

# Coping with Crisis

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## Abstract

Looking at a sample of Instagram profiles, this article analyses the ways in which individuals' posting behaviour on Instagram changed during the first Corona Crisis lockdown and how this relates to Well-Being. It can be seen that people put more focus on their own and more pictures of creative activities and meditation / yoga were shown. In addition, more changes in the timing of postings can be seen. From these observations, it can be concluded that although the focus remained on what was visually well presented and people probably also felt pressure to publish despite diminished subject options, they also used the social medium in this situation to stay in touch with others and to do identity work. Furthermore, Instagram offered structure and the impetus to become creative and discover new things for themselves. Thus, the social medium can have a positive influence on the well-being of active users in times of crisis.

**Keyword :-** Creativity; Well-Being; social Media; Meditation; Corona; Covid .

## Introduction

### 1. Crisis as Chance

Social media are ubiquitous and their impact on users, their behaviour and their psyche is widely discussed. In times of the Corona crisis and the first lockdown, the use of social media such as Instagram still increased significantly (Babvey Asghar et al. 2021: 8), but at the same time the possibilities for typical photo motifs were severely limited.

This raises the question of how profile owners reacted to the situation and whether or to what extent the use of social media helped users, especially profile owners, to deal with the crisis. To answer this question, after explaining the basic concepts and the crisis-independent connection between well-being and the use of social media, a sample of 50 different profiles will be used and their posting behaviour observed in the first weeks of the crisis. The changes in posting behaviour are then interpreted on the basis of the factors "image motives" and "chronology".

### 2. The medium of "photography" and the platform "Instagram"

Before approaching the topic, some important terms in this context should be briefly addressed. On a medial level, this is first of all photography, but then also the platform Instagram, for which photos are taken and/or selected and on which the images are put into a certain context, presented and discussed. Without wanting to separate "medium and message" too much from each other, the concept of well-being is then further to be considered under point 3 as a central goal in the use of social media.

### 2.1 Photography

The term "photography" stands first of all for an imaging process, as well as the activity associated with it - taking photographs - , and furthermore for the product of this process, individual photographs. The term "image", which is now to be defined, in "imaging process" is used in many ways, graphically as well as intellectually and linguistically (Leutgab 2012: 32). In our context, the linguistically fondly used phrase "reading pictures" is particularly interesting. On the one hand, images - whether photographs, sketches or paintings - do not display a clear linearity comparable to a line in a text. As eye-tracking studies show, the sequence and dwell time of the perception of different picture elements is very complex and can only be planned or predicted to a limited extent (Dürrach 2020: 16). There always remains - as with a text - a certain ambiguity: a picture may say more than a thousand words, but depending on the "picture reader", not necessarily the words intended by the picture creator.

The basis of photography is that a selected moment is snatched from the flow of time and preserved. In this context, photographs are also spoken of as "memento mori" (e.g. Barthes 1989: 103). Photographs offer the presence of something that is obviously no longer present (in exactly this form): "The photographer is manifestly absent from the field of the image. Instead, we are there, we are seeing what the photographer saw at the moment of exposure. This structural congruence of point of view (the eye of the photographer, the eye of the camera, and the spectator's eye) confers on the

photograph a quality of pure, but delusory, presentness" (Solomon-Godeau 1991: 180).

Due to their indexical reference to reality, photographs are said to have a special credibility: "The epistemically special character of photographs is revealed by this fact: we are inclined to trust them in a way we are not inclined to trust even the most accurate drawings or paintings" (Cohen and Meskin 2010: 70). The "seemingly unsymbolic, objective character of technical images leads the viewer to see them not as pictures but as windows. He trusts them as his own eyes. And consequently he criticises them not as images but as world views (if he criticises them at all). His critique is not analysis of their production, but world analysis" (Flusser 1983: 13f.). This ignores not only the manifold possibilities of editing and staging, but also the various conscious and unconscious decisions that shape the image in its reception and selection.

In addition to the aforementioned temporal limitation of picking a moment out of the flow of time, photography also has a clear spatial limitation, the so-called framing. This also goes hand in hand with its practicality: "Perhaps the central reason put forward for the proliferation and dramatic uptake of photography is its ability to transcribe the world in a form that is readily portable from one location to another" (Wright 1999: 6). Digital photography, and with it the medium of Instagram, reinforces this aspect by making photos even easier to handle and accessible at any time via mobile phones and the internet.

Photographs - whether self-portraits or self-taken or selected images - are also closely linked to identity, they are means that help to build and express identity (van Dijck 2008: 58). Especially today, identity is seen as increasingly problematised, as a lifelong work project: "One general line of consensus in [...] recent social theory is that in conditions of intensive globalization-individuals are increasingly required or called upon to become the 'architects of their own lives', to engage in continual do-it-yourself identity revisions" (Elliott 2016: 70). Photography can support this identity work, which is important for well-being (Jerrentrup 2019).

## 2.2 The social medium Instagram

The immense importance of social media has been pointed out many times in the literature (Dyer 2020: 28), for example with regard to the processing of information (Roese 2018), political aspects (Shirky 2011), trends (Colliander & Dahlén 2011) or cultural identity (Gündüz 2017).

Instagram is a platform that, unlike other social media such as Twitter, is based on visual posts, i.e. photos, video clips or graphics. In doing so, the platform imposes a specific format on these works that does not correspond to the 2x3 format commonly used in

photography. The images are sorted chronologically in the individual profile and appear to the recipient mostly in a mixture of different images from subscribed profiles, which allows infinite scrolling. For users, unlike in other social media, there is no obligation to keep their Instagram account in line with real life (Leaver et al. 2020: 16).

The focus of Instagram postings - at least before the Corona crisis - was on fashion, food and restaurant visits, design, near and far travel, nature, health and fitness, inspiration and art, and parties and events (von Puttkamer 2019). These activities are often done together with other people, cooking together, going out together or partying with friends. Instagram allows linking with other users, which increases the reach of the postings - an aspect that is usually desired, at least for open profiles.

In this context, the question already arises as to why people use social media at all and what benefits they expect from them. Giuseppe Riva et al. link the use of social media to the way in which they are able to satisfy various needs according to Abraham Maslow's classic categorisation of needs (Riva 2016: 7f.) and state that social media can be associated with a variety of needs. This in turn includes precisely the importance in identity work that social media assume (Dyer 2020: 28). This connection between social media and identity is often the focus of academic literature (Gündüz 2017, Vincent 2021) and is described as a discursive process (Jakaza 2020: 3). The pros and cons of social media use are discussed in more detail below.

## 3. Well-being and social media

The WHO (2014: 1) uses a broad concept of health as the status of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of illness. The definition thus goes beyond the purely physical dimension that can be determined on the basis of objective criteria. Well-being is considered "the main, if not only objective of life" (Ng 1996: 1) and will therefore be used as a basis in the following instead of a narrower concept of health. The research question posed at the beginning included the phrase "help in dealing with the crisis" - this help thus refers to the promotion of well-being.

However, the concept of the Well-Being is not easy to grasp: It is considered a holistic, ambiguous and dynamic concept (Sonnentag 2015) and involves interactions of body, environment and mind, making it very complex, so that despite some attempts (e.g. Ryff's 1990), there is no clear list of criteria for Well-Being. Accordingly, the identical life situation could be perceived by one person as congruent with well-being, by another as incongruent with it. Consequently, the concept inevitably leads to existential, philosophical,

religious and ethical questions "about who we are and the meaning and purpose of our existence" (Sykes 2010: 1). Culture must be seen as a central aspect in this context, as wellbeing is understood differently depending on the cultural character. The "cross-cutting issue" of "identity" that resonates here has already been addressed several times in the previous points and is also of central importance in the context of well-being, since a stable self-understanding as a coherent being with certain characteristics and a history can be regarded as a basic human need (Schönhuth 2005: 91), just as people strive for positive social identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979; related to social media Trepte and Krämer 2007).

The concept of resilience, which is important in the context of the Corona crisis, should be briefly addressed here: In physically or psychologically challenging situations, resilience, i.e. the ability to resist and adapt to the situation, plays an essential role in well-being (Smith et al. 2016, Burtles 2007). According to Micheline Rampe (2005), seven positively influencing factors can be distinguished, including optimism, acceptance, solution orientation, taking responsibility, planning for the future and - particularly interesting in our context - network orientation, i.e. the creation of a stable social environment, as well as the abandonment of a possible victim role, which goes hand in hand with an active reinterpretation of the situation and a reflection on one's own strengths.

"Well-being and social media" represents an extensive field of research that is approached from various disciplines, such as cultural anthropology, psychology, media studies or pedagogy.

### **3.1 Threat to Well-Being through Social Media**

Some findings indicate that (intensive) use of social media - considered here in general terms and not in relation to the situation of the Corona crisis - can pose a threat to the Well-Being (Lee Won et al. 2020). In the following, particularly important findings are briefly presented:

Social media have addictive potential, leading to concomitant "Fear of Missing Out" ("FoMO", Roberts and David 2019). This is explained by the fact that the use of social media leads to the release of dopamine. Due to the constant updating on social media, users fear missing out if they do not check constantly, which can add to the addictive nature. Therefore, "digital detox" (Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel 2019), i.e. abstinence or controlled use, is partly advised.

Dark participation refers to types of use that "can have severe effects on the victims and on society at large" (Quandt et al. 2022), including above all cyberbullying (Katzner 2013), which is made particularly easy by the opportunity for anonymity. Such behaviour can,

however, be perceived as rewarding on the part of the offenders.

Despite the apparent connectedness with countless other users, many users experience increased loneliness and isolation in their lives outside of their media activities (Hu 2009, Dror and Gershon 2012, Primack et al. 2017). In this context, there is also a focus on the superficial: social media allow for a variety of different impressions in a short time by shortening content. Twitter only allows a certain number of characters, on Instagram you have to condense your post into a photo, a series of photos or a short video clip. Since the posts are presumably often only viewed briefly, "catchy" motifs are also useful, which further limits the range of topics and the creative possibilities and thus also makes it more difficult or even impossible to communicate more complex topics or, in the case of Instagram, topics that cannot be represented visually. The assumption of "likable content" formulated by Tiftental and Manovich goes one step further: users "seem to approve of pictorial qualities, and not to be concerned about aiming a critical or political statement" (2018: 176). This results in a superficiality that cannot "fill the inner emptiness" (Geiger 2008: 22).

Moreover, many users see themselves at a disadvantage in the social comparison processes already mentioned above, even if there is an "authoritative disclaimer" or they have been educated about cognitive bias - neither of which seems to significantly reduce the negative consequences of social comparison in social media (Weber et al. 2021).

The spectrum of displayed topics and aesthetics is increasingly focused and thus narrowed down by algorithms (Pariser 2011). This leads to the fact that one learns more about the topics that interest oneself, but under certain circumstances the diversity of opinions is no longer represented and one only sees one's own attitude confirmed. Problematic attitudes such as political radicalism, violence, distorted self-perception, anorexia or the like are also reinforced in this way.

### **3.2 Positive influences on well-being through social media**

However, some studies also see the potential of promoting well-being through social media:

Being active on social media can provide a communication outlet (Maleyka 2019: 5) and leads to a "sense of belonging" (Allen et al. 2014: 21). In this context, Roberts and Davis (2019) also see the above-mentioned "Fear of Missing Out" quite positively. While loneliness has already been mentioned under a different sign, it is also assumed that image-based platforms such as Instagram "have the potential to ameliorate loneliness due to the enhanced intimacy they offer" (Pittman and Reich 2016: 155).

Another feature that has positive aspects is the democratising potential of social media, which is made possible by the elimination of one-sidedness in the media. This also creates the opportunity for more diversity (Tomova 2017: 2ff.; Farinosi and Fortunati 2020: 43; Duffy 2013). Very different interests, information needs, inclinations and cultural contexts can come together here and develop their topics further. The facilitation of support groups (Gajaria et al. 2011) and the joint creation of positive social identities are also related to this. (Initial) anonymity helps especially when dealing with sensitive issues.

Social media are also seen as places for inspiration and form platforms where creativity is appreciated and creatives have the opportunity to publicise their work in a relatively easy way (Szymkowiak et al. 2020). Social media thus offer an opportunity for more people to discover and use the potential of creativity for well-being.

Furthermore, movements such as #metoo, #blm and #bodypositivity have managed to use social media to bring social issues into the public consciousness and to help those affected to achieve more well-being by acknowledging their problems or fighting against them.

When it comes to social media and well-being, however, the preferred way of using it is also important - whether one is mainly a recipient, i.e. focused on others, or focused on oneself: While focusing on others is more likely to lead to harmful outcomes, those who focus more on themselves are more likely to experience social media as beneficial (Vogel and Rose 2016). This can be explained by the fact that people mostly want to present themselves positively for reasons of social desirability, for example, and that the focus on positive self-presentation can have a feedback effect.

#### 4. Research framework and sample

Based on the above findings on well-being and social media in general, we will now look more specifically at the pandemic period, or more specifically, the first lockdown. Instagram was chosen as one of the most popular social media at the time to form the sample. Moreover, as mentioned, Instagram is based on images, which brings with it the challenge that the possibility of capturing typical image motifs was significantly limited at that time.

With the aim of avoiding the aforementioned filter bubbles in our own research, a new Instagram account was created for the survey of the sample. In order to obtain random profiles from the matching geographical region in which lockdowns existed around the same time, profiles with names of larger or medium-sized cities from Germany, Austria, Switzerland or the Netherlands in the profile name or description were searched for until the number 50 was reached in order to

obtain a representative sample. The profiles should also have a maximum of 200,000 followers to ensure that they are not professional influencers.

This number was derived from my own experience with the medium; although there are also non-commercial accounts with a million followers and commercial ones with only a few thousand, it gives a certain tendency. Moreover, the accounts were to be attributed to individuals, not commercial enterprises. Thus, in almost all accounts, one's own life was also the main topic. This fits with the term "microcelebrity", which refers to people who are well-known among a certain group of people (Marwick 2018a: 114) and tend to gain this status by building affective relationships with recipients and conveying authenticity (Marwick 2018b). Who exactly was behind the profiles is, of course, impossible to say with certainty. However, looking at posted self-portraits, they seemed to be mainly people between 20 and 50 years old, and more than half were probably female users. Further demographic data could hardly be inferred. For ethical reasons, only open profiles were selected, i.e. those that accepted or aimed for a certain visibility, which was incidentally also confirmed by the frequent use of hashtags.

The 50 profiles were observed during one month, from 14 March to 14 April 2020, so the time frame of the sample survey was at the beginning of the Corona crisis in Northwest Europe. In order to detect changes, previous posting behaviour was also considered, up to several months before the first media coverage of the outbreak, depending on the posting frequency.

Between 14 March and 14 April, there were some profiles that posted fewer pictures than usual, others were quite active and increased their posting frequency a little. The reasons for this behaviour can hardly be traced and are therefore not part of the analysis.

The image motifs of the postings were categorised according to fields of meaning with the help of an ethnographic content analysis (Altheide 1987). This means that the categories were not all fixed from the outset, but emerged in reflexive work with the material.

A second aspect consisted of tracing the chronological sequence of the postings with regard to their relation to life outside of social media. It is not always possible to say with certainty whether an image refers to a point in time further back in the past; but at least there are some clues, which will be explained below.

It should also be briefly explained why a sample was chosen as the basis and not, for example, participant observation or interviews. Participant observation is inevitable in a study if one has been actively involved with the medium for many years. However, in order to better understand the situation, it would have been necessary to set up a corresponding channel in advance,

which, like the accounts in the sample, is more about one's own life. The author's account, however, deals in particular with staged and documentary photography and is thus thematically very special. Chronology, for example, does not play a major role in this context, just as no self-portraits are posted. Accordingly, their own Instagram activities are not to be considered sufficiently representative, even if certain aspects - such as a certain frequency of postings - affect them as much as many other users. In the run-up to the study, informal conversations were held with "microcelebrities" personally known to the author. However, only people from her own circle of acquaintances came into question for this, who in turn are somewhat more deeply involved in the field of artistic photography and are therefore also unlikely to be considered representative. Enquiries to the profile holders from the sample as to whether an interview was possible remained unanswered, possibly filtered as spam or perceived as uninteresting.

## 5. Changed posting behaviour

As could be assumed, the posting behaviour of the observed profile owners changed significantly during the beginning of the Corona crisis. Three starting points played a role here: First, as mentioned above, there were limited options for usually popular picture motifs such as travel, shopping or restaurant visits; at the same time, however, it could also be assumed that most profile owners did not want to take longer breaks from social media, perhaps because of the above-mentioned desire to stay connected during a time of crisis. Furthermore, it could be assumed and quickly confirmed by the images in the sample that the focus of self-presentation remained on positive aspects (Vogel and Rose 2016). As a third starting point, the same situation existed for the recipients and their respective comparison groups among the posters - which the profile holders in question were certainly also aware of.

### 5.1 Image motifs

Almost 30% of the posted images had direct crisis-related content, including humorous reflections of the crisis such as memes or own productions, for example on the topic of toilet paper shortage, or "call for action" postings, for example on the topic of wearing a mask. A frequent motif, for example, was a selfie with a mask, often accompanied by hashtags such as #corona, #westayathome, #wirsindstaerker or #wearingiscaring. The accompanying texts referred to the current situation, admonished, were humorous or encouraged. Optimism in connection with humour and solution orientation and taking responsibility in connection with "Call for Action" can be identified as resilience strategies. However, some posts also addressed the difficulty of creating interesting content for Instagram in the given situation. However, the initially very high number of

corresponding, narrowly crisis-related postings quickly flattened out.

Own or self-referrals represented another major theme: In themselves, of course, all photos taken and/or posted by a person are also related to them - they are their impressions, their preferences, their choices. Not surprisingly, the number of motifs that focused on one's own was also high in the sample, including one's own home, one's own pets, family members or - especially popular - one's own person. Although this clear focus on the self was also high up in the profiles before, the self was now more narrowed down: while before, for example, one's own city, one's own fitness club or one's personal favourite restaurant were also shown with pleasure and taken up textually as "own", the self now appeared even more narrowed down, for example by showing one's own furnishings or personal objects such as a teddy bear or a guitar. Even self-portraits were more tightly cropped; one saw fewer full-body photos, but instead more shoulder shots or even tighter close-ups. The increase in tighter focus on the self can be put at around 50%.

An interesting exception to the increased focus on the self and the spatial delimitation of the self was a slight shift towards "domestic nature" towards the end of the survey, especially self-portraits that were probably taken in a park or forest. This is certainly also seasonal - with spring approaching, it was more tempting to go outside - but it could also be related to the next aspect, the marked increase in images showing creative activities and meditation.

Images of such activities saw an increase of just over 40%. The creative activities shown were mainly painting and handicrafts, as well as arts and crafts, such as beautifying one's own home and garden - subjects that were almost not shown at all in the accounts before the crisis. The corresponding creative activities were activities that offer interesting visuals - graphic design on the computer or writing novels were not shown, and musical activities also appeared only very rarely in the sample.

Meditation also appears more frequently in the sample, depicted in appropriate iconic poses, often cross-legged with palms turned upwards and eyes closed, but also in more specific yoga asanas, usually in the setting of a room, a garden, or, as mentioned earlier, in nature at home. Pictures showing the subjects with closed eyes, apparently completely absorbed in meditation, must presumably be regarded as clearly staged motifs that do not show actual meditation, since the subjects themselves had obviously planned, realised and selected this very shot. Accompanying texts usually suggested that the posters had newly discovered or rediscovered creative activities and meditation for themselves.

## 5.2 Chronology

The term "chronology" comes from the ancient Greek "chrónos", which means time, but also stands for a god. Consequently, chronology refers to the science or understanding of the temporal sequence of events, "the determination of the actual temporal sequence of past events" (Princeton's WordNet).

Of course, it is not possible to say with certainty when every image was created, but there are sometimes clues that indicate changes in the actual sequence of events: The change is obvious if it is picked up in the text accompanying the image, for example with text elements that address the fact that a photo represents a "repost" or a memory, more often with links to other people involved at the time. Sometimes the time when the photo was taken is also mentioned. In other cases, picture elements can be assigned to other time periods, such as photos from summer in Germany that were posted in winter, or one finds photos of long-distance travel that were not possible at the time of posting. In still other pictures, one recognises the person with certain looks that cannot be changed quickly, indicating that the order has changed: for example, pictures with shorter and longer or differently coloured hair, or pictures with and without tattoos. Sometimes you also see photos that are obviously - recognisable by outfit, location, lighting etc. - from a series that was posted earlier. The increase in pictures that did not correspond to the chronological order of events increased by about 30%.

## 6. Interpretation of the data

As described, this paper is based on a sample of Instagram posts and not on interviews with the users concerned. All conclusions are therefore derived from the postings themselves, or more precisely from looking at these very Instagram postings, as well as from tracing their chronology.

As before the pandemic, the focus remains on what is visible or visually transportable, and positive self-presentation continues to play a role. Despite the greater emphasis on meditation or creative activities, one could conclude that these activities ultimately remain only in the realm of acting and that the approach to the idea of incorporeality and immateriality in cyberspace (Lackner 2014: 95) remains a long way off, at least on Instagram: Content consequently has to be banned on two dimensions, "catchy" and look appealing - the main theme remains "appearance" (Baker et al. 2019). Creative activities and results are especially Instagram-ready when they involve actions that can be realised quickly and presented in a visually interesting way. For example, we saw postings about handicraft work, but not about writing poems, short stories, graphic design on the computer or the lengthy work on larger paintings. Meditation, to put it pointedly, has been reduced to a few

iconic asanas and the decoration of a nice meditation corner. It stands to reason that meditation photos must have been staged and thus often do not represent actual meditation, and in any case the essence of the activity can hardly be communicated. Seen in this light, the aspect of superficiality mentioned under "Threat to the Well-Being through Social Media" (Tiftental and Manovich 2018, Geiger 2008) can possibly be confirmed.

In the lockdown, many profile holders were still under pressure to publish (Sekhri 2021) in order to maintain their reach and fans. It is possible that the pressure was even greater in this situation than in normal everyday life, which offers more options for simple content, while in the lockdown, thrown back to - more or less - one's own walls, there are fewer options. This was confirmed not only by some captions but also by several informal conversations with some people known to the author who are active on social media. Pressure per se, however, does not have to be seen as negative for well-being.

Thus, it can be seen as positive that the medium of Instagram, along with the pressure to publish, has also provided people with a form and structure to which they could adhere in a time characterised by great uncertainty. The function of media for structuring everyday life has previously been noted above all for television (Flick 1996: 241), which is additionally bound to clock times. But regular posting on Instagram can also be interpreted in this direction. It is also interesting to note that many of the observed profiles always posted at roughly the same times and also allowed similar time intervals to pass between posts.

With a view to the new image motifs, one can also conclude that the pandemic brought the opportunity to deal with something new, i.e., according to Rampe (2005), to leave the victim role - the view of oneself as the person harmed by the pandemic: Instead of passively enduring the pandemic, the posters became active and reinterpreted the difficult situation as a challenge or even an opportunity. Perhaps they were all the more motivated to do this because the goal was (also) to be able to communicate something interesting or, more generally, positive on Instagram. As shown, this mainly included creative activities and meditation, but also with a view to self-portraits or photos of one's own, new motifs could be found despite limited possibilities, which can be associated with creativity. Creativity, as numerous studies show, has a positive effect on the psyche and is associated with pride, self-esteem, empowerment and personal development (Mundt 2009: 97, Schuster 2015: 50). The reduction of motive options already mentioned, which applies in addition to the limitations typical of media anyway, can ensure more engagement with reality. This places creativity in

relation to life; it becomes relevant because it involves problem-solving thinking (Krause 1972: 42). In the present case, for example, the question is how to create interesting postings from very limited resources. The analysis clearly confirms that it is by no means possible to assume media determinism and that the media specifications regarding format and interesting content, which were apparently particularly difficult to fulfil during the crisis, have not led to a reduction in creativity: "While any given medium confronts an artist with certain inherent constraints, media still allow wide latitude for innovation and artistic manipulation" (Carey 1967: 28). Apparently, users have managed to adopt the medium flexibly and adapt it to the needs of the situation.

In addition to providing an opportunity for visual creativity, the limitation can also create a chance to devote more attention to individual topics and, in the medium term, to go into more depth. Of course, one can critically note that posting is usually not, or at least not only, intrinsically motivated at first: "It is not documented what one has experienced, but one experiences it only because one documents it" (Thurner 1992: 31) - however, one does not have to interpret it as disillusioned as Ingrid Thurner writes in relation to travel photography, because doing something at all, being interested in something, is probably preferable to disinterest and can form the basis for more intensive engagement (Ow Yeong 2014: 9). Moreover, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are not permanently mutually exclusive: "If it is possible to free goals [...] that are normally not aligned with the whole self but are geared towards concrete outcomes from this focus and connect them with all the important needs and values of the person and their social relationships, then even such 'extrinsic' goals can become intrinsic goals, the achievement of which can then also promote well-being and health" (Kuhl and Koole 2005).

The even stronger focus on the individual and one's own can also be seen in this context - it can be interpreted as narcissism on the one hand, but also as a way of dealing more intensively with one's own identity. In this context, the change in temporal sequence can also be understood as an engagement with facets of identity. This is not only about diachronic aspects of identity, but also about synchronic ones, i.e. the interaction and cohesion of different aspects, the work on one's own multidisciplinary. This can also include the retracing of one's own, quite erratic thoughts in the "stream of consciousness" - "that flow of perceptions, purposeful thoughts, fragmentary images, distant recollections, bodily sensations, emotions, plans, wishes, and impossible fantasies" (Pope & Singer 1978: 1). This "stream of consciousness" corresponds to the human experience of life.

Since the postings are (also) directed at third parties - the recipients - one can also assume a special openness and an offer of communication (Maleyka 2019: 5), especially clear due to the abolition of media one-sidedness mentioned at the beginning: Similarly, Christian Cohrs and Eva Oer interpret the phenomenon of the "selfie" not merely as an expression of narcissism, but as "a new way of connecting with the world" (Cohrs and Oer 2016: 12). Thus, in addition to or in connection with the focus on the individual, it can also be assumed that many profile owners used social media to maintain connections during the crisis, a time when many people were affected by social isolation. The aforementioned assessment by Pittman and Reich (2016: 155) that image-based social media helps with loneliness could therefore be confirmed here. This corresponds to research on special interest groups that find their niches within the framework of social media and give each other support. In addition, a "sense of belonging" (Allen et al. 2014: 21) could also have developed depending on the situation. On social media, it is also clearly demonstrated at Corona time that numerous people share a similar fate, which can bring relief. Coping strategies of others can help to gain inspiration for a better handling of the situation. Many links in the posts also speak for the resilience factor "network orientation" (Rampe 2005). #

As the interpretation shows, there are often two sides to the same coin, which may have different effects depending on the user and individual situation: the form and structure, for example, that the medium Instagram provides can be used and evaluated differently, for example, it can be experienced as a limitation and lead to only superficial engagement with new content, but it can also be understood as a structuring element of everyday life, as security in uncertain times and as an incentive to try out new things or to deal with one's own identity more intensively.

## 7. Outlook: Creative appropriation

With its research design, this analysis has focused on profile holders and how they have dealt with the situation of the crisis. For them, all in all, there may be a positive effect that promotes well-being. For those, however, who primarily receive and produce less themselves, the negative social comparisons described by Weber (2021) and the feeling of disadvantage probably remain: The lives of those posting probably seem more interesting and attractive than their own, even in pandemic times. An analysis in this regard, perhaps based on longer-term repeated interviews, could offer further insights here.

In view of Weber's analysis, however, it seems obvious that in order to achieve a beneficial effect, active participation in the sense of creating one's own content is a prerequisite even in pandemic times. At least in the

medium term, the goal should not only be "likes" and comments, but the opportunity for intrinsic motivation for creative activities and identity work. However, it would be problematic for all social media if more were produced than received: This would turn social media into more or less private photo albums, which would stand in the way of networking and be more like the concept of the now far-fetched platform Myspace (Erichsen 2022), which was popular in the mid-2000s. Here it would still need to be explored in what way a positive balance can be achieved.

In summary, the analysis suggests that photography-based social media such as Instagram have the potential to promote well-being for active users, especially in times of crisis.

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