Synopsys

In the upcoming exam paper, I would like to explore the psychology of social media. I aim to achieve this by investigating certain components embedded in the software of a social media page and/or app. I will mostly focus on Facebook and Instagram and compare them to one another while analyzing them in terms of psychological aspects. If relevant I will describe tendencies from other types of social media to further support my claims.

In more detailed terms I would like to touch upon the ways in which social media attempts to dictate our behavior within their apps and webpages. Here I draw inspiration from Benjamin Grossers article “What do metrics want? How Quantification Prescribes Social Interaction on Facebook”. In his article he explores and analyzes how different can metrics change our perception of different components within Facebook and how they can change our behavior. I found his article relevant and very interesting as it completely deconstructs Facebook and reveals its true colors. But rather than evaluating metrics in relation to capitalism, I wish to focus on the psychological aspects of social media and how it affects us emotionally. In doing so I hope to discover why social media is so addictive to some people and why it can change our emotions both positively and negatively. The reason behind my choice of topic is that we use social media every day without giving much thought to why we’re using certain types of social media. Social media is often portrayed as a neutral platform that allows us to interact with our friends, family, and other acquaintances. As Benjamin Grosser discovered, this is far from the case. So how and why does social media manipulate our feelings and actions within their platforms? This is something I find that every social media user should be aware of. Because if we know why social media can manipulate us, we might find it easier to not be affected by their attempts to promote certain behaviors online. In addition, perhaps we would be more apt to act individually in our online social lives. I would also like to explore how the composition and layout of a social media page or app can change our perception of the platform itself. Other than looking at the overall composition, I aim to analyze the smaller parts of the whole in order to fully understand the bigger picture by applying the hermeneutic method.

To explore the above I need to include the appropriate literature. My inspiration stems form Benjamin Grosser’s article “What do metrics want? How Quantification Prescribes Social Interaction on Facebook”, so I obviously need to apply his concepts in my wok. In his article Benjamin Grosser briefly mentioned Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs. I found that parallel highly interesting, even more so than the affect of metrics. In my paper I will use Maslow’s pyramid of human needs as a starting point for analyzing different components of Facebook and Instagram. Furthermore, I will employ parts of his book; “Motivation and personality”. I aim to start with Maslow and add relevant theories by other experts as my work progresses. I wish to find literature that complements my findings and not the other way around. I do not want my paper to seem forced or fake in any way. Neither do I wish to be overly biased by the findings of many different theorists. In other words, I would like to look at Facebook and Instagram to discover their different components and analyze them further. I don’t want to already know exactly what I’m looking for. I want my work to progress naturally. On the other hand, I am aware that many people have explored my topic before me, and as I go along I will compare their perspectives to my own. I will do so to keep my research academic and to not be too compromised by my own views. I have already found different articles concerning the phycology of social media. I found some articles by Forbes, Psychology Today, and different webpages that concern themselves with mental health.

My next steps would be to determine how Facebook and Instagram are constructed. This would be on a purely objective level. It would act as a purely functional analysis of the two social medias. It would be naïve to look at the two platforms subjectively before I am truly familiar with the composition and functionality within their structures. After making a functional analysis I can start to analyze more subjectively. I could for example start by looking for the semiotics within the different medias and further investigate how they affect our understanding within the medias. As my work progresses it will gradually become more complex as I will draw upon more advanced material (for example Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs) and dig deeper beyond the surface of social media.