicited diaries capture personal reactions towards change or upheaval and provide interpersonal insights (Snowden, 2015). The latter gives the researcher little control over the data collected, but results in data that are mostly uninfluenced by the research process (Bartlett, 2012). Research diaries can be used as photo and picture diaries, paper diaries or e-diaries depending on the research design and purpose (Snowden, 2015).

In the present study, diary research was conducted by providing all 15 participants with a diary in which they were asked to reflect daily on their thoughts, feelings, and experiences during the 14-day Instagram detox. It was used to gather deep insights into the personal thoughts of the participants and to give the participants a support to capture their experience without the presence of a researcher. This method had the advantage of keeping daily track of the participants' state of minds during the detox, which would not have been possible with other one-time research methods. Thereby, the diaries particularly served as a reminder for the participants for the subsequent individual in-depth interviews. The Instagram Detox Diary can be found in Appendix 2.

The participants were offered to pick up the diary on site from the researchers as a paper diary. Regarding the purpose of the study, this was recommended by the researchers, as a paper diary supports the sense of a digital detox. For participants who were unable to pick up the diary due to distance, a digital version was provided that could either be printed independently or used as an e-diary. Consequently, 8 participants kept a paper diary and 7 participants kept an e-diary.

The diary started with a cover sheet, an introduction and a request for personal information such as name, age, nationality and personal thoughts such as motivation, expectations, wishes and anxieties before the detox. Subsequent the researchers used a predominantly unstructured diary design to allow participants freedom in their reflection. However, the diary was divided into the 14 days and structured per day in the 5 categories mood & satisfaction, technological craving, mental well-being, physical well-being and social relationships based on the model developed in chapter 2. This served as a guide to ensure that participants reflect on aspects that are relevant to the actual research topic. At

the end of each week, a free page served as space to write down more if the participants wanted to share something beyond the categories. With the halfway point, participants found a reminder in their diary that they were halfway through the detox and were asked to send the current status of the diary as well as the screentime proof to the researchers. This gave the researchers the opportunity to review the quality of the diaries and provide feedback. For instance, it was communicated via the WhatsApp group that in the second week attention should be paid to writing complete sentences instead of bullet points. After the second week, the diary concluded with another request to send the final diary as well as a screentime proof. During the 14 days, a daily reminder to fill in the diary was communicated via the WhatsApp group in order to counteract a subsequent filling in or falsification of information. With the consent of all participants, the diaries were used to prepare the in-depth interviews and anonymized for data analysis.

3.4.3 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews serve as a data collection technique by conducting an unstructured and personal interview with a single participant. The method seeks to reveal underlying thoughts, beliefs and attitudes on the respective research topic (Hox & Boeije, 2005; Nunan et al., 2020). By asking questions and interpreting the interviewees answers, researchers can derive deep insights and understanding. For this, a trusting and intimate atmosphere is important, which is created by relaxed interaction and friendly demeanor (Johnson, 2002). An in-depth interview can take up to over an hour depending on the interest and time available of the participant. After explaining the interviewee, the purpose of the interview, and asking an introductory question the discussion can flow into specific areas of the research topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). For this purpose, a topic guide can be used which is reminiscent of important topics to be covered, but still allows flexibility. Thereby, the course of the interview naturally evolves according to the answers of the participant. By asking probing questions the interviewer can gather even deeper understanding and uncover underlying thoughts by asking the participant to clarify or explain their answers (Nunan et al., 2020; Warren, 2002).

The present study used in-depth interviews one week after the detox to individually talk with the participants about their journey. It was used to specifically address what has been written in the diaries, to clarify ambiguities and to ask more in-depth questions. Through this method, participants had the opportunity to open up about the study topic without the

presence of other participants. Further the interview was used to make them reflect on their post-behavior after the detox by asking about post-consumption and screentime of Instagram.

The 15 individual in-depth interviews were scheduled from the 11.03.2022 to 13.02.2022 and lasted from 21 to 40 minutes. Likewise, the focus groups, the interviews were carried out via ZOOM. Prior to conducting each interview, the researchers were required to read and review the participant's respective diary. Based on this, the researchers created an interview guide (Appendix 3). The guide included predetermined introductory questions, followed by space for individual questions based on the participants' personal detox journey captured in the diaries. This allowed flexibility when asking the main questions. The predetermined concluding questions focused on experiences within the group and post-detox behavior after the detox. Also, in this data collection method, small talk and a friendly conversation were used to create a trusting atmosphere. Further, all interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and then transcribed and anonymized.

3.5. Population and Sampling Selection

Sampling describes the procedure of systematically choosing a relatively smaller number of representative individuals, a subset from a pre-defined population. This number of representative individuals serves as data source for the certain study (Sharma, 2017). The procedure of sampling is used when it is not possible to test the whole population. Instead researchers select a desired sample from a specific population, which was the case within this study since testing every single individual of the population was impossible (Sharma, 2017).

For this thesis, the pre-defined population of interest were all Instagram users, who spend time on the platform frequently and express about themselves that they feel dependent to the platform. Another important criterion was that they were born between 1980 and 2002 and thus belong to Gen Y due to the argument that Instagram is specifically popular among the younger generation aged 19 to 29 (Auxier and Anderson, 2021; Humphrey, 2016; Schiffmann and Kanuk, 2010).

As the sampling method, the researchers decided that the **selective, judgmental approach** was the most suitable which is a form of non-probability sampling which relies on the researchers' discernment (Sharma, 2017). Thus, features of the population that selected the required elements of the population were consciously selected based on the researchers' judgement (Sharma, 2017). Therefore, the following appropriate criteria were selected and considered:

- (1) Participants should frequently use Instagram - at least thirty minutes a day
- (2) Participants should be born between the years 1980 and 2002 and therefore belong to Generation Y
- (3) Participants should have the feel of dependency to the platform from time to time
- (4) Participants should feel the will to abstain from Instagram for 14 days

Since the sampling technique was based on researchers' judgment, some risks regarding bias were considered. Thereby, the researchers' own judgement can be problematic and occur in a research bias when the judgmental subjective perspective is weakly considered or unreliable, e.g., selecting participants without having a clear definition of sampling criteria (Nunan et al., 2020; Sharma, 2017).

To find suitable participants who meet the defined criteria, a short survey was published through the story function on Instagram itself, mainly targeting the researchers' followers in terms of circle of friends, acquaintances and fellow international students from Jönköping University (Appendix 4). In addition, members of Facebook groups belonging to the social network of Jönköping University were asked whether individuals of Gen Y would be interested in participating in an Instagram Detox. Interested parties were first asked how much time they spend on the platform on average per day and whether they have the feeling of being somewhat dependent. In the next step, they were asked whether they could imagine discontinue using Instagram for 14 days in order to participate in the study. Based on the results and the feedback in form of private replies to the researchers and after informing the most suitable responders about the exact procedure, length and participation in the study, the following 15 participants were selected:

Table 2: Participants Overview

Participant	Age	Gender	Nationality	In-depth Interview Length
P1	24	Female	Hungarian	31 minutes
P2	25	Female	German	17 minutes
P3	19	Female	Bulgarian/Turkish	23 minutes
P4	24	Male	Mexican	24 minutes
P5	20	Male	American	32 minutes
P6	25	Female	German	19 minutes
P7	25	Female	German	35 minutes
P8	25	Female	Swedish	34 minutes
P9	23	Female	Dutch	27 minutes
P10	27	Female	Croatian	18 minutes
P11	23	Female	German	41 minutes
P12	22	Male	German	21 minutes
P13	26	Female	German	36 minutes
P14	27	Female	Greek	40 minutes
P15	24	Female	Swedish	38 minutes

3.6. Data Analysis

Before starting the process of analyzing, the researchers ensured to save all data collected on two different computers for security reasons. In total, 9 1/2 hours of interview-data were collected and 173 pages of transcription, containing in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. For the diaries a transcription was not necessary as the analysis was applied directly to the written entries by the participants. By doing this the participants' names were changed to numbers to ensure anonymity for each participant who took part in the study. Furthermore, to ensure credibility, the individual transcripts were sent to the participants when requested.

To analyze the transcripts the method of **thematic analysis** was used. Thematic analysis is a suitable research technique when analyzing large sets of textual information, a method for identifying, analyzing, interpreting trends and patterns of words used, their frequency, their relationships and the structures and discourses of communication, so-called themes (Clarke & Braun, 2018; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The aim of using thematic analysis is not only to summarize the collected data but rather to identify and interpret key features of the data, overall guided by the research questions. Moreover, thematic analysis provides a systematic procedure for generative codes and themes. Thereby, codes are the smallest units of analysis that captures remarkable and interesting features of the data collected relevant to the research topic and questions (Clarke & Braun, 2018). The codes build the blocks for themes and larger patterns of meaning which is underpinned by a central concept or a shared core idea and thus provide a framework for organizing the analytical observations by the researchers.

The analysis started with generating initial codes and identifying implicit and explicit ideas, the different themes. By reviewing these themes, the researchers checked if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set. In the following step, final themes were defined, named and represented with codes to sort and categorize the data (Clarke & Braun, 2018; Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

Thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants by highlighting similarities as well as differences and generates unanticipated insights. Therefore, using a thematic analysis was seen as an appropriate method as it helped to conquer the complexities of meaning within the data collected.

3.7. Ethical Considerations & Potential Research Risks

There are potentially serious implications for trust in the research process for both qualitative and quantitative research which should be considered within the research process (Nunan et al., 2020). As this thesis used a qualitative research design, the authors had to investigate ethical concerns that might arise for this research propose.

Concerning ethical codes and the privacy law a general data protection regulation (GDPR) compliance was sent to each participant, where they could among other things decide to consent that they voluntarily participate within the study, can refuse answer

questions and can withdraw from the study at any time without given a specific reason (Appendix 5). Regarding the research methods, the participants could decide to consent to the audio and video recording via Zoom during the focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews as well as to give their consent to the research diaries to be read and interpreted by the researchers. The GDPR form had to be completely filled out and signed from each participant before the research study started. Furthermore, the researchers decided to use a direct approach where the participants were informed about the topic and the purpose beforehand to ensure that they are willing to discontinue using Instagram for 14 days and participate in the study for four weeks in total, based on intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, one main advantage of an indirect approach is that participants might reveal more extensive information about their particular feelings without being impacted. However, participants needed to know about the purpose of the study in order to proactively discontinue using Instagram. Also, for ethical reasons the authors decided to inform the participants beforehand to avoid the risk of them feeling betrayed or cheated when finding out the purpose of the study at a later stage (Nunan et al., 2020).

One of the main barriers or potential research problems lies in the way researchers gain access to the community group and what effect they might have through their actions and words that could influence the participants (Orb et al., 2001). Another issue within qualitative research is the relationship between the interviewee and the participant. Spencer et al. (2003) described how the researchers attitude, which encompasses values and assumptions, can impact the interviewees reaction. There is always a risk for a topic or specific questions to be perceived as sensitive. With this in mind, the researchers used diaries where participants could reflect on their feelings and experiences alone, uninfluenced and at a time of the day of their choosing. In order to provide a quiet and private platform for each participant to talk about sensitive issues, feelings or experiences related to their detox as the study progressed, the authors opted for in-depth interviews rather than having them talk to others in a larger focus group, thus reducing the likelihood of them feeling inhibited or affected.

3.8. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to certify the quality of a study (Polit & Beck, 2014). According to Sandelowski (1993) a study is trustworthy only if the reader reviews and judges it to be so. Trustworthiness becomes a matter of persuasion, whereas the researchers are viewed as having made these practices both audible and visible (Sandelowski, 1993). Therefore, researchers should establish the protocols and procedures of the research study to be considered worthy of consideration by readers. Trustworthiness is divided in the following four sub-categories (Sandelowski, 1993).

Credibility mainly refers to ensuring internal validity (Shenton, 2004). In this study, the researchers sought to guarantee that the study measures what is intended to be measured by determining and choosing appropriate research design and methods for achieving a high level of credibility.

The term **transferability** encompasses to what degree the findings of a study can be applied to other events (Shenton, 2004). The researchers sought to ensure this by not only describing behaviors, emotions and experiences within the detox journey but also by providing descriptions of the phenomenon and theoretical background information which can be transferred to another context.

To ensure the **dependability** and reliability of this study, the researchers decided to do detailed and in-depth descriptions of the research design and method. Furthermore, the type of study, which ran about four weeks, could be repeated at any time, which is one main argument for dependability (Shenton, 2004). Through the detailed description and delivering of in-depth details of the study's methodic, the reader is able to achieve a deeper understanding.

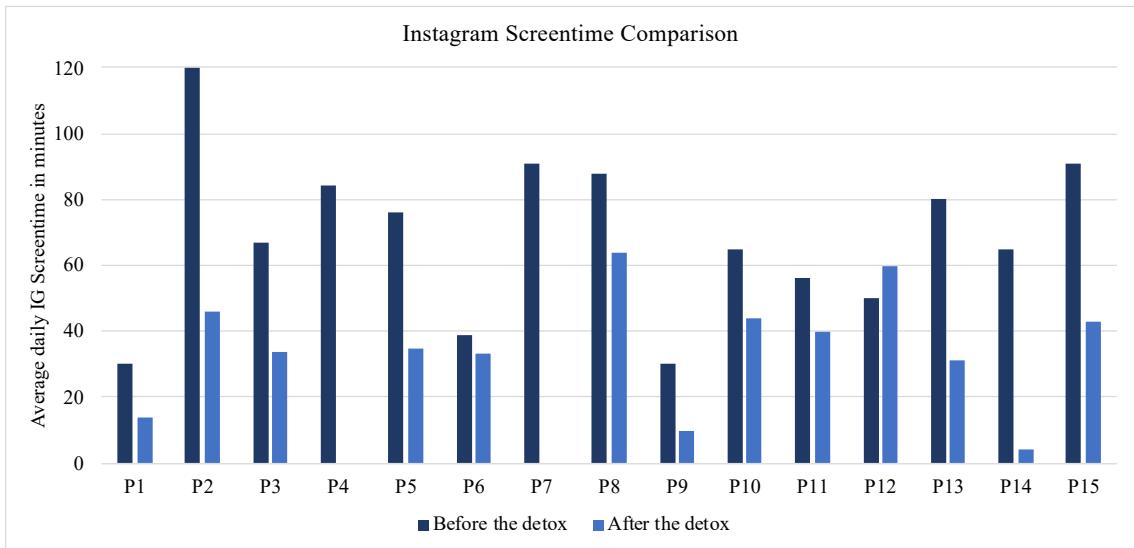
Regarding **confirmability**, the researchers have sought to remain objective and neutral throughout the whole research process by being careful about including their own viewpoints, e.g., in the focus-group meetings and in-depth interviews as well as when analyzing what was said and written down but rather based all information on data. To avoid bias, the researchers did not participate in the entire study, nor did they ever undergo an Instagram detox themselves.

4. Empirical Findings

This section provides an overview of the empirical findings from the data collection. Initially, the screentime of the participants before and after the detox is presented to illustrate a comparison. The themes that emerged from the first and second level codes are visually presented as well as representative quotes. Representative quotes were retrieved from the focus groups (FG), diaries (D) and individual interviews (I). Finally, the results are presented by elaborating on the themes identified and thereby based on the three stages of the journey.

To make the Instagram detox journey of each participant tangible and to evaluate individual success in terms of personal screentime, the Instagram screentime proofs requested during the data collection were evaluated (Figure 6). Participants had an average daily Instagram use of 68 minutes prior to detox which varied from 30 to 120 minutes among participants. With seven people, about half of all participants uninstalled the Instagram app from their phone for the time of the detox, with the other eight keeping the app. During the period of detox, the screentime was expected to be at 0 minutes. However, some participants who did not delete the app recorded a screentime higher, giving different reasons: P2, P6, P12, P14, and P15 opened the app unintendedly out of habit and recorded a few seconds or minutes of screentime. P8 recorded up to 15 minutes of screentime because she had to manage the Instagram account of her family's business. Strikingly, P3 and P5 had a significantly higher screentime in the first week of detox, as they could not give in to the urge to use the app. However, in the second week, a positive decrease was noted. The screentime after the detox decreased to an average of 35 minutes per day which varied from 4 to 64 minutes among participants. P4 and P7 did not record their screentime after the detox as they had the app still uninstalled and only consumed it via a browser. A table showing the collected screentime per participant in more detail can be found in Appendix 6.

Figure 6: Instagram Screentime Comparison



The following section is divided into subchapters, based on the three stages within the detox journey, representing the individual emotions, feelings, thoughts and experiences of the participants discovered within this study. Thereby, the results of the first stage before the detox show above all the personal motivation. Stage two expresses the experiences and feelings of the participants during the detox. Finally, stage three shows the results of the user behavior after the detox, focusing primarily on whether they returned to old habits or changed their behavior somehow.

For a better illustration and understanding of the findings, the figures present the coding process, resulting from the thematic analysis. Additionally, representative quotations are set out in subsequent tables. Therefore, in figure 7 to 9, the column on the left side shows the first level codes. These were directly derived from the participants statements that were made during the focus group discussions, in-depth interviews or written down in the participants' diaries. The first level codes represent both single-mentioned but meaningful statements as well as reoccurring statements. Concluding, in order to create concise terms, the first level codes were further developed and connected. Resulting from this, the second level codes were developed and grouped as final themes.

4.1. Stage 1: Motivation before the detox

Examining the motivation of Gen Y to discontinue using Instagram, in the first stage two final themes could be identified with a variety of associated first and second-level codes.

Figure 7: Coding of motivation before the detox

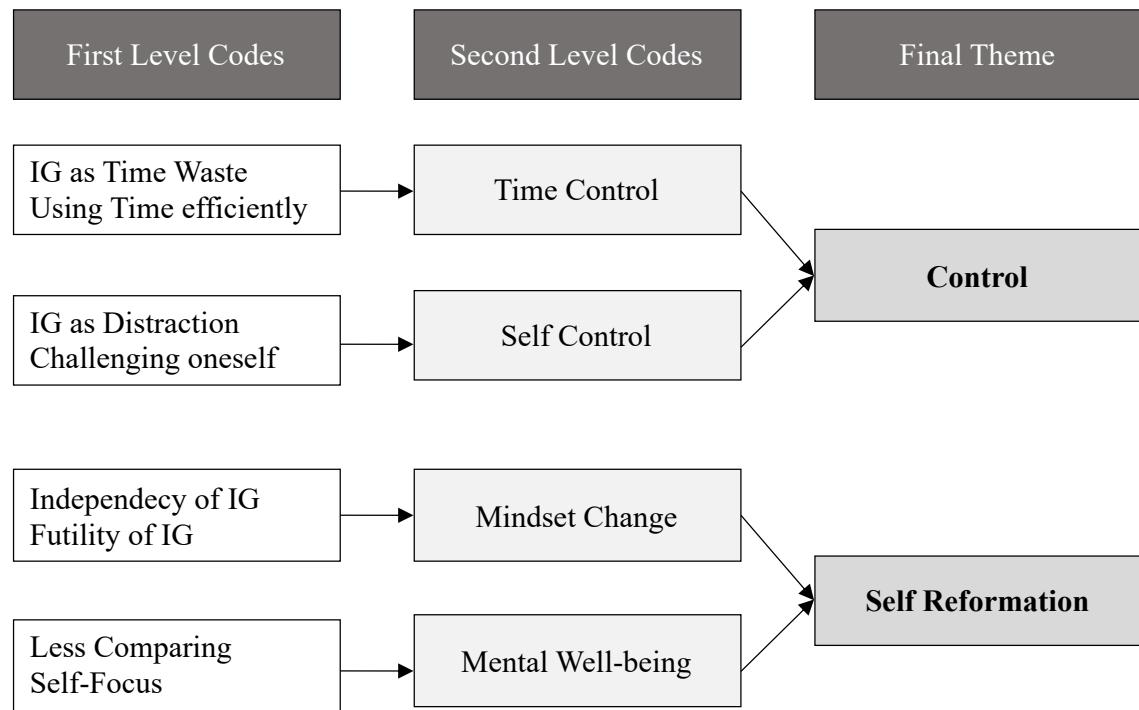


Table 3: Representative Quotes of motivation before the detox

First Level Codes	Representative Quotes
Control	
Time Control	
Instagram as a Time Waste	P8 (I): “But for me the reason to be here it also that I just keep going back to Instagram when I’m the slightest bored, basically. And just waste my time.”
Using Time efficiently	P3 (I): “I couldn’t find any time in my daily life to go the gym as much as I did before [...] so, I was like, I didn’t really realize I was using Instagram that much [...] and I could actually use the time to go to gym instead which I want to do.”
Self-Control	
Instagram as Distraction	P2 (I): “I think that when you have the option to scroll through your Instagram feed, it’s the easiest option to spend some time and not think so much. And I think that the detox is a very good way to focus more on reading books, because there is no distraction.”
Challenging oneself	P7 (I): “As I said, it could apply to other stuff. So, I just wanted to know, for myself, can I actually do it? And I think I can, I can prove myself that I can go without it.”

Self-Reformation	
Mindset Change	
Independency of Instagram	P11 (I): “I kind of wish that after the two weeks detox, I realize that I don’t need to install the app again. This would be the perfect if I really realize okay, I don’t need it anymore. Just leave it.”
Futility of Instagram	P9 (I): “In social gathering, or social settings, when I will be with friends, my phone is always with me. And I was just hoping that maybe I wouldn’t, if

	something happens wouldn't be like, oh, I need to take a picture of this. Which doesn't harm anyone. But it's just, it's just annoying. Like, why do I do this?"
Mental Well-being	
Less Comparing	P9 (I): „I think one of them is, of course, comparing myself to images on Instagram, because the most people I follow are either influencers who have, of course, amazing lives, or my friends. So, I was actually wondering or hoping that by not seeing them anymore, I would somehow feel less pressure, maybe I didn't even feel pressure at the time.”
Self-Focus	P14 (I): “The detox gave me the inspiration to focus more on myself.”

4.1.1. Control

Regaining and having control was identified as a key motivation to do an Instagram detox. When analyzing and evaluating the results, the aspect of control could be clustered into time control and self-control.

Time control compromises the motivation of the majority of the participants to regain control over their own available and valuable time and not wasting it by using the platform several times a day as P13 stated:

“I wish to define any kind of new routines [...] and I don't have time to do sports, I don't have time to whatever, go for a walk. But I see that I spend one hour per day on Instagram. And that means that I definitely have the time because I'm doing or I'm wasting one hour of my day for just scrolling through pictures [...].”

A high number of statements were made about Instagram being seen as a *waste of time* and wishing to use the *time more efficiently* instead of unconsciously opening the app several times a day. Therefore, these were identified as first-level codes. Moreover, the majority of the participants said that instead of scrolling irrelevantly through Instagram, they would rather focus on tasks that add value to them personally such as going to the gym more often, reading a book, taking care of job applications, working on university assignments without distraction and time loss.

Self-control comprises the motivation of the majority of the participants, often mentioned, to prove themselves independency from the platform. Often the wish appeared that with the help of the detox they wanted to show themselves that they can easily live without Instagram and that the app is not really needed like P7 said in the interview:

“As I said, it could apply to other stuff. So, I just wanted to know, for myself, can I actually do it? And I think I can, I can prove myself that I can go without it [Instagram].”

Statements which contain Instagram as a *distraction* and therefore as one reason to *challenge oneself* with doing a detox to prove independency from the platform were particularly common and were therefore identified as first-level codes. In this context, statements were mainly made about the platform distracting the participants from other activities and tasks which are seen as more valuable instead of scrolling through the app many hours a day without a purpose or greater meaning behind it and giving Instagram too much control. As P15 described “Instagram [...] takes my time. [...] then I feel like I don't have control because they have control over me.” Therefore, most of the participants stated that they wish to regain self-control through not using the app anymore and thus not being distracted.

4.1.2. Self-Reformation

The second final theme considered is the motivation of self-reformation. When analyzing the findings, the aspects of wishing to focus more on oneself and its own wants and needs were clustered into mindset-change and mental well-being.

Mindset-change includes the statements of the majority of participants who wished to prove and remind themselves that they do not need the app as P7 said:

“So, I hope I will be reminded that I can live without it.”

As the majority of the participants said that they would like to show themselves that they can be *independent* from the app, do not need it and thus to prove themselves the *futility* of the usage, these statements were identified as first-level codes. In this context, P9 stated the wish to realize the unnecessary of posting everything going on in life by uploading pictures from social gatherings and situations instead of just enjoying them without feeling the urge to use social media besides and share everything with the public. Moreover, P10 began to rethink whether she would like to continue using Instagram at all, both professionally and privately to avoid being dependent and focused on how many likes a post, story or picture has received. Further, this was described by almost all of the participants as an exhausting and unnecessary perception.

The second-level code **mental well-being** summarizes that a high number of the participants stated that other users such as influencers, celebrities as well as their own friends and family and their positive portrayal of their lives on the platform often make them feel uncomfortable and stressed about their life and achievements because they find themselves constantly comparing as expressed by P5:

[...] comparing myself to others, comparing myself to random people that I've met and followed on Instagram before. And obviously, they post highlights of their life. So, when I see them, their highlights, and I'm just sitting in my bed doing nothing. It's sort of like, oh shit, I should be doing something with my life. And that constant comparison just weights me down a lot."

Before the detox, almost all participants wished to *compare themselves less* with others, often unknown-people and *focus more on oneself*, its own life and own goals without feeling pressure through pictures and posts of others. Therefore, these statements were identified as first-level codes. Furthermore, the majority of participants stated that they find it mentally exhausting to constantly compare themselves and having the feeling of not doing enough out of their lives. This was described by P1 to happen subconsciously and without controlling it when scrolling through the app. Thereby, P4 described that at some point he felt compelled to make comparisons with others. Further, comparison to others is perceived as exhausting and described as a mental burden by most of the participants and was aimed to be minimized.

4.2. Stage 2: Experiences during the detox

Regarding the experiences and feelings of Gen Y during the detox, in the second stage five final themes emerged with a variety of associated first and second level-level codes.

Figure 8: Coding of experiences during the detox

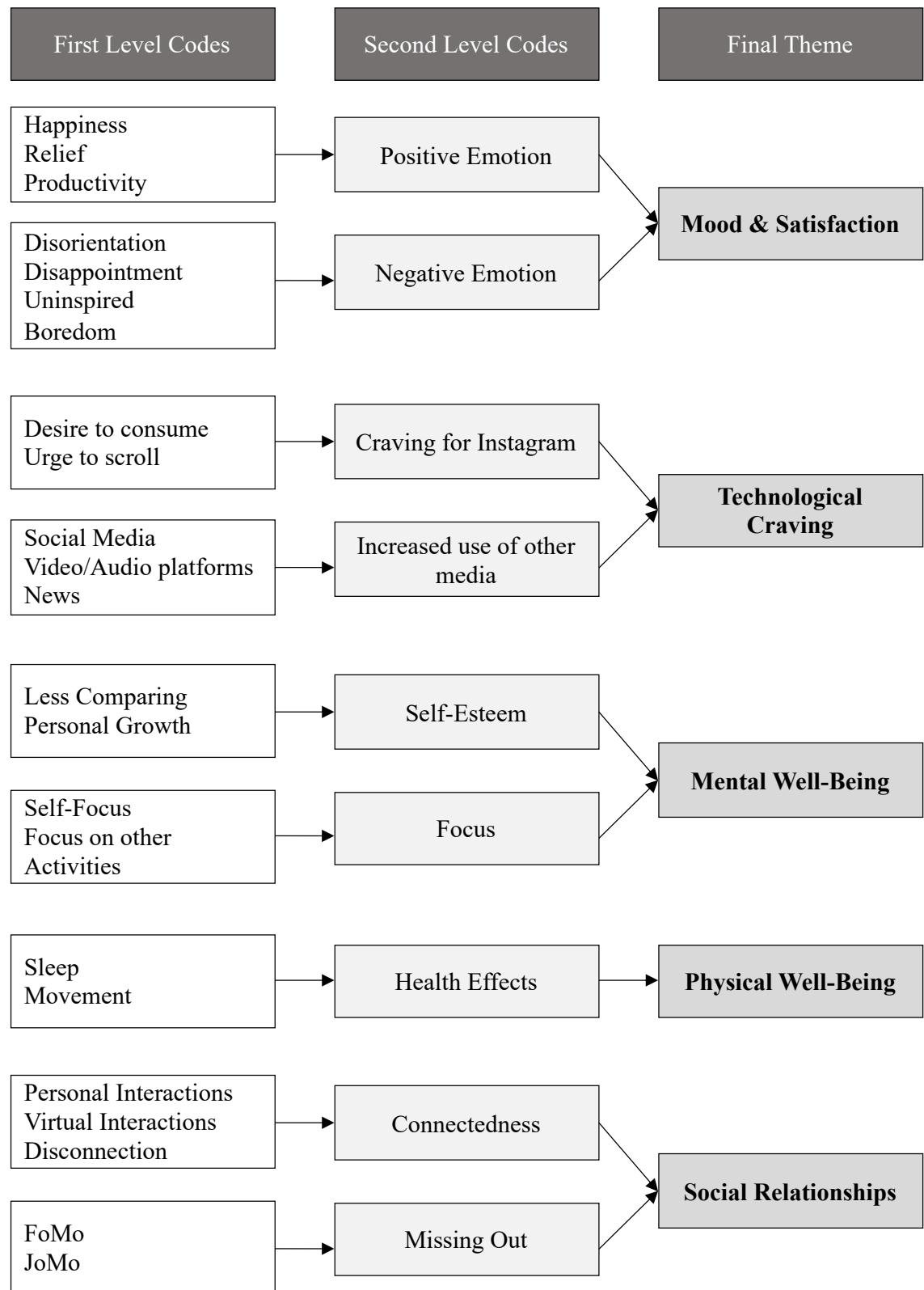


Table 4: Representative Quotes of experiences during the detox

First Level Codes	Representative Quotes
Mood & Satisfaction	
Positive Emotion	
Happiness	P4 (I): “[...] in general, I would say my mood got A little better, because I think I was, like, not annoyed by looking at stuff that I didn't want to see, I guess.”
Relief	P14 (I): “[...] I let myself think without the need of having some application in my daily life to control me, control my feelings. [...] And I was shocked, because on the first day, I felt so free.”
Productivity	P4 (I): “[...] I was, like, really being productive, getting stuff done and still with time left for or doing activities that I wanted, like outside. That made me feel like I accomplished something.”
Negative Emotion	
Disorientation	P1 (I): „They were like, first, second and third day, I had much more time. And I was just like, what to do with my life? I'm just here alone with my phone [...].”
Disappointment	P12 (I): “[...] I was in the app. Just for a few seconds, so not that long. [...] It made me feel low-key disappointed because I was like, I wanted to make it through the whole two weeks without clicking on Instagram.”
Uninspired	P12 (I): “For fashion [...] I mainly use Instagram for it. [...] There I was missing in it a lot.”
Boredom	P3 (D): “[...] I was actually bored and I didn't feel like I had anything to do.”
Technological Craving	
Craving for Instagram	
Desire to consume	P13 (I): “[...] what was missing was this little instrument, having two minutes before going to bed just to be by myself having the feeling of being in that bubble, which is scrolling through your phone consuming the content that you choose.”
Urge to scroll	P15 (I): “I just had that huge muscle memory of just closing an app and then going through my phone and then being like, oh Instagram, [...] opening up my phone not doing having anything to do, and then just opening Instagram.”
Increased use of other media	
Social Media	P9 (I): “[...] in the beginning, I wasn't even aware that I was using Facebook instead of Instagram. But then after first day of reflecting I was like, oh, maybe I did use Facebook instead of Instagram.”
Video/Audio platforms	P14 (I): “[...] I was spending more time on YouTube, for example, I was just looking for some random videos about recipes and games and reviews [...]”
News	P12 (I): “[...] I feel like the news apps more replaced Instagram, because I would get like my information out of there then.”
Mental Well-being	
Self-Esteem	
Less Comparing	P11 (I): “[...] like seeing or watching the stories of others and see how exciting their day is and then compare myself like my daily routines, which are mostly studying and boring. I didn't think about comparing myself to others. It was not really there, this comparison thing.”

Personal Growth	P12 (I): “[...] personal growth just because I was low-key proud about the fact that [...] not being on Instagram really reduced my screen time [...]. I didn't care about my phone that much anymore. And then that made me low-key proud [...].”
Focus	
Self-Focus	P1 (I): “I just felt that I can focus way more on myself as I'm not focusing on other people's lives are not around me.”

Physical Well-being	
Health Effects	
Sleep	P12 (I): “Well, I just slept more because I wasn't on my phone in the evenings mainly. Also, I mean, there's this whole theory about phones and social media before sleep that might affect your quality of sleep. [...] So, this is why I had way better sleep, slept longer, usually, because I went to bed earlier.”
Movement	P11 (I): “It was at some point sometimes I felt like, Okay, you're lying in your bed, <u>you don't use Instagram, just do something and get out of your bed.</u> ”

Social Relationships	
Connectedness	
Personal Interactions	P1 (I): “I had a friend who traveled to a city, and she was like, kept posting things. And when she arrived back, I asked, how was it? And she said that it was really nice and if I saw the stories. And I was like, no, I don't have Instagram right now. And then she was just like, showing it to me in person and telling stories to this and stuff. So, from this side, for me, it looked more personal, the way how she told me how she enjoyed the trip and stuff.”
Virtual Interactions	P4 (I): “For example, here in Sweden lots of friends only use Instagram or Snapchat. And some of them like decided to download or start using a bit more WhatsApp to reach me when we're going out.”
Disconnection	P5 (I): “[...] obviously loneliness because I'm not connected to my friends on Instagram, or not connected to my friends back home.”
Missing out	
FoMo	P4 (I): “Well, the thing is some friends told me they were going out, and that they would like text me or something to go out together. And yeah, I think I was really tired that day [...]. So, I decided consciously to stay inside. But still, like not looking at Instagram to know what was happening was a little stressful.”
JoMo	P12 (I): “I realized that what other people do is like really not that important. I could literally live without knowing what they were doing. And, like, the curiosity goes away with time I feel like. The more you don't see and you stop just like being curious about what other people are doing.”

4.2.1. Mood & Satisfaction

The first theme considered during the detox is the mood & satisfaction of the participants. When evaluating the results, the experienced emotions could be clustered into positive and negative emotions which constitute the second level codes.

Positive emotions comprise occurred feelings, which are assessed as “good” by the participants. Several positive emotions were mentioned like P10 stated in the interview:

“[...] and she asked me, how is your Instagram detox going? And I said to her, I'm so happy. It's so good.”

Further expressions such as satisfaction, excitement and motivation were mentioned in the diaries expressing positive feelings. Statements indicating happiness, relief, or increased productivity were particularly common and were therefore interpreted as first level codes. With *happiness*, the majority of participants described an increase in their current mood, which was attributed to the absence of Instagram. This feeling is also closely linked to the feeling of *relief* that four participants described. They mentioned a pressure to post and share content on Instagram that was taken away through the detox and made them feel free and relieved. Likewise, the pressure to reply to people on Instagram via private messages was eliminated during the detox. The feeling of increased *productivity* was experienced and mentioned by almost all of the participants. Thus, they described more productive behavior and fewer breaks during study periods since Instagram could not be used as distraction or procrastination. Most realized they had more time for other useful activities and invested it in sports, reading, studying, or cleaning. P4 also stated “I was improving my time management” and described stricter adherence to his daily schedule.

Negative emotions comprise occurred feelings, which are assessed as “bad” by the participants. These include feelings of disorientation, disappointment, boredom and feeling uninspired which is also underlined by the statement of P12:

“I feel like it was a little bit a combination of like, sometimes being uninspired and bored. Then this just makes me feel kind of like down a bit.”

The emotion of *disorientation* is connected to feeling of not knowing what to do as Instagram was not available. The majority of participants felt “lost” because Instagram, as an otherwise everyday component, offered them stability and familiarity. Moreover, they were unaware of what would happen next and how the following days would feel without Instagram. *Disappointment* occurred after participants accidentally opened the app during the detox which happened to five participants. All of them described to be disappointed as they felt like ruining the challenge. Using Instagram as a source of

inspiration, few participants felt *uninspired* during the detox. P12 described in his diary to usually get fashion inspiration from Instagram, that he was particularly missing during the detox. The rarely mentioned feeling of not knowing what to do also led to *boredom* for some participants. Thus, P3 experienced such great boredom that led her to relapse, even though she was in the first week of her detox.

4.2.2. Technological Craving

The second final theme considers the technological demand of the participants during the detox. By analyzing and clustering the results, a craving for Instagram itself and an increased use of other media became evident. These two topics serve as second level codes.

A **craving for Instagram** refers to the urge to use the platform during the detox, which was felt to varying degrees by all participants. For instance, P11 described the situation in which she particularly wanted to use the app:

“At the beginning, like, I catch myself always going on my phone and wanting to use Instagram and then realized, oh, you cannot use it. [...] In the evening, for example, when you were looking at your pictures, and then I thought, oh well, this could be nice for your Instagram story or whatever.”

In the craving for Instagram, a differentiation can be made between the desire to consume and the urge to scroll, which are therefore interpreted as first level codes. The *desire to consume* explicitly refers to the desire to use the app specifically for its content, such as checking specific accounts and topics that participants choose. For instance, P6 mentioned the desire to look for interior inspiration, which was not possible during the detox. Also, the findings indicate that the desire to consume the app was such intense that P3 and P5 relapsed. The *urge to scroll*, however, relates to the mostly unconscious desire of using the phone for the sake of scrolling like P14 described “my hand really wants to scroll”. A third of the participants associated this urge to a type of muscle memory, whereby their hands are used to use and scroll through the phone which was limited due to the detox. Consequently, they checked their phone automatically, although no specific reason occurred, or notification was received. The participants described the occurrence especially in connection with stress or boredom.

The **increased use of other media** was described to different extents by all participants. Increased usage includes other social media platforms, as well as video/audio platforms and the consumption of news via different media channels as described by P8:

[...] in the first week, I took up my phone all the time, and instead I was scrolling Facebook or News [...] but then I just realized at one point, I just found myself like scrolling my Facebook feed, and I was like, what am I doing? This is so stupid."

Especially an increase in other *social media platforms* became evident while evaluating the collected data. Thus, two third of the participants described a shift in their daily use from Instagram to other platforms such as most frequently mentioned Facebook as well as Twitter, Snapchat, Tik Tok, Linkedin, Reddit or Pinterest. Whereas for some participants the consumption of other social media happened unconsciously, others consciously searched for content that they would usually have consumed on Instagram. The increased use of *video platforms* such as Netflix or YouTube and *audio platforms* such as Spotify could also be reflected. In particular, three participants started listening to podcasts during the detox. P14 stated that she listened to podcast with similar content as on Instagram, whereas P11 said to consume completely different content than on Instagram. Due to the change in the political situation in Europe (Russia-Ukraine war) during the first detox week, some participants reported an increased interest in *news*. They realized they would normally consume news via Instagram and therefore resorted to substitutes. News apps such as BBC, NTV or Tagesschau were downloaded and newspaper reading increased.

4.2.3. Mental Well-being

The third final theme includes changes in the mental well-being of the participants during the detox. Statements are clustered into the second level codes self-esteem and focus.

Positive changes in the **self-esteem** of the participants became evident, like P9 stated:

[...] I think my self-esteem improved because I didn't really care anymore what if someone would like or dislike or see or not see what I was wearing or doing or eating."

The positive effects were particularly expressed in the fact that participants compared themselves less with others during the detox and were able to perceive a personal growth.

Participants described in the interviews and diaries that their Instagram consumption led them to *compare* themselves to others, as ideals and life's best moments are often presented on the platform. Such comparisons made them feel worse and to doubt themselves. By being absent on Instagram, the constant comparison decreased which positively influenced the participants self-esteem as P4 stated to feel more comfortable with himself after some days. Further, the feeling of pride was described by few participants because they followed through with the challenge, which positively influenced their self-esteem as well. The statements to grow beyond oneself with the participation in the detox are therefore reflected in the first level code *personal growth*.

Findings showed that participants experienced to be more **focused** during the detox like P12 stated:

“[...] the whole topic of like people being mentally not as stable because they see these perfect lives of people. And that stresses me out a lot sometimes. But I was less stressed because I didn't see it. [...] And had like a more focus on myself and what I do. [...] And that like really cut my stress off.

On the one hand increased focus manifests itself by being more focused on oneself and on the other hand by being more focused on other activities. Increased *self-focus* is also linked to the fact that social comparing decreased during the detox, which made half of the participants focus more on their own life and goals. They described using the detox as occasion to think and reflect on their own life and personal or career goals. Further self-focus made few participants enjoying “quality-time” only for themselves and keeping moments private by not sharing everything with others on Instagram. Also, participants could *focus on other activities* that positively influenced their mental well-being. Such as P11 and P7, who focused on reading books while P3 discovered new music for herself and P10 focused on practicing Swedish. Further they described being more in the moment and perceiving situations more consciously as the phone use was limited.

4.2.4. Physical Well-being

The fourth theme refers to the physical well-being of the participants influenced by the detox. Since few relating statements refer to sleep or urge to move during the detox, these are summarized under **health effects** as second level code. For instance, P3 stated:

“And my daily habits changed [...] like going to gym. Like one good thing kind of triggers or another. So, like, if you go to gym, you cannot eat trash food, so I started making smoothies. Eat better, feel better.“

A third of the participants noted better or longer *sleep* during the period of detox. This is especially related to less cell phone use before going to bed, as Instagram was not available. Thereby, they described being less distracted in the evening, less exposed to blue light, and therefore able to find restful sleep more quickly. Also, an increased motivation to *move* was experienced by few participants. They attributed this to less time on the cell phone and more time for other things. P14, for instance, created a completely new routine for herself and started to schedule daily afternoon walks which she did not do before the detox.

4.2.5. Social Relationships

The fifth final theme covers experiences and feelings connected to the participants social relationships. The second level codes are formed by the categories connectedness and missing out.

The evaluation of statements related to **connectedness** show different experiences throughout the detox. Whereas half of the participants experienced a stronger connection through increased personal and virtual interactions, the other half experienced a weaker connection with people which was interpreted as disconnection. The detox made it apparent that Instagram is a powerful driver in feeling connectivity like P9 stated:

“I open stuff because I want to see what other people are doing at that moment. [...] maybe [...] I want to see what other people are doing, actually. Maybe to somehow feel connected to them.“

Participants experienced an increase in *personal interaction* which they justify either with more time available or with the restriction of social contact via Instagram. Thus, P9 and P11 mentioned that they talked more to people around them and P12 stated that he became closer to his roommates as they spent more time together. Also, participants described to share moments and experiences with friends and family directly, whereby they would usually post these on Instagram. They realized that with real friends they would still have contact and are informed what the other person is doing although Instagram was not available. For example, P1 stated that she enjoyed it more when her friend told her about

a trip rather than seeing it on Instagram as she perceived it as more personal. Also, *virtual interactions* increased, leading participants to have more phone calls with their friends and family or to start sending messages through other channels such as Snapchat or WhatsApp. In contrast to the increase of personal and virtual interactions is the feeling of *disconnection* mentioned by six participants. They described feeling disconnected to some people or even being lonely as the connection via Instagram was interrupted. Especially, a high degree of disconnection occurred between people who did not find any alternative channel to keep contact on. However, this situation was interpreted as rare as only P10 stated “some friends that I'm reaching out to, are only on Instagram and they don't have other media”.

The second level code called **missing out** includes the two contrasting feelings of fear and joy when missing out on specific moments. Both were experienced during the detox like P9 stated:

“[...] I thought about what I could be missing or who like who could be following me or talking to me.”

FoMo was expressed by the majority thinking and being curious about what they could be missing while they could not check Instagram. The fear referred to new postings, following or notifications that could be missed especially from people close to the participants. Thus, P4 described feeling stressed by the fact that his friends went out, but he could not see how the night was as he could not check their postings. P15 stated that she felt *FoMo*, but she was aware about making it up, “I knew in my head like it's not true”, because she was actually not missing something important. In contrast to *FoMo*, a few participants experienced *JoMo* and enjoyed not being informed about everything via Instagram. Thus, P9 described “it gave me like more piece of mind” by not seeing what her friends posted while celebrating carnival. Similarly, P12 described having *JoMo* as he realized it was not important for him to know what other people are doing and that his curiosity decreased over time.

4.3. Stage 3: Post-behavior after the detox

Concerning the post-behavior of the participants in the direct time after the detox, three final themes could be identified.

Figure 9: Coding of post-behavior after the detox

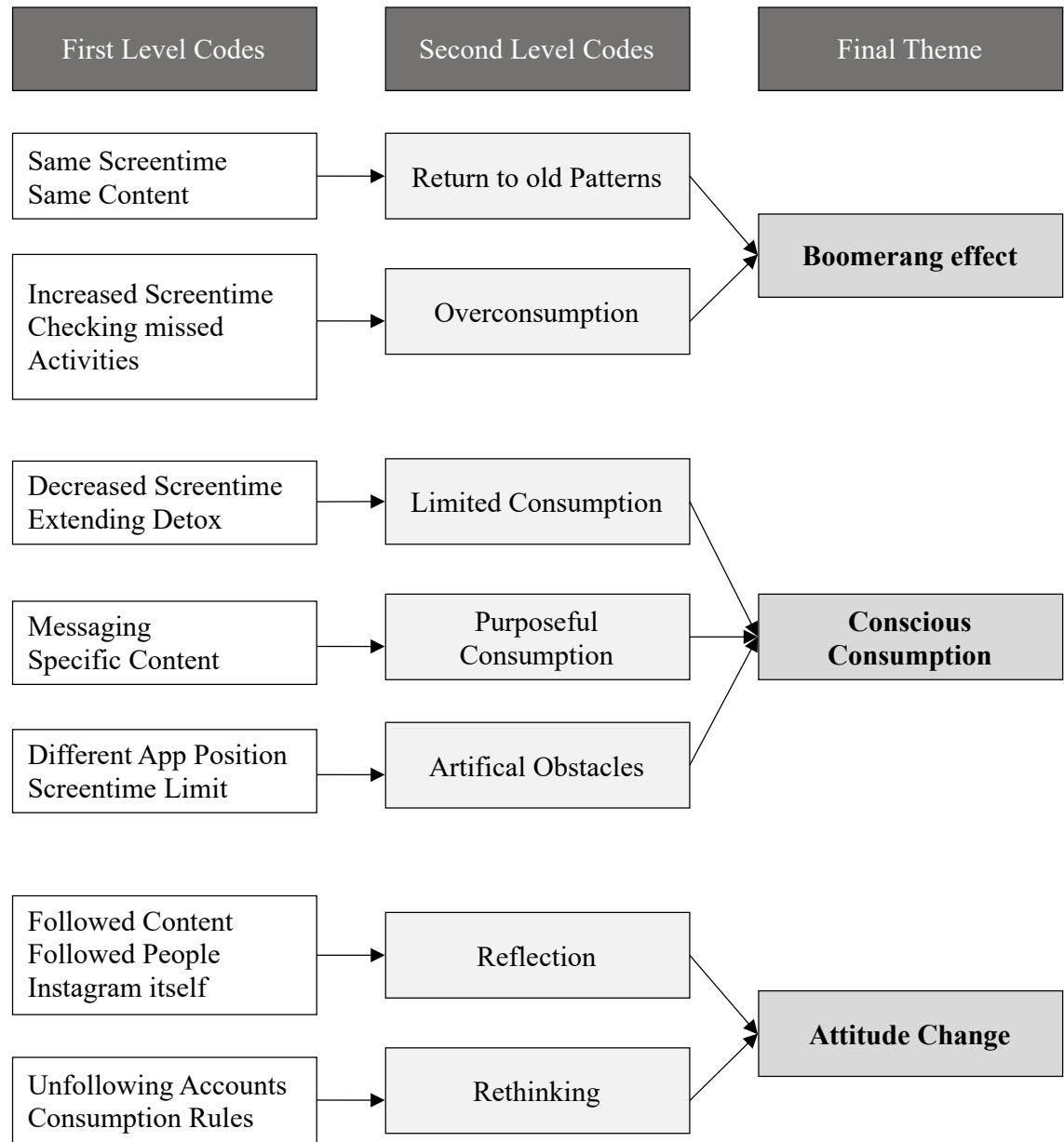


Table 5: Representative Quotes of post-behavior after the detox

First Level Codes	Representative Quotes
Boomerang Effect	
Return to old Patterns	

Same Screenshot	P13 (I): "When we spoke last week, I've told you that I more or less went back to my normal usage level, [...]."
Same Content	P8 (I): "No, I think it's quite the same, actually. And once again, before I was already very aware of the accounts that I do follow. They're very specially chosen and picked, but I don't mind unfollowing people that I know from middle school and that I don't care about."
Overconsumption	
Increased Screenshot	P4 (I): "Yeah, I would say I completely failed because I used it even more this week. But I am conscious that it was specifically because of the exam week. [...] So, I really noticed how my brain was asking me like, for any distraction."
Checking missed Activities	P9 (I): "I have downloaded the app again. The first thing I did was open these messages. And it was as I said, it was a not so interesting. I had some new followers. Yeah. Okay. And I had, like, someone I met this week texted me on there. Also, not very exciting."

Conscious Consumption	
Limited Consumption	
Decreased Consumption	P5 (I): "My screen time is down like 50% on it. Compared to before the detox, which is pretty good."
Extending Detox	P6 (I): "So I think it was very good actually for like my mental health. With still a bit of FoMo or like social pressure here and there [...] and in general, I think it was more good than bad. And especially also now in the political crisis it's like I haven't even actually checked Instagram since the detox end anyways. So, it's kind of ongoing for me."
Purposeful Consumption	
Messaging	P12 (I): "[...] obviously when I was allowed to go on Instagram, again, I the first I feel like I spent an hour on it or something. But just to catch up with people who sent me messages."
Specific Content	P15 (I): "And it makes me use it more mindfully now because, like I know what accounts there are. There are some accounts like that inspire me in my like yoga and I really kind of missed some of the accounts when I wasn't there. Like it was like, Oh, I wonder what she has posted? Things like this because I know they only inspire me and they don't bring me any negativity or comparison. So, like, now I know what the accounts were that I was missing."
Artificial Obstacles	
Different App Position	P6 (I): "And I also still haven't, like, put the app back in its original place on my phone, which I think makes a very big difference. Just not being able to yeah, just mindlessly click on it."
Screentime Limit	P14 (I): "I didn't delete the Instagram app as I mentioned before, I just put the time limit. Half an hour every day. I just use it 15 minutes. I feel that I don't need it."

Attitude Change	
Reflection	
Followed Content	P4 (I): "But still, I think I used it, like in a different way. I unfollowed a lot of accounts or content I didn't really want to see and, I don't know started searching for more things that really interests me, like cooking stuff or movies or stuff like that."
Followed People	P2 (I): "I unfollowed some people. I scrolled through my list following people and erased some of them like unfollow, unfollow, unfollow."

Instagram itself	P13 (I): “And as this probably is my favorite app just because of the content I can consume. This won't really change. So maybe I should really prepare rules for myself to use it to maybe take out all of the bad stuff about the app and only use it for good.”
Rethinking Unfollowing Accounts	P10 (I): “[...] maybe more fashion and other things that I've consumed before. Some brand accounts. I think that is something that I will unfollow for sure [...] because I really don't need to see what they're posting about. I think what I'm mainly interested in now is their business aspects. And I think I can read about it on any other platform like Google.”
Consumption Rules	P9 (I): “And also, I decided that I only would use it once a day to like checkup for the full day instead of going on 10 times a day, like shortly.”

4.3.1. Boomerang Effect

The boomerang effect comprises the second-level codes return to old patterns and overconsumption and thus focuses primarily on the post-detox behavior, where participants either returned to their previous user behavior or spent more time on Instagram than before.

Return to old patterns contains the behavior when no noticeable changes occurred after the detox, i.e., participants returned to the platform and made statements about having the *same screentime* as well as consuming the *same content* as before like P13 described:

“When we spoke last week, I've told you that I more or less went back to my normal usage level, [...].”

Further, P13 described in the same context, that he returned to his normal user behavior directly after the detox, but at the same time reported that he is disappointed about himself as it feels like he has learned nothing and should behave differently. Some participants, like P8, said that she continued consuming the same content as before. However, she made clear that she was already paying attention to what content she followed before the detox started. P13 shared a similar opinion by saying that it felt unnecessary to delete the app as she had the feeling that she can control her usage to a certain degree and does not want to defend her user behavior since she is allowed to create her free time individually. At the same time, few participants reported feelings of guilt regarding their return to Instagram, especially when they realized they were falling back into old patterns. For example, while P9 reported scrolling pointlessly through Instagram during a break like she did before the detox, she realized that she does not like her own behavior. She said that she aims to be careful about not falling back into old patterns because the detox felt good, which is a statement made by several participants.

Overconsumption includes few participants stating to spent more time on Instagram in the immediate days after the detox and that their *screen time increased* compared to before the detox. Thereby, the focus was on *checking missed activities* from the two weeks, which often took up a lot of time. Therefore, these statements were identified as first-level codes. P9 commented on this behavior as follows:

“[...] the first thing I did was answer the messages, check the notifications. And I checked like three stories of people that were in the top. But then I was like, okay, and I scrolled maybe like four pictures down and then I was like, oh, fuck, this is so much work to go back for two weeks.“

The participants' motivation for higher Instagram use were mainly due to the fact that they wanted to read and reply to messages they received from friends and acquaintances within the two weeks. P4 reported an increase or spike, which was due to the feeling of compensating the two missing weeks. At the same time, he mentioned a higher screentime although he used Instagram primarily to reply to messages from friends.

4.3.2. Conscious Consumption

The second theme comprises limited consumption, purposeful consumption and artificial obstacles and therefore focusses on the partial change in the usage behavior of the majority of the participants. This is seen as result of reflection and positive experiences within the detox, which led to changes in behavior towards a more conscious consumption.

Limited consumption describes a limited usage of Instagram after the detox as P2 stated:

“Yes, it decreased a lot. After a few days, I used Instagram and I think I opened the app more consciously. And yeah, I think I am now daily at 20 to 25 minutes.“

In this context, almost all participants mentioned a *decreased screentime*, especially in comparison to their screentime before the detox. Further, two participants decided to even *extend the detox*. Therefore, these statements were classified as first-level codes. Almost all participants said to spent significantly less time on Instagram, primarily because they no longer opened the app unconsciously and were more aware of when they used it. For example, P9 described that she made the decision to take the app back, particularly for checking notifications and messages of her friends. She also added that it could have

taken a few hours before she clicked on it, as she did not consider it as that important anymore. Furthermore, two participants decided to extend the detox independently and told about this in the individual interviews one week after the detox. The two main reasons for this were to prove to themselves that they could go without the app for longer or to avoid seeing news about negative events. Thereby, they described to protect their mental health as the news reporting within the app was often perceived as unfiltered and uncontrollable. Within the focus group after the detox, P7 indicated that she was still not using Instagram – all other 14 participants had decided to use the app again by then.

Purposeful consumption describes the user-behavior of some participants who stated that they decided to only open the app for staying in contact with friends and family, meaning to only use it for *messaging* or to consume *specific content*, based on their individual interests such as P15 described:

“[...] it makes me use it more mindfully now because like I know what accounts there are. There are some accounts like that inspire me in my like yoga and I really kind of missed some of the accounts when I wasn't there. It was like, Oh, I wonder what she has posted? [...] because I know they only inspire me and they don't bring me any negativity or comparison. [...] now I know what the accounts were that I was missing.”

Few participants felt more mindful about consuming the app as they realized they wanted to continue using the app primarily to maintain contacts. Especially with people who do not use any other social media, making Instagram the only option. Also, they realized what content interests them personally and what content is now seen as unnecessary. Thereby, the focus here was the comparison with others on the platform. P15 said she unfollowed content and people after the two weeks because she realized that looking at others made her feel mentally bad but also in relation to her body. This is why she decided to focus on content of personal interests without perceiving feelings of negativity.

Artificial obstacles describe the behavior of participants who *repositioned* the app on their phone or *set a limit* within their phone settings on how much time they are allowed to spend on the platform. That was mainly used as barriers to make it harder for themselves to open Instagram multiple times a day and try not to pick up old habits from before the detox. P6 described the setting of artificial obstacles as follows:

“And I also still haven’t, like, put the app back in its original place on my phone, which I think makes a very big difference. Just not being able to yeah, just mindlessly click on it.”

The often-mentioned time limit of 30 minutes per day automatically closes the app after the time has expired and makes it more difficult to open it again. Another way of not using Instagram too much, mentioned by few of the participants, was to not re-install the app back on the phone but instead to use it on the computer. Like P5 described he “didn’t download the app again” and “used Safari to get on Instagram, which makes it harder”. For a few participants this ensured less opportunities to use the app as most of the times during the day their phone is with them, but a laptop or computer is often at home. Thus, they were unable to use Instagram or noticeably less than before.

4.3.3. Attitude Change

Attitude change describes the behavior of some participants who took specific action after the detox, e.g., by setting themselves new rules for their Instagram consumption or re-evaluating what content and people they still wanted to follow. The overarching goal mentioned was to spend less time on the platform and focus more on the specific topics of interest, often cleared up through the detox.

Most participants mentioned that after the detox they **reflected** extensively on their previous Instagram behavior in terms of the *followed content* as well as *followed people*, or even the *app itself* and its meaning for them. Thus, these statements were classified as first-level codes. Regarding the followed content P4 said:

“But still, I think I use it, like, in a different way. I unfollowed a lot of accounts or content I didn’t really want to see and [...] started searching for more things that really interests me, like cooking stuff or movies or stuff like that.”

Besides the specific content or specific people, they consumed, some participants reflected about the app itself. Thereby P8 expressed that the detox showed her that she enjoys to take, edit and share pictures, especially for friends who live abroad. Further, she realized that Instagram is an important source of inspiration for her, where she mainly follows artists or small hotels – something that gives her an added value and she would not want to miss. In contrast, P6 said that she reflected on the negative effects that the Instagram has on her, especially when it comes to watching news, which often feels

unfiltered. Thereby, she realized that she only wants to consume content of personal interests such as interior design and only open the app when she feels like being in the right state of mind where she could also deal with negative news.

Rethinking includes the two actions of *unfollowing accounts* and setting up new individual *consumption rules*, that represent the first-level codes. In this context, P11 said in the kick-out focus group:

“Or at least I try to just look at Instagram in the evening, like once, and nothing more, just also like participant 9 and 10 said [...] that I don’t go on Instagram 10 times a day.”

Checking the app once or twice a day, e.g., only in the morning or evening, was a new rule given by few of the participants. In relation to this, P2 said that opening the app for a few minutes in the evening is quite sufficient as one could see what friends or persons of personal interest experienced during the day and not miss any information. Another idea and new rule mentioned by two participants is to spend at least one day per week without the app and de-install it from the phone, e.g., on a Sunday to have a “mini-detox” to clear the mind. In this context, P7 expressed the thought of doing at least two longer detoxes per year, e.g., again two weeks, since she realized “how good it is” for her. Furthermore, in the kick-out focus group the idea of having two separate accounts came up – one for following and interacting with friends and family and one for commercial brands and influencers to avoid the feeling of comparing oneself or constantly wanting to consume presented products.

5. Discussion and Analysis

In this section, the empirical findings are further analyzed and discussed in relation to the literature and hence provide a more critical in-depth analysis of the results. The chapter is structured based on the three research questions underlying this study and therefore again on the three stages of the Instagram detox journey.

Research Question 1: Before the detox

The first research question explored what motivates individuals of Gen Y to do an Instagram detox by discontinue using the platform. Thereby, this study found two main motivations: (1) control and (2) self-reformation. The third motivation found in the previous literature review by other scholars (Ganito & Jorge, 2018; Hardey & Atkinson, 2018; Jorge, 2019) was not mentioned by the participants of this study: personal connection. Besides the main wishes to focus more on themselves as well as on other activities that are seen as more valuable, the motivation to focus more on social relationships was not explicitly mentioned. However, it cannot be clearly stated whether the description of more valuable activities also include maintaining social relationships outside of the internet and social media. The term of the main motivation, i.e., controlling time, found in the literature review was changed to the final theme control. Not only were the participants in this study motivated to use their time more efficiently, but they also viewed Instagram as a distraction and wanted to become independent with respect to the app.

Regarding **control**, participants overwhelmingly indicated before the detox started, that they felt that the constant, mindless scrolling on Instagram, often several times a day, *wasted time* and prevented themselves from attending to important tasks or pursuing activities that are considered as more valuable. Brubaker et al. (2016) found that participants left the dating-app Grindr to avoid a constant source of distraction and instead rather wanted to focus on other tasks. Jorge et al. (2019) came to a similar conclusion, as participants also intended to be more productive, more focused and in control of their time instead of wasting it through scrolling. Regarding the wish to *use time more*

efficiently by not being distracted from Instagram, the results of previous studies are coherent, even if previous scholars focused on other social media platforms such as Grindr, Weibo or media usage in general. Thus, Zhou et al. (2018) found that 18% of their participants left the social media app Weibo as the platform was perceived as too time-consuming and they rather wished to concentrate on other activities. Likewise, Syvertsen and Enli (2020) stated that digital tools and media occupy a high amount of time and distract the user from more valuable and essential things in life.

Instagram was seen as *source of distraction* by the majority of participants. Thus, it was described that the time spent on the platform should be more controlled. Participants indicated, e.g., reading a book or concentrating on a series or film, researching more out about topics of individual interest or just spending time with themselves without being on the phone and online on Instagram. These findings are coherent with Brubaker et al. (2016) and Syvertsen and Enli (2020). Since the participants in this study were mainly students, they often felt a desire to gain more self-control in order to be diligent and focused in study-related tasks and perform well. Miksch and Schulz (2018) revealed a similar conclusion, showing that the decision to detox was mainly made to achieve better, qualitative results while studying or within the professional environment. Moreover, few participants were motivated to gain self-control by *challenging themselves* and proving that they could show perseverance. This motivation in particular was not mentioned by previous studies and is thereby considered as new insight.

In the context of **self-reformation**, this study found a change in thoughts regarding the usage or non-usage of Instagram: many participants were guided by curiosity to show themselves that they can live without Instagram and thus prove themselves *independency* and *futility* of the app. This specific motivation was not found in other previous studies as well.

Other scholars (Glomb et al., 2011; Miksch & Schulz, 2018) found the motivation to increase well-being within the professional environment or to focus on enjoying life outside the internet. These aspects were mentioned only sporadically within this study. Similar to Syvertsen and Enli (2020), this study found that participants viewed the temporary break as an opportunity to raise awareness and re-learn self-regulation, e.g., by not mindlessly scrolling or clicking on the app several times a day. Along with the

study of Kent (2020), this study also showed that the participants were motivated by *avoiding social comparison* and rather *focusing on oneself*. Kent (2020) found that continuously looking at others can lead to unpleasant feelings of comparative anxiety, inadequacy and disempowerment. Similar to Kent (2020), this study found that the majority of participants were motivated to detox in order to compare themselves less and rather focus on personal goals and individual achievements without feeling social pressure through looking at the lives of others in form of pictures and videos. This content was often perceived and described as flawless and perfect. Thereby, participants mainly reported unpleasant feelings when they saw the lives of others, which were often perceived as better than their own and further, that these negative feelings mostly appeared during periods of feeling insecure. They wished to avoid these feelings and thus restore their mental well-being with the help of the detox.

Research Question 2: During the detox

The second research question explored how Gen Y experiences the intermittent discontinuance of Instagram by capturing their feelings and experiences during the Instagram detox. The results found are consistent with the conceptual framework (figure 4) that was created by this thesis researchers based on previous research and secondary data. Thereby, to varying extents previous assumptions of several scholars were confirmed by the five identified final themes: (1) mood & satisfaction, (2) technological craving, (3) mental well-being, (4) physical well-being and (5) social relationships.

Mood & satisfaction, including the identified positive emotions such as happiness, relief and increased productivity and negative emotions such as disorientation, disappointment, being uninspired and boredom were partially considered in previous studies. In accordance with the results of the study by Fioravanti et al. (2020), who studied the effects on a one-week abstinence from Instagram and Facebook, an increase in life satisfaction was witnessed. Likewise, the majority of participants described to feel good and happy during the detox indicating an increase in life satisfaction. However, the literature does not consider the feelings of *happiness* and *relief* specifically, thus their occurrence is considered a new finding of this study. The present work shows an increased motivation for *productivity* among participants, supporting the results of Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel (2019) and Sheldon et al. (2011). They found increased work-productivity and less procrastinating, which was also experienced by participants in the present study,

resulting in greater focus on studies or other activities. The occurrence of negative emotions like *disorientation* and *disappointment* in relation to an Instagram detox were not reflected in previous studies and therefore interpreted as new insight. The same applies to the feeling of being *uninspired* during the period of abstinence that was experienced by few participants. Higher *boredom* levels were found by Stieger and Lewetz (2018) during a 7-day social media break, which are in line with the experience of this study's participants. However, for one participant, the boredom was so severe that it led to relapse, underscoring the intensity of this feeling.

The occurrence of **technological craving** during any type of digital detox was indicated by scholars such as Wilcockson et al. (2020) and Stieger and Lewetz (2018). Likewise, a craving to use Instagram was felt by all participants to different extents. Fernandez et al. (2020) claimed craving as addiction-related symptom that may lead to a relapse which was evident for two participants in this study. Thereby, the cravings were described as so intense that they could not cope with the feeling, presumably due to the addictive nature of Instagram. Kircaburun and Griffiths (2018) found daily internet usage to be a positive predictor of Instagram addictiveness, indicating that the two recidivist individuals have high internet use and are prone to addiction. However, a reduced relapse behavior in the second week was recorded, in other words a decreased screentime, which implies a reduction in the craving. This contradicts the findings of Wilcockson et al. (2020) who noted that craving increases with the progression of the detox period. Moreover, the literature does not consider this withdrawal symptom as differentiated as this study does by distinguishing between the *desire to consume* specifically content on Instagram and the desire to simply *scroll* through the phone. Further, an increased use of other media during a detox was also noted by Baumer et al. (2015) but in this study found in more detail with regard to the types of media mentioned, such as *social media*, *video/audio platforms* and *news*. Therefore, the found subcategories of technological craving occurring during the detox are considered as new insights.

An increase in people's **mental well-being** when detoxing from social media was proved by scholars such as Tromholt (2016) and Brown and Kuss (2020). Although findings regarding increased self-esteem during a detox could not be found in the literature, the present study confirmed a decrease in *social comparison* experienced by the participants, which can have a positive effect on individual's self-esteem. Likewise, Vigil and Wu

(2015) noted that participants described the impression of seeing only perfect lives on Instagram. In line with this, this study's participants described a decrease in the need to compare themselves with others and a decrease in social pressure. The findings contradict Stieger and Lewetz (2018) who found high social pressure to be still present during an one-week social media detox. In previous literature, no conclusions were drawn about the feeling of *personal growth* during a detox. Therefore, the outcomes regarding personal growth described by the participants are considered as a complement to the existing research. The same applies to the feeling of being more focused during the detox, both *focus on oneself* and *on other activities*, as revealed by the participants. This particular finding was not mentioned by other studies and is therefore interpreted as a new contribution.

Previous research showed an positive impact on the **physical well-being** during social media breaks (Vanman et al., 2018). By showing that high smartphone use negatively impacts *sleep* quality (Bianchi & Phillips, 2005; Demírcí et al., 2015), it is reasonable that the present findings show positive effects on the sleep of the participants during the detox. Thereby, few participants noted better, longer and quicker sleep. However, these findings refute the results of Dunican et al. (2017) who found no effects on sleep during a two-day digital detox. Further, the present study found an increase of physical activity among few participants. As the urge to *move* during an Instagram detox was not examined in greater detail by previous studies, this is interpreted as new insight.

The influence on **social relationships** during a digital or social media detox was explored by several scholars (Brown & Kuss, 2020; Eide et al., 2018; Elhai et al., 2018; Hunt et al., 2018; Lamblin et al., 2017; Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019; Lepp et al., 2014; Przybylski et al., 2013; Stieger & Lewetz, 2018; Vigil & Wu, 2015). Likewise Brown and Kuss (2020), this study found opposing feelings in terms of social connectedness during the detox. Thus, one half experienced *increased personal or virtual interaction* and the other half experienced a sense of *disconnection*. The present findings also confirm Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel (2019) who found an increase in face-to-face interactions during a social media detox. Since the feeling of social connectedness during a period of detox seems to vary highly among individuals, this study's findings are viewed as a complementary and more detailed contribution to the state of research. Another component regarding social relationships is the feeling of *FoMo* which received much

attention in previous research. Since the majority of participants experienced the feeling of FoMo during the period of detox, this confirms the findings of Brown and Kuss (2020), Eide et al. (2018) and Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel (2019) who also found an occurrence during social media abstinence. Contrary, other scholars found a decreased feeling of FoMo during a digital or social media detox (Elhai et al., 2018; Hunt et al., 2018; Lepp et al., 2014). These findings may indicate the occurrence of the feeling *JoMo* described by few participants in the present study. Since the literature has drawn little connection between *JoMo* and a digital or social media detox so far, this is considered as new insight.

Research Question 3: After the detox

The third research question explored the post-behavior of Gen Y after the intermittent discontinuance of Instagram. Looking at the findings and comparing them to the previous literature review, all three behaviors were noted among this study's participants: (1) the boomerang effect, (2) conscious consumption, and an (3) attitude change. The new term "boomerang effect" includes the behavior of overconsumption as discussed in the literature review. Since the term additionally considers the return to old consumption behavior, which occurred in this study but was not discussed in previous literature, the term was adapted.

As other scholars (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2019) have found, few participants of this study showed the post-behavior of **the boomerang effect**, i.e., they felt the urge to return to normality or overconsumed the app after the detox. Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel (2019) found that even the detox proceeded without major difficulties, individuals returned to social media and old habits quickly and described themselves feeling somehow addicted. Likewise, this occurred among very few participants, reporting the *same* or even *higher screentime* in the immediate days after the detox. If this was the case, they also consumed the *same content* as before. Contradicting Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel (2019), the participants in this study did not state giving in to an addiction, but rather stated that they were disappointed about their own behavior. The main reason for the immediate overconsumption was that participants were curious about what they could have missed and wanted to look up content as well as *checking messages*. Others mentioned that they went back to familiar behavior because it felt even harder to not use Instagram without the challenge and support of the study. Additionally, two more reasons

mentioned were isolation due to Covid as well as study breaks. These reasons for returning to old patterns or overconsuming are interpreted as new insights.

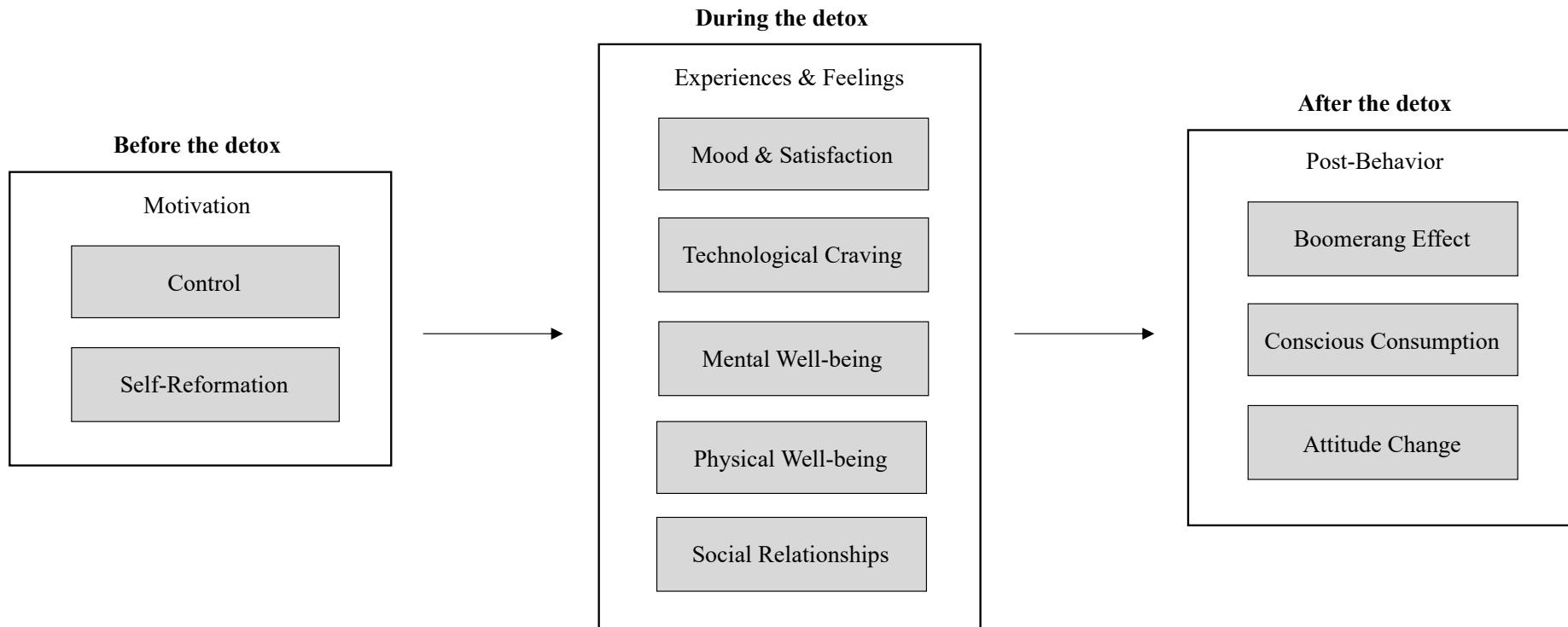
On the other hand, this study found that most participants tried to not fall back into old behaviors, to overall use the app less and decrease their screentime after the detox. Thereby, they changed to **consciously consume** the content of their individual interest instead of mindlessly scrolling through the app. Previous studies (Brown & Kuss, 2020; Vally & D'Souza, 2019) have already concluded that one type of post-behavior consists of trying to consume digital and social media more consciously. Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel (2019) have shown that this is often related to the fact that the detox provides individuals with deeper insights into their information needs, i.e., being more aware of content of their personal interest, but decreasing their overall time spent on social media platforms. Similarly, the majority this study's participants stated to became more conscious about their *specific content* consumed. Further, the majority spent less time on Instagram and *reduced their screentime* with two participants *extending the detox*. Also, the app was mainly used for *messaging* and texting to other people. Thereby, these types of conscious consumption support previous findings in greater detail. With participants creating artificial obstacles like moving the *app to a hidden position* or setting a *screentime limit* in their phone settings, these findings contribute the literature, as this was not found by previous scholars.

Most participants reflected and rethought and further **changed their attitude** towards their user-behavior on Instagram, which is consistent with the results of previous studies (Brown and Kuss, 2020; Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel, 2019). Particularly in this study, participants provided deeper insights about setting new behavioral rules after reflecting about their user-behavior. Brown and Kuss (2020) showed that some of the participants felt morally better after a detox and further, this feeling led to behavior change. Likewise, in this study, the reason for an attitude change was primarily an increase in the users mental well-being as well as a reflection on *the content, people* and *Instagram itself* leading to immediate action like *unfollowing accounts*. Similar to the findings of Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel (2019), few participants designed *new consumption rules* for themselves, e.g., they opened the app only once or twice instead of several times a day or implemented a specific Instagram-free day within the week.

5.1. Revised Conceptual Framework: Instagram Detox Journey

Based on the findings and discussion, the stages of the Instagram Detox Journey were revised and adapted. Thereby, in contrast to the former, only two motivations were identified, whereby “time-control” was adapted to “control”. Additionally, the previous found post-behavior “overconsumption” was adapted to the “boomerang effect”. The revised conceptual framework is presented in figure 10 and provides a groundwork that contributes to the current state of research.

Figure 10: Revised Conceptual Framework: Instagram Detox Journey



6. Conclusion and Implications

The final chapter starts with presenting the theoretical contribution of the present study and is followed by societal and practical implications. Finally, the limitations are described providing recommendations for future research.

6.1. Theoretical Contribution

By accompanying participants through an Instagram detox, the purpose of this study was to capture the journey of intermittent discontinuance by exploring Gen Y's motivation before, experiences and feelings during and post-behavior after the detox.

With regard to research question 1, two motivations of Gen Y before starting the detox were found: gaining back control and self-reformation. Concerning research question 2, five themes were identified during the detox: mood & satisfaction, technological craving, mental well-being, physical well-being and social relationships. Regarding research question 3, three different types of post-behavior after the detox were noted: the boomerang effect, conscious consumption and an attitude change. Based on the following line of reasoning this study contributes significantly to the current state of research:

First, this study is an attempt to fill the gap in literature in undergoing a social media detox, as previous research has focused primarily on platforms other than Instagram (York & Turcotte, 2015; Zhou et al., 2018). In addition, this study refers to users of Gen Y, who as digital natives, represent a relevant user group and have not been considered within this context in previous literature.

Second, by adopting a journey perspective, this study takes a very different approach than previous research by linking the theoretically grounded concept of the customer journey to the current issue of taking a break from Instagram. Thereby, this study explored three stages within the intermittent discontinuance of Instagram and considers them as a cohesive journey.

Third, this study provides a conceptual framework that makes the different stages of the journey tangible. Within each stage, the framework suggests categories that either support previous literature or supplement to the current state of research. Thus, the conceptual framework "Instagram Detox Journey" is a new contribution to the research field and represents a groundwork to be applied in future research.

Fourth, this study identifies further sub-levels (first and second level codes) of each stage of the Instagram Detox Journey and illustrates them in the visualization of the coding. Consequently, the study provides insights to each stage in greater detail and provides another new contribution to the research field.

Lastly, this study employed a unique research design by incorporating multiple qualitative research methods, which sets it apart from other studies. By accompanying the participants throughout their 4-week detox journey and by using focus groups, diary research and in-depth interviews, insights with greater profoundness and coherence could be gained.

6.2. Societal Implications

"I am becoming more aware of my odd addiction [...] I believe it takes a long [...] way to adjust my life to move on to better things." With this statement P5 was referring to his self-proclaimed addiction to his smartphone including the use of social media apps such as Instagram. The present study emphasizes the dependency that many younger people feel towards their smartphones and social media which can easily develop into addiction (Bolton et al., 2013; Cabral, 2011; Moreno et al., 2022). Thereby, the Instagram detox journey highlights the addictive nature of Instagram itself, as the majority of participants experienced the discontinuance as very challenging. The fact that two participants relapsed despite their motivation and willingness to go through the detox shows the high degree of dependency, perhaps even addiction, towards Instagram. With this study, the researchers call for awareness of the addictive nature of Instagram among younger generations.

This study provides social network users, particularly of Instagram, with valuable insights into how a detox might look and feel like. Thereby, positive feelings and experiences such as happiness, relief, increased productivity, positive effects on self-esteem and

focus, improved sleep, motivation to move, increased personal/virtual interactions and JoMo are made visible. On the other hand, negative feelings and experiences such as disorientation, disappointment, uninspiration, boredom, strong craving, increased use of other media, disconnection and having FoMo are also made transparent. This realistic representation of the Instagram detox journey allows Instagram users who are also interested in detoxing to know what to expect and to better engage with potential challenges. As the study has shown, many of the participants' wishes and expectations have come true, especially effects on post-behavior such as an attitude change towards the platform and more conscious consumption. This shows that such a detox encourages a rethink and contributes to a healthier relationship and use of social media. Some participants even shared the motivation to undergo further detox periods in the future, whereby this research demonstrates a possible positive long-term impact. With this study, the researchers call for awareness of unhealthy social media consumption among younger generations and motivate for undergoing an Instagram detox to support a more conscious and healthier consumption in the long run. To conclude, as P14 captured very well in her diary: "*I believe this challenge was about waking us up!*".

6.3. Practical Implications

The implications for society such as undergoing an Instagram detox to promote conscious and healthy consumption lead to a new responsibility for social media platforms themselves. Instagram should take active steps against internet and social media addiction by calling for regular detox periods among users and thus take responsibility for their well-being. Further, Instagram could integrate time-based usage restrictions, framed as "mini detox", to allow users to set limits within the app itself rather than in the phone settings, as currently the case. This could include individually set as well as age-based usage restrictions, such as prohibiting nighttime use for minors. Besides positive effects for users, this would have a positive impact on the reputation of Instagram, differentiating itself from the competition. As the study has shown, the detox is often followed by more conscious consumption, which would also have a positive effect on the satisfaction of users, as they would chose content more mindfully and thus enjoy consumption more.

6.4. Limitations

This research comes with limitations relating to the study as a whole and its methodology which need to be considered.

Limitations of study

Firstly, with regard to the experiences and feelings reported, it cannot be clearly stated whether these are always related to the Instagram abstinence or also to other happenings and experiences of the individual which could have had influence. Through probing in the interviews, the researchers addressed feelings mentioned in the diaries in order to delineate to what extent they were related to the detox. Furthermore, participants might not have been totally honest in the interviews as they may have been ashamed of certain feelings and emotions. The researchers have tried to combat this by arranging the kick-off meeting at the beginning as well as creating a WhatsApp Group to build a trustful atmosphere and make participants not feel alone. In addition, the diary offered a space to reflect on their feelings privately.

Participants could have continued to use Instagram on other electronic devices without disclosing this. In order to avoid this, the participants were informed beforehand about the purpose of the study and thus took part out of their intrinsic motivation and interest.

Furthermore, it might be assumed that the participants showed a higher perseverance of discontinuing using Instagram due to the study framework, as they knew that they were part of an official research. The researchers asked about that during the in-depth interviews and the majority of the participants answered that it might have been harder to resist if they had not been part of an official study.

Finally, the study only focuses on one social media platform, i.e., Instagram, leaving out others and does not consider a complete digital detox. The researchers decided to focus on Instagram as the platform enjoys a special reputation, meaning it is known for its addictive potential and high usage among younger users. By doing so, particularly the impacts of an Instagram detox could be explored in greater detail.

Limitations of methodology

With regard to the methodology, no pilot test of the interviews and diary research was conducted to check in advance whether the study and thus the questions designed for it measure what it was supposed to measure. This was not possible as the participants were first supposed to try to abstain from Instagram for two weeks before they can report on their experiences, feelings and thoughts.

The period of two weeks to discontinue using Instagram might be too short to analyse and reveal lasting changes and long-term effects. A longer time of research and thus a prolonged detox could have revealed deeper insights of the participants experiences. However, the researchers only had a limited amount of time available, as the present study was completed within the Master Thesis course within a set time frame.

Moreover, the selection and sampling of participants can be seen as limited as the researchers only acquired in Facebook groups within the university network and via their private Instagram accounts.

With regard to the participants, a few limitations could have been identified. 14 of the 15 participants are non-native English speaker. A possible language barrier within the interviews might have influenced answers and expressions of the participants.

The study has a limitation in terms of the cross culturalism of the participants. The findings are not universally applicable as the majority of the participants lived in Europe or the United States at the time of research. However, the researchers do not assume that there are cross-cultural differences, i.e., that people with another cultural background would experience the detox significantly differently when the criteria of the sampling selection would be the same.

The two participants who did not manage to completely abstain from Instagram during the two weeks were not excluded from the study, even if the overall goal was to not use the platform at all. However, in the kick-off focus group, the researchers asked participants to be honest and open about any relapse. In addition, it was found that these were mainly participants who previously had a very high screen time. Due to this addictive potential for which the platform is known and a steady improvement, i.e.,

minimizing the screentime to only a very few minutes during the period, it was decided to keep them in order to gain further insights into their individual journey.

6.5. Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations that arise within this study can be seen as room for improvement and therefore as a basis for future research. The findings serve as good foundation for further scientific debate and investigation.

On the one hand, future research could choose a longer period of time and thus a longer detoxification phase in order to gain deeper insights into participants' experiences, thoughts and emotions. Furthermore, at a later point in time at which the post-behavior is analyzed, it would be interesting to determine whether participants return to the previous user behavior or whether changes are noticeable in the long term.

With regard to the chosen method of diary research, it might be interesting to investigate possible differences between the use of a handwritten diary and a digitally filled diary, e.g., whether the choice of method has an influence on the perception of detoxification.

Regarding the three stages, which have been holistically researched within this study, it might be of interest to explore each theme and part of the journey in greater depth in order to find more precise relationships within them, e.g., concerning the order or the strength of a feeling that occurs during the detox.

Lastly, future research could concentrate on different groups of users to explore how their experiences, feelings and thoughts might differ from other groups. Thereby, researchers could focus in one gender or another generation to contrast the results, e.g., Gen Z as a highly technology-interested generation and the one following Gen Y in time.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Focus Groups Topic Guide

Instagram Detox Study Kick-off

1. Introduction & Welcome

1.1 Explanation of the focus group process

- Welcoming participants
- Informing about GDPR

Recording starts

- Introducing of researchers

2. Introduction round

2.1 Participants introducing themselves

- Asking participants about age, profession, nationality, and place of residence

3. Discussion on Motivation

3.1 Motivation

- Asking about participants motivation before the detox

3.2 Expectation

- Asking about participants expectations before the detox

3.3 Wishes

- Asking about participants wishes before the detox

3.4 Anxieties

- Asking about participants anxieties before the detox

4. Screenshot Check

4.1 Participants telling screentime

- Asking participants about their screentime before the detox

5. Screenshot Proof & Diary

5.1 Informing participants about study process

- Asking participants of being honest if relapse occurs
- Explaining about the timings for the screenshot proofs
- Telling participants to choose freely between uninstalling or keeping the app
- Showing and explaining how the diary looks like

6. Thank you & Farewell

6.1 Conclusion of the focus group

- Asking for questions
- Thank you & Farwell

Recording stops

Instagram Detox Study Kick-out

1. Welcome & Thank you

1.1 Explanation of the focus group process

- Welcoming participants
- Informing about GDPR

Recording starts

- Thanking participants for their participation in whole study

2. Table round & Reflection

2.1 Participants reflecting on Instagram Detox Journey

- Asking participants for 3 words to describe their journey
- Asking participants to share their personal detox experience with the others

3. Discussion on Post-behavior

3.1 Current Consumption

- Asking participants to raise hands who is continuing the detox
→ Asking participants if/when they plan to return
- Asking participants to raise hands who is using Instagram again
→ Asking participants to share how consumption is now

4. Thank you & Farewell

4.1 Conclusion of the focus group

- Thanking participants for being part in the whole journey
- Asking for the last screentime proof
- Motivate participants to stay connected via the WhatsApp group
- Farewell

Recording stops

Appendix 2: Instagram Detox Diary



JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
Jönköping International
Business School

A STUDY WITHIN THE MASTER
THESIS IN INT. MARKETING BY

MATIENA MARIE SCHEPPE
ANNA LUISE SEIFFEN

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2022

Instagram Detox Diary

Accompanying a 14-days intermittent discontinuance of using the social media platform Instagram

DIARY FROM
Name:

ABOUT

Welcome to your Instagram Detox Diary!

This is your safe place where you can truly open up and share about your feelings and experiences during your personal 14-days Instagram detox. The diary is meant to accompany you on your journey by reflecting on:

- ♥ your mood & satisfaction
- ♥ your craving after technology
- ♥ your mental well-being
- ♥ your physical well-being
- ♥ your social relationships
- ♥ other thoughts & impressions

Be honest, take your time & listen to yourself!

BEFORE

... SOME GENERAL INFORMATION

Name:

Age:

Nationality:

... SOME PERSONAL THOUGHTS

Your motivations:

Your expectations:

Your wishes:

Your anxieties:

DAY 1 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

DAY 2 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

DAY 3 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

DAY 4 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

DAY 5 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

DAY 6 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

DAY 7 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

WEEK 1 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ other thoughts and impressions

♥ anything else you want to share

IT'S HALF- TIME

Please send the current status of your diary and
the proof of your Instagram screentime of the
first week to Anna and Marie!

DAY 8 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

DAY 9 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

DAY 10 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

DAY 11 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

DAY 12 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

DAY 13 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

DAY 14 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ your mood & satisfaction without Instagram

(happiness, sadness, boredom, stress level, nervousness, loneliness, emptiness, inspired/uninspired, motivated/unmotivated...)

♥ your craving after (other) technology without Instagram

(craving to use Instagram, craving to use another platform, actual time spent on the phone/online...)

♥ your mental well-being without Instagram

(self-esteem, anxiety, depression, personal growth...)

♥ your physical well-being without Instagram

(sleep, physical sensation, urge to move...)

♥ your social relationships without Instagram

(social connectedness, fear of missing out (FOMO), social pressure, urge to compare yourself...)

WEEK 2 ... REFLECT AND COMMENT ON

♥ other thoughts and impressions

♥ anything else you want to share

AFTER

Please send the final diary and the proof of your
Instagram screentime of the second week to
Anna and Marie!

**THANK YOU FOR
PARTICIPATING!**



Appendix 3: In-depth Interviews Guide

1. Introduction

1.1 Explanation of the interview process

- Hello XY, thank you for your time! We hope you are good.
- The purpose of this individual interview with you is to talk more in detail about your journey of the Instagram detox. By doing so, we will dive deeper into a few specific situations from your diary.
- We also would like you to know that can leave or stop the interview and have the right to not answer a question if you do not want to.
- If you are ready, we would like to start the recording now with your permission.

Recording starts

- Hello XY, we are super happy to have you hear and reflect together on the past weeks of your Instagram detox.
- By looking back to the 2 weeks of detox, can you briefly give us a recap of your experiences? What do you think about it?

2. Before the detox

2.1 Motivations, expectations, wishes, and anxieties reflected on in the diary

- At first, we wanted to talk with you about your personal thoughts you wrote down before starting the detox, consisting of your motivations, expectations, wishes and anxieties.
- *Individual questions based on diary answers for each category (motivations, expectations, wishes, anxieties)*

3. During the detox

3.1 Mood & Satisfaction reflected on in the diary

- *Individual questions based on diary answers*

3.2 Technological Craving reflected on in the diary

- *Individual questions based on diary answers*

3.3 Mental Well-being reflected on in the diary

- *Individual questions based on diary answers*

3.4 Physical Well-being reflected on in the diary

- *Individual questions based on diary answers*

3.5 Social Relationships reflected on in the diary

- *Individual questions based on diary answers*

4. Journey within the community

4.1 Journey experience as part of research study group

- As you did the Instagram detox together with 14 other people, how do you think this sense of community/group impacted your journey?
- What role did the study frame and screen time proof play in your commitment and perseverance in the detox?

5. After the detox

5.1 Experiences on IG consumption after the detox

- Since detox has been over for a week, how is your IG consumption now? Has there been any change?
- Can you tell us about the time you spend now on IG after the detox? Is it the same or different? How?
- Can you tell me about the content and people you follow now after the detox? Is it the same or different? How?
- *Individual questions based on diary answers*

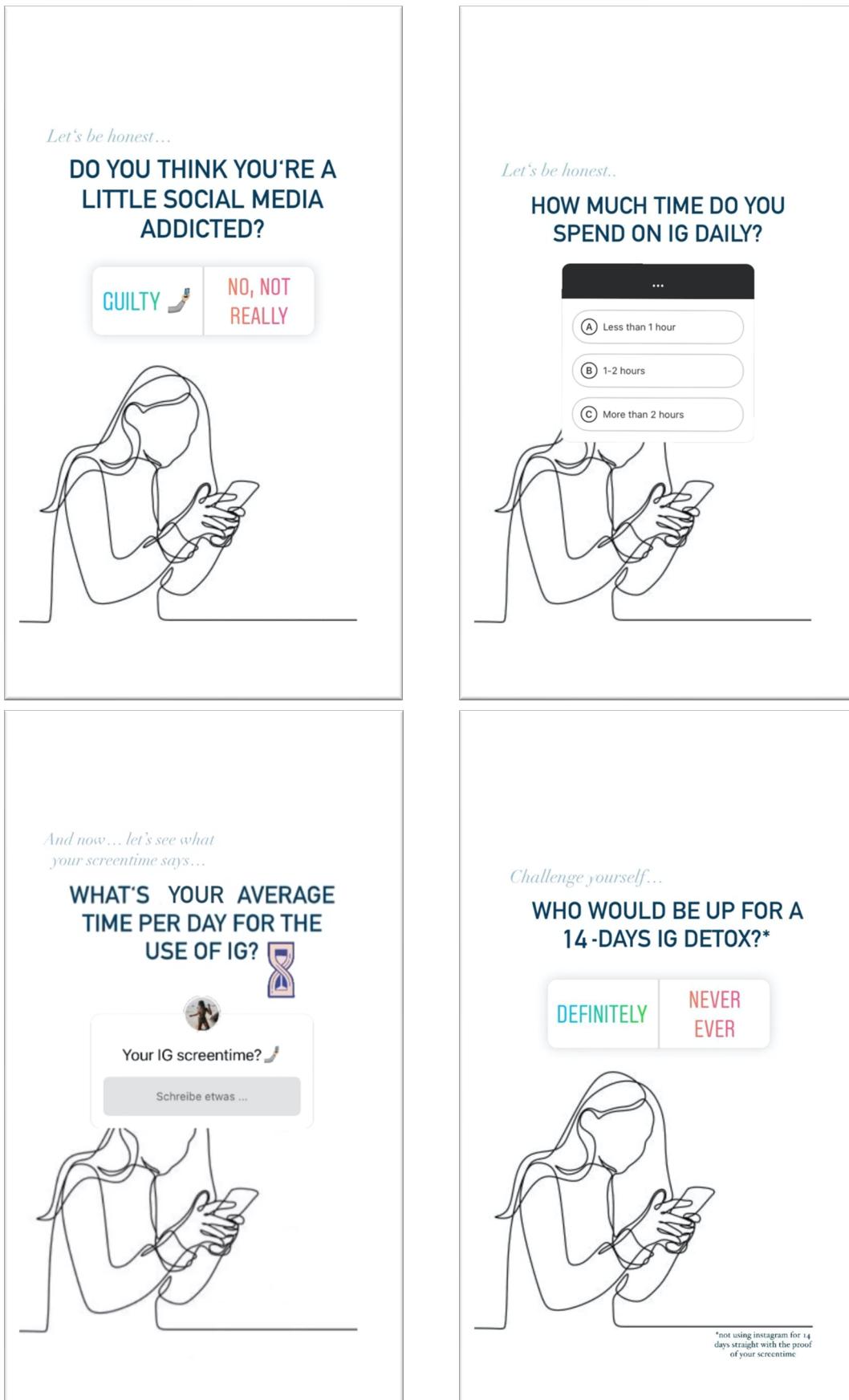
6. Thank you & Farewell

6.1 Conclusion of the interview

- Thank you for your time and especially for your participation in the Instagram detox. We were able to gather valuable insights and are excited for our findings.
- We will see you again in our Kick-out Meeting next week.

Recording stops

Appendix 4: Instagram Story for judgmental sampling



Appendix 5: GDPR Thesis Study Consent Form



JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
Jönköping International
Business School

GDPR Thesis Study Consent Form

GDPR Consent for the master thesis: Is it time for a social media detox? Understanding the journey of intermittent discontinuance in using Instagram among Gen Y.

Please tick the appropriate boxes

Yes No

Taking part in the study

I consent to JIBS processing my personal data in accordance with current data protection legislation and the data delivered.

I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.

Taking part in the following research methods

I give my consent to be audio and video recorded during the **focus group discussions** via ZOOM. What is said will be transcribed immediately and anonymized to ensure that no identification of the person can be made.

I give my consent to be audio and video recorded during the **in-depth interviews** via ZOOM. What is said will be transcribed immediately and anonymized to ensure that no identification of the person can be made.

I give my consent for what is written in the **research diaries** to be read and interpreted by the researchers. The contents of the diary will be anonymized to ensure that no identification of the person can be made.

My signature below indicates that I choose to take part in the thesis study and consent to JIBS treating my personal data in accordance with current data protection legislation and the data delivered.

Name of participant [IN CAPITALS]

Signature

Date

Thesis contact details for further information

Scheppe, Matiena Marie +49170 3864639 scma21xi@student.ju.se

Seiffen, Anna Luise +49177 3340411 sean21wv@student.ju.se

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Participant Information Sheet template

You are being invited to take part in a thesis study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study collecting personal data?

As part of the research study, which is being conducted in the master's program International Marketing, the experiences during a 14-day Instagram detox will be explored. For this purpose, two focus group meetings will take place online via Zoom: the first one as an initial get-to-know-you meeting, mainly to find out the motivation and drivers of the participants to take part in the study, and a final meeting at the end of the study to learn more about the participants' behavior after the completed detox. During the detox, participants will fill in a research diary about how they experience the 14 days. This is followed by in-depth interviews to talk to each participant in detail about their journey.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to give your consent. All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any ensuing reports or publications.

Under GDPR you have the following rights over your personal data:

- **The right to be informed.** You must be informed if your personal data is being used.
- **The right of access.** You can ask for a copy of your data by making a 'subject access request'.
- **The right to rectification.** You can ask for your data held to be corrected.
- **The right to erasure.** You can ask for your data to be deleted.
- **The right to restrict processing.** You can limit the way an organisation uses your personal data if you are concerned about the accuracy of the data or how it is being used.
- **The right to data portability.** You have the right to get your personal data from an organisation in a way that is accessible and machine-readable. You also have the right to ask an organisation to transfer your data to another organisation.
- **The right to object.** You have the right to object to the use of your personal data in some circumstances. You have an absolute right to object to an organisation using your data for direct marketing.
- **How your data is processed using automated decision making and profiling.** You have the right not to be subject to a decision that is based solely on automated processing if the decision affects your legal rights or other equally important matters; to understand the reasons behind decisions made about you by automated processing and the possible consequences of the decisions, and to object to profiling in certain situations, including for direct marketing purposes.

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You should also know that you may contact the data protection officer if you are unhappy about the way your data or your participation in this study are being treated at dpo@ju.se

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering whether to take part in this research study.

Contact details for further information

Thesis supervisor Adele Berndt: Adele.Berndt@ju.se

Thesis student Matiena Marie Scheppe: scma21xi@student.ju.se

Thesis student Anna Luise Seiffen: sean21wv@student.ju.se

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Appendix 6: Instagram Screentime during detox

Participant	Before the detox	Week 1 of detox	Week 2 of detox	After the detox	Status of IG app during detox
P1	30 minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	14 minutes	uninstalled
P2	120 minutes	1 second	0 minutes	46 minutes	installed
P3	67 minutes	40 minutes	8 minutes	34 minutes	installed
P4	84 minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	no data	uninstalled
P5	76 minutes	12 minutes	5 minutes	35 minutes	installed
P6	39 minutes	0 minutes	2 seconds	33 minutes	installed
P7	91 minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	no data	uninstalled
P8	88 minutes	8 minutes	15 minutes	64 minutes	installed
P9	30 minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	10 minutes	uninstalled
P10	65 minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	44 minutes	uninstalled
P11	56 minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	40 minutes	uninstalled
P12	50 minutes	0 minutes	1 minute	60 minutes	installed
P13	80 minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	31 minutes	uninstalled
P14	65 minutes	< 1 minute	0 minutes	4 minutes	installed
P15	91 minutes	19 seconds	0 minutes	43 minutes	installed

*Average daily screentime of Instagram