

## Gratification Needs Factors for Authentic Self-Expression on Instagram

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### Abstract

Research shows that individuals on Facebook and Instagram are more likely to express their authentic personalities rather than idealized ones. The more authentic the self-expression, the higher the life satisfaction. This article needs to investigate the relationship between gratification needs and authentic self-expression in the Instagram context. This online survey study used a comprehensive purposive sampling method, respecting the characteristics of the respondents to suit the purpose of the study. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed online. The findings suggest that the more positive the need for recognition, the higher the authentic self-expression. All the gratification needs (social needs, motivation needs, communication needs, recognition needs) contribute around 23.1% to making authentic self-expression. This result suggests that Instagram users express themselves more authentically on the media platform when they are actively engaged in platform interactions, such as enhancing personal identity, value, respect, support and creating a sense of belonging.

**Keywords:** Use and Gratification Theory, Authentic Self-Expression, Instagram

### Introduction

Social media can provide users with better and easier opportunities to express their opinions. Users who use social platforms can share their opinions, experiences, and timely thoughts with their friends through social platforms (Nedra, Hadhri, and Mezrani, 2019).

People are using social media for self-expression, to exchange news, and to get information, which is a means of socializing (Bailey, Matz, Youyou, & Iyengar, 2020). One of the most popular social media outlets today is Instagram, with users all over the world. Instagram's popularity stems from its ability to facilitate visual communication, which resonates with the younger generation's desire for immediate and authentic self-expression. Unlike text, images convey a richer tapestry of emotions and experiences, capturing the nuances of everyday moments (Laor,2022; Song, Han, Lee, & Kim, 2018). There are many more features of

Instagram, such as sharing videos and photos with other users, as well as live streaming and Instagram Stories features that enable users around the world to share their lives anytime, anywhere (Rahmayani, Ardi, & Nofrialdi, 2022). By using these features, users around the world are brought closer to each other. This, coupled with the platform's user-friendly interface and accessibility on mobile devices, has cemented Instagram's position as a leading social media platform for young people to share glimpses into their lives with friends (Sheldon, & Bryant, 2016; Solon, 2018).

Many social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, utilize tagging, a feature that allows users to link the profile of another user to their posts, including photos and text (Büttner & Rudert, 2022). Through this tag, people with similar preferences, interests and concerns, i.e. similar personalities, are gathered to form homogeneous circles and create a community atmosphere that belongs only to their own group, from which self-identity is constructed.

Self-image can be conceptualized as a constituent component of self-concept, which, in turn, serves as the foundational framework upon which self-identity is constructed (Bailey, 2003) Self-image comes from the result of self-knowledge, but the result is made up of many components, including self-realization (I believe in all uses), ideal self (I may have), and self (I should have). Ideal and ought to play a guiding role in self-comparison with real self, by adjusting the actual self to narrow the gap between the two. Therefore, self-image can be understood in this way. It is a comprehensive presentation of a person's self-understanding and adjustment from three aspects: physical self, social self and psychological self, which are formed by role-playing. In addition, authentic self-expression allows individuals to verify and affirm their sense of self which can increase self-esteem, and a sense of belonging (Bailey, Matz, Youyou, & Iyengar, 2020). Authentic self-expression may have a variety of motives behind its display on social media that do not directly reflect the interpersonal characteristics of the person sharing the post. However, these displays are related to personality labels in the eyes of the viewer. It's possible that the people who follow one on social media are blind to these different reasons and are more likely to draw conclusions about personality or self-perception from a post's visual content. Lee and Sung (2016), highlight several motivations for using social media, including recording events, interacting with others, and amusement. This aligns with Leary's (1995), assertion that impression management, driven by concerns about one's public image, plays a significant role in shaping online behavior. Therefore, it merits more investigation to see if social media posts influence others' opinions positively or negatively, the creation of this perception can have a profound effect on subsequent social media behavior and even offline interactions. Importantly different social media content also tends to create different perceptions of posters.

Compared to Facebook, Instagram had a higher value for the demand for recognition, indicating that Instagram's self-expression and presentation elements are more appealing to respondents. Research by Chatchaiyan (2017), revealed that individuals actively curate and adjust their online identities based on the specific social media platform they are using. The study by Lee, Lee, Moon, and Sung (2015) highlighted the significance of self-expression as a driving force behind Instagram usage. Users employ the platform to portray their true selves through images and personal information, making it a vital tool for self-presentation online. Thorkildsen & Xing (2016) found that self-expression was paramount for adolescents using

Facebook to connect with others. Their desire to share personal images superseded any motivations related to civic or civil engagement. Young Instagram users may only share a small number of people with their own storytelling materials (Kim, 2019).

According to the logic of Use and Gratification Theory, people are driven to satisfy their needs and desires by engaging in specific behaviors or seeing content on particular platforms (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). According to this viewpoint, a number of social media studies have determined why people use social media and what they get out of it (Karnik, Oakley, Venkatanathan, Spiliotopoulos, & Nisi 2013; Quan-Haase and Young 2010; Ellison, Smock, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011). Hence, Use and Gratification Theory identified by these studies were centered on themes, i.e. information, entertainment, escape, relaxation, companionship, convenience, or passing time. Some of these studies identified gratifications that are a combination of these themes. Various studies suggested that individuals are using technologies for different reasons, including to satisfy their own social and psychological needs (Dhir, Chen, & Nieminen, 2016). Such as social needs, motivation needs, communication needs and recognition needs.

#### *The Influence of Social Needs Towards Authentic Self-Expression*

According to Katz (1974), social needs are operationalized as affiliation needs, which are related to a sense of belonging and involve the consumer intending to join a group and wanting to be acknowledged as such. The three needs that make up the human organization of experience are grandiosity, idealization, and the need for an alter ego or a sense of belonging, according to Kohut (1977).

Additional research examines the relationship between emotions of individual loneliness and belongingness and general user well-being, which has been found to have a direct impact on well-being (Reddy, Baum, Fleming, & Aiello, 1981; Rook, 1987). It can be divided into four categories: 1) kill time, escape, and relax; 2) enjoyment and excitement; 3) information; 4) partnership and social interaction. The social benefits of making and keeping touch with people, such as friendship, close connections, and social support, are referred to as maintaining interpersonal contact. The benefits that an audience receives from being accepted and acknowledged by other audiences as well as the elevated social standing that results from individual contributions. People may adopt new temporary content features on social media in order to escape peer pressure, as social pressure can cause stress when there is little to no connection with others or when one is disregarded by others.

According to earlier studies, users mostly use social media to contact with friends in order to satisfy their desire for socialization (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Lee and Ma, 2012; Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000). Additionally, several studies have discovered that social media can help people feel like they belong and improve interpersonal connection (Cemalcilar, Falbo, and Stapleton, 2005; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Viswanath, Mislove, Cha, and Gummadi, 2009). (Lee and Ma, 2012; Rubin, 1994). Synthesizing the views of these scholars, it can be understood that social media is considered as an interactive mechanism through which users can exchange information with other users when they want to satisfy their social needs, which also strengthens their social ties with others in the community.

People participate through interactions with microblogging content and other users (Shao, 2009). Liu, Min, and Han (2020) state that these interactions fulfill their social needs to connect with old friends (or make new ones) and fulfill other needs (such as communicating factual information and gaining attention). Eugenia (2019) also argues that the need to socialize is the need to socialise with friends, relatives, family, colleagues, and others through media to satisfy social needs. Closer connections with old friends can be promoted through authentic self-expression. From this, a first hypothesis can be made: Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between social needs and authentic self-expression.

#### *The Influence of Motivation Needs Towards Self-Authentic Expression*

Uses and Gratification Theory was created in mass communication research and is now frequently used to study why people utilize new media (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004). Use and Gratification Theory suggests that media consumers are goal-oriented and seek to satisfy a basic set of demands, suggesting that the primary factors influencing a user's decision to utilize a medium are the functions it can perform.

The current study attempts to offer insights into the mechanism underpinning the use of ephemeral content by defining users' motivations, psychological tendencies, and media use consequences holistically via the lens of uses and gratification theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Building on previous research, this study examines why users use ephemeral content to satisfy their needs, including social pressure (Fox & Moreland, 2015), trust (Green, Wilhelmsen, Wilmots, Dodd, & Quinn, 2016), fear of missing out (Lai, Altavilla, Ronconi, & Aceto, 2016), and immediacy (Bolter & Grusin, 2000).

Research of television-viewing motives using Uses and Gratification Theory has recognized the following: arousal, social connection, friendship, escape, information seeking, relaxation, pass time, amusement, and time consumption (Rubin 1981; Alonzo, and Aiken 2004). Alonzo and Aiken (2004) list avoidance, amusement, engagement, surveillance, communication, and personal identity as some of the reasons why people engage in other online activities. A person's genuine self-expression might serve as evidence of their identity. On the other hand, Beyens, Frison, and Eggermont (2016) contend that the need to always stay up to date with what other people are doing serves as the driving force behind the fear of missing out.

In reaction to social exclusion, those who feel dread of missing out will turn on an adaptive social monitoring system that searches the surroundings for social connections. In order to meet their requirements for inclusion, individuals will therefore probably use social media more frequently (Lai, & Chong, 2023). This allows for a second hypothesis: Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between motivation needs and authentic self-expression.

#### *The Influence of Communication Needs Towards Authentic Self-Expression*

Previous researchers have argued that regular communication will facilitate the development of social relationships among people (Panteli and Sockalingam, 2005). In general, social media provide attractive places for users to present themselves to connect to others (Cheung and Lee, 2010; Lin and Lu, 2011). Similarly, other researchers have found that self-presentation is an important factor that will facilitate interpersonal communications (Laurenceau, Barrett and Pietromonaco, 1998).

According to research on the internal drivers of social media usage, Facebook use is forced by the need to escape unpleasant emotional states including boredom and loneliness (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Burke, Marlow, & Lento, 2010).

In a similar vein, dissatisfaction with the present state of one's relationships has been identified as a motive undergirding social media use (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Fear of Missing Out is driven by a desire to stay in constant contact with what others are doing, and to view this as a motivation (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013). The third hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between communication needs and authentic self-expression.

#### *The Influence of Recognition Needs Towards Authentic Self-Expression*

People are recognized and praised by others for their interactions with them and are able to improve their social status in the community through the activities they engage in (Baumeister 1997). For example, several studies show that many people engage in virtual communities to answer questions from other users, mainly for recognition by peers (e.g., Dholakia et al., 2004, Alexande, 2002). This is the main manifestation of the need for recognition as a motivation to maintain a sense of belonging in a social group (Cheng, Liang & Leung, 2015).

Recognition needs also contribute to Instagram addiction. Sheldon and Bryant (2016) found that Instagram users actually focus more on showing personal identity and self-expression. The formation of personal identity and self-expression is a form of recognition needs, namely the need to be noticed, the need to show our existence in front of other people (Adristiyani. & Halimah. 2021). These needs can be met by posting photos on the Instagram feed. These results are also in line with research conducted by Ponnusamy et al. (2020). So the likes and comments feature is seen as a form of fulfilling recognition needs or the need for recognition from other people.

The term recognition needs signify gratification from social interaction and joining others in collective actions (Leung, 2007). Mirrored the ways in which internet users create information to promote their knowledge, get esteem, and for personal identification (Leung, 2009). The phrase "recognition needs" refers to the satisfaction that comes from interacting with people and working together on projects (Leung, 2007). This leads to the fourth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between recognition needs and authentic self-expression.

#### **Methodology**

In terms of methodology, this study used a quantitative, questionnaire to investigate users' perceptions of the determinants the relationship between gratification needs and authentic self-expression. In order to guarantee the study will be conducted successfully, 30-50 pieces of questionnaires will be distributed firstly to do a pilot study. A pilot study has been conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the research tool prior to the adoption of a comprehensive sampling process. A pilot study involved a purposeful selection of 30 respondents from Instagram users who had been on Instagram for more than two years and were between the ages of 18-45. Then, the respondents were then briefly briefed on the

purpose of the pilot test before distributing the questionnaire to them. In order for respondents to answer the questionnaire as honestly as possible, anonymity and confidentiality were explained to respondents. In most quantitative studies, pilot studies are required to try out the instrument or to provide results for actual research (Siti Aishah, 2006; Samah, 2018).

At the beginning of the design of the questionnaire survey decided to use the online Google Forms for the design of the questionnaire, first of all, we created Google Forms to prepare the questions to be entered in the Google corresponding form and select the user to participate in the questionnaire survey during and after the completion of the questionnaire will see the content of the questionnaire survey will be sent to the user.

Pilot test were conducted to test the internal consistency of the study's constructs is measured by reliability. Under reliability test, Cronbach's Alpha value for the Social Needs scale with 5 items ( $\alpha = 0.708$ ) were found reliable, the motivation needs scale with 12 items ( $\alpha = 0.795$ ), the communication needs scale with 7 items ( $\alpha = 0.700$ ), the needs of recognition scale with 9 items ( $\alpha = 0.761$ ), the authentic self-expression scale with 14 items ( $\alpha = 0.870$ ), reliability results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Reliability Statistics*

| Constructs                | NO. of Items | Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Social needs              | 5            | 0.708              |
| Motivation needs          | 12           | 0.795              |
| Communication needs       | 7            | 0.700              |
| Needs of Recognition      | 9            | 0.761              |
| Authentic Self-expression | 14           | 0.870              |

### Findings and Discussion

As shown in Figure 1, the structural model of this study was assessed through the bootstrapping technique with 450 sub-samples via the software Smart-PLS, to test H1 to H4 for the direct effect of independence variables on dependent variable.

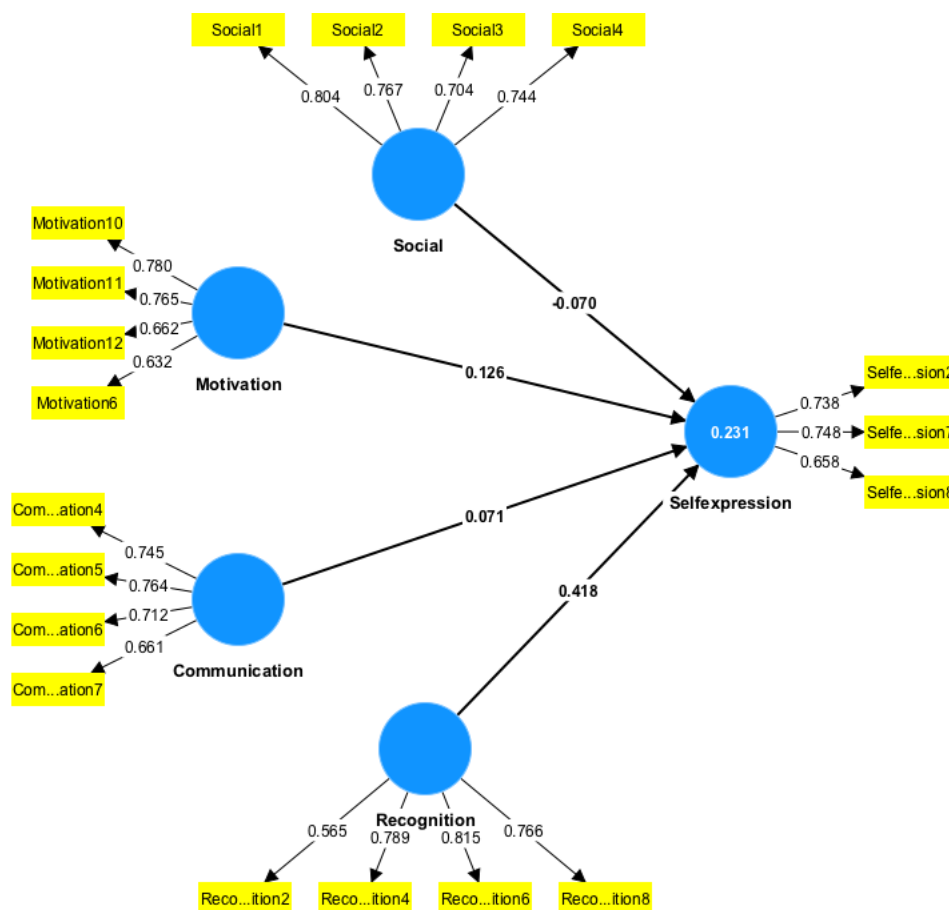


Figure 1: The structural model of gratification needs and authentic self-expressing.

### *The Relationship Between Social Needs and Authentic Self-Expression*

The results of the structural model analysis in Figure 1 showed H1 were supported, that there was a significant negative relationship between social needs and authentic self-expressing at the 0.05 significance level ( $\beta = -0.070$   $p = 0.000$ ). The results showed that the need for social was lower and the level of authentic self-expression was higher. That means on Instagram, the user who uses that platform cannot fulfill their social needs in authentic self-expression but the user still prepares to express their authentic self. This text highlights three main social needs:

**Maintaining a wide range of social relationships:** A desire to connect with many people simultaneously through Instagram, including old friends, new friends, and alumni. **Maintaining relationships with alumni:** A desire to connect with alumni through Instagram, perhaps to access alumni resources, participate in alumni activities, or simply maintain a sense of belonging to the alma mater. **Strengthening relationships with friends:** A desire to enhance interaction with friends through Instagram, maintain and deepen mutual affection, especially with those who are geographically distant.

The results indicate that the stronger people's social needs are, the less willing they are to express themselves authentically on social media platforms. This phenomenon may be attributed to several factors. **Seeking acceptance:** To maintain a wide range of social relationships, individuals may tend to suppress their true selves and cater more to the expectations and preferences of others in order to gain recognition and acceptance. **Avoiding conflict:** Expressing one's true self in social interactions may lead to conflict or disagreement.

To avoid these unpleasant situations, individuals may choose to conceal their true opinions and feelings. Maintaining a desirable image: Social media platforms like Instagram often serve as a stage for presenting an idealized self. People tend to showcase a positive side and hide vulnerabilities and negative aspects to maintain an ideal social image. Lack of security: In some cases, individuals may lack security and worry that their true selves will not be accepted or understood, leading them to conceal their true selves to avoid being hurt. The factors outlined above may inhibit individuals' willingness to engage in authentic self-expression on social media.

This text offers a limited perspective on the interplay between social needs and self-expression on Instagram. While it accurately identifies core social needs like connection, relationship building, and belonging, it arguably oversimplifies the motivations behind using the platform. The text primarily focuses on how Instagram can be used to maintain existing social connections, overlooking its potential to foster new connections, explore diverse communities, and discover new facets of one's identity.

Moreover, the text presents a somewhat pessimistic view of authenticity on Instagram, portraying social needs as inherently at odds with genuine self-expression. While it acknowledges the pressures to conform and present an idealized self, it neglects the agency users have in navigating these pressures and utilizing the platform for self-expression and empowerment. Instagram can be a powerful tool for self-discovery, connecting with like-minded individuals, and even challenging social norms.

Additionally, a few scholars noted that TikTok, particularly among teens, gives users a greater platform for authentic self-expression than Instagram. According to Uses and Gratification Theory suggests that consumers who are satisfied through media choose media to fulfill, a range of social, leisure, and information needs (Sharabati, Al-Haddad, Al-Khasawneh, Nababteh, Mohammad, & Abu Ghoush, 2022). Also scholars Quan-Haase and Young (2010) proposed to turn sharing issues into belongingness and social information into informativeness, including contribution and self-expression. In connection with this study, the result obtained is that TikTok users are more able to show the need for socializing in authentic self-expression than Instagram users.

Ultimately, the text provides a valuable starting point for understanding the complexities of social needs and self-expression on Instagram. However, a more nuanced perspective would recognize the diverse motivations and experiences of users, acknowledging both the challenges and opportunities that the platform presents for authentic self-expression.

#### *The Relationship Between Motivation Needs and Authentic Self-Expression*

The structural model analysis results in Figure 1 show that there is a significant positive correlation between motivational needs and authentic self-expression, with a significance level of 0.05 ( $\beta = 0.126$   $p = 0.000$ ). Therefore, the findings support H2. The results showed that the higher the need for motivation, the higher their authentic self-expression. That means users may meet these demands via Instagram, and the more easy they are on the platform, the better they can present themselves. In previous studies in their investigation into why people use the Internet, Papacharissi and Rubin found that users have five main reasons for doing so: information seeking, passing the time, convenience, entertainment, and



interpersonal utility. All of these factors have an impact on users' levels of gratification (Papacharissi, & Rubin, 2000). People are motivated by these requirements and motives to select the appropriate media according to gratification, which is the capacity to meet one's wants through media consumption (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rayburn, 1980). The ability to find something enjoyable, engaging, and a pleasant diversion from Instagram usage is what this study's participants found to be gratifying when it comes to their motivational needs. As a result, using Instagram can help users meet these needs, and the more at ease they are on the platform, the more authentically they can display themselves.

#### *The Relationship Between Communication Needs and Authentic Self-Expression*

This study supported the H3, that there was a significant positive relationship between communication needs and authentic self-expressing at the 0.05 significance level ( $\beta = 0.071$   $p = 0.000$ ). The results showed that the need for communication was higher and the level of authentic self-expression was higher. This means that there will be greater authentic self-expression on Instagram when users actively share their experiences, interact with one another, and leave comments. Previous scholars have also mentioned that people use spoken and written words, gestures, and visuals, as well as non-verbal communication, to convey their ideas, thoughts, and impressions to other people (Lee & Lin, 2020; Hayes, 2007). Moreover, self-expression helps people use social media platforms to fulfill their needs. When other users connect with content that reflects their emotions, people's satisfaction levels grow. Reaction icons, comments, shares, and likes can all be used to achieve this. (Wu, Xu, & Atkin, 2020; Gao, & Feng, 2016; Krebs, Lubascher, Moers, Schaap, & Spanakis, 2017). This result is connected to earlier research, users will share more of who they are on Instagram as they self-express more.

#### *The Relationship Between Recognition Needs and Authentic Self-Expression*

The statistical results in Figure 1 show were accepted the H4, that there is a significant positive correlation between the need for recognition and authentic self-expression, with an alpha level of 0.05 ( $\beta = 0.418$   $p = 0.000$ ). The findings suggest that the more positive the need for recognition, the higher the authentic self-expression. This result shows that when Instagram users actively participate in platform interactions, such as enhancing personal identity, value, respect, support, and creating a sense of belonging, they will express themselves more authentically on the media platform. This result is consistent with previous studies a strong incentive for using social media is feeling like they belong. Graff (2022) mentioned in their research that Influencers can share everything about their lives, including routines, personal experiences, and habits, which draws in followers who have gone through similar things. Therefore, the Instagram user feels like they fit in and belong when these situations are normalized and a relationship is formed between them and their impact.

Table 2

*Hypothesis Testing and Relationships Between the Variable*

| Hypothesis | Relationship | Std.beta | p-value | R <sup>2</sup> | f <sup>2</sup> |
|------------|--------------|----------|---------|----------------|----------------|
| H1         | SN → ASE     | -0.070   | 0.000   | 0.231          | 0.006          |
| H2         | MN → ASE     | 0.126    | 0.000   |                | 0.020          |
| H3         | CN → ASE     | 0.071    | 0.000   |                | 0.006          |
| H4         | RN → ASE     | 0.418    | 0.000   |                | 0.215          |

SN, Social needs; MN, Motivation needs; CN, Communication needs; RN, Recognition needs; ASE, Authentic Self-expression.

Analysis of the findings revealed a significant positive relationship between gratification needs using Instagram and authentic self-expression. Authentic self-expression allows users to affirm their true sense of self and enhances self-esteem and the sense of belonging (Monacis, Griffiths, Limone, & Sinatra, 2021). Reinecke and Trepte (2014) report that individuals who present their authentic selves on Facebook have higher levels of positive affect and lower levels of negative affect. This is in line with the Uses and Gratifications Theory paradigm (Katz and Blumler, 1974). But the difference with this study is that the platform used is different, the previous study was on Facebook, and the platform for this study is Instagram. Within the mature (talent, garden, etc) age bracket, the most cited motives for producing content were linked to needs of self-expression, social recognition, and fame-seeking (Bossen, & Kottasz, 2020).

This study assessed R<sup>2</sup> (the coefficient of determination) to measure the predictive accuracy. R<sup>2</sup> values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 for dependent variables, respectively, might be regarded as having weak, moderate, and substantial accuracy, based on a rule of thumb (Hair Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). As shown in Table 2 and Figure 1, the R<sup>2</sup> value of 23% demonstrated that the predictors in the structural model explained the variance in the model for authentic self-expression. All the needs (social needs, motivation needs, communication needs, recognition needs) contribute around 23.1% to making authentic self-expression. More specifically, social needs, motivation needs, communication needs, and recognition needs significantly weakly contributed to authentic self-expression. This conclusion suggests that the model in this study weakly contributed but still significantly, meaning this model needs to consider all the variables (social needs, motivation needs, communication needs, recognition needs) to change authentic self-expression.

This text presents some interesting findings about the relationship between different needs and authentic self-expression on Instagram. However, it could benefit from a deeper analysis and exploration of the nuances within these findings. Here are a few points to consider:

The text mentions socializing with multiple people and keeping in touch with alumni as key social needs. It would be helpful to delve deeper into the specific types of social interaction people seek on Instagram. Do they primarily use it for broadcasting updates to a large audience, or for intimate one-on-one conversations? How do different types of social interaction influence self-expression?

The text also touches on the need for belonging, particularly within alumni networks. It would be interesting to explore how Instagram facilitates connections with different communities beyond alumni groups, such as interest-based groups, fan communities, or social movements.

The text identifies several needs beyond social needs, including motivation, communication, and recognition needs. It would be valuable to analyze how these different needs interact and potentially influence self-expression. For instance, does the desire for recognition and support conflict with the desire for authentic self-expression? Or can they reinforce each other?

The study's definition of "authentic self-expression" as solely expressing genuine concern for others appears quite limited. This narrow definition raises concerns about the lack of acknowledgement for the diverse ways in which authenticity can manifest on social media. Authenticity can be expressed through various actions, such as: Sharing personal struggles (Opening up about challenges and vulnerabilities), Expressing unpopular opinions (Voicing beliefs that may not be widely accepted), Showcasing creativity (Sharing original content that reflects one's unique perspective and talents), A more comprehensive understanding of authenticity would enrich the analysis and provide a more nuanced view of self-expression on Instagram. Furthermore, it's essential to consider how the platform's affordances themselves, such as filters, curated feeds, and the emphasis on visual content, may shape and potentially constrain authentic self-expression. These features can encourage a curated and idealized presentation of self, potentially hindering the expression of vulnerability, complexity, and less visually appealing aspects of one's identity.

The text mentions that people with stronger social needs are less willing to express themselves authentically. It would be beneficial to investigate the reasons behind this finding in more detail. Are there specific fears or anxieties associated with self-expression for those with high social needs? How do different demographics and personality types navigate this tension between social needs and authenticity? It would also be valuable to explore how the concept of authenticity is evolving in the context of social media. Are there emerging forms of authentic self-expression unique to digital platforms? By delving deeper into these aspects, the text can provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between human needs and self-expression in the digital age.

## **Conclusions**

This study sheds light on the multifaceted nature of Instagram use and its connection to self-expression. It's clear that Instagram serves a variety of needs, acting as a platform for social connection, entertainment, communication, and validation. However, the findings also reveal a potential conflict between the desire for social connection and the expression of one's authentic self. Diverse motivations drive Instagram use, fueled by a complex interplay of needs. However, the findings also reveal a potential conflict between the desire for social connection and the expression of one's authentic self. People use the platform not only to connect with others but also to entertain themselves, share experiences, and gain recognition. This highlights the platform's versatility and its ability to cater to a wide range of individual needs. Social connection vs. authenticity: While Instagram facilitates social interaction and relationship building, the findings suggest a potential trade-off between social connection and authentic self-expression. The desire to maintain a wide network and gain

social approval may lead individuals to suppress aspects of their true selves, highlighting the inherent pressures to conform within social media environments. Communication and recognition: The study emphasizes the importance of communication and recognition in shaping Instagram use. People value the platform for its ability to facilitate communication with friends and family, share experiences, and receive support and validation. This underscores the role of Instagram in fostering a sense of belonging and building meaningful relationships. Limited view of authenticity: The study's definition of authentic self-expression, focusing solely on expressing concern for others, appears somewhat narrow. This raises questions about the diverse ways in which authenticity can manifest on social media and the potential for Instagram to facilitate other forms of self-expression, such as creativity, personal growth, or social activism.

### **Implications and Future Directions**

Navigating social pressures: The findings highlight the need for individuals to be mindful of the social pressures inherent in platforms like Instagram and to actively cultivate self-awareness and critical thinking skills to navigate these pressures effectively. Promoting authentic self-expression: Further research is needed to explore strategies for promoting authentic self-expression on Instagram and other social media platforms. This may involve developing educational interventions, promoting media literacy, and designing platform features that encourage genuine self-presentation. Understanding the evolving nature of authenticity: It's crucial to recognize that the concept of authenticity is constantly evolving in the context of social media. Future research should investigate how digital platforms are shaping our understanding of authenticity and explore emerging forms of self-expression unique to online environments.

Although this study contributes with close to 25% of the data showing an effect of the use and gratification theory on authentic self-expression, there is a need to consider other new variables to take into account the effect on authentic self-expression, and to incorporate new theories to predict changes in authentic self-expression. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between human needs and self-expression in the digital age. It underscores the need for ongoing research to understand the evolving role of social media in shaping individual identity, social interaction, and the pursuit of authenticity.

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