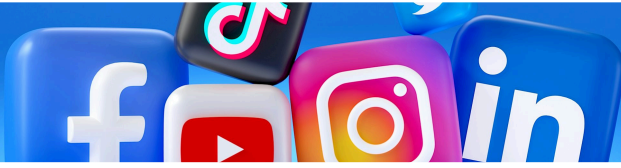


# Feeling Guilty about Social Media Usage



MKTG 390 Analytics Final

By: Luke Snellback



## Overview



Social media has always been an important topic for debate, especially in regards to its impact on younger generations. As technology continues to advance, it raises the question of whether social media is having an increasingly significant impact on people today. To gain a better understanding, we collected surveys from students at the University of Oregon in 2024, in hopes to identify what traits make an individual more likely to be impacted by social media.

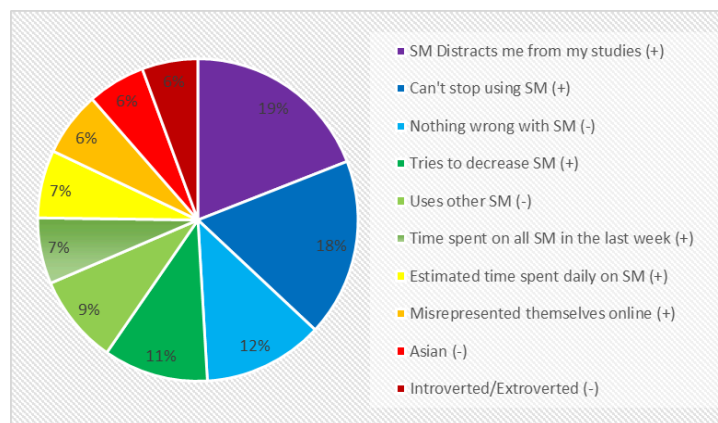
In the article “Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation”, Jean M Twenge uncovers negative effects technology has on teens. They found that teens who spend more time on social media are more likely to have depression. This begs the question, “If social media has a negative impact on an individual’s mental health, why do we still often use it?”

Social media is a pressing problem in today’s society, especially among college students. Have you ever noticed how college campuses are filled with students deeply engrossed in their phones? We noticed this and recognized this as an opportunity to conduct a survey in hopes to understand the reasons behind students' attachment to their phones.

## Who feels guilty about using social media?

What caught our attention from our data is people who feel guilty about the amount of time they spend on social media. This finding raises another important question, “Why do people use social media if they feel guilty about the amount of time they spend on it?” Our findings listed in this report will identify the variables that had the most weight in predicting whether an individual is likely to feel guilty about the amount of time they spend on social media.

Using our primary data, we first did a stepwise regression<sup>1</sup> to identify any variables associated with feeling “guilty”. We found 10 independent variables that were an important predictor for determining if someone felt guilty about using social media.



This pie chart illustrates three major aspects of what makes someone feel guilty:

- The 10 most important predictors for feeling guilty
- The weight they have (%)
- The direction of influence on the “guilty” score (+/-)

It appears that being distracted from your studies has the biggest influence on if you feel guilty about your social media usage. The plus and minus symbols imply if they do or don't have that trait. Those who feel distracted, addicted, believe there's something wrong with social media, etc. have higher scores indicating that they feel guilty with the amount of time they spend on social media.

## The Negatives



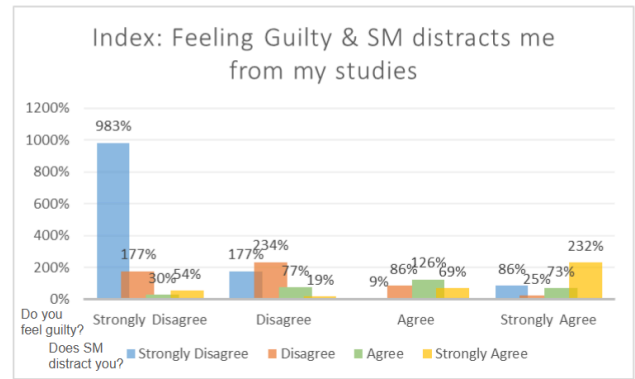
When you think of the word guilty, you connect the term with a negative feeling. So it's no surprise that some of the strongest predictors with feeling guilty have some negative connotation to them. First, we'll further analyze the strongest predictor with the feeling of guilt:



### • Distracted From Studies

Feeling guilty about the time spent on social media often comes from an awareness of its impact on our productivity, particularly when it comes to studying. Having an easily accessible distraction not only affects the quality of one's work, but also creates a cycle of procrastination making it difficult to complete goals. As people become engrossed in the digital world, the constant barrage of notifications and updates can disrupt their focus, making it difficult to immerse themselves in their study material.

This graph is a crosstab index<sub>2</sub> between feeling guilty and having social media distract you from your studies. There seems to be a strong association between these two traits, suggesting that as the frequency of social media distractions increase, feelings of guilt tend to rise as well.

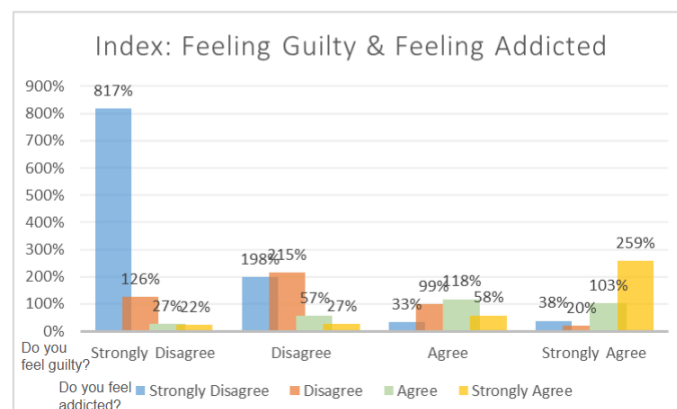


This insight can be valuable for educators and students alike, helping develop strategies to minimize interruptions and maintain focus. Techniques like scheduling social media time, using apps to block distractions, or practicing mindfulness can reduce feeling guilty and improve one's academic performance. Understanding this relationship could pave the way for a more comprehensive approach to maintaining a healthy balance between digital engagement and educational responsibilities.



## • Addicted to Social Media

If people feel guilty about the amount of time they spend on social media, why don't they do anything about it? Like other addictions, it can be hard to overcome them, especially when these platforms are designed to be highly engaging. Using features that cause psychological triggers including your reward system, social validation, and creating a fear of missing out. We decided to investigate this using our own data to see if there's a connection to feeling guilty and being addicted.

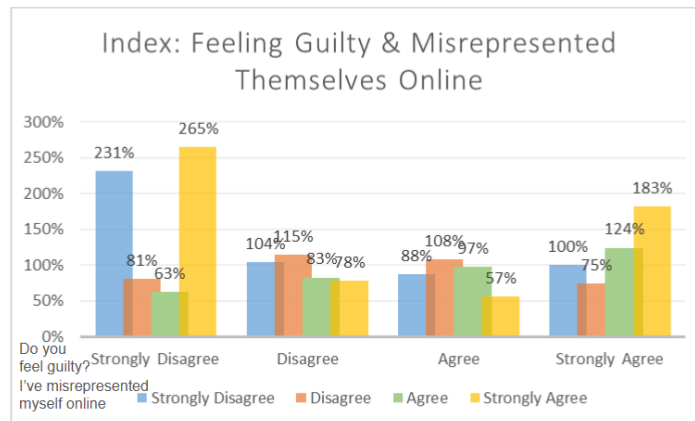


It appears that those addicted are 1.6 times more likely than the average to feel guilty. Breaking free from addiction often requires conscious effort, support, and sometimes professional help. Healthy habits like exercise, hobbies, and mindfulness can provide positive outlets that support recovery and personal growth.



## • Misrepresented Themselves Online

For some people, this feeling of guilt doesn't just come from the time they've lost on social media, but the personas they've crafted. These exaggerations, omissions, and fabrications created to impress or create a sense of belonging. This persona of inauthenticity could weigh heavily on the user, increasing the feeling of guilt. We wanted to see how big this connection would be with our own data, so we tested it out and found this.



Those that have misrepresented themselves online are 83% more likely than the average to feel guilty. One's digital self relates to their feelings of self-worth and the desire for connection, even if it leaves behind a trail of guilt and regret. Another interesting thing to point out in our findings is that those who have misrepresented themselves are 1.7 times more likely than the average to not feel guilty.

## The Positives



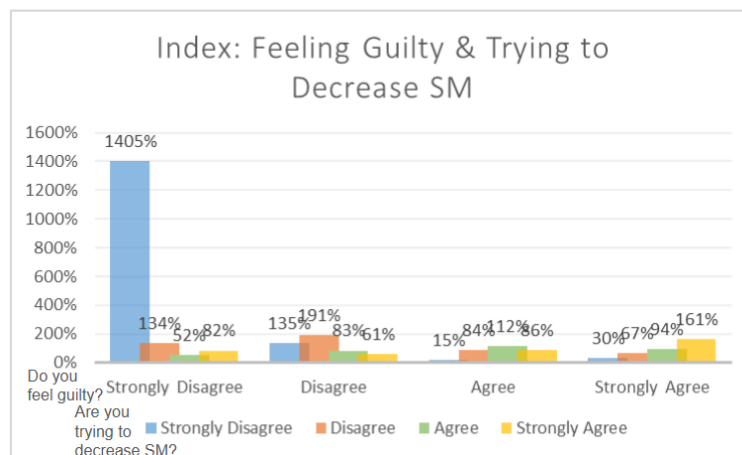
From our findings we can see that those that feel guilty using social media get distracted from studying, feel addicted, and have misrepresented themselves online. Although guilt is often seen as a negative feeling, it can also serve as a powerful motivator to correct mistakes and make amends. As shown in our top predictors, people who feel guilty know that there's something wrong with social media. The critical step to recovery is identifying the source of your problem.



## • Trying to decrease time on SM

Once you've identified the source of your problems you can work on trying to get rid of it. In today's digitally saturated world, a growing number of individuals are becoming increasingly aware of the impact excessive social media consumption has on their overall well-being.

This growing awareness has led to a surge in individuals actively seeking to reduce their screen time and foster healthier digital habits. Since those trying to decrease their time on social media were a strong predictor of feeling guilty, we decided to investigate further into the matter to see how many people were trying to limit their screen time.



Those that are trying to decrease the amount of time they spend on social media are 61% more likely than the average to feel guilty. The journey towards a healthier digital lifestyle is a personal one. By understanding the motivations behind our social media habits, we can make informed choices that align with our values and goals. People have been able to achieve a decreased amount of social media usage by setting boundaries, practicing mindfulness, and seeking support.

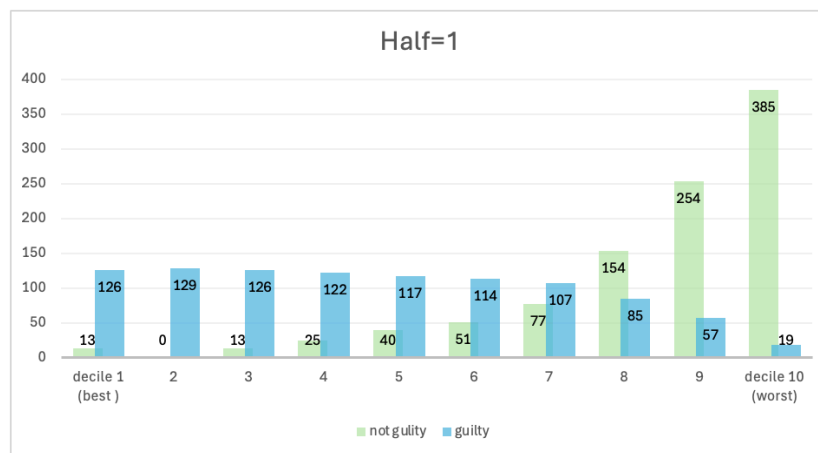
## Regression

Using linear regression modeling, we were able to get a better sense of what variables were our best predictors for feeling guilty. In order to test the validity of our model, we split our student data into two halves to find out and explain how students who feel guilty compare to an independent sample of students. Then we used the first half to identify the common traits of people who feel guilty about their social media usage.

### Truthfulness of the test

We then spread out that data into 10 equal deciles, where the first decile is the best 10% of students and the tenth decile is the worst 10% and recorded their indexes as shown in the graph below. The reason why we did this is to test the **internal validity** of our model. As you can see in the graph below, those who feel guilty are much more likely to be in those first few deciles meaning that they really look like they are feeling

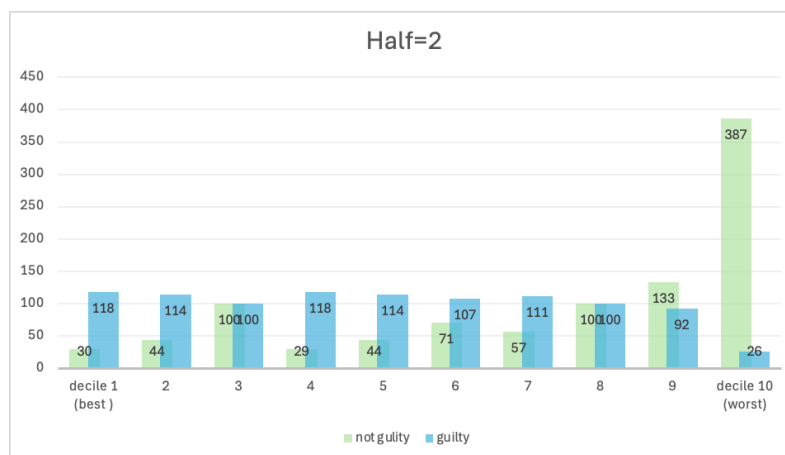
guilty about their social media use. Whereas on the other side, students who do not feel guilty are almost four times more likely than average to be in the worst decile meaning they do not look like they feel guilty at all.



We then used those predictors to spread out the second half of the data as shown in the graph below. We're using the second half of this data to see how well our model predicts the traits of those who feel guilty.

## Generalizability of the test

Looking at the graph below, you can see that this is obviously a similar pattern to the graph above. This chart depicts a completely independent sample so that we can test and see if our explanation from the first half can represent other samples as well.



This consistency across different samples suggests that the model's predictions can be generalized beyond the initial data set, lending credibility to its applicability in independent samples. The reason why we did this is to test the **external validity** of our model which has proven to hold true. Now, we can confidently use this model across all our data to effectively find out and see who our guilty students are.

By using a wide range of traits in our model, it becomes a powerful tool for identifying potential people who feel guilty about their social media usage. Ultimately, the model's validity makes it a valuable asset for studying traits about people's social media usage.



# Closing Thoughts



As social media continues to evolve, it's crucial to remain vigilant and develop a healthy amount of usage accordingly. While some students reported benefits such as staying connected with peers and easily accessible information, some have highlighted negative effects including being distracted, addicted, and misrepresenting themselves.

As people today continue to use social media despite knowing of the negative effects, it begs the question of if we'll ever stop using it. These platforms continue to keep users engaged even if they know it's bad for them. Many of them develop an addiction, highlighting what the future relationship with technology might entail. This report using the data from surveys collected at the University of Oregon has provided an understanding of its impacts on students as well as key predictors of social media and feeling guilty.

While social media seems to be having a negative impact on students, hope is not lost. Guilt is mostly viewed as a negative feeling, but it can also be a powerful motivator to correct mistakes and make amends. People who feel guilty recognize issues with social media and are trying to limit their time on it. A critical step to recovering is identifying the source of your problem, which we can see people who feel guilty have identified. By understanding social media's impact on college students, we can work towards developing strategies to mitigate negative effects and maximize positive ones.

## Strategies for healthy social media use:

- **Limit screen time:** Set specific amounts of time for social media usage each day and stick to them.
- **Change your feed:** Follow accounts that inspire, educate, and align with your values, and regularly unfollow accounts that negatively affect your mood.
- **Be mindful of comparisons:** Avoid comparing your life to curated online portrayals of others. Comparison is the thief of joy.
- **Take breaks:** Schedule regular periods where you completely disconnect from social media.
- **Prioritize real-life connections:** Focus on maintaining strong relationships in person rather than solely relying on online interactions.
- **Be critical of information:** Verify the source of information before sharing and be cautious of misinformation.
- **Be aware of your emotions:** If social media is causing stress or anxiety, consider reducing your usage or taking a break.

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## Appendix

1. **Stepwise Regression:** This is a regression method that evaluates all potential predictors before refining them to create the final model.
2. **Index:** An index of 100 means the percent of the group of interest is equal to the overall average. For example, an index of 120 means that group is 20% more likely than average to have the trait of interest and vice versa.