

MOTIVATIONS OF BRAZILIAN USERS FOR INSTAGRAM USE

EMILY MARINA SATO

MARLETTE CASSIA OLIVEIRA FERREIRA

IFSP - INSTITUTO FEDERAL DE EDUCAÇÃO, CIÊNCIAS E TECNOLOGIA DE SÃO PAULO

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the main motivations of Brazilian users for using Instagram. The research is applied in nature, with descriptive objectives, a quantitative approach, and a survey procedure. Through a questionnaire applied to platform users, motivations, perceived media value, and psychological benefits are analyzed. The predominant motivation is surveillance, but what truly drives Instagram use among these respondents is the hedonic aspect, as evidenced by the high perceived entertainment value and the psychological benefits of satisfaction and happiness. Class B2 exhibits a more emotional use, focused on entertainment, subjective well-being, and social recognition. Class B1 has a more functional profile, prioritizing social connections and the remembrance of important moments. Class C1 uses the platform more reservedly, with less emphasis on visibility, although it maintains practices related to distraction and interaction through likes. These results indicate a passive content consumption pattern driven by fast formats like reels, reinforcing an automated use pattern oriented toward accessible entertainment.

Keywords: motivation; perceived media values; psychological benefits.

RESUMO

Este trabalho tem como objetivo geral identificar as principais motivações dos usuários brasileiros para o uso do Instagram. A pesquisa é de natureza aplicada, com objetivos descritivos, abordagem quantitativa e procedimento survey. Por meio de questionário aplicado a usuários da plataforma, analisam-se as motivações, o valor de mídia percebido e os benefícios psicológicos. A motivação predominante é a vigilância, porém o que realmente impulsiona o uso do Instagram por esses respondentes é o aspecto hedônico, como evidenciam o elevado valor de entretenimento percebido e os benefícios psicológicos de satisfação e felicidade. A classe B2 apresenta um uso mais emocional, voltado ao entretenimento, bem-estar subjetivo e reconhecimento social. A B1 tem um perfil mais funcional, priorizando conexões sociais e na lembrança de momentos importantes. A classe C1 utiliza de forma mais reservada, com menor valorização da visibilidade, embora mantenha práticas ligadas à distração e à interação por curtidas. Esses resultados indicam um padrão de consumo passivo de conteúdo, impulsionado por formatos rápidos como os *reels*, o que reforça um padrão de uso automatizado e orientado ao entretenimento acessível.

Palavras-chave: motivação; valores de mídia percebidos; benefícios psicológicos.

1. INTRODUCTION

The growth of modern social networks began in the early 2000s, with the launch of Friendster in 2002, followed by the rapid rise in popularity of MySpace in 2003. The year 2004 marks an important point in this process with the creation of Facebook, which contributed to the consolidation of the online social interaction model (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Among these networks, Instagram stands out as one of the most popular and influential social platforms among Brazilians. Launched in 2010, Instagram had, by 2025, more than 2 billion active monthly users worldwide. In Brazil, its presence is equally significant, with an audience of approximately 140.7 million users, placing the country in third position globally, behind only India and the United States (Statista, 2025).

More than just a space for sharing photos and videos, Instagram has begun to directly influence forms of digital social interaction, especially among young people, becoming an integral part of people's daily lives.

In light of this scenario, marked by the widespread use of the platform in Brazil, this research seeks to answer the following question: what are the motivations of Brazilian users for using Instagram?

The main objective of this research is to identify the key motivations of Brazilian users for using Instagram. More specifically, it aims to assess the perceived media value associated with the platform, identify the psychological benefits experienced by users, and analyze how these factors relate to their motivations for engaging with the network, focusing on Instagram users as the subject of the study.

The methodology applied categorizes the research as applied in nature (Hair Jr. et al., 2010), descriptive in terms of objectives (Malhotra, 2012), and quantitative in its approach. The data collection was carried out through a survey conducted via the researcher's social media channels, using a non-probabilistic convenience sampling method (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister, 2012). In addition to demographic and segmentation items, the study incorporates the economic classification criteria developed by the Brazilian Association of Research Companies (ABEP, 2024), as well as the following scales: Motivation (Floriano & Silva, 2023); Perceived Media Value (Zhang, Xu, & Ye, 2022); and an adapted factor from the Facebook Motivation Scale addressing Psychological Benefits (Balakrishnan & Shamim, 2013).

The choice of this topic is justified by Instagram's widespread popularity in Brazil. Although there are existing studies on the motivations for using social media, a gap in the literature is observed when it comes to the relationship between motivation, perceived value, and psychological benefits in the context of Instagram use. By addressing these three aspects in an integrated manner, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of user behavior on the platform, offering a new perspective to the academic debate on the impact of social media on modern life.

This study is structured into four parts: the introduction; the main theoretical foundations of the research; the analysis and discussion of the data, which presents the results in relation to the respondents, their social classes, and the constructs investigated; and finally, the concluding remarks, which summarize the key points addressed, the results obtained, and the final reflections of the study.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents the main concepts related to motivation, social networks and social media, perceived media values and psychological benefits, in order to contextualize and support the study.

2.1 Motivation

Motivation is understood as a set of processes that lead individuals to act in a certain way. It arises when a need is triggered and generates the desire to satisfy it. Once activated, this need creates a state of tension that drives the consumer to seek its reduction or elimination (Solomon, 2016). According to Kotler and Keller (2018), needs can be classified as biogenic, when they stem from physiological tensions such as hunger and thirst, or psychological, when they originate from emotional states, such as the desire for recognition, belonging and self-esteem. This need may be utilitarian in nature, related to functional or practical benefits, such as consuming vegetables for nutritional reasons, or hedonic, associated with experiences involving emotions, fantasies and the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of discomfort, in other words, subjective happiness (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Solomon, 2016).

2.2 Social network and social media

The phenomenon of social networks, although intensified by the internet, predates digital technologies and has its roots in the most basic forms of human sociability. According to Gabriel (2010), social networks refer to social relationships, which have existed long before modern technologies. Digital technologies, such as the internet and smartphones, merely act as facilitators of these interactions and the sharing between people.

Torres (2018) proposes a distinction between social networks and social media, pointing out that the latter place greater emphasis on content creation and dissemination, as is the case with Instagram, while social networks prioritize connections and exchanges between individuals. For the author, social media are a subset within the broader universe of social networks.

In this study, the term social media is used when referring to platforms such as Instagram, considering that the research focuses on content sharing and users' motivations for engaging with such digital spaces. However, the term social network is used in the questionnaire, as it reflects the terminology adopted by the original scale's author. Therefore, both terms are considered equivalent and are used complementarily throughout the study.

According to Mark et al. (2023), the advancement of digital technologies has made social media increasingly diverse, with platforms offering different formats and functions. This variety expands the ways in which people interact and highlights the importance of understanding what motivates users to prefer one network over another. In the case of Instagram, the emphasis on visual presentation and public connection sets the platform apart from others, such as Facebook, directly influencing the reasons behind its use. The uses and gratifications theory, proposed by Katz et al. (1973–1974, as cited in Mark et al., 2023), argues that individuals choose media based on their personal goals. In this sense, the use of social networks follows specific purposes, such as entertainment, social validation, and relationship maintenance.

2.3 Psychological benefits of social media use

Psychological benefits refer to the emotional and subjective gains that individuals experience when interacting on social networks, such as personal validation, a sense of belonging, and increased self-esteem. These platforms offer a space where users can express themselves, share aspects of their own identity and, above all, receive feedback from others, which directly contributes to the formation of self-image and social relationships, as highlighted by Balakrishnan and Shamim (2013).

In the study by Balakrishnan and Shamim (2013), a motivation scale for Facebook use is developed based on focus groups and the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Exploratory factor analysis results in five factors, including psychological benefits, adopted as a variable of interest in this study.

According to Prades and Carbonell (2016), social networks, especially Instagram, provide users with a space where it is possible to express feelings, relieve stress, and reinforce self-esteem through interaction with others. The study identifies that one of the most relevant psychological benefits is the feeling of belonging to the community, fueled by comments and likes received on posts. Furthermore, using the platform as a way to express oneself helps young people to show what they are feeling and share their experiences creatively, which is good for their emotional side. The network also serves as a way to escape reality a little, functioning as a kind of refuge to deal with negative feelings.

The feeling of loneliness tends to be lower among individuals who use social networks focused on image sharing, as is the case with Instagram and Snapchat. Because these platforms give more prominence to visual content, they help create a greater sense of closeness and connection with others. For this reason, the more a person uses these networks, the greater their feelings of happiness and life satisfaction generally are. Additionally, there is evidence that positive feelings, such as well-being and a sense of social bonding, can be shared through these visual interactions. This becomes even more evident in direct exchanges of photos and videos between friends, which contribute to recreating the intimacy of social presence and minimizing the perception of isolation (Pittman and Reich, 2016).

2.4 Instagram and motivations for its use

Instagram is one of the most popular social networks today, and understanding what drives users to use the platform has been the subject of several studies. Floriano and Silva (2023), based on the original work of Sheldon and Bryant (2016), adapt and validate the Instagram Use Motivation Scale for the Brazilian context. This scale identifies four main dimensions that explain the use of the network: surveillance, documentation, popularity, and creativity.

Surveillance corresponds to the use of the network to follow information and events. Documentation involves recording and sharing personal moments. The motivation for popularity is linked to the desire for social recognition, while creativity refers to personal expression through the production of original content (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

The motivation for surveillance refers to the act of observing the lives and activities of other people, including viewing posts from friends, family members, celebrities, or any other profile. This highlights the social characteristics of the network used as a means to maintain relationships and know what is happening in others' routines (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

The use of social networks as a tool for social surveillance manifests, for example, when users maintain ties with previous relationships or investigate people known in the offline environment. This behavior, identified in studies on Facebook, is known as “social searching” (Lampe et al., 2006).

However, Instagram differentiates itself by being more focused on the user's personal identity, that is, on how the individual presents themselves, rather than emphasizing social relationships between users. Unlike Facebook, Instagram primarily functions as a platform for self-promotion, with less focus on building and maintaining social relationships (Marcus, 2015, as cited in Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

The motivation for documentation is related to using Instagram as a digital record of important moments, functioning as a photo album to store memories and events (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). According to the same authors, this is one of Instagram's advantages because it supports the continuous storage of these documents and makes them accessible to people.

Instagram is widely used as a way to preserve moments and seek inspiration. The platform helps users organize their experiences and create memories that contribute to a more positive view of life (Sheldon, Antony & Ware, 2021).

A good example of this is Disney's “Let the Memories Begin” campaign, which relies on the power of memories and encourages people to record their experiences in photos and videos, strengthening the emotional side of the moments lived. Similarly, networks like Instagram gain popularity precisely because they allow the creation of a kind of “external memory bank,” by publishing images and videos of significant situations (Solomon, 2016).

This type of use shows how documentation has an important psychological function. By recording the present, users revisit the past and keep alive the emotional connection to shared experiences (Solomon, 2016).

According to Sheldon and Bryant (2023), the motivation related to popularity is directly linked to the desire for social recognition and validation. On Instagram, it is common for many users to post content with the intention of gaining visibility, attracting likes, comments, and increasing their number of followers. This behavior is connected to self-promotion and the attempt to build a positive image in the eyes of others. The authors also state that this pursuit of popularity drives engagement on the platform, making Instagram a space of constant interaction and exposure.

This search for social recognition is closely related to self-esteem. The Sociometer Theory, proposed by Leary and Baumeister (2000), suggests that self-esteem functions as an internal gauge of social acceptance. In other words, individuals constantly monitor how they are perceived by others and adjust their behaviors to maintain or increase their relational value. This perspective helps explain why so many users seek likes, comments, and followers on social networks like Instagram, as these signals of engagement serve as forms of social validation and recognition, essential for self-esteem regulation.

The motivation for creativity refers to the use of Instagram as a means of visual and personal expression, through the posting of images and creative content. This motivation is associated with the desire to showcase aesthetic and photographic talents, explore filters and visual compositions, as well as use captions and hashtags creatively (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). According to Buryan (2018, as cited in Floriano and Silva, 2023), this factor highlights Instagram as a platform that

encourages originality, becoming a conducive environment for the dissemination of creative content.

Instagram is a predominantly image-based social network where users share visual content and can interact through likes, comments, and reposts (Chatzopoulou & Filieri, 2020). As a platform centered on the visual aspect, it also enables individuals to express their creativity, such as by applying filters that make images more aesthetically appealing or give them an artistic appearance (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

2.5 Perceived media values

According to Zeithaml (1988), perceived value is the overall evaluation that consumers make about the utility of a product or service, considering the benefits they believe they obtain compared to the costs or sacrifices involved in purchase or use. This judgment is subjective and may change depending on the context and personal consumption experience.

Although the concept originated in the context of physical products and traditional services, it has increasingly been applied to digital environments. In this regard, Zhang et al. (2022) adapt the notion of perceived value to the context of social media and propose a specific typology called perceived media values. According to the authors, even though access to social networks is free, users evaluate these platforms based on perceived utilities that include informational value, entertainment value, social network value, social status value, and organizational communication value. These values reflect the gratifications sought by users and significantly influence the trust they place in social media brands.

However, the present study adopts only three of these factors, namely: entertainment value, social network value, and social status value, as they are more aligned with the research objectives and represent central aspects of the subjective experience of social media use.

Based on the usage motivations described by different authors, Zhang et al. (2021) adopt these definitions as a conceptual foundation to characterize perceived values in social media. In this context, perceived entertainment value refers to the emotional benefit users associate with using digital platforms as a form of leisure and stress relief. Even though it does not involve direct financial costs, this value is perceived through experiences of fun, relaxation, and distraction, which make social media use an attractive alternative for escaping daily routines (Buzeta et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021).

Perceived social network value relates to the utility users assign to the possibility of connecting with other people and participating in online communities. Derived from the motivation for social interaction, this value manifests in the perception of belonging, the strengthening of interpersonal ties, and the expansion of socialization capabilities that social media enable, constituting a relevant relational benefit in the digital environment (Buzeta et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021).

Finally, perceived social status value is related to the recognition and social appreciation obtained through interactions on social networks. This value refers to the perception of prestige and admiration that the user believes they achieve by sharing content, being associated with the desire to stand out among peers and build a positive image in the digital environment. In this context, the use of social media becomes a symbolic tool for attaining status, highlighting how online behavior can reflect motivations linked to self-esteem and perceived social position (Lee & Ma, 2012; Zhang et al., 2021).

2.6 Research object

In Brazil, a large part of the population has access to the internet and uses social media daily. This research focuses on Instagram users, one of the most popular platforms in the country.

2.6.1 Instagram

Instagram is a social network focused on sharing photos and short videos, where users can create, interact, and share content freely (Ahmad et al., 2024). The platform was founded in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger (Caliandro & Graham, 2020).

Initially, the platform was developed for exclusive use on mobile devices, operating only on iOS and Android systems. This format, combined with the focus on visual content, influences user behavior, who began to access the network quickly and constantly, anytime and anywhere, directly through their phones, generating a dynamic different from other social networks (Lee et al., 2015). Since 2012, Instagram has offered a version accessible via web browsers, although with limited functionality (Torres, 2018).

Instagram's popularity is especially evident among users aged 18 to 34, who represent 62.6% of the platform's total user base, with 32% in the 18 to 24 age range and 30.6% between 25 and 34 years old (Statista, 2024). This strong appeal among young and young adult users is related to the network's format, which prioritizes sharing information through visual content, such as photos, videos, and stories (Huang, 2018).

Currently, Instagram offers a range of features that enable both the creation and dissemination of content, as well as promoting interaction among users (Instagram, 2025).

The feed is one of the platform's main tools, allowing the permanent sharing of photos and videos, functioning as a showcase that helps build the visual identity of the profile (Instagram, 2025).

Stories are features for quick posts that last 24 hours, enabling the publication of photos, videos, and other interactive elements such as polls, questions, links, and stickers (Instagram, 2025). Reels stand out as short, creative, and dynamic videos designed to promote greater reach and engagement, allowing users to connect with a broader community through inspiring content, trends, and challenges (Instagram, 2025).

Another widely used feature is live streaming, which enables real-time broadcasts, allowing direct communication with followers and is often used for events, launches, conversations, and spontaneous interactions (Instagram, 2024). Additionally, Direct Messages (DMs) function as a private communication channel where users can exchange texts, audio, photos, videos, stickers, and make video calls (Instagram, 2025).

Instagram also offers the edits feature, which allows users to save and reuse filters, effects, and customized edits on their photos and videos, facilitating the standardization of the visual style of the content (Instagram, 2025). For businesses and content creators, the shop feature enables the promotion and sale of products directly on the platform, integrating product tags in posts and offering a dedicated shopping tab (Instagram, 2025).

Complementing these tools are insights, which provide analytical data on performance, reach, engagement, and audience characteristics, being essential for business and creator accounts (Instagram, 2025).

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis and discussion of data obtained through the application of a questionnaire conducted between April 17 and October 29, 2024. A total of 103 responses were received, of which 11 were excluded for indicating that they do not use Instagram, resulting in 92 valid questionnaires.

The majority of respondents are male (68.5%), with an average age of 21 years. The predominant age range is 10 to 29 (54.5%), followed by 20 to 29 years (39.4%), 30 to 39 (4%), and 40 to 49 (2%). Regarding education level, 66.7% have completed high school or incomplete higher education, 16.2% have completed middle school II or incomplete high school, 15% have completed higher education, and 2% have completed elementary school I or incomplete middle school II. As for socioeconomic class, respondents from class B2 predominate (38%), followed by C1 (24%), B1 (15%), C2 (13%), and A (10%).

Most reside in the state of São Paulo (52.2%), followed by other states (32.6%), Paraná and Minas Gerais (5.4%), and Bahia (4.3%). Among platform users, 66.7% report using it daily, 27.3% occasionally, and 6.1% several times a week. The reasons for using Instagram, in descending order of selection among respondents, are: passing the time (22.0%), interacting with friends and/or family (19.2%), following people (17.6%), keeping up with news (9.8%), finding inspiration (9.8%), following companies (6.4%), posting personal content (5.8%), discovering new trends (5.2%), and others (3.8%).

3.1 Motivation

Motivation is understood as a set of processes that lead individuals to act in a certain way, being activated by needs that generate tension and drive actions to reduce it (Solomon, 2016).

Regarding the **motivation for surveillance**, the overall average is 60.62%, indicating a moderate level of this motivation among respondents. When analyzing the classes separately, following my friends is the most common behavior, with 75.87% overall, especially prominent in classes B1 (81.43%) and B2 (78.86%). The lowest overall average is identified in the item related to checking other people's posts, with 52.83%, remaining at a lower level across all classes.

Users in class C1 (59.39%) show slightly lower engagement compared to classes B1 (62.86%) and B2 (62.38%), but with a highlight on the higher frequency of liking photos (64.55% - C1), a behavior more expressive in this class. Overall, class B1 presents the highest averages in behaviors focused on observing and following contacts, while class C1 (59.39%) demonstrates a more selective engagement pattern, concentrated on actions such as liking posts.

Therefore, based on the results, it can be inferred that Instagram is most commonly used to follow friends (75.87%) and somewhat frequently to interact with friends (62.83%), while the least common use is to check other people's posts (52.83%). This shows that, for these respondents, Instagram is used for surveillance in a moderate way, with an emphasis on direct social connections, especially among higher income strata, and a more visual and affective focus among users in class C1 (59.39%).

Regarding the **motivation for documentation**, an overall average of 36.56% is observed, indicating occasional use. When analyzing the classes separately, the most frequent behavior is

related to remembering special events, with a general average of 42.17%, standing out in class B1 (51.43%), which uses it with some regularity.

In general, respondents use Instagram to remember important moments and celebrate events; however, this motivation is not very expressive, with frequencies indicating occasional or even rare use. Only class B1 shows a percentage above 50% for remembering special events, while classes B2 and C1 demonstrate even lower engagement, maintaining low and similar levels in the other items.

Therefore, based on the results, it can be inferred that Instagram is little used to remember special events (42.17%) and to celebrate some event (40.87%), while it is used even less to describe life through photos (30.65%), which shows that documentation has low relevance among the motivations for using the platform.

Regarding the **motivation for popularity**, the overall average indicates a low use of Instagram for this purpose, at 31.01%. When analyzing the classes separately, it is observed that, although the percentages are still low, users in classes B1 (30.00%) and B2 (31.43%) show a slight tendency to use the network to become popular, while class C1 (20.91%) practically does not use Instagram for this purpose.

The most expressive behavior among users is concentrated in classes B1 and B2, which use Instagram to provide updates about their lives to friends, with averages of 42.86% and 37.14%, respectively, while class C1 (33.64%) presents a lower percentage, showing that for these respondents popularity has low relevance.

Regarding the **motivation for creativity**, the overall average is 30.43%, indicating low use of this motivation among respondents, making it the factor with the lowest overall percentage. When analyzing the classes separately, class B2 shows the highest average (31.43%), followed by class C1 (29.09%).

The most expressive behavior is related to using Instagram to showcase photographic skills, with a general average of 33.91%, followed by using it to create art, with 26.96%. It is notable that class B2 leads in both items, with 29.14% for creating art and 33.71% for showcasing photographic skills, while class B1 presents the lowest percentages in both actions (20.00%) and (28.57%). In contrast, class B1 shows the lowest percentages of creative engagement (24.29%), highlighting the item “create art,” whose average of 20% indicates that all respondents in this class report not using Instagram for this purpose.

Therefore, based on the results, it can be inferred that, for these respondents, Instagram is rarely or never used as a space for creative expression, especially by class B1 (24.29%), with this motivation being more present in classes B2 (31.43%) and C1 (29.09%), which demonstrates that creativity plays the smallest role among the motivations for using the platform.

3.2 Perceived media values

Perceived value is the overall evaluation that the consumer makes about the utility of a product or service, considering the benefits they believe they receive compared to the perceived costs (Zeithaml, 1988). In the context of social networks, the term perceived media value is used, which corresponds to the evaluations users attribute to the use of these media based on perceived utilities (Zhang et al., 2022).

Regarding **perceived entertainment value**, an overall average of 76.81% is observed, making it the factor with the highest overall percentage in this research. When analyzing the classes separately, users in class B2 (81.71%) present the highest average score and perceive Instagram as a way to pass the time when they are bored.

In the item related to accessing interesting music and videos, classes C1 (75.45%) and B2 (75.43%) show the highest percentages. Meanwhile, in the use of Instagram to share leisure and entertainment topics, the highest percentages were recorded in classes B2 (81.14%) and C1 (80.91%). Class B2 (79.43%) consistently shows the highest agreement in using Instagram for entertainment purposes across all items. Although it has the lowest average among the three classes, class B1 (70.95%) still demonstrates agreement with using the platform for this purpose. Therefore, based on the results, it can be inferred that Instagram is widely perceived as a source of entertainment (76.81%), with an emphasis on using the platform to pass the time when bored (78.26%), as well as accessing music, videos (74.35%), and leisure content provided by Instagram (77.83%).

Regarding **perceived social network value**, the overall average is 49.35%, indicating that respondents tend to disagree that Instagram is useful for strengthening connections. When analyzing the classes separately, users in class C1 feel the greatest increase in connection with colleagues through Instagram (57.27%), closely followed by the overall average (57.17%). Classes B1 (54.29%) and B2 (53.71%) show slightly lower scores.

Class B1 generally demonstrates a higher perception of strengthening connections with friends (55.71%), while class B2 does not feel increased connections with family (37.71%), although all groups show low percentages in this regard. The overall average for this item is only 36.30%, indicating that Instagram has a limited impact on family relationships among its users.

Therefore, based on the results, it can be inferred that Instagram is more perceived as useful for increasing connections with colleagues (57.17%), followed by friends (54.57%), and less perceived as useful for strengthening family ties (36.30%), highlighting a greater focus on social relationships outside the family nucleus. This shows that respondents tend to remain neutral about Instagram strengthening their connections with friends and colleagues, while showing disagreement regarding its influence on family relationships.

Regarding **perceived social status value**, the overall average is 59.71%, indicating neutral agreement. When analyzing the classes separately, users in class B2 show a higher perception that Instagram is useful for being recognized by others (70.86%), followed by class C1 (67.27%) and the overall average (66.74%).

Class B2 consistently shows the highest perception of Instagram as a tool to achieve social status across all items (63.81%), with emphasis on the item “helps to be recognized by others,” which reached 70.86%. Class B1 indicates less affinity for using Instagram to impress others (54.29%), while class C1 disagrees with the statement that Instagram makes them look cool (44.55%).

Therefore, based on the results, it can be inferred that Instagram is most perceived as a tool to be recognized by others (66.74%), followed by impressing others (61.96%), and less commonly to look cool (50.43%), which shows that respondents, in general, tend to remain neutral regarding perceived social status value, except for class B2 in the item related to recognition by others (70.86%).

3.3 Psychological benefits

Psychological benefits represent the emotional gains that users experience when using Instagram, such as increased self-esteem, satisfaction, well-being, and a sense of belonging (Balakrishnan; Shamim, 2013).

Regarding the psychological benefits factor, the overall average is 53.04%, indicating neutral agreement. When analyzing the classes separately, users in class B2 present greater emotional gains from using Instagram, especially in the item related to the sense of satisfaction provided by the platform, with 70.86%, a value significantly higher than the overall average of 63.48%. Class C1 stands out for the lowest percentage in the item related to using Instagram to overcome loneliness, with 42.73%, indicating a significantly lower perception compared to the other classes.

Users in class B1 (55.21%) generally show lower engagement compared to the other classes, mainly in self-esteem (37.14%) and identity creation (42.86%) for this research sample.

Therefore, based on the results, it can be inferred that using Instagram leads to the highest feelings of satisfaction but with a neutral score (63.48%), as well as happiness (63.26%), while the lowest impact is on self-esteem (40.22%) and improvement of social status (47.83%). Overall, users remain neutral regarding the perception of psychological benefits provided by Instagram, since the overall average reaches 53.04%. However, class B2 (55.21%) stands out, showing a more positive trend with the highest percentages in items related to satisfaction and happiness (64.00%), indicating that this group is the one that most perceives emotional gains from using the platform.

3.4 Discussion of results

Among the motivations, surveillance stands out (60.62%), characterizing a moderate and passive use, in which users follow the daily lives of friends and influencers without active engagement. A frequent behavior is “following friends” (75.87%), a routine practice that serves more to keep the feed updated than as an active motivation. The use of the platform is predominantly reactive: most access Instagram to pass the time, distract themselves, or relieve boredom (78.26%), and not necessarily to express themselves, gain visibility, or document their own lives (30.65%).

This pattern connects to the high perceived entertainment value (76.81%), indicating that Instagram use is driven more by immediate rewards than by conscious goals. The difference between motivation and perceived value points to a less rationalized and more automated usage logic, focused on quick gratifications. As a consequence, many users report psychological benefits associated with subjective well-being, such as satisfaction (63.48%) and happiness (63.26%).

Social status presents distinct interpretations: in perceived value, it represents the perception of opportunities to be recognized and make a good impression (66.74%); while in psychological benefits, it refers to the actual impact on the user’s self-esteem, with a lower average (47.83%). This suggests that although users recognize the social potential of the platform, they do not always perceive concrete gains in their personal image.

The analysis by social class reveals significant differences in Instagram use. Class B2 is characterized by a more intense and emotional use of the platform, standing out with the highest averages in entertainment value (79.43%), psychological benefits (55.21%), and social recognition (70.86%). This indicates that users in this class use Instagram not only for leisure but also to seek visibility and social approval.

Class B1 presents a more functional profile with less emotional involvement, showing the lowest averages in social status (54.29%), psychological benefits (49.46%), and creativity (24.29%).

Despite this, this class values maintaining social relationships, evidenced by the high frequency of following friends (81.43%), the recognition of the importance of remembering significant events (51.43%), and the reported increase in connection with friends (55.71%). On the other hand, Class C1 shows lower appreciation for recognition, with lower averages in popularity (26.36%) and documentation (35.61%), which may reflect a more reserved relationship with the network, possibly associated with lower expectations of visibility or social appreciation in this environment. Even so, this class maintains considerable appreciation for interaction through liking friends' photos (64.55%) and entertainment (76.67%).

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study aimed to identify the main motivations of Brazilian users for using Instagram, also considering perceived media values and psychological benefits associated with the platform. The results indicate that surveillance is the primary motivation among users, according to the scale used in this study, which includes the factors of surveillance, documentation, popularity, and creativity. However, in practice, what truly drives Instagram use among these respondents is the hedonic aspect, evidenced by the high perceived entertainment value (76.81%) and the psychological benefits of satisfaction (63.48%) and happiness (63.26%) experienced by users. Thus, although Instagram use is often passive and habitual, it is driven by the pursuit of pleasure, distraction, and emotional well-being.

This dynamic reflects a significant change in user behavior, especially with the popularization of reels and the advancement of Instagram's algorithm. Fast and engaging formats favor passive and repeated consumption, reinforcing a profile of automated and less rationalized use. In this context, users remain on Instagram seeking accessible entertainment and relief from boredom, rather than necessarily engaging in activities that require greater effort or public exposure.

The analysis by social class shows differences in Instagram usage. Class B2 is characterized by a more intense and emotional use of the platform, focusing on entertainment (79.43%), subjective well-being (55.21%), and the desire for social recognition (70.86%). Class B1 presents a more functional profile, with lower emotional involvement (49.46%), but shows interest in maintaining social connections (55.71%) and remembering important moments (51.43%). Meanwhile, Class C1 reveals a more reserved relationship with the network, with lower appreciation for visibility and recognition (26.36%), although it still maintains practices related to entertainment (76.67%) and interaction through liking friends' photos (64.55%).

An important factor to consider is the predominance of the male gender in the sample (68.5%), which may have influenced the results found. Studies indicate that women are more likely to engage actively on visual social networks like Instagram, dedicating more time to communication and social interaction (Sheldon, 2008; 2015, apud Sheldon; Bryant, 2016). Thus, the higher presence of men in the sample may explain the lower averages observed in almost all motivational items and consequently influence the general characterization of Instagram use in this study.

Furthermore, the analysis of the reasons for using Instagram, investigated through a multiple-choice question, reveals the multifunctionality of the platform for Brazilian users. Among the options, "finding inspiration" and "keeping up with news" accounted for 9.8% of the total choices, indicating that beyond hedonic and passive use, there is also a significant portion that uses the network for more active, informative, and functional purposes. However, the creativity factor, which assesses active involvement in creating art or demonstrating photographic skills, showed a low overall average (30.43%), suggesting that despite the search for inspiration, the effective production of creative content remains limited.

A significant limitation of this research is the small number of respondents, which may restrict the generalization of the results. With a reduced sample size, there is a larger margin of error, and the conclusions may not accurately represent the diversity of experiences and perceptions of users in a broader population.

For future research, it is recommended to seek a more balanced sample in terms of gender, since the majority of participants are male (68.5%). Additionally, investigating other platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) could contribute to understanding whether the motivations, perceived values, and psychological benefits observed in Instagram use are consistent across other networks or vary significantly among them. It would also be relevant to include the investigation of possible harms associated with social media use, such as impacts on mental health, addiction, social comparison, and reduced quality of offline interactions, in order to provide a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon.

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Use of Generative AI in This Research

This article involved the use of the Generative Artificial Intelligence tool ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI. The tool was applied in the following stages:

- Support for improved textual clarity, applied to the Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Discussion of Results, and Final Considerations sections;
- Grammatical revision of excerpts throughout the entire work;
- Translation of the full article from Portuguese to English.

The use of the tool occurred, in part, during the preparation of the Undergraduate Dissertation, whose texts were fully retained in the submitted article version. All analyses, interpretations, and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the author. No customized or fine-tuned version of ChatGPT was used in this research.