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THE INFLUENCE OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL NETWORK BAN ON CONSUMERS' ATTITUDE TO RUSSIAN SOCIAL MEDIA: CASE OF VK

Master's thesis

2nd year student of master's program

profile – Master in Management

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ЗАЯВЛЕНИЕ О САМОСТОЯТЕЛЬНОМ ХАРАКТЕРЕ ВЫПОЛНЕНИЯ
ВЫПУСКНОЙ КВАЛИФИКАЦИОННОЙ РАБОТЫ

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STATEMENT ABOUT THE INDEPENDENT CHARACTER OF THE MASTER
THESIS

I, Iliva Mariia Nikolaevna, (second) year master student, program «Management», state that my master thesis on the topic «The Influence of International Social Network Ban on Consumers' Attitude to Russian social media: Case of VK», which is presented to the Master Office to be submitted to the Official Defense Committee for the public defense, does not contain any elements of plagiarism.

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31.05.2023

ABSTRACT

Master Student's Name	Iliva Mariia Nikolaevna
Academic Advisor's Name	Alkanova Olga Nikolaevna Candidate of Science (Economics) Associate Professor, Marketing Department
Master Thesis Title	The Influence of International Social Network Ban on Consumers' Attitude to Russian social media: Case of VK
Description of the goal, tasks and main results the research	The main goal of the research is to identify how Zennials' emotional reaction to the international social networks ban in 2022 influences their attitude to Russian social networks (based on the VK case). Research tasks were: 1. Justify relevance of the emotional attachment towards social networks of Zennials. 2. Study examples of worldwide disconnection from social networks and current situation on the Russian market of social networks. 3. Identify the main patterns of consumer behaviour (emotional reaction strategies) of Zennials after the block of several social media. 4. Determine how the emotional reaction to the international social networks ban influenced attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, satisfaction with VK. 5. Define main users' profiles of Zennials based on the emotional reaction strategy chosen. 6. Explore differences in profiles regarding technographic characteristics. 7. Develop a set of recommendations for content producers, add-owners, bloggers, companies, and VK developers on how to communicate on the VK platform. There have been changes in attitude towards and satisfaction with VK based on the emotional reaction of Zennials to international social networks ban. Three completely different profiles of end-users (Disappointed Pragmatics, Negative Skeptics, Positive Accomodators) with distinct attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, satisfaction with VK, and technographic characteristics were defined. Detailed profiles and practitioner recommendations were developed as a result of the study, along with the theoretical contribution.
Keywords	Social networks, emotional attachment, Zennials, international social networks ban, emotional reaction strategies, attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, satisfaction with VK, technographic characteristics, end-users' profiles.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Автор	Илива Мария Николаевна
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Название ВКР	Влияние запрета международных социальных сетей на отношение потребителей к российским социальным сетям: на примере социальной сети VK
Описание цели, задач и основных результатов исследования	Основная цель исследования - определить, как эмоциональная реакция представителей пограничного Y-Z поколения на запрет международных социальных сетей в 2022 году влияет на их отношение к российским социальным сетям (на примере социальной сети VK). Исследовательскими задачами были: 1. Обосновать актуальность эмоциональной привязанности представителей пограничного Y-Z поколения к социальным сетям. 2. Изучить примеры отключения от социальных сетей по всему миру и текущую ситуацию на российском рынке социальных сетей. 3. Определить основные модели потребительского поведения (эмоциональные стратегии реакции) представителей пограничного Y-Z поколения после блокировки некоторых социальных сетей. 4. Определить, как эмоциональная реакция на запрет международных социальных сетей повлияла на отношение к VK, интенсивность взаимодействия с VK, удовлетворенность VK. 5. Разработать профили представителей пограничного Y-Z поколения на основе выбранной эмоциональной стратегии реакции. 6. Изучить различия в профилях, касающиеся технографических характеристик. 7. Предложить для создателей контента, владельцев рекламы, блогеров, компаний и разработчиков VK рекомендации как коммуницировать с пользователями в VK. Были обнаружены изменения в отношении к и удовлетворенности VK на основании эмоциональной реакции представителей пограничного Y-Z поколения на запрет международных социальных сетей. Были определены три совершенно разных профиля пользователей (Разочарованные Прагматики, Негативные Скептики, Позитивные Приспособленцы) с различным отношением к VK, интенсивностью взаимодействия с VK, удовлетворенностью VK и технографическими характеристиками. В результате исследования были разработаны подробные профили пользователей и рекомендации для практиков, а также обозначен теоретический вклад исследования.
Ключевые слова	Социальные сети, эмоциональная привязанность, представители пограничного Y-Z поколения, запрет международных социальных сетей, эмоциональные стратегии реакции, отношение к VK, интенсивность взаимодействия с VK, удовлетворенность VK, технографические характеристики, профили пользователей.

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Introduction

In today's society, social networks have become an integral part of modern life, with the number of online users growing at a rapid pace. As of January 2022, Russia had a total population of 145.9 million, with 129.8 million of them being internet users, representing an internet penetration rate of 89.0 per cent. According to DataReport (2023), the number of active social media users in Russia has been steadily increasing over the past five years and reached 106 million people in 2022. However, the development of social networks faced new challenges in February and March 2022, with the blocking of Meta*[1] products and TikTok's refusal to serve Russian users. Consequently, there is a need to analyze the changing behavior patterns and preferences of Russian consumers.

Topic relevance

The ban on some social networks has created an unprecedented situation, forcing the Russian internet audience to search for new platforms for communication, blogging, and earning from advertising. This influx of authors and audiences to new platforms has created a need to understand how the change in attitude towards social networks in Russia contributes to consumers staying on or shifting to alternative social networks. Moreover, businesses faced the challenges as they needed to satisfy the desires of shifted audiences.

The social network VK was chosen as the main alternative social network for study due to its boom in growth after the ban of several social media networks. The number of VK users has grown from 46 million to 50 million between January and July 2022, making it relevant to study the influence of International Social Network Ban on Consumers' Attitude to Russian social media based on VK platform. Additionally, the study focuses on Zennials, as they are the main consumers and users of social networking sites.

The novelty of this research is demonstrated by the absence of similar studies on this topic after the restrictions appeared in the media industry. Thus, this study aims to address this gap and create a foundation for other academic researchers studying consumers' behavior and changes in attitude to social networks in Russia after the restrictions on several social networks.

The research will allow content producers, add-owners, bloggers, and companies to improve their offerings on the VK platform as the main alternative to banned social networks. All these factors demonstrate that the chosen topic is relevant to the current situation in the Russian market of social networks.

Research gap and problem statement

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[1] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

There is a limited understanding of how Russian consumers met the restrictions of some social networks. In addition, there is not so much research that studies this phenomenon. The research problem that is a part of the current research gap can be described as the following question: "How attitude towards the international social networks ban influenced consumer behavior on VK platform?" Moreover, satisfaction with and intensity of engagement with existing platforms were also influenced by the current situation. Such conditions facilitate the necessity to know how to communicate with end-users on the main alternative domestic social network. This master's thesis is aimed at answering the research problem mentioned above.

Research questions

In order to address the research problem, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the typical behavioural patterns (emotional reaction strategies) of Zennials after the block of several social media?
2. How Zennials' emotional reaction to the international social networks ban influenced the attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, satisfaction with VK?

The object of this master's thesis is Russian Zennials who use social networks. **The subject** is the change in attitude to social networks in Russia after restrictions based on the VK platform.

Goal and tasks

The main goal of the research is to identify how Zennials' emotional reaction to the international social networks ban in 2022 influences their attitude to Russian social networks (based on the VK case).

In order to address the research goal, the following **research tasks** were formulated:

1. Justify relevance of the emotional attachment towards social networks of Zennials.
2. Study examples of worldwide disconnection from social networks and current situation on the Russian market of social networks.
3. Identify the main patterns of consumer behaviour (emotional reaction strategies) of Zennials after the block of several social media.
4. Determine how the emotional reaction to the international social networks ban influenced attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, satisfaction with VK.
5. Define main users' profiles of Zennials based on the emotional reaction strategy chosen.
6. Explore differences in profiles regarding technographic characteristics.

7. Develop a set of recommendations for content producers, add-owners, bloggers, companies, and VK developers on how to communicate on the VK platform.

This master thesis consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references, and appendixes.

The first chapter consists of a literature review, a description of the main theories used and conceptual model framing. Also, similar practices of social networking sites' restriction in different countries and worldwide were discussed.

The second chapter is devoted to the selection of research methods, the design of guides for in-depth interviews and online questionnaires, the process of data collection, descriptive statistics of the collected data and the results of the qualitative study.

The third chapter contains an analysis and results of the data collected from the quantitative study, and recommendations for practitioners and researchers as well as limitations and further development of the topic under analysis.

Finally, conclusions were summarized at the end of the master thesis.

Chapter 1. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF ZENNIALS PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AFTER THE BAN

1.1. Emotional attachments towards social networking sites

Social networking sites have become a crucial aspect of human life, as well as necessary elements for businesses and marketing purposes. Social networking refers to online platforms where people can create public or semi-public profiles and connect with other users (Boyd D.M., Ellison N.B., 2007). This definition is in line with that of the Cambridge Dictionary, which defines a social network as "a website or computer program that allows people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Right now, making coffee is not the first thing that you do in the morning, but rather social network scrolling. Consumers of social platforms all over the world send messages and posts to each other, communicate in direct messaging, put likes, and perform other social integrations with family and friends, acquaintances and even strangers. By doing so users fulfill their various needs and desires in receiving information, social network interconnection, time passing, entertainment, organizational communication and much more (Zhang M., Xu P., Ye, Y., 2022).

With the growing role of social networks in people's lives, users develop emotional connections and attachments to their preferred social media platforms (Harrigan P. etc., 2017). An attachment could be defined as a system of internalized representations that are based on previous experiences with notable figures. They mediate close relationships, reflect specific insights and emotions, and influence how an individual interacts with other people (Mikulincer M., Shaver P. R., 2012).

Research examining emotional connections with social media platforms gained momentum in the 2010s. Variety of emotions that users experience when using social networks were studied, ranging from healthy and controlled use (Brailovskaia J. etc, 2022) to addiction and problematic use (Servidio R. etc., 2021). A good example could be a study done by Chiu and co-authors in 2013 when Facebook[2]* users demonstrated a positive relationship between a sense of well-being, pleasant emotions related to the visit to the Facebook* platform and increased users' loyalty to this social networking platform (Chiu C.M., 2013). A similar study was conducted by Köhl and Götzenbrucker in 2014. They concluded that if end-users interact

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with their favorite social network, they tend to encounter comfort and warmth, positive emotions in other words (Köhl M.M., Götzenbrucker G., 2014).

Social networking usage therefore can be beneficial, because it allows you to interact with your old friends and make new ones. Moreover, social media platforms help in maintaining social communications and social relationships with like-minded peers who share common interests and hobbies (Kuo F. Y. etc., 2013). Thus, social media interaction helps in satisfying an individual's need for social connection and relationships. Social networks are also advantageous for people who would like to escape reality. In a world where there is a lot of uncertainty in the real-life virtual world, the world of social interactivity enables separation from problems and hardships of real life. Social media is perceived as a world full of fantasies and pleasures (Graciyal, D. G., Viswam, D., 2021).

On another side, excessive communication through social media can lead to social dysfunction that is addictive, causing emotional distress (Marino C., Gini G., Vieno A., Spada, M. M., 2018). According to the Social Comparison Theory, this happens when end-users experience stress because they believe that the lives of other users are more interesting and entertaining than their personal ones based on the social media content that these people post (Park S. Y., Baek, Y. M., 2018). These feelings were greatly put by Alfasi in the following quote: "The grass is always greener on my friends' profiles" (Alfasi Y., p.111, 2019). As a result, end-users undergo negative feelings related to their personal well-being, life satisfaction, and overall mood (Zebroski M., 2019).

It was also found that people who experience envy levels have mindless social network use, while users with controlled and thoughtful leverage of social platforms tend to make fewer social comparisons and therefore be happier with their interactions on social networking (Zebroski M., 2019). Consequently, even though we can argue about different effects of social network usage, one is confirmed – there is a great level of emotional attachment (positive or negative) associated with social networking sites by end-users.

Enterprises and companies realize the great opportunities that social media platforms grant to them too. That is why you can hardly find a company that is right now not present on social media. Any enterprise, even the smallest today, has its own social network account where end-users can find overall information about the organization, see its functionality and services provided, and check how responsible is the organization's management. Social networking creates a unique opportunity to establish new business contacts with people from unexplored markets to gain new customers or contractors (Kazienko P., Szozda N., Filipowski T., 2013). For example, Sberbank together with VK launched the first youth project, the Sberbank

chatbot, which helps users master financial literacy and gives exclusive stickers. The chatbot talks about money, how to earn it and how to save, thereby attracting the attention of young people to the brand- name Sberbank (Sostav, 2017).

Therefore, social media platforms now became a point of contact and communication between customers and businesses. For a business, it's pivotal to understand its customers and be able to meet their needs and hidden motives. Thus, businesses must know and be able to respond accordingly to the current situation in the social networking market which is characterized by instability and great uncertainty in Russia. To do it successfully businesses should be aware of the target audience that they interact with through social media platforms.

1.2. Generations Theory

According to a global customer engagement software company Khoros the most active users of social networking sites are people aged from 18 till 29 years old (Khoros, 2022). Understanding Zennials' perceptions of and attitude to social networks can help companies and marketers better target this generation, as they are a significant consumer demographic.

Based on the classical approach to the generations these are representatives of Generation Y and Generation Z. Each generation has its own values, beliefs, lifestyle, motives, and attitudes. Because of rapid technological development the characteristics of consumer behavior differ significantly between them and should be investigated. This sub-paragraph is dedicated to determining the distinctive features of generation Z and generation Y separately. Moreover, peculiarities of borderline generation in social networking are discussed in detail.

1.2.1. Peculiarities of generation Y in social networking

Millennials, also known as Generation Y, were born between 1981 and 1996, and currently range in age from 26 to 41 years old (Radaev V. V., 2019). They are referred to as Digital Natives because they were the first generation to grow up in the era of the Internet, and therefore have been exposed to global interactivity from a young age (McMillan S. J., Morrison M., 2006). In addition, they were the pioneers of social networking and were the first to communicate with friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances through these platforms (Vogels E. A., 2019).

In terms of their consumer behavior, Millennials tend to make emotional choices when it comes to products, but rational decisions when it comes to retailers, as they have access to a

wealth of information (Barton C., Fromm J., Egan C., 2012). They spend time researching before making a decision and tend to stick to their preferences. They prioritize their values, such as economization or a healthy lifestyle, and search for products that align with these values (Oganisjana K., Bąk M., Kozlovskis K., Andersone, I., 2022).

Millennials have a strong influence on purchasing decisions and are particularly concerned with image, brand, and social profile (Ordun G., 2015). They value flexible working hours and access to vegan and vegetarian food. They often rely on financial support from their families and may not feel that they earn enough money even if they have a job. This raises questions about their loyalty to their profession and work (Neohr, 2020).

This generation is ambitious and willing to pay for high-quality, long-lasting products and services (Finneman B., Ivory J., Marchessou S., Schmidt J., Skiles T., 2017). They live by the motto "Living here and now" and prioritize spending money on interesting activities rather than saving for future investments like buying a home. In Russia, Millennials are often associated with narcissism and a focus on pleasure (Drobysheva E.E. (2016). It's important to note that not all Millennials have the same economic and behavioral practices, due to factors like age and historical events they have experienced.

On social networks, Millennials prefer infographics and videos and spend several hours a day scrolling through them. They seek out high-quality content that helps them develop their desired, often idealized, image in both social media and real life (Zemskova E.S., 2019).

1.2.2. Peculiarities of generation Z in social networking

Generation Z, currently aged between 10 and 25 years old, encompasses individuals born between 1997 and 2012 and represents the largest consumer group worldwide. This group has grown up in an era of affordable internet, smartphones, laptops, and free access to digital media. Their consumer behavior is characterized by a preference for purchasing goods and services online, with tablets and smartphones being their primary means of information search, product selection, and payment (Singh A. P., Dangmei J., 2016).

This group is often referred to as digital consumers, with their constant online presence for studying, working, watching series, and spending several hours a day on social media. Before making purchases, Generation Z seeks out information, conducts research, and reads reviews to evaluate their options. They are highly informed, and pragmatic, and make analytical decisions based on available digital literature. Additionally, they are interested in collaborating with brands, employers, and leaders, and supporting innovation and creativity. This group

consumes information in a fragmented way, leveraging multiple devices simultaneously (Curtis B. L., Ashford R. D., Magnuson K. I., Ryan-Pettes S. R., 2019).

Social media platforms are the main channel for advertisement delivery, with a focus on visual content and the shortest formats possible. Social network changes based on the demands of representatives of this generation (Grigoreva E. A., Garifova L. F., Polovkina E. A., 2021). Generation Z representatives use social networks as the main source of information and entertainment (Wada H., 2019). They can easily shift from the real world to the virtual one and perceive them as complementary worlds. In social networks, they actively express their feelings and emotions in personal blogs, comments, direct messages and blogs and groups of others. They use as well as create a lot of content nowadays (Dolot A., 2018).

Russian Generation Z will be different from the same age group in Europe. Firstly, highly progressive and well-digitally educated users could be seen only in cities with a population of more than 1 million, whereas representatives of other regions in Russia will be different due to the poverty, low digital and technological progress, and lack of willingness to change. Secondly, Russian representatives of Generation Z will be more conservative and comfortable with traditions (Vyugina D., 2019).

1.2.3. Peculiarities of borderline generation in social networking

As digitalization continues to grow, businesses must reconsider how they segment and effectively communicate with their customers. The traditional method of separating generations with a 15-year gap is becoming outdated and inaccurate due to rapid technological progress and innovation. People born at the beginning and end of this 15-year period exhibit different behaviors and attitudes, making it obvious that Millennials born in 1980 and 1996 cannot share the same outlook and habits due to their vastly different experiences with technology.

Currently, the trend is towards studying micro-generations, which can help in better understanding users' emotions, feelings, and behavior within a given area of exploration. This understanding can be further enhanced by comprehending the available technology and how it influences the perception of purchase, money, and communication. Instead of a 15-year gap, micro-generations experience shorter periods that occur at the end of one generation and the beginning of another. An example of such a micro-generation is the Zennials.

Zennials are individuals who demonstrate characteristics of both Generation Y and Generation Z, representing consumers with mixed expectations (WGSN, 2020). In this thesis,

we will refer to individuals born between 1993 and 2000 as Zennials (PYMNTS, 2023). The characteristics that are typical for Generation Y, Generation Z, and Zennials can be best described by the following picture:
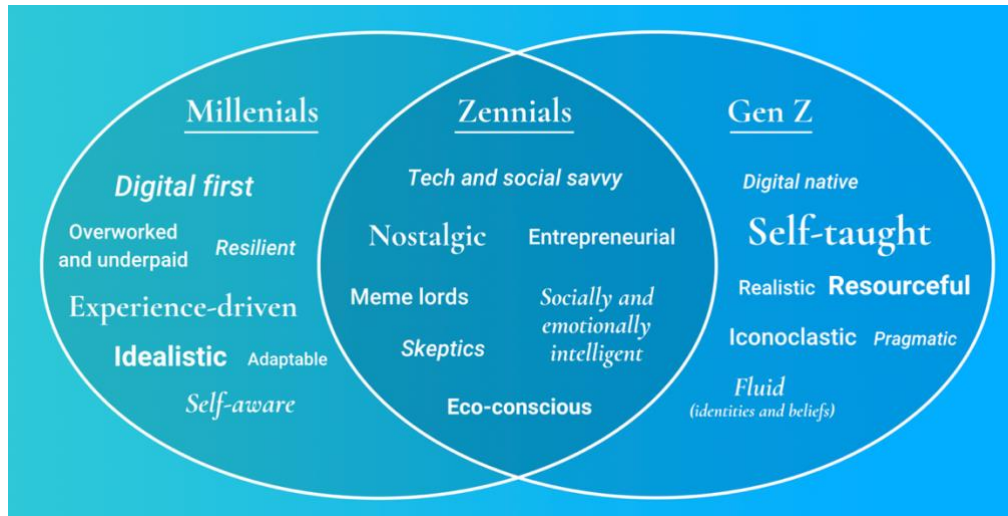
Figure 1.1. Differences and similarities of generations Y, Z, and Zennials
[Source: (WGSN, 2020)]

Zennials are the main users of social networks right now and are tech and social experts with high emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial mindset who value authenticity and work-life balance and are flexible pragmatics. Focusing on Zennials can be advantageous for businesses as it allows for a deeper understanding of their psyche, peculiar reactions to certain events, and behavior patterns. By studying both generations, businesses can conclude inherent patterns and choose more general messaging that can satisfy a larger number of customers. Additionally, this approach assists businesses in understanding the variety and disparity within the group and the connection between Generation Y and Generation Z. In other words, companies must understand Zennials and their links to both generations to deliver more effective marketing campaigns.

However, there is currently a lack of research and studies that focus on the borderline generations. This study aims to understand how Zennials' perception of and attitude to social networks in Russia has changed over time. To achieve this goal, the current situation in the Russian social networking market needs to be analyzed. This analysis is necessary to provide businesses with recommendations on how to act and continue to be successful in fulfilling clients' desires.

1.3. Current social media landscape in Russia.

To better analyze the current situation of the social media market in Russia we need to consider the previous practices common for the Russian market of social networks prior to February 2022, sequence of events that occurred in February- March of 2022, and following circumstances and changes in the Russian market of social networks.

The most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2022, ranked by number of monthly active users in millions are presented below:
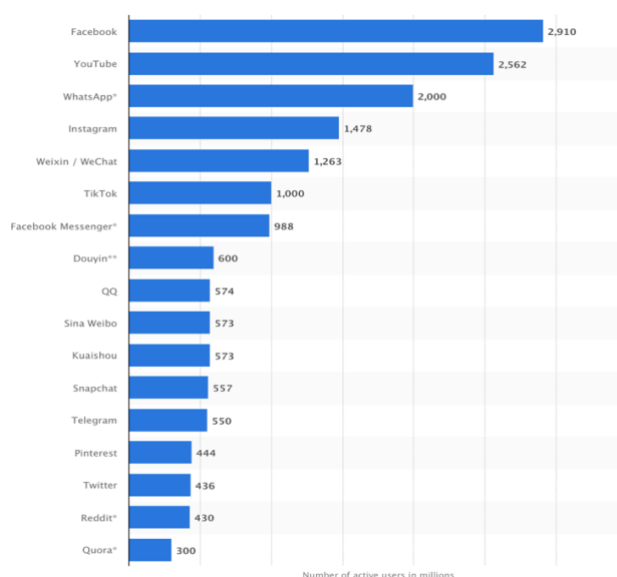
Figure 1.2. Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2022, ranked by number of monthly active users (in millions) [Source: (Statista, 2022)]

As for the Russian market in 2021 before any changes in social media, the leading social media platforms in Russia were WhatsApp (80.9% respondents' penetration), VK (76.4%), Instagram[3]* (63.7%), Telegram (50.8%), TikTok (46.6%), Odnoklassniki (45.1%), Viber (40.7%), Facebook* (30.3%), Skype (16.9%), Pinterest (13.8%), Facebook* Messenger (12.5%), Twitter* (11.7%), iMessage (10.3%), Discord (8.4%), Snapchat (8.2%) (Statista, 2022).

However, considering a chronological sequence of events such media platforms as Instagram*, Facebook*, TikTok, and Twitter* were blocked at the legislative level (Cossa, 2022):

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[3] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

- 24th of February – the beginning of the special military operation and the start trend of the growth activity in Telegram and VK and negative growth of Instagram[4]* and Facebook* activity.

- 4th of March - Twitter* and Facebook* were blocked at the request of Roskomnadzor. Google and YouTube have suspended the display and sales of contextual advertising in Russia.

- 5th of March - Meta* company has paused advertising on Instagram*.

- 6th March - TikTok has restricted its platform for users from Russia.

- 7th of March - ЯRUS and TenChat were ranked in the top of the most downloaded in Russia.

- 10th of March - YouTube has stopped all monetization functions for bloggers from Russia.

- 14th of March - Instagram* and TJournal were blocked at the request of Roskomnadzor.

- 21st of March – Meta* was recognized as an extremist organization.

Therefore, Twitter*, Facebook*, Instagram*, and TikTok stopped working in the territory of the Russian Federation. Such a policy affected the behavior of online social media users. The table below demonstrates the reduction of users from February 24 to March 15, 2022 (Statista, 2022).
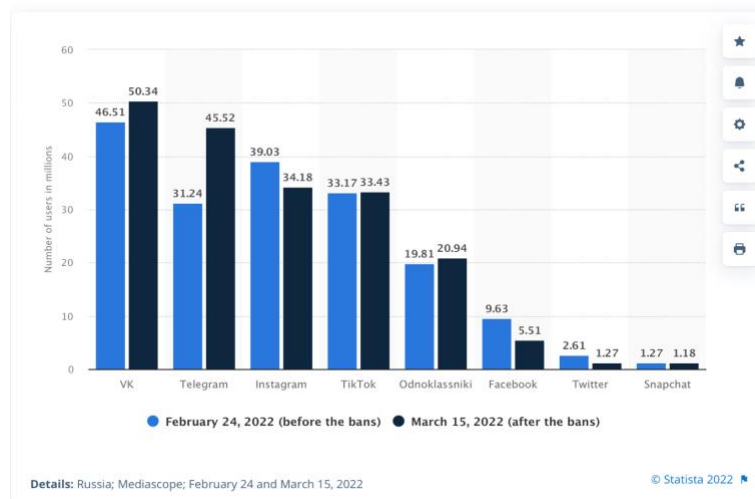
Figure 1.3. Daily users of social media before and after bans of Facebook*, Instagram*, and Twitter* in Russia on February 24 and March 15, 2022, by selected platforms (in millions) [Source: (Statista, 2022)]

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[4] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

Moreover, based on the data collected by Mediascope for Forbes, the daily audience of Facebook[5]* and Instagram* has decreased by 8 and 4 times respectively from January to July 2022. Mediascope calculated the data of Instagram* and Facebook* in two sections — considering sessions of any duration and considering sessions lasting from 5 minutes or longer. The first case also takes into account occasions when a consumer logs into Facebook* or Instagram* apps but logs out immediately because nothing works or updates due to the blocking.

Audience on Instagram* fell by 3.5 times from 37.8 million in February to 10.6 million in July. If we talk about sessions that lasted longer than 5 minutes, then the number of users decreased even faster here. From February to March, the audience fell by 41%, from 28.9 million to 16.9 million users, and from March to April it decreased almost three times — to 6 million people. By July, the average daily reach of the Instagram* mobile apps had dropped to 5.5 million. The audience of the Facebook* social networks decreased 4.7 times, from about 9 million users in February to 1.9 million in July. At the same time, 2.7 million people spent more than 5 minutes on the Facebook* app in February, and only 305,000 users in July (Forbes, 2022).

RBK agency provides the following information about the situation in the Russian market social media:
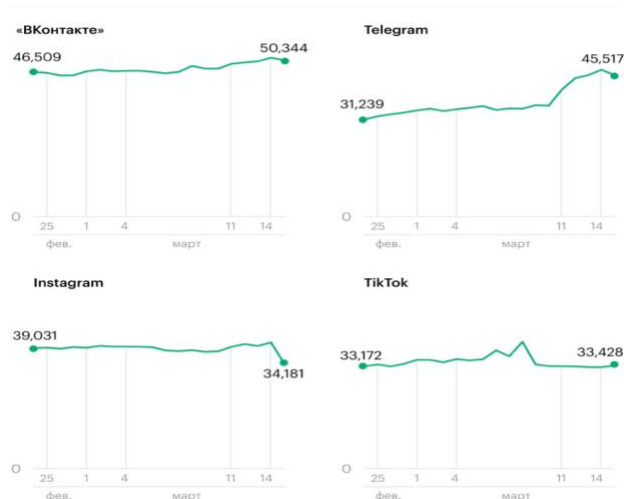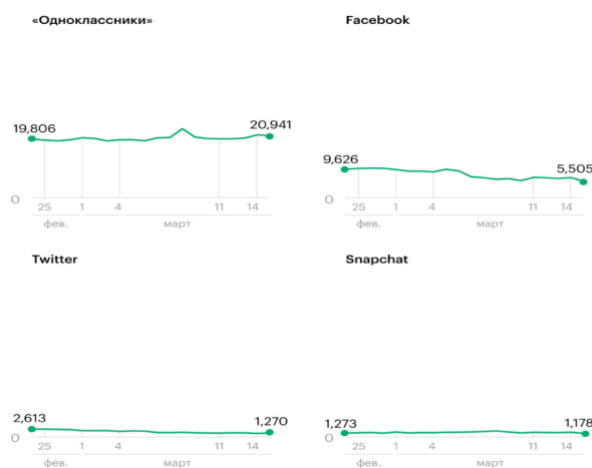
Fig. 1.4. Daily audience in Russia on mobile devices and desktops, in millions (people over 12 years old.) [Source: (RBK, 2022)]

There are social media platforms that benefited from the ban of some social networks. The most noticeable growth in the number of users occurred on the Telegram messenger: in six months, its audience grew by 66%, from 25 million in January to 41.5 million people per day in July. The audience of the VK has grown from 46 million people in January to 50 million in July, according to Mediascope data. But the growth of the social network's audience has slowed down significantly since March.

Chief Analyst of the Russian Association of Electronic Communications (RAEC) Karen Kazaryan states that it could have happened because in March 2022 the great influx of audience was due to the users who needed to promote their businesses, in other words, required VK for work. Rest users still preferred to follow banned media platforms through VPN (Forbes, 2022). Despite the slowdown of new audiences, the activity on VK increased. The time that users spend on this social network has increased by 7% from January to July 2022.

Therefore, in the Russian market, popular social media platforms used by millions of people have been banned, leading to significant audience shifts to other social media platforms.

1.4. Disconnection from social network worldwide

Great changes that occurred in the Russian market of social networking sites were unique for our country, however on a worldwide level such a scenario is not totally new. People from different countries experienced a disconnection from particular social networking sites.

For example, since 2009 Meta[6]*-owned Facebook* and Twitter* have been blocked in China. It was a part of the government's crackdown on activists after the mass riots in Xinjiang Province. In addition, WhatsApp and Instagram*, Meta*'s messaging, and photo- and video-sharing platforms were also blocked. In the same year (2009) Facebook* and Twitter* have been banned in Iran against the backdrop of disputed elections and mass protests limiting the opposition to the public government. In 2016 North Korea officially blocked Facebook* and Twitter*. The same social media platforms were banned in Turkmenistan. In 2020 the Indian government banned TikTok as a move of retaliation to clashes between Indian and Chinese forces at the Himalayan border. Finally, Twitter* was blocked in Nigeria due to the deletion of the Nigerian president's tweets and postponing his account (Time, 2022).

Blockage of popular social network platforms caused distinct reactions from end-users. While analyzing open sources and materials we can get examples of people's attitudes and opinions in a lot of many forums. For example, on the forum Web2asia the following comments can be found related to the ban of Twitter* and Facebook* in China in 2009 (Web2Asia, 2009):

- "I've got a VPN, so I don't have any problem with it".
- "I'm getting tired of having to work around internet sites. I want to be able to come home from work and talk to my son on Facebook*. Unfortunately, this is not an option anymore. Could someone please tell me if they have found a way to combat this? Thanks".
- "It's probably temporary and you don't have the emails/phone numbers of the people you contact on Facebook*? Well, that's unfortunate. "How do I keep in touch with friends???" You can call them, email them, IM them, send them a postcard, etc. Wow".

Another forum Quora demonstrates the following comments on the question "Do you think China has done the right thing blocking Facebook* in the country?" (Quora, 2020):

- "Absolutely right. Many Chinese have some doubts about blocking Facebook*, but most of them believe it is an absolutely right action…"
- "I don't know. I generally support freedom of information and more information rather than restricting the flow of information. At the same time, there are a lot of people that don't like Facebook* and think it should be banned…."
- "What can I say? Emmm. We, human beings, actually do not have absolute freedom. We do not have the freedom to kill other people if we wish to do that. And after all, our human nature has certain defects, for example, greed (which is also a major driving

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force to push us to develop.) We enjoy all the freedom we enjoy because our freedom is restricted. We are both restricted and protected by law…"

Therefore, practice shows different reactions of people to the separation from social networking sites.

Coming to fundamental studies done to analyze the user's reaction towards the ban of social networking sites, one should pay attention to the case of Meta[7]* company worldwide. There was an interesting case when three of Meta*'s most popular social media companies went down on October 4th of 2021. This failure caused a worldwide "outage" for 6-7 hours when billions of people were not able to access the social media accounts of Meta* company that include Facebook*, Instagram*, WhatsApp, and Messenger. During this lack of access, users experienced different levels of stress. Discomfort, annoyance, boredom, happiness, relief and feeling of separation from the world were just a plethora of feelings that occurred (Israeli Internet Report, 2022).

Due to the widespread usage of social networks, the shutdown caused shock, as it was both unexpected and unprecedented. This is why end-users could not prepare themselves for such a shutdown (Sismeiro C., Mahmood A., 2018). Because of this outage users flood across to other social media platforms (Massie G., 2021).

During this disconnection users experience different feelings. Eitan and Gazit conducted an online survey in two days following the shutdown to examine what was the emotional experience that end-users underwent. Based on the content analysis researchers pointed out 4 main feelings that were common to the users of social networks blocked.

Firstly, there was a group of people that felt anxious at first due to the unexpected shutdown but then realized that it's a problem worldwide and started just waiting till this issue will be resolved by the IT department of Meta* company. The second group of users had strongly negative feelings when they realized that they could not use their favorite social networks even for 6 hours. They felt disconnected from the entire world and all pivotal information that they could check through social networks. On top of it, this group was very worried that they are separated from their family members, friends, colleagues, and communities. The third kind of reaction was related to positive feelings. Respondents that answered in such a manner emphasized that they encountered the joy of missing out and were glad that at least today it wasn't necessary for them to scroll through social media. Finally, the

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fourth group stated indifference towards what was going on. Users reported neither good nor bad feelings. They were more apathetic (Eitan T., Gazit T., 2023).

A similar study was conducted by Shousha and Abdelgawad who examined the feelings experienced during the outage from the Egyptian perspective. The result of their online survey revealed 3 categories of feeling when 56.6% of respondents expressed boredom, frustration, and separation, 33.3% were relieved and mentioned feelings such as relaxation and comfort, and preserved this situation as an opportunity finally to have a break from social media usage and last but not least 10% stated that they didn't consider this accident as a universal problem and were ok with this (Shousha N. M., Abdelgawad L. R., 2021). Results in absolute values could be seen below:
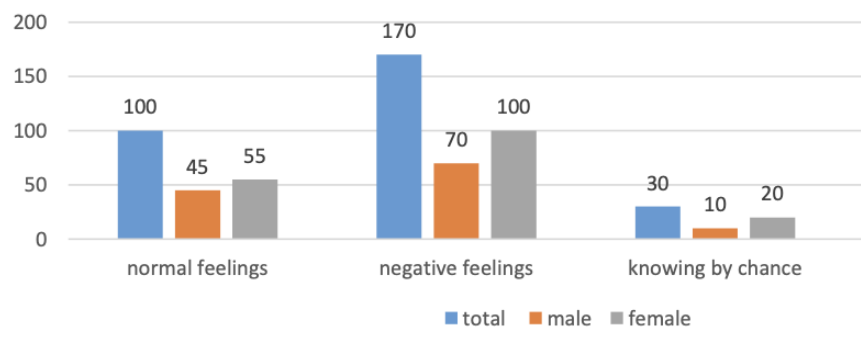
Figure 1.5. Feeling during the outage in 2021
[Source: (Shousha N. M., Abdelgawad L. R., 2021)]

Therefore, based on these studies described, we can see that there are different emotional reaction strategies that end-users can come up with while dealing with the block of distinct social networking sites. For the purpose of this study by emotional reaction strategies we will define the feeling that Russian end-users experienced and continue to experience right now due to the block of Instagram[8]*, Facebook*, and Tik-Tok social networking platforms. Conditions of each country and therefore each social media audience are so unique that to elaborate more on the actual emotional reaction strategies that were developed by the Russian end-users in the current situation, there is a need to conduct separate exploratory study to get insights into what people's feelings and therefore emotional reaction strategies chosen are. Exploratory study will be discussed in the next chapter.

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1.5. Determination of the research model

The current situation on social networking sites in the Russian market is characterized by the ban of some popular social media platforms that were used by millions of people and great shifts of audiences to different social media. As soon as VK is the social network with the largest audience in the Russian market and is the main alternative for users there is a need to look at this platform in more details.

The VK is a Russian social network headquartered in St. Petersburg, which was founded and officially registered in 2006 by Pavel Durov. This social network was created as an analogy to the social network Facebook[9]*.

Initially, it was possible to register here only by invitation, but soon registration opens for everyone. At the same time, an advertising campaign was launched to attract new users. The most active promoters were awarded prizes — Apple products: iPod video, iPod nano, and iPod shuffle (SMMX.ru, 2022). The detailed milestones in the development of VK could be found in Appendix 1. VK for the last couple of years has undergone tremendous changes in interface and functionality. Right now, VK is more like an ecosystem that includes such functions on its interface as my page, news, messenger, calls, friends, photos, music, video, clips, stories, games, advertising, mini-apps, VK pay, job, bookmarks, files, etc.

While choosing whether to stay on or shift to any social network, users assess their attitude to this platform. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, an individual's attitude towards a particular behavior is one of the most significant predictors of his or her intention to engage in that behavior. Attitude is a person's positive or negative feeling that is influenced by the convictions required for action (Mahmoud A.B., 2013). Attitude refers to the evaluation by an individual of how favorable or unfavorable an act is. Researchers Ajzen and Fishbein showed that attitude depends on an individual's beliefs and the evaluation of those beliefs (Ajzen I., Fishbein M., 1969). Attitude is also influenced by judgments of the ethicality of an act (Ellis T.S., Griffith D., 2000) and has its roots in people's characteristics and moral development (Kohlberg L, 1975).

Attitude is developed out of behavioral beliefs and subjective outcome evaluations (Ajzen I., 1991). Attitude is composed of instrumental and affective beliefs of performing the behavior (Ajzen I., Driver B.L., 1992). Instrumental beliefs about the behavior take into consideration the use or cost benefits of performing the behavior. Experiential or affective

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beliefs about the behavior take into consideration the emotional benefits of performing the behavior. In other words, behaviors can be considered important because of their perceived usefulness or because of their perceived enjoyment value. For the purpose of this study, the attitude was defined as a consumer's evaluation (positive or negative) towards VK social platform as the main alternative to banned social platforms. By the behavior we comprehend the intensity of engagement with VK based on the technographic scale that was developed by Center for Strategic Marketing and Innovations, GSOM (Center for Strategic Marketing and Innovations, 2018).

From an academic perspective, there is evidence to suggest that attitude towards social media can have a direct impact on the intensity of engagement with this social media. For example, Baker and White supported the classical theory of TPB that attitudes towards social media predict use of it (Baker R. K., White K. M., 2010). Group of researchers conducted a study based on the Facebook[10]* platform and proved the same (Raza S. A., Qazi W., Shah N., Qureshi M. A., Qaiser S., Ali R., 2020). Based on the TPB and previous studies the first hypothesis should be stated:

H1. Attitude towards the VK positively influences Intensity of Engagement with VK.

Any creator of a social media network has the desire to make his or her social platform the most attractive one. The task becomes even more challenging when a social network needs to retain followers. This requires continuous changes and updates in the interface, functionality, special features, and benefits that social platforms offer for their users. The more end-users are happy during engagement with social media, the more they are satisfied with it and therefore recommend it to others. Indeed, for a social network to thrive it is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage that motivates continuous use and consequently lead to great satisfaction. Thus, it seems necessary to add satisfaction with social networks into the model.

Customer satisfaction is one of the most studied concepts in marketing. It is defined by different researchers in distinct ways. It can be determined as the result of meeting the expectations of customers regarding the performance of the product or service and is determined by a comparison between previous expectations and impressions of what was gained by the client (Oliver R. L., 1980). He, Li, and Harris in 2012 defined customer satisfaction as the fit between the performance of the brand and customers' expectations (He H., Li Y., Harris L. 2012). Other explanations were proposed by Delgado- Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (Delgado-Ballester E., Munuera-Alemán J., 2001) and Schau, Muniz, and

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Arnould (Schau H., Muñiz A., Arnould E. (2009). They argued that customer satisfaction is related to brand trust. Liljander and Strandvik linked satisfaction with quality as these "have evolved along parallel tracks" (Liljander V., Strandvik T., 1992). Olsen and Johnson believed that customer satisfaction is a good predictor of the intentions and behavior of clients (Olsen L., Johnson M. (2003). At the same time Kotler stated that customer satisfaction is "the key to customer retention" (Kotler P., 1994).

Regardless of the definition, the customer is satisfied when the actual performance of something is at or even better than the client's expectations. Vice versa, when actual performance does not meet the consumer's expectation, the client will be unhappy, and he or she will spread negative experiences about the performance of something. Assessment of customer satisfaction is an emotion-based reaction that is cognitive and affective in nature (Oliver R. L., 1997). A pleasant state of satisfaction from such emotions as happiness, joy, and surprise is responsible for the affective component (Ha H. Y., Perks H., 2005), while an assessment of attributes and perceived effectiveness is responsible for cognitive one (Oliver R. L., Swan J. E., 1989).

Based on the previous research that stated satisfaction of the client is generally considered as an assessment after experiencing the purchase or the usage of some product or service proposed (Oliver R. L., 1981) we focus on satisfaction with social network VK after engagement with it. The use of social networks allows users to connect with friends, family, and like-minded individuals; share information, ideas, and experiences with others; entertain through videos, games, virtual events and so on.

All these activities, whether a user is having a positive experience or a negative one, can therefore lead to an increase or decrease in satisfaction level with this social networking platform. Engaging with social media is known to provide users with satisfaction, social support, and a sense of increased importance (Verswijvel K., Heirman W., Hardies K., Walrave M., 2018). However, behaviors such as a self-centered attitude or exaggerated behavior towards peers, for example, only seeking validation through "likes" or reacting negatively or not at all, can have a detrimental effect on user satisfaction (Moqbel M., Kock N., 2018).

A study conducted by Mican, Sitar-Taut and Mihut in 2020 aimed at empirically assess the link between the activities on social networks and the satisfaction with it through applying structural equation modeling proved that engaging in activities on social networking sites has been found to have a positive impact on the level of satisfaction. This suggests a direct correlation between the quantity of posts and comments and the level of satisfaction

experienced by users (Mican D., Sitar-Taut D.A., Mihut I.S., 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2. Intensity of Engagement with VK influences Satisfaction with VK.

Thus, the level of satisfaction with social media networking is crucial for the survival of the social media platform. If social media users perceive a social networking site as being useful and interesting then they are more likely to be satisfied with it (Kang Y. S., Lee H., 2010). According to prior research, attitude has a significant impact on satisfaction. For instance, Hunt conceptualizes attitude as an emotion and satisfaction as the assessment of that emotion (Hunt K.H., 1977). Similarly, Oliver proposes that satisfaction is an evaluation of attitudes formed before the act of consumption (Oliver R.L., 1980, 1981).

Recent study done by Curras-Perez, Ruiz-Mafe, and Sanz-Blas demonstrated that attitude is a crucial factor in enhancing satisfaction. A study was conducted to examine the relationship between the uses and gratifications of social networking sites, attitude, perceived risks, satisfaction, and social networking site loyalty, using structural equation modeling. The sample was comprised of 811 Spanish social networking site users who participated in a personal survey (Curras-Perez R., Ruiz-Mafe C., Sanz-Blas S., 2013). Based on this literature, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

H3. Intensity of Engagement with VK mediates the relationship between Attitude towards the VK and Satisfaction with the VK.

H4. Attitude towards the VK positively influences Satisfaction with the VK.

The context of the current situation in the Russian market of social networks leads to the necessity to add extra variable. The blockage of Instagram[11]* and Facebook* was perceived by end-users differently:
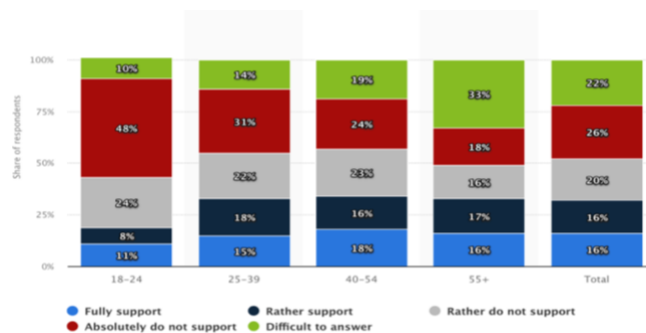
Figure 1.6. What is your opinion on the blocking of social media platforms Facebook* and Instagram*? [Source: (Statista, 2022)]

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Based on these statistics we can see that users expressed different opinions related to the ban. Therefore, in the Russian market of social media there is a high influence of the blockage of Instagram[12]*, Facebook*, Twitter*, and TikTok on attitude towards remaining social networks on Russian market. In such circumstances, it can be proposed that the change in the attitude towards, intensity of engagement with, and satisfaction with domestic social media sites and especially VK occurred. The great shift of audience affected the end-users' minds, indifferently, whether they shifted to VK or were already there and met "newcomers" with a different set of behavior patterns, beliefs, personal opinions, and views or outlooks. As soon as there is no academic proof for it currently several propositions could be formulated:

P1. Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban will influence the attitude towards the VK.

P2. Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban will influence the intensity of engagement with VK.

P3. Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban will influence the satisfaction with the VK.

To understand whether our propositions make sense it was decided to conduct qualitative study 1. For now, model looking as following:
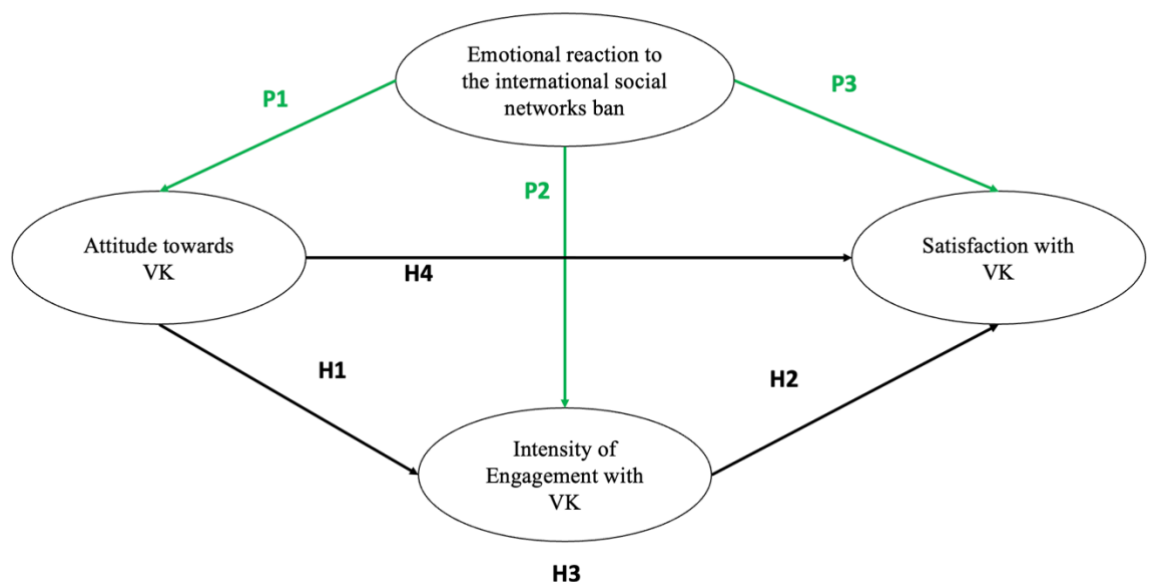
Figure 1. 7 Initial model of the master thesis

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Summary of the chapter 1

This chapter discussed the definition and the role of social networking sites in the life of end-users, businesses, and marketing overall as well as the emotional attachment towards social media platforms. The target audience of social networks is described and the choice of Zennials micro-generation is explained. The examples of restrictions of distinctive social media sites in different countries and worldwide based on the instance of a Meta[13]* outage in October 2021 were provided as a benchmark to the potential emotional reaction strategies existing. A detailed analysis of the current social media landscape in Russia was done as well as the choice of VK platform was clarified.

Finally, the theoretical framework was discussed. The main theoretical foundations of the research were considered in detail, which will be implemented in the development of the research design in the future. Hypotheses formulation and model creation were implicated.

Chapter 2 will emphasize the research plan of the current study, as well as the description of the research methods applied. A guide for in-depth interviews and an online questionnaire will be developed and elaborated, and the data collection process will be explained and discussed.

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Chapter 2. RESEARCH DESIGN DEVELOPMENT AND DATA COLLECTION PROCESS DESCRIPTION

2.1. Determination of research design

Nowadays, it's impossible to imagine a human's life without social networking platforms. The current situation in the Russian social media market leads to the necessity to rethink how social media platforms as well as companies that are presented there should communicate with the target audience. For now, there are not a lot of studies regarding this topic. In addition, the knowledge was not systemized, and it should be taken into account when the development of the research design.

Moreover, while choosing the research design it's important to be clear with the overall goal of the study. There are three basic goals that can be followed: explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive (Saunders M. NK., 2009). An explanatory study is generally chosen for the aim of casual relationship determination among multiple variables and is usually applied through quantitative methods. The exploratory study follows the purpose of identification of what is going on by asking questions. It intends to look at the problem from distinctive perspectives in order to figure out its nature. Finally, the descriptive study focuses on providing an accurate description of different events, environments, or people (Robson C., 2002).

This master thesis is exploratory research as it studies the new outlook of the Zennials' attitude to social networks in Russia in the current situation.

The empirical study is performed in a mixed format and consists of a qualitative (study 1) and a quantitative study (study 2).

The qualitative study of empirical research targets to determine the respondents' emotional reaction strategies towards the ban of some popular social networking platforms and investigate how the ban influenced them. In addition, one of the tasks of in-depth interviews was to figure out the motives of respondents to stay or shift to another social network after the ban. This method was chosen because it allows us to identify the main emotional reaction strategies, which in turn makes it possible to formulate hypotheses about how the user's attitude towards the VK, intensity of engagement with VK, and satisfaction with VK were influenced based on the emotional reaction strategies. The structure of the questionnaire for the qualitative method is represented by open questions.

The quantitative study aimed to determine the patterns of behavior in social media in general and identification of the attitude towards the VK platform, intensity of engagement

with the VK platform, and the level of satisfaction with this social networking site as the most used one particularly. Also, a quantitative study will allow us to measure these changes after the ban of Facebook[14]*, Instagram*, TikTok, and Twitter*. This method is an online survey, the results of which have been analyzed and discussed. The structure of the questionnaire for the quantitative method is represented by open and closed questions.

2.2. Determination of data collection methods

It is pivotal to consider the approach to data collection that best fits the means of research, taking into account the design of the study and the research method mentioned above.

In this study, data was collected from the sample and not the entire population. It was done because of several reasons. The first reason relates to the impracticability of survey conduction on the entire population. The second and third ones are the budget and time limitations correspondingly (Saunders M. NK., 2009). The sampling techniques are divided into two main types – probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is used when there are equal and known probabilities for cases to be selected from the entire population. Particularly in this research, there were no resources to define the probabilities required and therefore non-probability sampling was applied. Non-probability sampling is used when the probabilities for cases to be selected from the entire population are unknown. This technique makes it possible to generalize the findings gained by using statistical procedures. In business research non-probability techniques are applied a lot because it's very rarely possible to collect the data from the whole segment studied (Smith S.M, 2005).

5 main non-probability sampling techniques could be potentially chosen. Quota, self-selection, and purposive sampling techniques were not used because they don't correspond to the budget constraints of the research and tend to be biased since data is collected from the respondents who wanted to participate in the study. Therefore, the last two types named convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used. With convenience sampling, we can use the respondents, who can be easily reached. The idea of snowball sampling lies in direct contact with respondents, who are then asked to distribute research to the people they know (Malhotra, 2002).

Such techniques have several advantages. First of all, they are the fastest and the most resource-saving methods to obtain data. Secondly, snowball sampling often enables us to invite

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the right people. For example, in the case of research on the attitude to social media in Russia, respondents might know that their friends have positive or negative feelings towards the ban on Instagram[15]*, Facebook*, Twitter*, and TikTok and therefore, can resend this survey to people with similar views to increase a sample with the target audience. Finally, these techniques will make it possible to reach the sample purposely and gain results from the hard-to-reach respondents.

According to the Data Report from 13 February 2023, there are 106 million social media users in Russia (DataReport, 2023). 91.5 million of them are of the age 18 and above with 54.8 % being females and 45.2%– being males. Of the entire Russian population, 20.2% are people aged from 18 to 34 which is broadly applicable to the Zennials micro-generation. Therefore, by determining the sample size using a fraction we can conclude that 250 respondents should be taken into account (Malhotra, 2002).

CNews- the largest high—tech publication in Russia and the CIS countries provide the following statistics on the Russian market of social media (C.News, 2023):

- 40% of Russians stopped using blocked social networks for principal reasons.
- 30% of Russians stopped visiting Instagram* and Facebook* due to the need to open VPNs.
- 5% of Russians were afraid of using Instagram* and Facebook* because they had a fear that it would be considered illegal.
- 25% of Russians continued to use the banned platforms through VPN.

In addition, the influx of new users of "sovereign" sites can be estimated at 4%. This number indicates how many people decided to try domestic services after the blockage of familiar platforms. 4% also stated their reluctance to use Russian platforms. These people never used and showed no inclination to use domestic sites.

2.3. Qualitative study

For study 1 In-depth interviews were chosen as a data collection method for the qualitative study. The semi-structured interviews of media users' Zennials were conducted. Such type of data collection was considered because semi-structured interviews provide more flexibility with the data collection. They are not totally formed in advance, which allows more space for exploring the opinions and ideas of participants during the interviews. Restrictions

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on the level of income, educational level, and other characteristics of the respondent were not set.

In-depth interviews were conducted in July and August 2022 and aimed at understanding the overall picture of the Russian market of social networks. The detailed sample of the questions can be seen in the Appendix 2. Based on the information that needed to be obtained, a guide for an in-depth interview was developed consisting of 5 blocks:

Table 2.1. In-depth interview questions division into topics

Topic of the interview	№ of questions
General information about respondents and their usage of social networks	7
Current usage of social networks	6
Consumer experience of social networks	1
Social networks usage before March 2022 and feelings associated with the ban	4
Attitude towards social networks	2

It is necessary to mention that questions were asked in the open form that later allowed to use some insights from the interviews in the online survey questions formulation.

2.3.1. Sample base for the study 1

The participants were selected based on their age and gender as well as on their personal desire to take part in the semi-structured interview. A total of 16 respondents took part in the in-depth interview, 8 from each gender. The majority of Zennials participating are Passive users that do not publish posts, stories, or photos too frequently. In addition, they do not see any reason to close accounts as social networks that they are using have the option to publish some content only to friends or limit the ability of others to send direct messages. The average time spent by respondents on social networks is 2 and 3 hours, correspondingly.

A brief demographic structure of respondents is presented below in the table:

Table 2.2. Demographic structure of interview respondents

Number	Year of birth	Gender	User type	Account type	Time spent (h)
1	1994	Female	Active	Open	3-4
2	1992	Male	Passive	Open	1
3	1992	Female	Active	Open	1-2
4	1995	Female	Active	Closed	2-3
5	1992	Female	Passive	Open	1
6	1995	Male	Passive	Open	1,5-2,5
7	1992	Male	Passive	Open	1-2
8	1996	Male	Passive	Open	5-6
9	1999	Female	Passive	Closed	3-4
10	1998	Female	Active	Open	2-3,5
11	1999	Female	Passive	Open	1-2
12	1999	Female	Passive	Open	1-2
13	2000	Male	Passive	Open	3
14	2000	Male	Passive	Open	3-4
15	2000	Male	Passive	Closed	5-6
16	1997	Male	Active	Open	4

Interviews were conducted through MS Teams, Telegram, audio-calls and were recorded with the respondent's permission. Interviews were recorded in such a way to make it possible to create transcripts and analyze answers. The transcripts were studied with attention to all details to determine insights and patterns of respondents' usage of social networks.

2.3.2. Results of the study 1

Qualitative data was analyzed by applying thematic analysis. This is an approach through which themes are defined by carefully reviewing the data and identifying recurring patterns in the meaning of the data (Kiger M. E., Varpio L., 2020). After getting familiar with the data through transcripts' reading a Qualitative codebook was created and main results in table form can be found in Appendix 3. More detailed analysis is presented below:

Theme: Social Network Usage

Codes: Current Social Network Usage, Past Social Network Usage

One of the tasks of the qualitative research was to identify which social media platforms are currently in use. VK and Telegram were the two social networks that were named the most. 9 out of 16 Zennials are currently using Instagram[16]* and 5 participants used it before but stopped after March 2022.

Theme: Reasons to Follow Social Networks

Code: Reasons for Social Network Usage

In-depth interviews also revealed what respondents use social networks for. The main reason was communication. Some respondents even pointed out that they follow some social networks only because of certain people who are not following other social networks. If not, respondents, probably, would drop out of social media: *"Mostly, I use social networks for communication and entertainment…. For me it's important to follow Instagram*, because there are people who don't follow any other social media and I want to be aware of what is going on in their lives".*

The second most answered reason was the source of information. Almost all respondents right now are following Telegram to get more information about the current situation in the world. However, it should be mentioned that some respondents for the same reason use Instagram* as a source of an alternative point of view on the same event. Here the point of trust is under question. *"Nowadays, I follow Telegram the most because it has important for me news channels. I am subscribed to at least 5 such news channels for my region and all-over Russia".*

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The third reason for using social media is time passing. Post scrolling, subscription to some interesting accounts, memes, funny videos watching, and playing games are activities that respondents do the most. *"I love to scroll posts and videos on Instagram[17]*. For me it works as a relaxation after long day full of routine. In addition, I can look thorough cafeterias and other cafes and Instagram* gives me picture that displays reality the most accurately"*.

Finally, professional content and job necessity were also reasons for respondents to follow some social networks, as some participants of in-depth interview were promoting their business through Instagram* or have job communication through VK. *"As for VK, I use it exclusively for work, that is, all working moments occur there"*.

<u>Code: Reasons to Use Particular Social Network</u>

The qualitative study assisted in the identification of features and characteristics that attract users to subscribe to particular social networks.

VK attracts respondents because there are a lot of people and personal contacts that are important and unique for only this social network. VK is also liked because of the music presented here. In addition, respondents used VK for the longest period and it became a habit. Participants feel some inner connection with VK, even if they do not like the interface, ads, and a lot many other features. *"VK became as a habit for me. I feel some special bonding with it and do not want to leave it, because it has a lot of important memories for me"*.

Telegram interests Zennials with its interface and special formats. Video in circles and a unique set of gifs were the top answers collected. *"I really love Telegram for its video in circles and unique set of gifs. Also, it's very easy to navigate here, because you van have separate chats, folders, and so on"*. However, some of the respondents (mainly the youngest representatives of Generation Y) do not fully understand the functions of Telegram. They find it difficult to share messages or leave comments. Therefore, most of the youngest Millennials only subscribed to some news channels without active participation and use of this entire functionality. *"Sometimes I don't even understand how to leave comments and whether I can do it on Telegram. On VK and Instagram* it's easier and more intuitively understandable"*.

Instagram* fascinates female Zennials with its design, easiness of posting, story creation and new format of reels. *"Stories and reels are my personal love on Instagram*. I also like how space there is organized, and I can post something without some specific knowledge of photography, photoshop and so on"*. At the same time, male participants find little practical usefulness in Instagram*. They are presented on Instagram*, however, post something very

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rare and follow Instagram[18]* in many cases only to be aware of what is going on there. *"I am following Instagram* without major enthusiasm, but rather because I would like to not be out of information. I like to be aware of what is going on there"*.

Facebook* is used only by 4 participants. Respondents didn't show any attraction to this social network. The reasons to follow it drastically differ from answer to the answer. Participants follow Facebook* because of unique pages that are not found anywhere else, games, the desire to follow each popular social network, and the necessity to have an account because of studying. For example: *"I use Facebook* primary to have an account to register on other websites"*.

Theme: Bloggers and Influencers
Code: Following Bloggers and Influencers

There were only 4 respondents who follow any bloggers. Instagram* was named the social network number one when it comes to following bloggers. After the ban on social media in March 2022 a lot of respondents' bloggers shifted to Telegram and participants of the in-depth interview continue to follow them there. *"My favorite blogger is "Katya. Pharmacist." She used to be on Instagram*, and then she switched to Telegram and now I'm following her in Telegram"*.

Theme: Difficulties to Use Social Network
Code: Difficulties in Social Network Use

Respondents who follow domestic social networks did not demonstrate any difficulties in social network usage, even though they were dissatisfied with some features of Russian social media platform. But participants, who currently also use banned social networks stated that they have troubles due to necessity to constantly switch on VPN. They mentioned that VPN apps consume a lot of data, work properly only for a short period (1-2 entrances and then you must download a new app), create problems with mobile phones functioning (inability to get income calls, problems with the usage of other apps) *"I used to forget to switch off VPN and as a result my relatives could not call me. It creates a lot of inconvenience for me. This is why now I rare visit Instagram*"*.

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Theme: Role of Social Network

Code: Role of Social Network in Life

It was determined that for 6 out of 8 youngest Millennials social networks play a secondary role in their life, while 6 out of 8 oldest Zoomers showed deep affection for social media platforms. The last group cannot imagine their mornings and evenings without social networks. *"I understand that I have a bad habit of scrolling news feed every morning and every evening but cannot resist to do it".*

Theme: Evolution of Social Network Usage

Code: Behavioral Pattern to Switch to New Social Network

Consumer's evolution of social network usage looks almost identical from one answer to another. Respondents in many cases started their journey on social networks from "Moyi Mir" and then shifted to VK. Afterwards, participants of an in-depth interview subscribed to Instagram[19]*. The choice of any social media shift was dictated by the popularity of social networks at some point in time. The phenomenon occurred - where everyone, there I should be. The primary motivation was to skip none of the important information and be modern. *"My first social network was "Moyi Mir". Then around 2006 I shifted to VK, because it was very popular that time. Afterwards, all my friends started to speak about Instagram*, and I decided to also register there even though initially I was quite skeptical about it".*

Theme: Social Network After the Ban

<u>*Code: Influence of Social Network Ban*</u>

2 participants didn't use Instagram* before March 2022, they deleted it earlier for reasons that have nothing to do with the ban of this social network and therefore they didn't answer this block of questions. Zennials expressed the following attitudes to the current ban on Instagram* (as social media that they named as the mainly used of those that are currently banned):

- 3 respondents were indifferent to the ban and stopped following Instagram* without any difficulties, - *"I stopped following Instagram without any difficulties and regrets, because I have active civil position".*
- 3 respondents – showed complete indifference to the ban, but they still use Instagram*, - *"I stopped any activities on Instagram*, because I was not so active there prior to*

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ban. This is why for me everything went painless. But I still have an account and if ban will be canceled, I will use it".

- 3 respondents – were sad, had some nostalgic feelings and the desire to return for 1-2 weeks just right after the ban, however completely shifted to another social network, - *"For the first two weeks I thought that it is goanna change and Instagram* will work, but then I realized that this situation will be for long time. It made me sad, but I decided to shift to domestic social networks. At the end of the day Russia VK that fully satisfies my needs".*

- 3- have a nostalgic feeling, the desire to return everything how it was, and still follow Instagram* despite any inconveniences, - *"I still use Instagram[20]*. This situation with the ban was sad for me and I have a desire to return everything how it was previously. Probably this is why I still occasionally log in to Instagram*".*

- 1 – feels relief, the person still uses Instagram*, but understood that without regular Instagram* following, one gets more time for more useful stuff in life, - *"I am very much happy that finally get rid of Instagram*, because for me it started to become as an obsession. Right now, I feel much better and believe that I even have more hours in a day".*

- 3- Feel anger, disappointment, frustration, and desire to find any means, but be able to use Instagram*, - *"Anger, frustration, disappointment, and what not I feel due to the ban. I am completely disagreeing with this restriction. I noticed that my desire to open Instagram* became even more".*

Code: Usage of Banned Social Networks

Based on the current usage or not of banned social networks respondents got one out of two questions:

- Why do you still use banned social networks even with the difficulties to enter?
- Why did you stop the usage of banned social networks? Did you delete or not banned social network accounts and why?

9 Zennials still use banned social networks because of 2 reasons:

- To find out how things are and share some information with people who don't sit on any other networks, but on Instagram*, - *"My sister use only Instagram*. If I would like to get to know how she is doing I need to follow Instagram*".*

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- To know alternative views on the same events that are discussed in different social networks, - *"I want to know different opinions that exist. I don't want to get only one side of the story. This is why I follow both Russian and International social networks"*.

5 Zennials stopped the usage of banned social networks because of 2 reasons:

- Active civil position and have no desire to use something illegal, - *"I do not want to be involved in any illegal stuff. For me it is more comfortable to not follow Instagram*. Also, I did not use it a lot even when it was legal"*.

- Inconvenience to switch on VPN every time, - *"I tried for several weeks to switch on and off VPN, but it is too cumbersome, especially because I always forget to switch it off. Therefore, I decided to stop my usage of Instagram[21]*"*.

At the same time, only 1 respondent from the youngest representatives of Generation Y completely deleted the Instagram* account and app, while others deleted only the app. The reasons for this were named as:

- *"I didn't think about it. I thought it is enough to delete only the app"*,

- *"I do not exclude the possibility that in the future Instagram* account will be useful to me for communication and information. And it will be difficult to create a new account. Therefore, let it hang as active"*,

- *"I didn't even know that it (Instagram* account) could be deleted. I have deleted the app and that's enough for me"*,

- *"I am too lazy to also delete an account. I deleted the app, and this is enough"*.

Code: Influence of Ban on Social Network Development

All respondents emphasized that a lot of people shifted from Instagram* to VK and Telegram. This phenomenon created the situation when from one side users bum on VK and Telegram forced these social platforms to develop some new features- stories and clips on VK, gifs and circle videos on Telegram. *"I don't know whether it is not or previously it also was the case, but VK copied a lot of features that are there on Instagram*. Before the ban I never came across to it"*.

From another – even though Instagram* is still functioning, respondents find less interesting content for themselves (they also stated that the frequency of posts and publishing drastically decreased). *"The other reason why I don't visit frequently on Instagram* is due to decrease of interesting content. A lot of people shifted to VK and Telegram and started to post there. Instagram* is still alive, but it is not as interesting as it was before"*.

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Theme: Ideal Social Network

Code: Features of Ideal Social Network

The description of the ideal social network revealed two interesting trends. Half of the youngest respondents of Generation Y (3 males and 1 female) named VK as an ideal social network. Another half (3 females and 1 male) believe that the combination of Instagram* and VK is the perfect mix of social networks. The oldest representatives of Generation Z differ in their opinions about the ideal social network:

- 2 respondents named VK as an ideal social platform (1 female and 1 male),
- 2 respondents named Telegram as an ideal social platform (1 female and 1 male),
- 2 respondents named the combination of Telegram and VK as an ideal social platform (1 female and 1 male),
- 1 respondent named the combination of Instagram[22]* and VK as an ideal social platform (1 female),
- 1 respondent named the combination of Instagram*, Telegram, and VK as an ideal social platform (1 male).

Overall respondents' opinion can be sum up as following: *"I would like to have combination of VK, Instagram*, and Telegram in my ideal social network. All visual designs I will take from Instagram*, form VK I will take music and people with whom I interact the most, finally, Telegram I love for video circles and ability to create separate folders and chats and hide them"*.

To conclude, semi-structured interviews helped understand the current feelings that Zennials experience due to the ban of Instagram*, Facebook*, Twitter*, and TikTok and identify the reasons to continue or stop usage of international social networks. With the findings from qualitative study and previous studies regarding Meta* outage in 2021 and statistics from Statista website following can be hypothesized:

H5. Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban will influence the attitude towards the VK.

H6. Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban will influence the intensity of engagement with VK.

H7. Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban will influence the satisfaction with the VK.

Final model looking as following:

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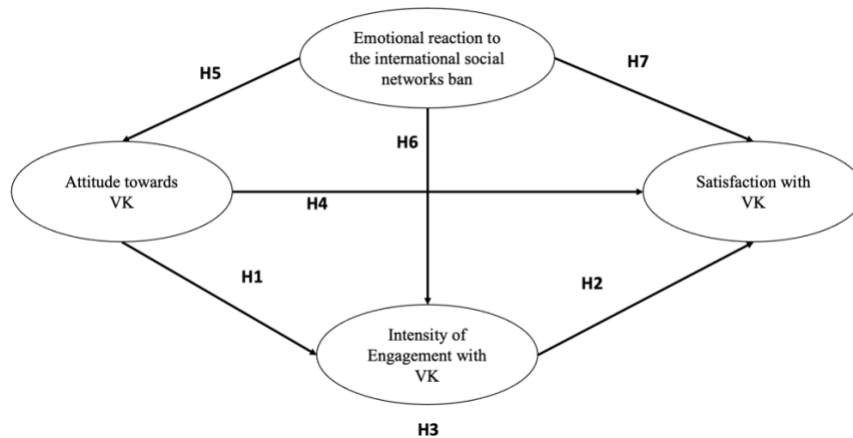
Figure 2.1 Final model of the master thesis

Based on these insights the survey for the quantitative study was formulated where Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban, attitude towards, intensity of engagement, and satisfaction with VK as the main alternative for blocked social networks were statistically checked.

2.4. Quantitative study

An online survey was chosen for data collection of the quantitative study. The survey was developed based on the results of the in-depth interviews (including a list of the most popular media platforms and emotional reaction strategies towards the ban of some popular social networking sites) and the results of the literature review (including elements of the Theory of Planned Behavior and satisfaction with social media platforms). The survey was organized so that it was possible to define variables for the SEM analysis and check the changes in the behavior on the social media platforms of Zennials.

Considering the theme of the study it was decided to use online channels to distribute the questionnaire. Firstly, as this research deals with social media it was easy to approach the target audience there. Secondly, an online survey gives great flexibility for designer and respondent-friendly questionnaire creation ability.

VK and Telegram social networks were used as the main channels of distribution among target samples due to their great popularity in the current situation in the Russian market social media. On VK the link with the survey was left on the personal account. Also, on VK and Telegram private messaging was conducted. The questionnaire was formulated in Russian and created through Google Forms software. As the author is a native Russian speaker there was

no requirement to use an extra person to estimate the comprehension of questions, however, the pilot study was conducted that included 5 females and 5 males of Zennials. Based on this some corrections in wording and better framing of questions were done.

The final version of the survey consisted of 10 different parts, in more detail presented in Appendix 4. Each section consists of a particular set of questions united by a common subject. At the same time logically, there was a question that divided users into two groups – users and non-users of the VK platform. Based on this division some questions were skipped by the respondents of the survey. The structure of the questionnaire is presented below:

Table 2.3. Structure of the online survey

Part №	Subject of the questions	Number of the question
Part 1	Questions related to use of social media platform before March 2022	5 (1 scale matrix)
Part 2	Questions related to the attitude towards the mostly used social platform before March 2022	2 (1 scale matrix)
Part 3	Questions related to the attitude to the ban of the mostly used social platform before March 2022	3
Part 4	Questions related to the use of social media platforms now	3
Part 5	Questions related to the users of VK platform and their attitude towards VK platform	1 (scale matrix)
Part 6	Questions related to the users of VK platform and their intensity of engagement with VK platform	1 (scale matrix)
Part 7	Questions related to the users of VK platform and their satisfaction with VK platform	5
Part 8	Questions related to the non-users of VK platform and the reasons of their dissatisfaction	4

Part 9	Question related to the general use of social networks	3 (scale matrix)
Part 10	Questions related to the demographic characteristics	8

The first part of the questionnaire was related to the use of social media platforms before March 2022. Respondents were asked to point out all social media that they used before March 2022, determine one of them that was their main social network, and identify the one from the banned social media right now that they used the most actively. Also, participants of the survey stated how they used the currently banned social media platform before March 2022 and how this use changed after March 2022.

The second part contained a set of questions related to the attitude towards the mostly used social platforms before March 2022. Here, respondents were asked how much they agree or disagree with the statements regarding the social media platform that they used the most actively before March 2022.

The third part of the questionnaire aimed to detect the actual behavior of respondents in the situation of banning social platforms that they used the most intensively before March 2022. These questions were directed to define the feelings of respondents and identify their reaction strategies towards the situation on the Russian social media platform's market.

The fourth part is related to the current use of social media platforms. Respondents named social networking platforms that they are using now, stated one that they use the most right now, and answered "yes" or "no" to the question about their usage of the VK platform. After this question participants were directed to the different block of questions for users and non-users of the VK platform.

The users of the VK platform answered the fifth, sixth, and seventh parts of the questionnaire. The fifth part aimed to figure out the actual attitude of VK users to the VK platform. The sixth part was devoted to the determination of how much VK users are active on this social media, whether they participate through a personal blog or regular posting, or just prefer to be passive and consume the content of others. The seventh part included questions that were evaluated to the satisfaction of the VK platforms. Respondents evaluated their general level of satisfaction with the VK platform, as well as pointed out features that they are completely unsatisfied with or satisfied with. Moreover, the question about why and with what you are not satisfied was also included in the questionnaire in the form of an open question.

The non-users of the VK platform answered the eighth part of the questionnaire. They were asked about the reason why they are not following the VK platform and why they are

dissatisfied with it in the form of open-ended questions. In addition, it was proposed to choose the features that they are not pleased with on the VK platform. Also, the question of what will prompt respondents to use the VK platform was included to be able to see the area of potential development of this social networking site.

The ninth part of the survey was included to see how respondents interact with content, communicate with other end-users, and collaborate with companies and businesses in social media.

Finally, the survey contained socio-demographic questions. It consisted of 8 basic questions: gender, age, residence, educational degree, income level, time spent on social networks, the purpose of using social networks, and means of social networks usage.

The final version of the questionnaire consisted of many questions, and it took a lot of time to complete. To overcome this difficulty, it was decided to survey an informal dialogue form. Since the target audience of respondents includes Zennials it was decided to build a dialogue in the form of an informal chat. In other words, between the blocks of questions, the survey contained words and phrases that created a sense of informal chat between the researcher and the respondent. For example, phrases such as "Let's talk about your current use of social networking sites". Also, a special space for email was added at the end of the survey to receive the results of the study. To prompt Zennials to participate in the survey it was decided to create 3 rewards for participants of the survey.

2.5. Data analysis method

In this research the structural equation modeling (SEM) approach was implemented. This data analysis method is widely used in advanced marketing research since it allows one to consider complex cause-effect relationships between constructs in the model simultaneously (Ashman R., Patterson A., 2015). It is not only popular among scientists, but also recognized as a highly developed method of analysis. This method has clear recommendations that lead to a thorough and reliable analysis of quantitative models.

SEM is a combination of path models and confirmation factors. Therefore, this technique makes it possible to extract factors from multiple scales and then find relationships among those factors to build a predictive or explanatory model. This method makes possible the combination of psychometric and econometric analyses while maintaining the best characteristics of both approaches.

There are the following reasons for choosing this approach in the current research:

- We are dealing with latent constructs in the model. Therefore, each construct consists of several dimensions and cannot be measured directly (Steenkamp J. B., Baumgartner H., 2000),

- Relationships among constructs are complex and are tested all at the same time (Ashman R., Patterson A., 2015),

- The purpose of the model's creation lies in the explanation of marketing phenomena, not in specific outcomes' prediction (Steenkamp J. B., Baumgartner H., 2000),

- Many studies examine attitude, use, and satisfaction with particular social networks through the SEM approach that was discussed in Chapter 1.

Thus, it is reasonable to use the SEM method, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in particular. This method is used due to its relative ease and less constraining assumptions instead of covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) (Hair J., Risher J., Sarstedt M., Ringle C., 2019). The benefits of PLS-SEM are (Hair J. F., Hult G. T. M., Ringle C. M., Sarstedt M., 2021):

- It is more suitable for exploratory research,

- It provides the researcher with the ability to work with much smaller sample sizes than the ones necessary for CB-SEM,

- It makes it possible to work with the complex model including many different constructs and multiple model relationships with latent variables,

- It is the better alternative for non-normal data,

- It includes reflective and formative constructs.

Therefore, the PLS-SEM approach is implemented in the study due to the exploratory nature of research, relevant complexity of the model (it includes several constructs), small sample size, and lack of normal distribution of data. This analysis will be performed using special software SMART-PLS4. The final model will be described in Chapter 3.

Summary of Chapter 2

The research methods applied in the study were discussed in this chapter. A mixed research method was implemented in the study. The in-depth semi-structured interview was selected as the first stage of the qualitative study. The goal was to classify the feelings of respondents associated with the ban of some popular social networking sites, as well as to create typical emotional reaction strategies adopted by end-users based on the current situation in the Russian social media platform's market. The online survey was chosen as a quantitative

research method to gain data from end-users of social networking sites about their attitude towards the VK, intensity of engagement with VK, satisfaction with VK, and technographic characteristics that will be different depending on the emotional reaction strategy chosen and followed.

The process of developing a guide for in-depth interviews and an online survey for quantitative research was reported in detail. The data collection process and the channels through which it occurred were described. Finally, the results of qualitative study were presented.

Chapter 3 will present a detailed analysis of the data obtained from a qualitative study and recommendations provided based on the survey results.

Chapter 3. DATA ANALYSIS AND PROFILES DEVELOPMENT

The analysis for study 2 consists of two main parts: measurement and structural model check and cluster analysis. Measurement and structural model check was conducted to verify the validity and reliability, as well as hypothesis testing. Cluster analysis and profiling is the main result of the work. At the end of the chapter, the results of the study are presented together with practical and theoretical implications.

3.1. Measurement Model

Before hypothesis testing the measurement model evaluation should be conducted. It is done to ensure the validity and reliability of each variable, namely Reaction to the international social networks ban, Attitude towards VK, Frequency of VK Engagement, and Satisfaction with VK. The measurement model was analyzed by the Partial Least Square (PLS) method using the PLS Algorithm feature in Smart PLS 4. The initial measurement model tested 24 indicators presented in the figure 3.1.

The factor loading of some of the items is below the necessary threshold and therefore, should be excluded. The second round of measurement model testing was performed. The results of the measurement model stage 2 are demonstrated in the figure 3.2.

Even though one of the items from the variable "Intensity of Engagement with VK" is still below 0.7, it is statistically significant. Moreover, values between 0.4 and 0.7 can be justified if acceptable values are gained on other indices, for example, AVE and Internal consistency reliability (Hair J., Risher J., Sarstedt M., Ringle C., 2019). Therefore, the first validity test which is convergent validity was performed. The second validity test named discriminant validity is carried out by looking at the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, cross-loading, and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio.

The Fornel-Larcker validity test is done through a comparison of the square root value of the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) for each variable with the correlation between the variables in the model. When the square of the AVE is greater than the correlation between the different variables the discriminant validity is achieved as can be checked by the table 3.1 (Hair J., Risher J., Sarstedt M., Ringle C., 2019).
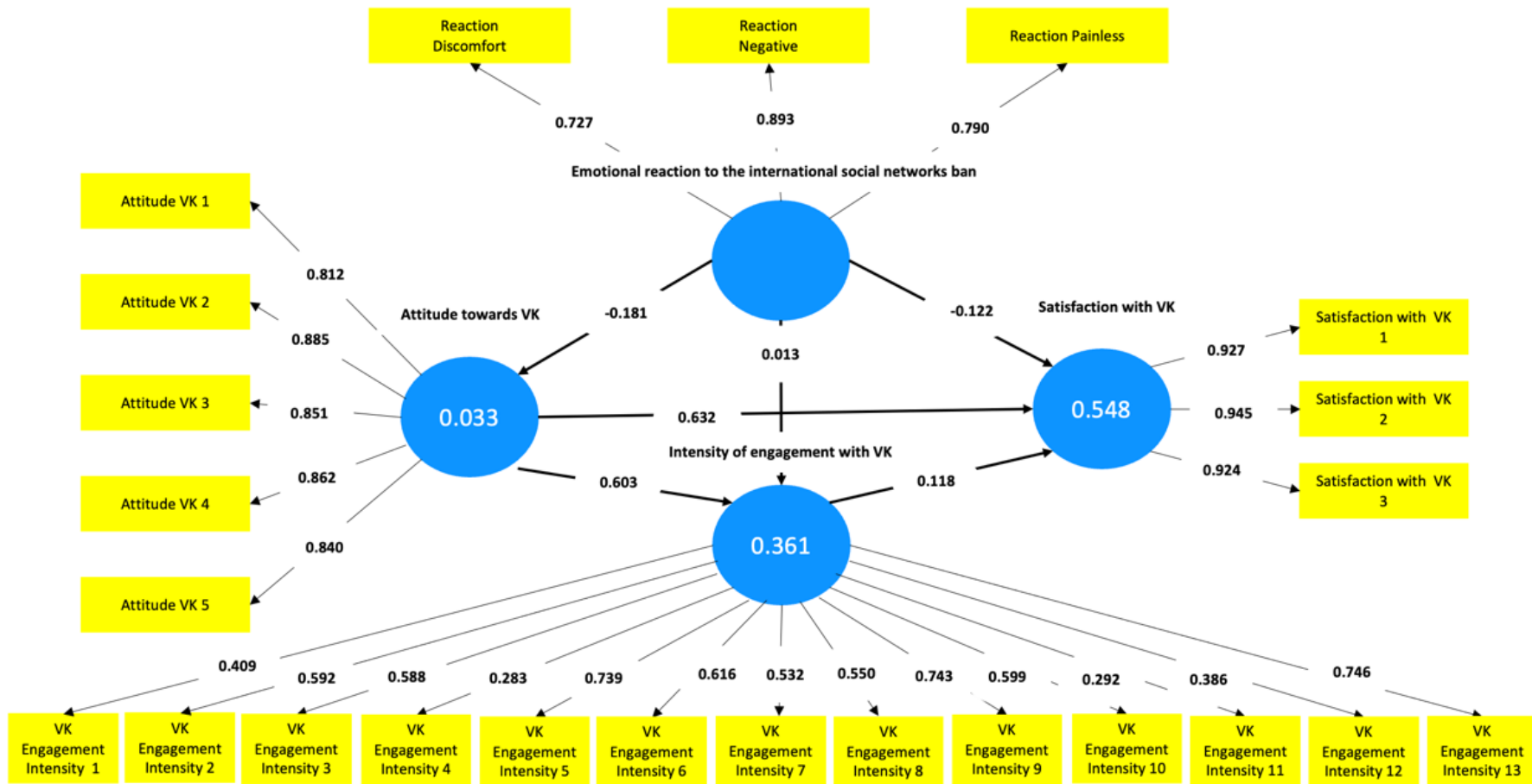
Figure 3.1. Initial Measurement Model
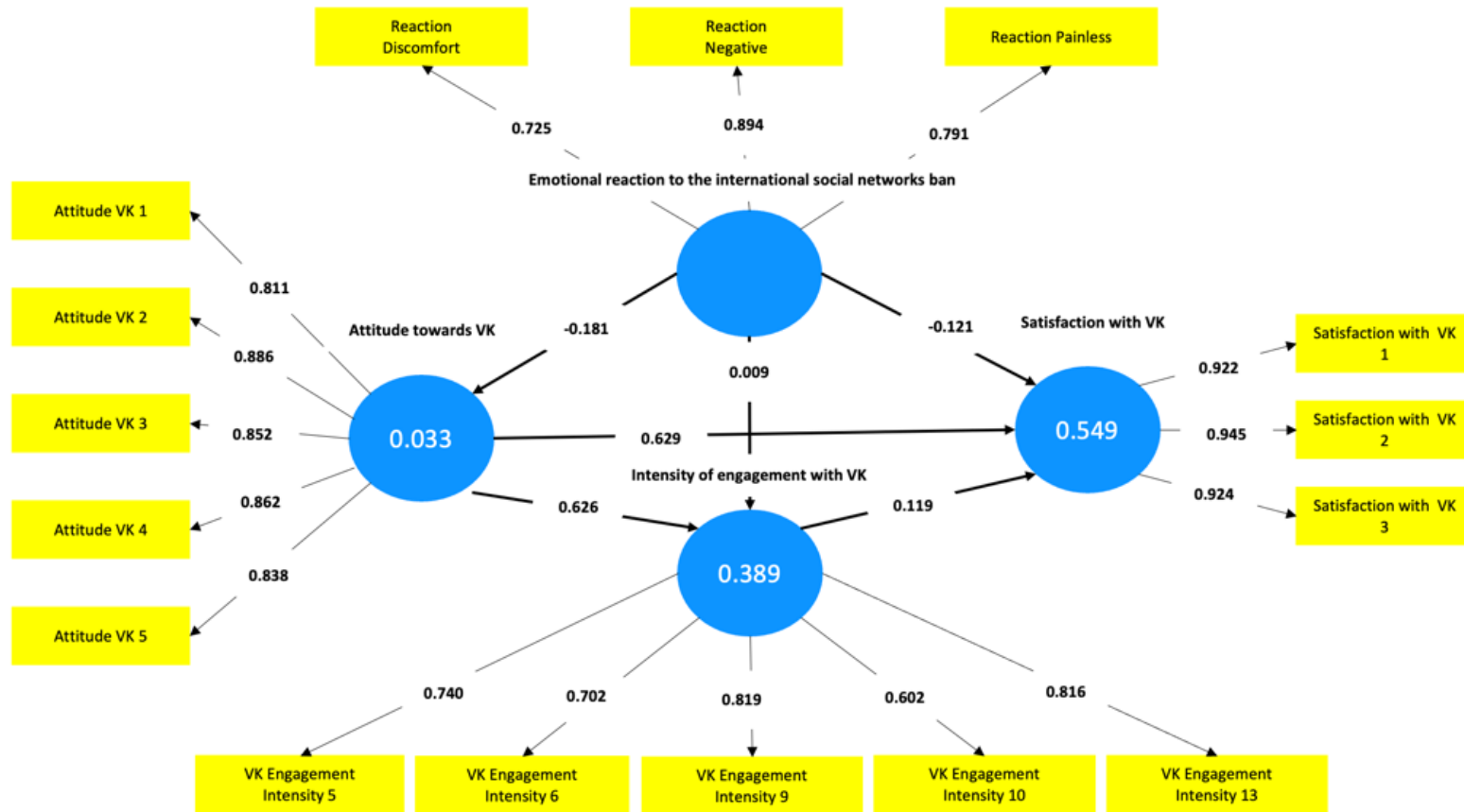
Figure 3.2. Final Measurement Model

Table 3.1. Discriminant validity - Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Discriminant validity - Fornell-Larcker Criterion				
	Attitude towards VK	Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban	Satisfaction with VK	Intensity of Engagement with VK
Attitude towards VK	0.850			
Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban	-0.181	0.806		
Satisfaction with VK	0.725	-0.248	0.931	
Intensity of Engagement with VK	0.624	-0.104	0.524	0.740

Then the cross-loadings were analyzed to conduct the second discriminant validity test. As is demonstrated in table 3.1 correlation between the variable and the indicator is higher than the correlation between the variable and the indicator of the other variables meaning the measurement model tested has good discriminant validity. Finally, the HTMT ratio must be less than 1.00 (Henseler J., Ringle C. M., Sarstedt M., 2015). The table below proves that the analyzed measurement model is of good discriminant validity:

Table 3.2. Discriminant validity- Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

Discriminant validity- Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban <-> Attitude towards VK	0.216
Satisfaction with VK <-> Attitude towards VK	0.787
Satisfaction with VK <-> Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban	0.283
Intensity of Engagement with VK <-> Attitude towards VK	0.735
Intensity of Engagement with VK <-> Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban	0.148
Intensity of Engagement with VK <-> Satisfaction with VK	0.609

The reliability of the variables was also checked by values of Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Table 3.4 indicates that all four variables have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.7 and AVE above 0.5, which confirms the reliability of the construct (Hair J., Risher J., Sarstedt M., Ringle C., 2019):

Table 3.3. Construct reliability and validity

Construct reliability and validity - Overview				
	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Attitude towards VK	0.904	0.907	0.929	0.723
Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban	0.736	0.814	0.847	0.650
Satisfaction with VK	0.923	0.926	0.951	0.866
Intensity of Engagement with VK	0.790	0.802	0.857	0.548

To exclude cases of high correlation between predictor variables, collinearity analysis was performed. The maximum level of VIF can be 5 (Ringle et al., 2015). The table below indicates that values are well below 5:

Table 3.4. Collinearity statistics (VIF)

Collinearity statistics (VIF)- Outer model	
	VIF
Attitude VK 1	2.388
Attitude VK 2	3.158
Attitude VK 3	2.664
Attitude VK 4	2.574
Attitude VK 5	2.693
Reaction Discomfort	1.339
Reaction Negative	1.609
Reaction Painless	1.531
Satisfaction with VK 1	3.495
Satisfaction with VK 2	4.334
Satisfaction with VK 3	3.087
VK Engagement Intensity 5	1.531
VK Engagement Intensity 6	1.413
VK Engagement Intensity 9	1.872
VK Engagement Intensity 10	1.314
VK Engagement Intensity 13	1.820

Collinearity statistics (VIF)- Inner model				
	Attitude towards VK	Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban	Satisfaction with VK	Intensity of Engagement with VK
Attitude towards VK			1.675	1.034
Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban	1.000		1.034	1.034
Satisfaction with VK				
Intensity of Engagement with VK			1.638	

For each endogenous variable in the model, there is one R-square. This value represents the sum of the explained variance of the structure in the structural model. The R-square has values close to the medium and weak: Satisfaction with VK – 0.549; Frequency of VK Engagement – 0.389; Attitude to VK – 0.033.

3.2. Structural Model

All indicators of validity and reliability of the testing measurement model were satisfied, and the next stage is to test the structural model. Structural modeling or hypothesis testing is done by looking at the significance level of the path coefficients using the PLS Bootstrapping. The results of testing the structural modeling are presented in Figure 3.3. and Tables 3.5:

Table 3.5. Results of testing Structural Model

Path coefficients - Mean, STDEV, T values, p values					
	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Attitude towards VK <-> Intensity of Engagement with VK	0.629	0.627	0.071	8.865	0.000
Attitude towards VK <-> Satisfaction with VK	0.626	0.628	0.042	15.047	0.000
Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban <-> Attitude towards VK	-0.181	-0.194	0.058	3.122	0.002
Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban <-> Satisfaction with VK	-0.121	-0.124	0.045	2.696	0.007

Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban <-> Intensity of Engagement with VK	0.009	0.007	0.054	0.173	0.863
Intensity of Engagement with VK <-> Satisfaction with VK	0.119	0.121	0.065	1.831	0.067
Attitude towards VK <-> Intensity of Engagement with VK <-> Satisfaction with VK	0.075	0.076	0.042	1.784	0.075

Based on these table the following decisions on the fact whether to accept or reject stated hypotheses were done:

Table 3.6. Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis Number	Hypothesis statement	Decision
H1	Attitude towards the VK positively influences Intensity of Engagement with VK.	Accepted
H2	Intensity of Engagement with VK influences Satisfaction with the VK.	Rejected
H3	Intensity of Engagement with VK mediates the relationship between Attitude towards the VK and Satisfaction with the VK.	Rejected
H4	Attitude towards the VK positively influences Satisfaction with the VK.	Accepted
H5	Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban will influence the Attitude towards the VK.	Accepted
H6	Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban will influence the Intensity of Engagement with VK.	Rejected
H7	Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban will influence the Satisfaction with the VK.	Accepted
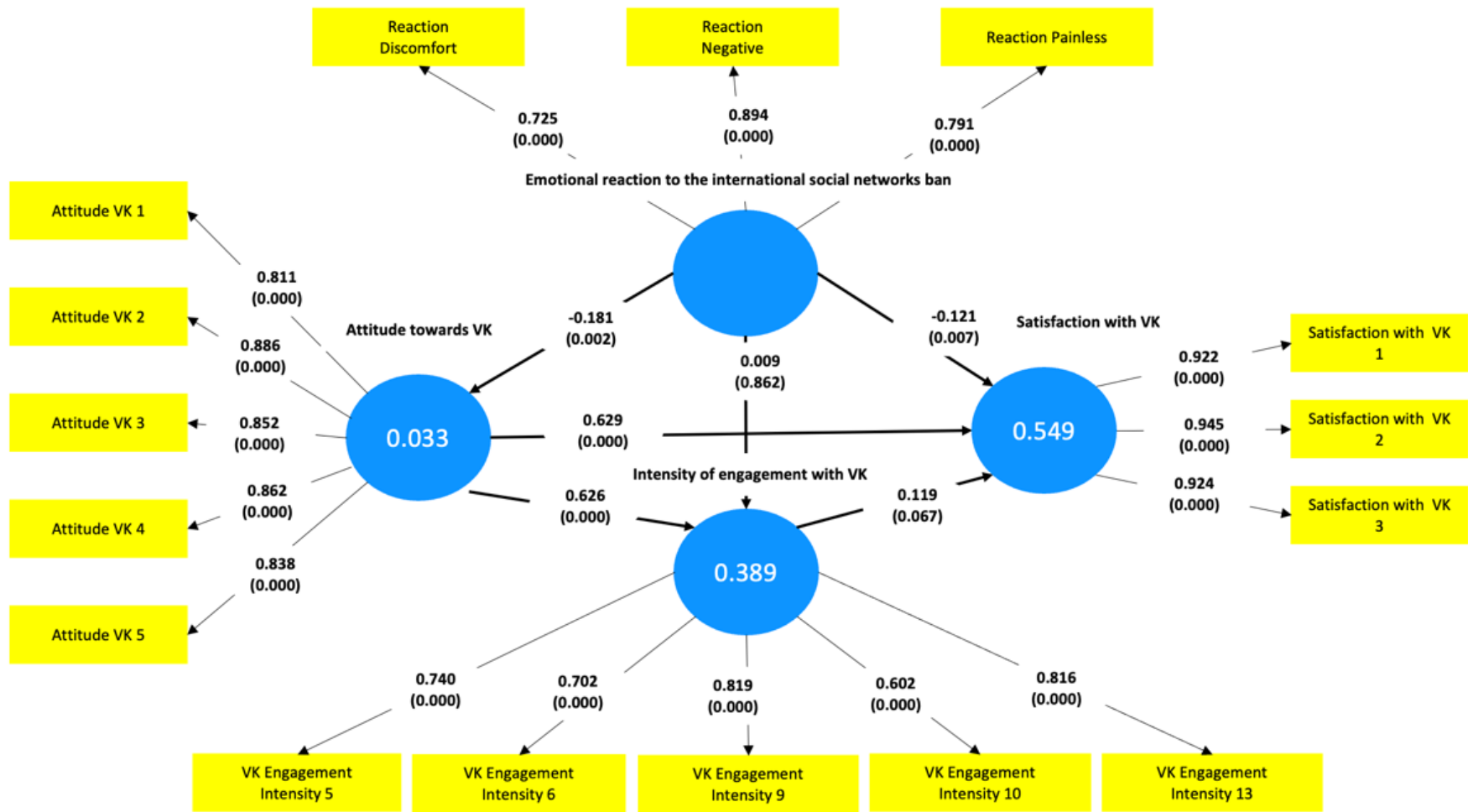
Figure 3.3. Structural Model

The result of testing the structural model provides support for 4 hypotheses. Related to the first hypothesis (H1), the results of the analysis show that the Attitude towards VK has a significant and positive influence on the Intensity of Engagement with VK (β=0.626, p-value <0.001). This implies that when users have a positive attitude towards the VK platform, they tend to use VK platform features more. Users read more news feeds, watch photos and videos, put likes, watch and read bloggers, and interact with friends in private messages, blogs, and chats.

The results of the fourth hypothesis (H4) also show a positive effect of Attitude towards VK on Satisfaction with VK (β=0.629, p-value <0.001), basically meaning that more positive attitude of end-users towards VK platform leads to greater satisfaction with VK.

The result also confirms the prediction of H5 and H7 that Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban influences Attitude towards VK and Satisfaction with VK (β=-0.181, p-value <0.001 and β=-0.121, p-value <0.001 correspondingly). This implies that more negative end users are with the situation of Instagram[23]*, Facebook*, Tik-Tok and Twitter* being banned, less positive attitude and satisfaction with the VK platform they have.

Hypotheses H2, H3, and H6 were rejected as the significance level is above 0.05.

Table 3.7. displays the results of the goodness of fit model test. The primary purpose of the goodness of fit model test is to measure the accuracy of the data distribution of the sample in estimating the actual value statistically. Two main parameters of the goodness of fit SRMR and NFI should be less than 0.08 and 0.9 respectively (Hair J., Risher J., Sarstedt M., Ringle C., 2019). Based on the results it is found that indicators are in the range of recommended values. This data states that the structural model has a high degree of suitability with the input data in the research sample.

Table 3.7. Goodness of fit

Goodness of Fit		
	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.067	0.067
d_ULS	0.616	0.616
d_G	0.281	0.281
Chi-square	395.074	395.074
NFI	0.826	0.826

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[23] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

Finally, the type of relationship between variables was checked using the Quadratic effect of PLS Smart 4 features. The model indicated that all relationships do not hold any significant non-linear relationship. The quadratic effect that can be viewed in Figure 3.4.

To confirm the double check was applied through the "Confidence Intervals Bias Corrected" Table:

Table 3.8. Confidence Intervals Bias Corrected

Path coefficients - Confidence intervals vias corrected					
	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Bias	2.5%	97.5%
Attitude towards VK -> Satisfaction with VK	0.622	0.624	0.002	0.480	0,742
Attitude towards VK -> Intensity of Engagement with VK	0.625	0.627	0.002	0.533	0.704
Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban -> Attitude towards VK	-0.184	-0.195	-0.011	-0.286	-0.057
Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban -> Satisfaction with VK	-0.124	-0.125	-0.001	-0.208	-0.022
Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban ->Intensity of Engagement with VK	0.010	0.007	-0.004	-0.0095	0.116
Intensity of Engagement with VK -> Satisfaction with VK	0.120	0.118	-0.002	-0.002	0.253
QE (Intensity of Engagement with VK) -> Satisfaction with VK	-0.030	-0.026	0.003	-0.120	-.053
QE (Attitude towards VK) -> Satisfaction with VK	0.009	0.003	-0.006	-0.103	0.141
QE (Attitude towards VK) -> Intensity of Engagement with VK	-0.011	-0.012	-0.001	-0.097	0.076
QE (Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban) -> Attitude towards VK	0.080	0.077	-0.003	-0.065	0.221
QE (Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban) -> Satisfaction with VK	0.035	0.036	0.001	-0.063	0.138
QE (Emotional reaction to the international social networks ban) -> Intensity of Engagement with VK	-0.025	-0.023	0.002	-0.139	0.084

The value zero falls in between the lower bound of 2.5 % and upper bound of 97.5% of all quadratic effects in the model. Thus, it can be concluded once again that relationships in the tested model are linear.
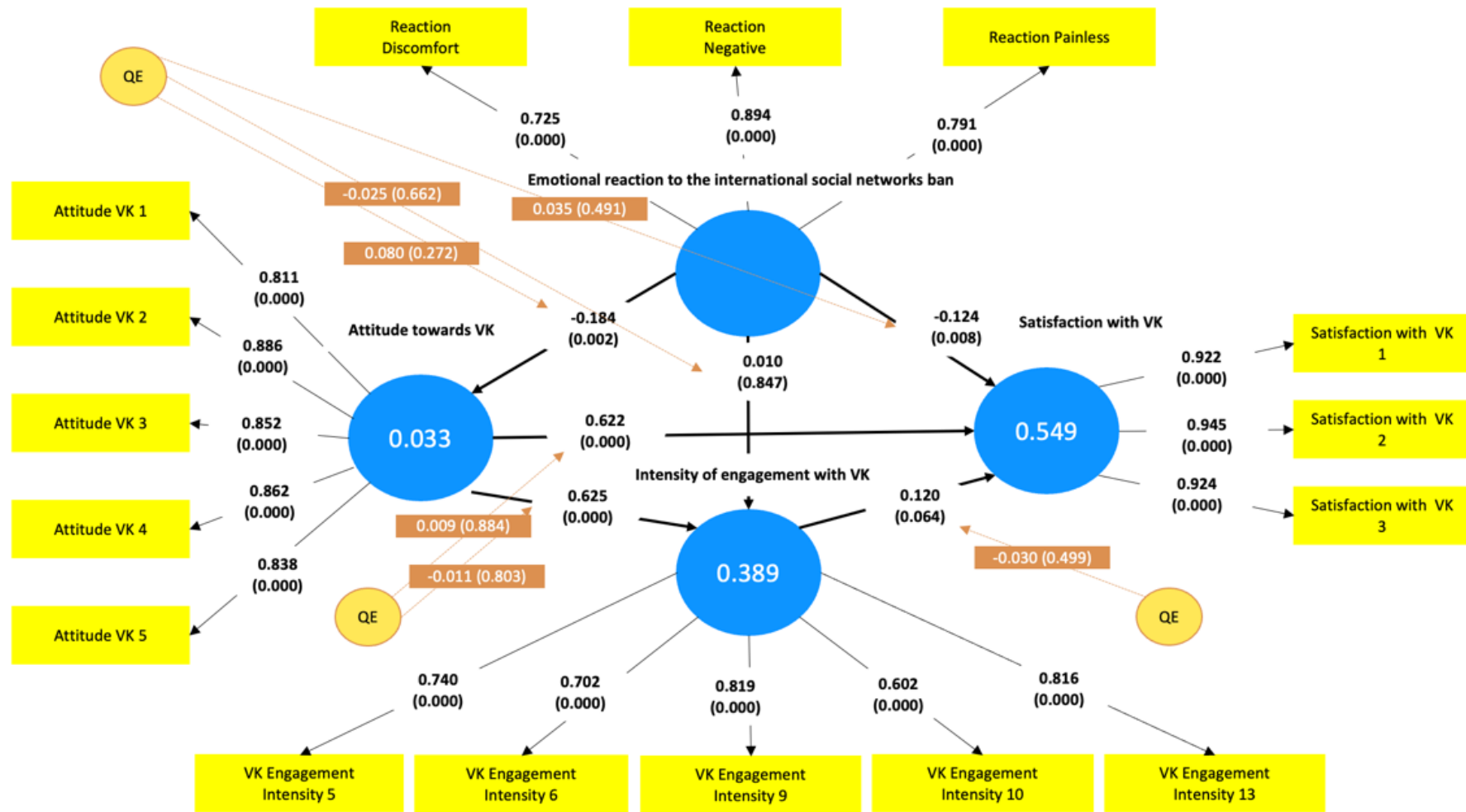
Figure 3.4. Quadratic Effect

3.3. Cluster Analysis

For cluster identification three variables were chosen: Usage of banned social media, Discomfort Level, and Pain Level. Usage of banned social media is a variable with 4 possible answers: 1 - I stopped the usage of this social network (meaning banned one) in March 2022, 2- I started using this social network less, 3 - My usage of this social network has not changed in any way, 4- I began to use this social network more actively. The variable Discomfort Level shows whether respondents were feeling discomfort or were resigned to the ban of some social media. The variable Pain Level was aimed at checking how painful was the restriction in usage of banned social media. The Discomfort Level and Pain Level variables were measured by the Likert scale where 1 was corresponding to the answer "Completely not about me" and 5 - "Completely about me".

Before the cluster analysis, all variable values were standardized.

Firstly, the hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted to identify the appropriate number of clusters. For this purpose, Ward's method and Squared Euclidean distance were applied. The number of clusters for further analysis was defined through the dendrogram presented below:
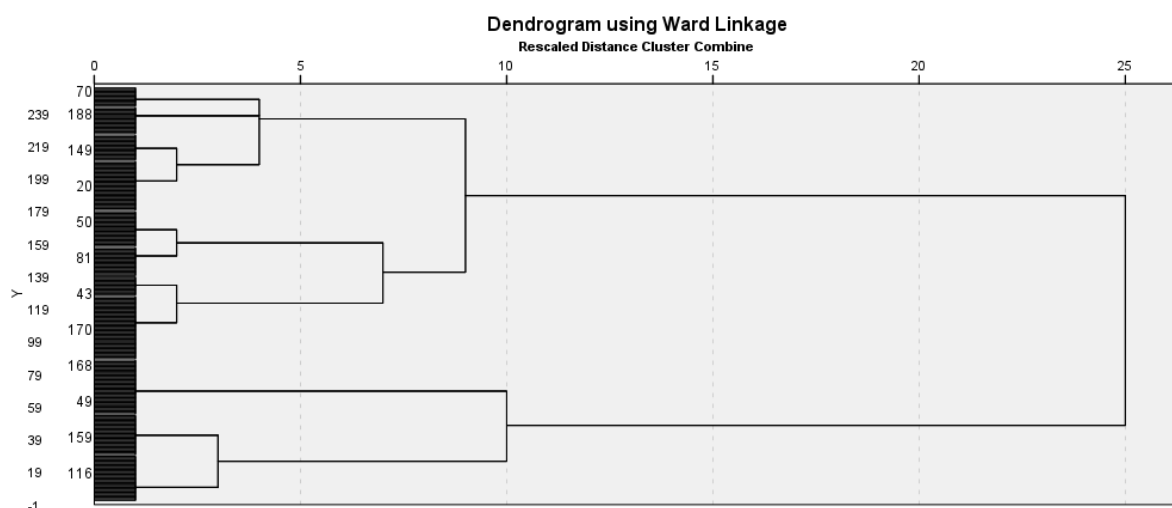
Figure 3.5. Dendrogram

Based on the dendrogram, the number of clusters is 3, where all clusters are approximately of the same size.

Secondly, a cluster analysis was done by the K-mean method, final cluster centers of which presented below:
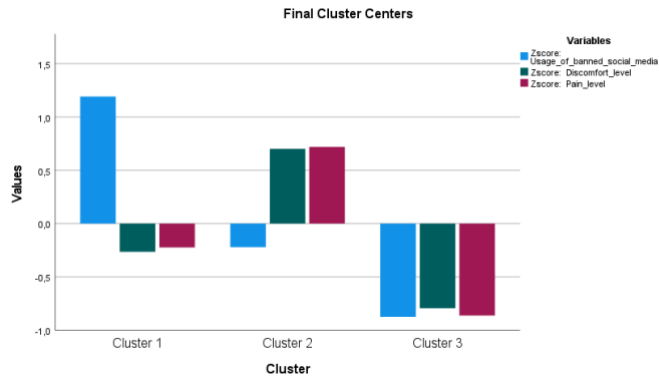
Figure 3.6. Final Cluster Centers

The numbers of cases in each cluster are 73, 109, and 72 respectively.

ANOVA

	Cluster		Error			
	Mean Square	df	Mean Square	df	F	Sig.
Zscore: Usage_of_banned_social_media	82,018	2	,354	251	231,399	<,001
Zscore: Discomfort_level	52,033	2	,593	251	87,690	<,001
Zscore: Pain_level	56,762	2	,556	251	102,148	<,001

The F tests should be used only for descriptive purposes because the clusters have been chosen to maximize the differences among cases in different clusters. The observed significance levels are not corrected for this and thus cannot be interpreted as tests of the hypothesis that the cluster means are equal.

All variables are significant (sig.<0.001). The F statistics demonstrate that the usage of banned social media has the greatest influence on forming the clusters, while the Discomfort level has the least on.

One-Way ANOVA was carried out to check that all variables have significant differences for different clusters. The Bonferroni correction for hierarchically built clusters is shown in the table 3.10. It demonstrates that all differences are significant (sig.<0.001). Therefore, this cluster analysis will be used for making further conclusions with practical value.

Table 3.10. One- Way ANOVA with Bonferroni correction

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Zscore: Usage_of_banned_social_media	Between Groups	164,035	2	82,018	231,399	<,001
	Within Groups	88,965	251	,354		
	Total	253,000	253			
Zscore: Discomfort_level	Between Groups	104,065	2	52,033	87,690	<,001
	Within Groups	148,935	251	,593		
	Total	253,000	253			
Zscore: Pain_level	Between Groups	113,524	2	56,762	102,148	<,001
	Within Groups	139,476	251	,556		
	Total	253,000	253			

Multiple Comparisons

Bonferroni

Dependent Variable	(I) Cluster Number of Case	(J) Cluster Number of Case	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Zscore: Usage_of_banned_social_media	1	2	1,41284384*	,09003958	<,001	1,1958365	1,6298512
		3	2,06597474*	,09888463	<,001	1,8276497	2,3042998
	2	1	-1,41284384*	,09003958	<,001	-1,6298512	-1,1958365
		3	,65313090*	,09041328	<,001	,4352229	,8710389
	3	1	-2,06597474*	,09888463	<,001	-2,3042998	-1,8276497
		2	-,65313090*	,09041328	<,001	-,8710389	-,4352229
Zscore: Discomfort_level	1	2	-,96510966*	,11649905	<,001	-1,2458878	-,6843315
		3	,53005628*	,12794334	<,001	,2216958	,8384167
	2	1	,96510966*	,11649905	<,001	,6843315	1,2458878
		3	1,49516594*	,11698257	<,001	1,2132224	1,7771095
	3	1	-,53005628*	,12794334	<,001	-,8384167	-,2216958
		2	-1,49516594*	,11698257	<,001	-1,7771095	-1,2132224
Zscore: Pain_level	1	2	-,94291897*	,11273896	<,001	-1,2146348	-,6712031
		3	,63820840*	,12381388	<,001	,3398005	,9366163
	2	1	,94291897*	,11273896	<,001	,6712031	1,2146348
		3	1,58112737*	,11320687	<,001	1,3082838	1,8539710
	3	1	-,63820840*	,12381388	<,001	-,9366163	-,3398005
		2	-1,58112737*	,11320687	<,001	-1,8539710	-1,3082838

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

3.4. Users' profiles development

Out of 254 respondents 19 answered that they didn't use the VK platform for the last 6 months. Due to insufficient number of non-users of VK platform it was decided to not separate them into distinct groups however some insights will be discussed in the limitations and further development section. Therefore 235 users were following VK for the last 6 months and were distributed among clusters the following way: 65 respondents of cluster 1, 105 respondents of cluster 2, 65 respondents of cluster 3. This is a sample that will be analyzed further.

To develop users' profiles cross tables in SPSS were applied. Comparison of clusters was done using different characteristics.

The comparison of clusters by demographic characteristics

Table 3.11. Cross Table of year of birth distribution for 3 clusters

Year of Birth					
Cluster Number		1	2	3	Total
Year of Birth	1993 / 30 years	6	13	3	22
	1994 / 29 years	7	11	14	32
	1995 / 28 years	7	10	7	24
	1996 / 27 years	7	13	7	27
	1997 / 26 years	7	10	8	25
	1998 / 25 years	7	11	7	25
	1999/ 24 years	9	15	8	32
	2000/ 23 years	15	22	11	48
Total		65	105	65	235

Based on the table above it should be noted that the concentration on 23 years old in clusters 1 can be observed. For cluster 2 30 years old was pointed as the most frequently answered. Cluster 2 demonstrates almost even age distribution.

Table 3.12. Cross Table of gender distribution for 3 clusters

Gender					
Cluster Number		1	2	3	Total
Gender	Male	30	40	31	101
	Female	35	65	34	134
Total		65	105	65	235

Regarding the allocation of gender, first and second clusters are almost of even distribution of male and female representatives, while the second cluster has slight tendency to have more female respondents.

As far as educational level is concerned clusters 1 and 3 showed most participants who have higher education. For cluster 2 higher education and incomplete higher education were responses answered the most.

With respect to financial situation all 3 clusters showed an inclination to be able to buy basic household appliances, but not a car as at least 30% of respondents answered in the questionnaire. The answers "We have enough for food and clothes, but it will be difficult for us to buy a TV, refrigerator or washing machine" and "Our funds will be enough for everything, except for such expensive purchases as an apartment or a country house" had second and third largest samples respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that most of our respondents have quite a stable financial situation.

Table 3.13. Cross Table of region of residence for 3 clusters

Region of residence					
		Cluster Number			Total
		1	2	3	
Region of residence	Far Eastern Federal District	4	4	5	13
	Moscow	7	12	9	28
	Volga Federal District	5	13	7	25
	Saint-Petersburg	18	26	16	60
	North-Western Federal District (except Saint Petersburg)	5	14	6	25
	North-Caucasian Federal District	2	7	3	12
	Siberian Federal District	3	5	2	10
	Ural Federal District	7	4	2	13
	Central Federal District (except Moscow)	8	9	5	22
	Southern Federal District	6	11	10	27
Total		65	105	65	235

The table Region of Residence demonstrates that representatives of all federal districts are presented in the sample, however there is an inclination to Saint-Petersburg and Moscow that can be a limitation for this study.

Table 3.14. Cross Table of social media usage purpose for 3 clusters

Purpose of Social Media Usage				
	Cluster Number			Total
	1	2	3	

Purpose of Social Media Usage	For communication	30	47	35	112
	For pastime (entertainment content)	22	35	13	70
	For reading news (news content)	3	15	13	31
	For tracking educational content	0	5	1	6
	For work	10	3	3	16
Total		65	105	65	235

As for the purpose of social media usage, the first two goals were communication and pastime for clusters 1 and 2. Then cluster 1 participants voted for work as the main purpose to follow social media, and news content for cluster 2. Cluster 3 was also interested in communication as the main purpose to use social networks, however, interests for entertainment and news contents were divided equally.

Absolute majorities of all three clusters pointed out mobile devices as the main means to access social networks. The average time spent on daily basis presented in the table below:

Table 3.15. Cross Table of daily time spent on social for 3 clusters

Time spent in social media every day					
		Cluster Number			Total
		1	2	3	
Time spent in social media every day	15-30 minutes	2	5	1	8
	30-60 minutes	8	4	15	27
	1-2 hours	17	42	21	80
	3-4 hours	27	33	21	81
	More than 5 hours	11	21	7	39
Total		65	105	65	235

It can be observed that cluster 1 uses social media more than cluster 2 or 3. The greatest number of users in cluster 1 pointed out 3-4 hours as time spent in social media every day, while participants of cluster 2 were more inclined to point out 1-2 hours. Evenly distributed were respondents of cluster 3 between 1-2 hours and 3-4 hours.

The comparison of clusters by technographic characteristics

By technographic characteristics, respondents answered three main logical blocks of questions related to content interaction - 12 questions, communication with others - 4 questions and company interaction- 8 questions. In order to check if there are significant differences among three clusters with regard to technographic characteristics One-way Non-Parametric ANOVA (Kruskal-Wallis) test was performed and showed that three clusters have significant difference in following questions:

Table 3.16. Kruskal-Wallis Test for technographic characteristics questions

Question	Significance
I read the news feed on social networks and the news in the messenger	0.026
I watch/read bloggers on social networks	0.007
I respond to posts on social networks with "likes"	0.039
I share information about the company/product on my personal blog/personal page	0.005
I protect my favorite companies when discussing on social networks	0.047

It means that based on these questions clusters differentiate, but on others do not. With respect to the differences the following conclusions should be done:

Cluster 1 representatives have moderate Content and Company Interaction. They sometimes and often read the news feed and news in the messenger, watch and read bloggers, and respond to the post they enjoy with "likes". They are quite protective of their favorite companies while discussing on social networks and sometimes even share information about the company or its product on their personal account or blog.

Cluster 2 individuals possess a high level of Content and Company Interaction, because they often read the news feed and the news in the messenger, watch and read bloggers and put "likes" to posts. Moreover, they do not hesitate quite often to share information about the product of a company or about the company itself on their personal account or page and protect its reputation while discussing on social networks.

Respondents from Cluster 3 represent low Content and Company Interactions. They only sometimes read news feeds, watch or read bloggers, and respond with "likes". Rarely do they share information about the company or product on their pages and accounts and infrequently protect their favorite companies on social media.

As far as similarities are concerned all three clusters while interacting with content will quite often read reviews about companies or products made by entities themselves as well as by other end-users on social media but will almost never react to them. Rarely, individuals make reposts of interesting information.

With regard to communication with others, all three clusters share the same behavioral pattern. Communication with others is always done through personal messaging and never through public forums or chats. Rarely respondents of the survey write comments on the posts of other people or bloggers and almost never express their opinion about posts of other users, bloggers, or companies in personal messages.

Finally, participants of the survey never tag brands or companies when they make posts and rarely take part in content held on social media with no difference whether they are done by their favorite companies or not.

The comparison of clusters by social media use and attitude towards ban of some social networks

To better analyze the perception of social media in Russia after the ban of some social media, firstly the previous use should be investigated as well as the changes in preferences. The table below demonstrates main differences:

Table 3.17. Social Media Platform Usage for 3 clusters

Cluster	Top 3 platform used before March 2022	The main social media before March 2022	Top 3 platforms used now	The main social media now	The mostly used social media that is currently banned
1	Telegram (65), VK (64), Instagram[24]* (56)	Telegram	Telegram (65) VK (63) Instagram* (51)	Telegram	Instagram*, Tik-Tok
2	Instagram* (105), VK (100), Telegram (96)	Instagram*	Telegram (104) VK (99) Instagram* (81)	VK	Instagram*, Tik-Tok
3	Telegram (60), VK (65),	VK	Telegram (60) VK (65)	VK	Instagram*

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[24] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

	Instagram[25]* (63)		Instagram* (26)		

According to the table, it is apparent that each of the three clusters had different social media preferences. Cluster 1 mainly uses Telegram as its primary social media platform, with VK being the second most used platform. Among the banned platforms, Instagram* and TikTok were the most frequently used by them.

Cluster 2 individuals were previously interested in Instagram* but now primarily use VK. They also frequently use currently banned platforms such as Instagram* and TikTok.

Representatives of Cluster 3 have always been followers of VK and Telegram, with VK being the primary platform. Although Instagram* is their favorite banned platform, its usage has significantly decreased, as shown in the table.

All groups' respondents primarily utilized prohibited social media platforms for viewing videos and photos, although their preferences for accessing restricted media differed. These variations are more clearly depicted in the table presented below:

Table 3.18. Set of priorities for banned social media use for 3 clusters

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Set of 5 priorities for banned social media use	I liked other posts/ photos/ videos	I liked other posts/ photos/ videos	Read the news feed
	Communicated with friends in private messages/ conversations/ chats	Watched/ read bloggers	I liked other posts/ photos/ videos
	Read the news feed	Read the news feed	Posted videos / photos
	Watched/ read bloggers	Communicated with friends in private messages/ conversations/ chats	Communicated with friends in private messages/ conversations/ chats
	Posted videos / photos	Posted videos / photos	Watched/ read bloggers

The respondents were asked to express their views on banned social media using a Likert scale and a set of questions that have been developed and utilized in several previous

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[25] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

studies. Overall, there is a positive inclination towards banned social media, however, noticeable differences are observed among Clusters 1, 2, and 3.

Most participants from Cluster 1 and 2 held a highly positive attitude towards banned social media. They found it fascinating to follow and considered it a good platform for self-expression, as well as an enjoyable user experience. They also believed that using banned social media was beneficial. However, the only noticeable difference between Cluster 1 and 2 was that Cluster 2 participants completely agreed with these statements, unlike those in Cluster 1.

On the other hand, representatives from Cluster 3 held a relatively moderate and neutral attitude towards banned social media. While they partially agreed that following prohibited social media was interesting, most of their responses to other parameters were "I don't know".

Finally, the reaction strategy to the ban of some popular social media was investigated. 3 clusters showed completely different behavior due to the blockage that can be seen below:

Table 3.19. Reaction strategy chosen for 3 clusters

Note the statement that characterizes you in relation to this social network.				
	Cluster Number			Total
	1	2	3	
I stopped usage of this social network in March 2022.	0	13	31	44
I started using this social network less	0	77	34	111
My use of this social network has not changed in any way	60	15	0	75
I began to use this social network more actively	5	0	0	5
Total	65	105	65	235

Therefore, representatives of cluster 1 mainly didn't change their use of banned social media and even 8 people reported that they began to use it more. Respondents from cluster 2 in majority started using the blocked media less. 12% and 13,7 % of them stopped and didn't change their use of banned social networks respectively. Almost evenly survey participants of cluster 3 started to use banned media less or stopped its usage in March 2022.

After this, respondents who started to use social media less or more (126 people: 5 from cluster 1, 77 from cluster 2, and 37 from cluster 3) were asked how exactly their behavior changed. The following results were accumulated:

Cluster 1

Make less: Repost of interesting information, use an account to register in third-party applications.

Hasn't changed: Read a news feed, watch/read bloggers, like other posts/photos/ videos, have my own blog/community, create content for other users, write comments, upload videos/photos, make purchases, follow news of favorite brands.

Make more: watch videos/photos, communicate with friends in private messages.

Cluster 2

Make less: Read a news feed, watch/read bloggers, watch and upload videos/photos, follow news of favorite brands, communicate with friends in private messages.

Hasn't changed: Repost pf interesting information, have my own blog/community, create content for others, write comments, use an account to register in third-party applications, make purchases.

Cluster 3

Make less: Read a news feed, watch/read bloggers, like other posts/ photos/ videos, repost interesting information, have my own blog/ community, write comments, watch and upload videos / photos, make purchases, follow the news of favorite brands, communicate with friends in private messages/ conversations.

Hasn't changed: Create content for other users, use an account to register in third-party applications.

Finally, the **reaction strategy** was identified in three clusters.

Cluster 1 participants did not undergo significant pain because of the ban, but they still have negative emotions and discomfort due to the restriction.

In contrast, Cluster 2 representatives are highly negative and not at all resigned to the ban. The ban caused them pain and they experienced a high level of discomfort.

Individuals in Cluster 3 are resigned to the ban. They do not experience negative emotions or pain, and their level of discomfort due to this situation is very low.

The comparison of clusters by VK users

All clusters of VK users demonstrated a positive **attitude towards the social media platform**, although to varying degrees.

Cluster 1 showed a relatively high level of positivity, with members generally believing that VK is useful, enjoyable to use, and satisfying their needs, but not necessarily of great importance to them.

Cluster 2 expressed a more moderate attitude towards VK, with participants generally not finding the platform very important or useful for them, despite finding it somewhat enjoyable and meeting their needs to some extent.

Finally, members of Cluster 3 displayed a strong liking for VK, finding it highly useful and enjoyable, with a majority stating that VK is important for them to use and satisfies their needs well.

Intensity of Engagement with VK also differs among clusters.

Cluster 1 rarely likes other posts or videos and uploads them themselves. Sometimes and more often representatives of this cluster read news feeds and watch videos and photos. However, they always prefer to communicate with friends in direct messages and with other people in chats.

Cluster 2 participants always communicate with friends through private messages and chats, sometimes scroll a news feed, watch videos and photos, and use an account to register a third-party application. Quite rarely they like other posts or videos and upload their own, like other posts, videos, and photos and write comments.

Cluster 3 respondents always communicate with friends through private messages and chats, often read a news feed, and sometimes watch videos and photos, like other posts, videos, and photos, and use an account to register a third-party application. Finally, they very rarely watch or read bloggers, make reposts of interesting information, write comments, and upload their videos and photos.

Next block of questions referred to **the Satisfaction with VK.**

Cluster 1 has moderate overall satisfaction with VK, because representatives of this cluster are partially satisfied with their interaction with VK and the content of VK quite well meets their needs.

Representatives of Cluster 2 demonstrate a low level of overall satisfaction with VK, as they are not content with their interactions with the platform and feel that the content provided does not sufficiently meet their needs.

Individuals from Cluster 3 exhibit the highest level of overall satisfaction with VK, as they are extremely pleased with their interactions with the platform and feel that the content provided meets their needs exceptionally well.

To go deeper, respondents were questioned what exactly they can name as a thing that does not satisfy them on VK.

Cluster 1 highlighted that their main source of dissatisfaction with VK is the overwhelming number of services currently offered on the platform. Members of this cluster feel that they are struggling to navigate and keep up with all the new services. Such phrases as "too many services", "unnecessary services", and "excessive services" were quite frequently met in the answers. They also mentioned that recent updates have not necessarily made the user

experience any easier. In fact, some participants expressed a preference for the previous interface and found that the additional services have slowed down the platform. Furthermore, survey respondents emphasized that the main functionality of VK has decreased, making it difficult to locate certain features. Finally, they drew attention to the fact that the news feed does not fully meet their needs, and excessive advertising on the platform is a source of frustration.

Respondents of the 2 clusters identified several issues that they are unhappy with on VK. Firstly, they find the navigation of the platform to be confusing and not user-friendly. Secondly, they are dissatisfied with the content on VK as they feel it only represents one perspective, primarily that of Russian citizens, and they want to see more diverse content from users around the world. For example, some respondents mentioned "there are no foreign users presented and posted on VK, only Russian citizens. But I want to see more people from different countries and get to know what they think and post". Thirdly, they dislike the poor recommendation algorithm on VK, which often fails to suggest content that aligns with their interests. Additionally, they are frustrated with the high level of censorship and lack of trust in data protection on the platform. Finally, they do not appreciate the fact that VK has copied features from Instagram[26]*, which they do not enjoy.

On the other hand, respondents from cluster 3 expressed their dissatisfaction with paid music being the main issue. They also find the frequent updates on VK, particularly on its mobile app, to be a hindrance making it take a long time for the app to respond. Additionally, they feel that the platform's interface is complex and not easy to navigate, primarily due to the abundance of extra services available.

In addition to the main survey questions, participants were also asked to identify aspects of VK that they disliked. Paid music and video clips emerged as the top two features that were disliked across all clusters. Cluster 1 ranked stories as their third priority, while Cluster 2 and 3 both expressed dissatisfaction with the visual design. Insufficient functionality was noted by Cluster 1 and 2 as a disliked aspect of VK, whereas Cluster 3 highlighted the absence of frequent communication with certain individuals as a drawback.

<u>Final Profiles Development</u>

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[26] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

The key characteristics of the individuals in each cluster can be found in the Appendix 5. After analyzing the cross tables for the main blocks of the questionnaire questions, profiles for Zennials were developed:

Table 3.20. Zennials profiles

Profile name/ Charactetistics	Disappointed Pragmatics (27%)	Negative Skeptics (46%)	Positive Accomodators (27%)
Time spent in social media every day	3-4 hours	1-2 hours	1-2 hours, 3-4 hours
Purpose to use social media	Communication, work	Communication, pass time	Communication, pass time, news
Content and Company Interaction	Moderate Content and Company Interaction	High Content and Company Interaction	Low Content and Company Interaction
The main social media before March 2022	Telegram	Instagram[27]*	VK
The main social media now	Telegram	VK	VK
The mostly used social media that is currently banned	Instagram*, Tik-Tok	Instagram*	Instagram*, Tik-Tok
Attitude towards banned media	Positive	Very positive	Moderate positive
Behaviour with relation to the blockage	Don't change their use	Started to use this media less	Started to use this media less Stopped usage of this media
Reaction to the ban	Not significant pain due to the outage of banned social networks, but rather a general feeling of discomfort.	Highly negative and experienced pain from switching to a new social platform. Feel discomfort and have not resigned themselves to the situation	No feeling of discomfort or pain associated with the loss of access to banned media
Attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, satisfaction with VK	Moderate Positive	Low Positive	High Positive

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[27] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

Dissatisfaction with VK	•Too many new services •Difficulties to navigate through •Slow down because of updates •Content doesn't meet needs	•Not user friendly interface •Lack of foreign content •Poor recommendation algorithm of content preferred •Too many copy pastes from another platforms	•Paid music •Advertisement •Too many updates •Slow down of time response from mobile app •Abundance of extra services

3.5. Discussions and theoretical contribution

The study's findings have both theoretical and practical implications. For researchers, it offers a deeper understanding of how international social networks ban influenced consumers' attitude to Russian social media in the eyes of borderline generation Y-Z. The results revealed three distinct user profiles in social media based on their emotional reaction to the ban of popular social networks, and how this affects their attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, and satisfaction with VK. This information is valuable to content producers, add-owners, bloggers, and firms or individuals operating on VK. Findings of this master thesis can assist in effective communication with the different user profiles and adaptation of content interaction, communication, and company interaction styles accordingly.

The study highlights the importance of understanding user behavior in response to international social networks ban that affects the availability of social media platforms, and how this behavior can shape attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, and satisfaction with VK.

The measurement and structural models were tested, revealing that emotional reaction to international social networks ban have an impact on the attitude and satisfaction towards VK. The study found that Zennials' attitude towards and satisfaction with VK were influenced by their emotional reaction to the block of other social media platforms. Specifically, those who perceived VK as a valuable alternative to the blocked platforms had a more positive attitude towards VK, leading to more intensive reading of news feed, watching photos and videos, following the bloggers' content, putting "likes" and interaction with friends through private messages, chats, and groups on VK as well as overall greater satisfaction with VK. At the same time, more negative users are with the international social networks ban less positive is their attitude towards VK and satisfaction with VK.

The results emphasize the significance of attitude in shaping social media engagement and offer an understanding of the elements that impact user satisfaction with particular

platforms. Intensity of engagement with VK did not demonstrate direct significant effect on satisfaction with VK and it does not mediate relationship between attitude towards VK and satisfaction with it. In other words, more frequent usage does not always correspond to higher satisfaction with the platform. It means that there could be other factors that influence satisfaction and need to be further investigated. For example, content that does not meet users' interest, difficulty in navigation, or dissatisfaction with visual appealing of VK could be the reasons to explain this insignificance. Therefore, the future research should be focused more on how the quality of content and users' experience influence satisfaction with VK.

Emotional reaction to the international social networks bans also did not affect the intensity of engagement with VK. Potential reason for it could be the fact that prior to most participants already used VK platform and continue to use it after March 2022. It means that VK was already essential for users and the current situation on Russian market of social media did not significantly change their behaviour.

Cluster analysis showed that based on the emotional reaction to the international social network ban users develop different behavior patterns. Those who experienced more negativity towards the ban had a less positive attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, and satisfaction with VK. Conversely, those who did not experience any discomfort had a more positive attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, and satisfaction with VK. The third group, who are not satisfied with the current situation, but do not experience sharp negativity demonstrated moderate positive attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, and satisfaction with VK.

The findings of this study **contribute theoretically** to the understanding of how Generation Y-Z met restrictions of some social networks. This research proves that there is a spill-over effect of emotional reaction to international social networks ban on remaining available social media platforms, VK particularly.

The study found that Zennials switched to alternative domestic platforms even though their reaction to the international social networks ban was negative. But they switched with the hidden dissatisfaction and transferred it to the domestic social networks. Basically, it means, that whatever developers of alternative social networks do, hidden negativity and biases towards remaining platforms will be there. It can create obstacles in effective communication between end-users and companies, add-owners, bloggers who operate there.

In this regard this master thesis reveled new area of academic development. Due to the novelty of the topic under research there were not a lot of academic investigations done in such direction and this study brings new knowledge and opens further discussions.

3.6. Managerial implication

From a **managerial perspective**, the study 1 identified different emotional reaction strategies towards the ban of social networks, ranging from indifference to strong negative emotions. Additionally, the qualitative research highlighted reasons why people still use banned media, such as unique content and alternative points of view. Moreover, spill-over effect is important for taking into consideration for companies, content producers, add-owners, and developers of social networks because it allows more effective implementation of some new features and communicate with audience. Cluster description for target users and their preferences was developed in Study 2 to assist businesses in enhancing their efficiency on VK. This study suggests the necessity to work with each profile but take into account the differences among them.

The study revealed that the first group of **Disappointed Pragmatics** primarily utilizes social media for communication and work-related purposes. Although they also use Instagram* and TikTok, Telegram was and is their primary platform, with VK as a secondary option. Their dissatisfaction with VK comes from the content that fails to meet their needs, resulting in discomfort rather than significant pain due to the ban of some social media. They have a moderately positive attitude towards VK but engage infrequently, usually limited to communication with friends, browsing news feeds, and viewing videos and photos. Considering these findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

For Companies, Bloggers, Add-Owners, Content Producers on VK platform:
- Communication messages and content should avoid news agendas, given that communication, pastime, and work are the main reasons for using the platform.
- More collaboration with bloggers since the target audience frequently watches and reads their content.
- Including coupons and discounts in bloggers videos can also increase brand loyalty and content engagement.
- Special bonuses for those who share information about the company or product on their own accounts.
- Ambassador program creation for those who protect the company when discussing on social media.

For VK developers:
- Focus on improving the recommendation algorithm to attract this audience since inappropriate content is the primary reason, they dislike VK or stop using it.

- Simplification of the navigation menu and providing clear labels and categories for each section could improve user experience and lessen overwhelming that target audience experiences.

- Creating a more streamlined menu structure, grouping similar features and functions together to make navigation more intuitive.

- Implementing a better categorization system for groups would make it easier for users to find and join groups of interest.

- Customizable dashboards should be introduced where users can add shortcuts to frequently used sections of the VK platform.

- Adding a preview pane for links would allow users to preview content before opening, reducing the number of unnecessary clicks.

The second group of **Negative Skeptics** on social media are primarily interested in communication and leisure activities. They engage with content and companies at a high level, regularly interacting with news and bloggers, and put "likes". They tend to be more loyal to companies on social media because they share information about products or companies on their personal accounts. After the ban of their main social media platform Instagram[28]*, they have shifted to VK. This group is highly negative and experienced significant discomfort from the shift. They still feel uncomfortable and have not adjusted to the new situation. Considering their low positive attitude towards VK and their overall dissatisfaction with it, the following recommendations proposed:

For Companies, Bloggers, Add-Owners, Content Producers on VK platform:

- Communication messages and content should avoid news agendas, given that communication and pastime are the main reasons for using the platform.

- Collaboration with foreign bloggers, as this audience tends to watch and read foreign bloggers.

- Offering exclusive access to products for foreign bloggers who promote companies on VK.

- Special coupons and discounts should be offered to those who share reviews about the company's products or write comments in chats and groups and especially to those who do it on their personal account.

- Unique set of gifs, emojis and other customized features from companies' bots on VK for loyal and active users.

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For VK developers:

- Several integrated interfaces that are customizable to the user's preference.
- Rewards offered to users who actively participate on VK, such as discounts, merch or early access to new features of products.
- Users should be asked which information VK can give to third parties and which not, to increase trust.
- Host a VK event or virtual summit for foreign bloggers, which can provide a platform for networking and sharing knowledge.
- Creation of a referral program where current VK users can invite their foreign blogger friends to join the platform and receive rewards or incentives for doing so.
- Usage of VK's advertising platform to target foreign bloggers with personalized ads that highlight the benefits of joining VK.
- Create a VK group or community for foreign bloggers, which can serve as a hub for sharing information, collaborating on content, and connecting with other bloggers.
- VK can offer advanced photo editing tools that allow users to edit their photos before uploading them to the platform.

The third group, known as the **Positive Accommodators**, use social media primarily for communication, pastime, and news reading, with low levels of content and company interaction. They mainly communicate through private messages but occasionally participate in public chats and forums, and utilize coupons, discounts, and promo codes provided by companies. This group has a positive attitude towards VK, their main social media platform, and has not been affected strongly by the ban of other platforms. However, there are some things they dislike about VK. Based on this, the following recommendations are stated:

For Companies, Bloggers, Add-Owners, Content Producers on VK platform:

- Creation of news content and news agenda in the communication messages or the content created or integrated by companies.
- Collaboration with bloggers can increase loyalty to companies on VK as this group sometimes reads and watches bloggers.
- Including coupons and discounts in content can increase loyalty to the brand and content engagement.
- Limiting the number of ads users see and making them more interactive and enjoyable through gamification can improve the ad experience.

For VK developers:

- Creating engaging and interactive content around paid music services can also be effective. For example, behind-the-scenes footage of artists recording new music or hosting exclusive online events for subscribers.
- Offering incentives for watching or engaging with ads and providing opt-out options can make the ad experience more personalized and user-friendly.
- Optimizing the interface for mobile users, improving search functionality, and providing more filters and sorting options can enhance the VK experience.

3.7. Limitations and future research directions.

The present study has identified several limitations that could be addressed in future research investigations. One of the key limitations is that the study sample was predominantly made up of individuals who were 23 years old and from Saint-Petersburg and Moscow. To overcome this limitation, future studies could be done to collect data from a more diverse and representative sample that includes representatives from a wider range of ages and geographical locations, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the age characteristics of users in the borderline generation Y-Z served as another limitation in this study. While it is true that studying this specific generation provides valuable insights into the behavior of two distinct groups of users, conducting research without reference to these generational boundaries may yield even more theoretical value. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies examine the topic of social media platform attitude separately for Generation Y and Generation Z and compare their findings to provide a more thorough comprehension.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that in this study, data was collected using convenience and snowball sampling methods. However, it is recommended that future research is done by implementation of probability sampling techniques in order to improve the representativeness and generalizability of the findings to the larger population.

In addition to the above, it should be noted that the main objective of this study was to develop audience profiles, which necessarily limits the scope of analysis in terms of identifying the factors that drive individuals' choice of emotional reaction strategy. Thus, for a better understanding of the issue, future research should conduct a more thorough investigation of the various factors that may influence the choice of a particular emotional reaction strategy as well as other factors that could influence satisfaction with social network.

Although certain technographic characteristics were found insignificant, it may be advantageous to incorporate the entire spectrum of technographic factors in order to arrive at more profound insights.

Ultimately, it is recommended that forthcoming research take into account the incorporation of the Telegram platform and conduct a comparative analysis with VK to provide a more extensive examination.

Finally, the study identified another group of end-users. 19 participants of the survey mentioned that they didn't use the VK platform for the last 6 months. Cluster distribution was 8, 4, and 7 for cluster 1, 2, and 3 respectively. To analyze users according to their belonging to the clusters we have limited sample size. This is why it was decided to look through all profiles of non-users of VK simultaneously.

Some users mainly from cluster 1 stopped using VK mainly because all their friends and content interests shifted to another social media Telegram. They in general prefer to follow messengers, not social networks. Majority of people from this cluster pointed out there is almost nothing that can return them to VK, only if VK will have some unique feature or their friends will return back to it. As the first 5 things that they are dissatisfied with on VK they mentioned insufficient functionality, visual design, clips, stories, and people with the same point of view.

Another group of users, who belong to cluster 2 doesn't follow VK because users don't trust this social media, as they feel it does not protect users' information and has strict governmental censorship. As a thing that can make them return back, they stated international content. If there would be more foreign representation, then they are ready to try VK once again. Insufficient functionality, clips, people with the same views, paid music, and the absence of people with whom I communicate were put as priorities which users dislike about VK.

Respondents, who were included in cluster 3 mentioned loss of relevance as a reason to not use VK. They don't see any reason that can make them return back to VK and do not like VK because of its insufficient functionality, people with the same views, absence of people with whom to communicate, and visual design.

As soon as the size of non-users sample is small further solid analysis was not feasible. It is suggested that in future research, a more in-depth examination of this particular group could provide valuable insights.

Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter discussed the analysis of data collected during a quantitative study. Measurement and Structural model testing were performed to check the reliability and validity of the model, as well as the hypotheses' acceptance or rejection conduction. A cluster analysis was carried out and its results were discussed in detail. Based on cluster analysis, social networking audience profiles were developed.

As a result, the study's research questions were resolved. Based on the results, practitioners were provided with recommendations. Additionally, the theoretical and practical contributions of the study were discussed. Finally, this chapter listed the study's limitations and proposed recommendations for future research.

Conclusion

This thesis has contributed both practically and theoretically, providing valuable insights for researchers and various entities in the media industry, including content producers, advertisers, bloggers, and companies. The primary objective of this work was to investigate whether there is a significant relationship between emotional reaction to the international social networks ban and users' attitude towards remaining alternative social networks. Additionally, based on the emotional reaction strategies chosen, customer profiles with common technographic characteristics, attitudes towards the ban, attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, and satisfaction with VK were developed.

In the first chapter, an extensive literature review was conducted, covering topics such as emotional attachment to social networking sites, and characteristics of Generation Y, Generation Z, and Zennials. In addition, the current social media landscape in Russia and worldwide social network disconnection were analyzed. The primary theoretical fundamentals were identified, and a research model was established.

In the second chapter, research design and determination of data collection methods were described. Guides and an online questionnaire were developed based on the literature review for each study. Qualitative research included in-depth interviews to explore the respondents' emotional reaction strategies towards the ban of some popular social networking platforms and reasons to stay or switch to another social network after the ban. A quantitative survey was also conducted, collecting data from 254 respondents. All data was prepared for further analysis, and the results of the qualitative study were also discussed.

In the third chapter, the data collected during the quantitative study was analyzed using SPSS and SMART-PLS 4 software. Measurement and Structural Models were created, and cluster analysis was applied. The significance of the framework developed was confirmed according to the results of the Measurement and Structural Models. The cluster analysis determined the profiles of the audience under the study. Although non-VK users were also analyzed, the small sample size and unwillingness of this group of respondents to return to VK prevented their inclusion in the profile design.

The study's findings indicate that among the borderline generation in the media environment, three different groups of users are identified based on technographic characteristics, attitude towards VK, intensity of engagement with VK, and satisfaction with VK.

The research provides recommendations to attract more audience on VK and improve communication and engagement on this social media platform, as well as a theoretical contribution to the existing literature. Finally, the limitations of the study and potential areas of improvements for future research were taken into account.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1. The main milestones in the development of VK

● 2008 – VK becomes the most popular Internet resource in the Russian Federation. This social network has its own video search service, sections "Questions" and "Applications" (future mini apps), advanced privacy features of the page. The audience is growing, reaching the mark of 20 million users. In addition, VK becomes available for mobile phones in the WAP version.

● 2009 - VK buys a domain vk.com for further promotion in international markets.

● 2010 – VK launches its own payment system. There is an opportunity to leave comments and mark "I like". In October users were forcibly transferred to the microblog format, which caused a lot of protests and inscriptions in VK "Durov, bring back the wall."

● 2011 – The official launch of the app for iPhones and the presentation of the app for androids takes place. Moreover, the VK Support Service begins its activity. Users can put hashtags.

● 2012- VK finally moves to the domain vk.com and opens an official representative office in Kiev.

● 2013 - Due to the adoption of the anti-piracy law in the Russian Federation, VK music collections were thoroughly "cleaned up".

● 2014 – Mail.ru The Group buys the VK social network and becomes its sole owner.

● 2015 - VK social network continues to develop and improve. The first "VK Fest" and a new section "VK Products" were launched. In addition, there is the opening of its own "online university" for the training of programmers.

● 2016 – The launch of the "smart feed" in news sections (an algorithm that changes the order of news, displaying interesting entries above the rest), the legalization of music posted on the site, the launch of the "Money Transfers" service, the addition of the "Stories" format. The design and menu were updated and transformed.

● 2017 – VK can conduct online broadcasts, Stories are updated. Now it becomes available for users to add interactive virtual masks that can be applied to the face in real time.

● 2018 – It becomes possible to add articles and long reads. Encrypted voice messages and video calls are launched in messages. In addition, the VK Pay payment platform started to work and there is a presentation of a platform for the development of mini apps based on the VK Apps application.

● 2019 – VK launches sales of goods from AliExpress and tests its own VK Me messenger.

● 2020 – It becomes possible to create group video calls. The new section "Clips" appeared. VK presents a single subscription to VK Combo paid services.

● 2021 – VK presents the voice assistant Marusya, as well as VK Video becoming a full-fledged video hosting (SMMX.ru, 2022).

Appendix 2. Study 1. In-depth interview design

Interview in Russian

ВСТУПЛЕНИЕ
Добрый день! Меня зовут Мария. Я провожу исследование для своей магистерской диссертации по выявлению потребительского восприятия социальных сетей на российском рынке молодежью. Мне важно понять, как люди прореагировали на изменение в пользовании социальными сетями в России. Все данные будут проанализированы в обобщенном виде с сохранением анонимности. В нашей беседе не будет правильных или не правильных ответов. Мне интересно именно Ваше мнение, ощущения, чувства, эмоции и пользовательский опыт. Поэтому постарайтесь отвечать максимально честно и высказывать именно свое мнение, даже если оно отличается от общепринятого. Эта беседа будет записана, но с записями буду работать только я без передачи кому-либо. Вы согласны на запись нашего разговора? -> если да, то мы продолжаем, если нет, то завершаем разговор (вся речь выше должна быть в начале записи, вместе с явным согласием на запись от участника).
ВВОДНАЯ ЧАСТЬ. О СЕБЕ И СВОЕМ ПОЛЬЗОВАНИИ СОЦИАЛЬНЫМИ СЕТЯМИ

1. Расскажите о себе. Сколько Вам лет?

2. Откуда Вы?

3. Вы сейчас работаете или учитесь? Где?

4. Вы активный или пассивный пользователь социальных сетей? Почему?

5. У вас открытый или закрытый профиль в социальных сетях?

6. Сколько времени ежедневно вы проводите в социальных сетях?

7. Сколько у вас друзей и подписчиков в тех социальных сетях, которыми вы пользуетесь?

ПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНЫМИ СЕТЯМИ СЕЙЧАС

1. Какими социальными сетями Вы пользуетесь на данный момент?

2. Для чего вы используете социальные сети?

3. Вы следите за блогерами? На каких социальных платформах Вы следите за ними?

4. Что Вас привлекает в выбранных Вами социальных сетях?

5. У Вас есть какие-либо трудности в пользовании Вашими любимыми социальными сетями?

6. Какую роль социальные сети играют в Вашей жизни?

ОПЫТ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ

1. Какая была Ваша первая социальная сеть и почему? Опишите свой пользовательский опыт перемещения из одной социальной сети в другую. Почему Вы пользуетесь именно этими социальными сетями, а не другими?

ПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНЫМИ СЕТЯМИ ДО МАРТА 2022 ГОДА

1. Какими социальными сетями Вы пользовались до марта 2022 года?
2. Как блокировка некоторых социальных сетей в России повлияла на Вас? Что Вы испытывали/чувствовали? Что Вы чувствуете сейчас?
3. Почему Вы перестали пользоваться некоторыми социальными сетями? // Почему Вы до сих пор пользуетесь некоторыми социальными сетями даже несмотря на блокировку?
4. Вы удалили заблокированные социальные сети? Почему? Почему нет?

ОТНОШЕНИЕ К СОЦИАЛЬНЫМ СЕТЯМ
1. Как вы считаете, блокировка некоторых социальных сетей повлияла на развитие этой социальной сети? Как блокировка некоторых социальных сетей повлияла на развитие социальных сетей, которые н были заблокированы? Что изменилось?
2. Опишите Вашу идеальную социальную сеть. Какие функции или особенности должны присутствовать в Вашей идеальной сети?

Interview in English

Introduction
Good afternoon! My name is Mariia. I am conducting research for my master's thesis on identifying the consumer perception of social networks in the Russian market by young people. It is important for me to understand how people reacted to the change in the use of social networks in Russia. All data will be analyzed in a generalized form while maintaining anonymity. There will be no right or wrong answers in our conversation. I am interested in your opinion, feelings, emotions, and user experience. Therefore, try to answer as honestly as possible and express your opinion, even if it differs from the generally accepted one.
This conversation will be recorded, but only I will work with the recordings without transferring them to anyone. Do you agree to record our conversation? -> if yes, then we continue, if not, then we end the conversation (the entire speech above should be at the beginning of the recording, along with the explicit consent to the recording from the participant).

INTRODUCTORY PART. ABOUT YOU AND YOUR USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS
1. Tell me about yourself. How old are you?   2. Where are you from?   3. Are you currently working or studying?   4. Are you an active or passive user of social networks? Why?   5. Do you have an open or closed social media profile?   6. How much time do you spend on social networks every day?   7. How many friends and followers do you have on the social networks you use?
CURRENT SOCIAL NETWORKS USAGE
1. Which social networks do you use now?   2. What do you use social networks for?   3. Do you follow bloggers? What social platforms do you follow them on?   4. What attracts you to your chosen social networks?   5. Do you have any difficulties in using your favorite social networks? Which one?   6. What role do social networks play in your life?
EXPERIENCE USING SOCIAL NETWORKS
1. What was your first social network and why? Describe your user experience of moving from one social network to another. Why do you use these social networks and not others?
USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS UNTIL MARCH 2022
1. Which social networks did you use before March 2022?   2. How did the blocking of some social networks in Russia affect you? What did you experience/feel? How do you feel now?   3. Why have you stopped using some social networks? // Why do you still use some social networks even though you are blocked?   4. Have you deleted blocked social networks? Why? Why not?
ATTITUDE TO SOCIAL NETWORKS
1. Do you think the blocking of some social networks has affected the development of this social network? How did the blocking of some social networks affect the development of social networks that were previously blocked? What has changed?   2. Describe your ideal social network. What functions or features should be present in your ideal network?

Appendix 3. Study 1. In-depth interview results

Theme	Code	Code definition	Result	Quotes
Social Network Usage	Current Social Network Usage	List of social media platforms currently used	**Currently used:** VK, Telegram, (Instagram[36]*, Facebook* with the less intensity)	*"Currently I am following VK, WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram*, Facebook*, and Viber"*
	Past Social Network Usage	List of social media platforms used by respondent before March 2022	**Used before March 2022:** VK, Telegram, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Tik-Tok	*"Previously, I used the same social networks, but my frequency to follow banned media decreased".*
Reasons to Follow Social Networks	Reasons for Social Network Usage	Categories of reasons for social media use	• Personal communication, • Interaction with particular people, • Information and news consumption, • Entertainment, • Following influencers and bloggers, • Professional networking.	*"It's probably more for time passing and communication. Also, for example, I am very distracted from problems in life when I sit on social networks. It helps me to forget reality".*
	Reasons to Use Particular Social Network	Categories of reasons for particular social media use (for example, VK, Instagram*, Facebook*, Twitter* etc.).	**VK:** • Interaction with particular people that are not following any other social network, • Music subscription, • Habit due to long usage (even though dissatisfaction with interface, ads, and a lot many other features. **Telegram:** • Information and news consumption, • Unique interface and special formats (circle videos, gifs). **Instagram*:** • Entertainment, • Awareness what is going on, • Fascinated with design, easiness of posting, story creation and new format of reels. **Facebook*:** • Unique Content, • Entertainment (games),	• *"VK became as a habit for me. I feel some special bonding with it and do not want to leave it, because it has a lot of important memories for me".* • *"Nowadays, I follow Telegram the most because it has important for me news channels..".* • *"Stories and reels are my personal love on Instagram*. I also like how space there is organized, and I can post something without some specific knowledge of photography, photoshop and so on".*

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			• Account to register on third-party applications, • Necessity to be presented on every social network.	• *"I use Facebook[37]* primary to have an account to register on other websites".*
Bloggers and Influencers	Following Bloggers and Influencers	Following bloggers and influencers and on which social media platforms they were and are presented	25% of respondents follow bloggers that previously were posting on Instagram*, but currently shifted to Telegram	*"My favorite blogger is "Katya. Pharmacist." She used to be on Instagram*, and then she switched to Telegram and now I'm following her in Telegram".*
Difficulties to use Social Network	Difficulties in Social Network Use	Categories of difficulties encountered in using social network	Difficulties with VPN due to: • VPN apps consume a lot of data, • Work properly only for a short period, • Create problems with mobile phones functioning.	*"I used to forget to switch off VPN and as a result my relatives could not call me. It creates a lot of inconvenience for me. This is why now I rare visit Instagram*".*
Role of Social Network	Role of Social Network in Life	Identify which role – primary or secondary- social networks play in respondents' lives	• For Millenials social networks play secondary role in life, • For Zoomers social networks play primary role in life.	*"I understand that I have a bad habit of scrolling news feed every morning and every evening but cannot resist to do it".*
Evolution of Social Network Usage	Behavioral Pattern to Switch to New Social Network	Description of respondent's first social media platform and further switching to new ones with identification the reasons for it	• Moyi Mir –>VK -> Instagram* (or Facebook* sometimes), • The main reason to register – popularity at particular moment of time.	*"My first social network was "Moyi Mir". Then around 2006 I shifted to VK, because it was very popular that time. Afterwards, all my friends started to speak about Instagram*, and I decided to also register there even though initially I was quite skeptical about it".*
Social Network Use after the Ban	Influence of Social Network Ban	Description of respondent's feeling during the ban and after the ban of international	**Respondents' feelings:** • Indifference and stopped usage, • Indifference and continued usage,	*I still use Instagram*. This situation with the ban was sad for me and I have a desire to return everything*

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		social networks and reaction strategy identification	• Nostalgic, desire to return back with stopped usage, • Nostalgic, desire to return back with continued usage, • Relief and happiness with stopped usage, • Anger and disappointment with continued usage.	*how it was previously. Probably this is why I still occasionally log in to Instagram[38]*"*.
	Usage of Banned Social Networks	Identification of deletion, stopped or continued usage of banned social media with definition of reasons to do so.	**Reasons to continued usage:** • Particular people, • Alternative point of view. **Reasons to stopped usage:** • VPN inconvenience, • Active civil position.	• *"My sister use only Instagram*. If I would like to get to know how she is doing I need to follow Instagram*"*. • *"I tried for several weeks to switch on and off VPN, but it is too cumbersome, especially because I always forget to switch it off. Therefore, I decided to stop my usage of Instagram*"*.
	Influence of Ban on Social Network Development	Description of respondents' observations how the ban of international social media influenced their development	Trends: • Shift from Instagram* to VK and Telegram, • New features development on VK and Telegram, • Less interesting Content on Instagram*.	*"I don't know whether it is not or previously it also was the case, but VK copied a lot of features that are there on Instagram*. Before the ban I never came across to it".*
Ideal Social Network	Features of Ideal Social Network	Description of features that ideal social network should have	Combination of VK, Instagram, and Telegram features – ideal social network	*"I would like to have combination of VK, Instagram*, and Telegram in my ideal social network. All visual designs I will take from Instagram*, form VK I will take music and people with whom I*

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				interact the most, finally, Telegram I love for video circles and ability to create separate folders and chats and hide them".

Appendix 4. Study 2. Online survey design

Survey in Russian

ВСТУПЛЕНИЕ
Привет! Меня зовут Маша и я провожу исследование для своей магистерской диссертации. Мне нужна ваша помощь! Я прошу вас честно ответить на вопросы в этой анкете. Все данные будут анализироваться анонимно. Вопросы очень простые – они про вас и про то, как вы относитесь к социальным сетям на российском рынке! Приятный бонус: среди всех прошедших опрос будет разыгрываться 2 подписки на ВК музыку на 3 месяца и 1 сертификат Озон. *В данном опросе есть упоминания социальных сетей Фейсбук[39]* и Инстаграм*, которые принадлежат компании Meta*, признанной экстремистской организацией и запрещенной в РФ.*
ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ

Перечислите все социальные сети, которыми вы пользовались до марта 2022 г. (Множественный выбор)
    ● Инстаграм*
    ● ВКонтакте
    ● Телеграмм
    ● Фейсбук*
    ● Тик-Ток
    ● Одноклассники

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- Твиттер
- Другое

Какую одну социальную сеть вы назвали бы своей основной до марта 2022 г.? (Один ответ)

- Инстаграм[40]*
- ВКонтакте
- Телеграмм
- Фейсбук*
- Тик-Ток
- Одноклассники
- Твиттер*
- Другое

Какими социальными сетями вы продолжаете пользоваться сейчас? (Множественный выбор)

- Инстаграм*
- ВКонтакте
- Телеграмм
- Фейсбук*
- Тик-Ток
- Одноклассники
- Твиттер*
- Другое

Какой из перечисленных социальных сетей вы пользовались АКТИВНЕЕ ДРУГИХ из этого списка до марта 2022 г. (Один ответ)

- Инстаграм*
- Фейсбук*
- Тик-Ток
- Твиттер*

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СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ СЕТЬ, КОТОРОЙ ВЫ ПОЛЬЗОВАЛИСЬ АКТИВНЕЕ ДРУГИХ. *Следующий блок вопросов будет про социальную сеть, которую вы указали в предыдущем вопросе*

Уточните, как именно Вы пользовались этой социальной сетью? (Множественный выбор)

- Читал(-а) новостную ленту
- Смотрел(-а)/ читал(-а) блогеров
- Лайкал(-а) другие посты/ фотографии/ видео
- Делал(-а) репосты интересной информации
- Вел(-а) собственный блог/ сообщество
- Создавал(-а) контент для других пользователей
- Писал(-а) комментарии
- Смотрел(-а) видео/ фотографии
- Выкладывал(-а) видео / фотографии
- Использовал(-а) аккаунт для регистрации в сторонних приложениях
- Совершал(-а) покупки
- Следил(-а) за новостями любимых брендов
- Общался(-лась) с друзьями в личных сообщениях/ беседах/ чатах
- Другое

Отметьте, насколько вы согласны со следующими утверждениями относительно Вашего опыта пользования этой социальной сетью до марта 2022 г. (Один ответ в каждой строке)

	Полностью не согласен	Частично не согласен	Нейтрален	Частично согласен	Полностью согласен
Я думаю, что использование этой социальной сети - хорошая идея.					

Я положительно отношусь к этой социальной сети					
Я думаю, что интересно использовать эту социальную сеть					
Я думаю, что использование этой социальной сети было выгодно					
Я думаю, что опыт использования этой социальной сети был приятен					

Отметьте утверждение, которое вас характеризует в отношении к этой социальной сети. (Один ответ)

- Я перестал(а) пользоваться этой социальной сетью в марте 2022г.
- Я стал(а) пользоваться этой социальной сетью меньше -> переход на дополнительный вопрос
- Мое пользование этой социальной сетью никак не изменилось
- Я стал(а) пользоваться этой социальной сетью активнее -> переход на дополнительный вопрос
- Другое

(Дополнительный вопрос) Уточните, что именно изменилось в Вашем пользовании этой социальной сетью с марта 2022 г.? (Один ответ в каждой строке)

	Делаю чаще	Не изменилось	Делаю реже

Читаю новостную ленту			
Смотрю/ читаю блогеров			
Лайкаю другие посты/ фотографии/ видео			
Делаю репосты интересной информации			
Веду собственный блог/ сообщество			
Создаю контент для других пользователей			
Пишу комментарии			
Смотрю видео/ фотографии			
Выкладываю видео / фотографии			
Использую аккаунт для регистрации в сторонних приложениях			
Совершаю покупки			

Слежу за новостями любимых брендов			
Общаюсь с друзьями в личных сообщениях/ беседах/ чатах			

ОТНОШЕНИЕ К БЛОКИРОВКЕ НЕКОТОРЫХ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ. *Ваше отношение к ограничению пользования этой социальной сетью. Та социальная сеть, которую вы выбирали из вариантов ответа: Инстаграм[41]*, Фейсбук*, Тик-Ток, Твиттер.*

Я испытываю чувство дискомфорта в связи с ограничением в пользовании этой социальной сетью, но уже смирился (лась). (Один ответ)

- Полностью не про меня
- Частично не про меня
- Не знаю
- Частично про меня
- Полностью про меня

Для меня ограничение в использовании этой социальной сети произошло безболезненно. (Один ответ)

- Полностью не про меня
- Частично не про меня
- Не знаю
- Частично про меня
- Полностью про меня

Я испытываю резко негативные чувства в связи с ограничением в использовании этой социальной сети. (Один ответ)

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[41] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

- Полностью не про меня
- Частично не про меня
- Не знаю
- Частично про меня
- Полностью про меня

ПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНЫМИ СЕТЯМИ СЕЙЧАС. *Давайте теперь поговорим о вашем пользовании социальными сетями сейчас*

Какую социальную сеть вы назвали бы своей основной на данный момент? (Один ответ)

- Инстаграм[42]*
- ВКонтакте
- Телеграмм
- Фейсбук*
- Тик-Ток
- Одноклассники
- Твиттер*
- Другое

Пользовались ли вы социальной сетью ВКонтакте в последние 6 месяцев? (Один ответ)

- Да (переход к разделу - пользователи ВКонтакте)
- Нет (переход к разделу - не пользователи ВКонтакте)

ПОЛЬЗОВАТЕЛИ ВКОНТАКТЕ. *Отношение к ВКонтакте*

Отметьте, насколько вы согласны со следующими утверждениями: Я думаю, что социальная сеть ВКонтакте… (Один ответ в каждой строке)

	Полностью не согласен	Частично не согласен	Нейтрален	Частично согласен	Полностью согласен

---

[42] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

Доставляет мне удовольствие					
Удовлетворяет мои потребности					
Приятна					
Полезна					
Важна					

ПОЛЬЗОВАТЕЛИ ВКОНТАКТЕ. *Интенсивность взаимодействия с ВКонтакте*

Ответьте на вопросы, связанные с вашим пользованием ВКонтакте. (Один ответ в каждой строке)

	Никогда	Редко	Иногда	Часто	Всегда
Читаю новостную ленту					
Смотрю/ читаю блогеров					
Лайкаю другие посты/ фотографии/ видео					
Делаю репосты интересной информации					

Веду собственный блог/ сообщество				
Создаю контент для других пользователей				
Создаю контент для других пользователей				
Пишу комментарии				
Смотрю видео/ фотографии				
Выкладываю видео / фотографии				
Использую аккаунт для регистрации в сторонних приложениях				
Совершаю покупки				

Слежу за новостями любимых брендов					
Общаюсь с друзьями в личных сообщениях/ беседах / чатах					
Другое					

ПОЛЬЗОВАТЕЛИ ВКОНТАКТЕ. *Удовлетворенность ВКонтакте. Оцените свою удовлетворённость социальной сетью ВКонтакте*

Я доволен своим взаимодействием с ВКонтакте (Один ответ)
- Полностью не согласен
- Частично не согласен
- Нейтрально
- Частично согласен
- Полностью согласен

Информационное наполнение ВКонтакте соответствует моим потребностям (Один ответ)
- Полностью не согласен
- Частично не согласен
- Нейтрально
- Частично согласен
- Полностью согласен

В целом, я доволен(а) ВКонтакте (Один ответ)
- Полностью не согласен

- Частично не согласен

- Нейтрально

- Частично согласен

- Полностью согласен

Если в трех предыдущих вопросах вы поставили не максимальную оценку, напишите, чем именно вы не удовлетворены? (Открытый вопрос)

Что вам не нравится в социальной сети ВКонтакте? (Множественный выбор)
- Недостаточный функционал

- Визуальное оформление

- Люди с одной точкой зрения

- Люди с разной точкой зрения

- Клипы

- Истории

- Платная музыка

- Отсутствие людей, с которыми я общаюсь чаще всего

- Другое

НЕ ПОЛЬЗОВАТЕЛИ ВКОНТАКТЕ.

Почему вы не пользуетесь / перестали пользоваться социальной сетью ВКонтакте? (Открытый вопрос)

Напишите, чем вы не удовлетворены в социальной сети ВКонтакте (Открытый вопрос)

Что вам не нравится в социальной сети ВКонтакте? (Множественный выбор)
- Недостаточный функционал

- Визуальное оформление

- Люди с одной точкой зрения

- Люди с разной точкой зрения

- Клипы

- Истории
- Платная музыка
- Отсутствие людей, с которыми я общаюсь чаще всего
- Другое

Что смогло бы побудить вас начать пользоваться социальной сетью ВКонтакте? (Открытый вопрос)

ДЕМОГРАФИЯ. *Этот блок вопросов про ваше пользование социальными сетями в целом и ваши демографические характеристики*

Ответьте на вопросы, связанные с вашим взаимодействием с контентом в социальных сетях (Один ответ в каждой строке)

	Никогда	Редко	Иногда	Часто	Всегда
Вы читаете новостную ленту в социальных сетях и новости в мессенджерах					
Вы смотрите/читаете блогеров в социальных сетях					
Вы читаете отзывы о компаниях/продуктах в социальных сетях					
Вы реагируете на отзывы о компаниях/продуктов других людей в социальных сетях					
Вы читаете отзывы о компаниях/продуктах в социальных сетях					
Вы реагируете на отзывы о компаниях/продуктов других людей					

в социальных сетях					
Вы реагируете на посты в соц. сетях «лайками»					
Вы делаете репосты интересной информации в соц. сетях					
Вы ведете собственный блог в социальных сетях (Instagram*[43], YouTube, Facebook*, пр.)					
Вы публикуете созданные вами тексты, стихи, музыку в социальных сетях					
Вы создаете контент для чужих социальных страниц					
Вы играете в игры в социальных сетях					

Ответьте на вопросы, связанные с вашим взаимодействием с другими пользователями в социальных сетях (Один ответ в каждой строке)

	Никогда	Редко	Иногда	Часто	Всегда
Вы общаетесь с другими пользователями в публичных чатах, форумах					
Вы общаетесь с другими пользователи в личных сообщениях (включая директ в Инстаграме*)					

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[43] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

Вы оставляете комментарии к постам других пользователей, компаний, блогеров в соц. сетях публично					
Вы пишите комментарии, выражаете свое мнение о постах других пользователей, компаний, блогеров в соц. сетях в личных сообщениях (включая директ в Инстаграме*)					

Ответьте на вопросы, связанные с вашим взаимодействием с компаниями в социальных сетях (Один ответ в каждой строке)

	Никогда	Редко	Иногда	Часто	Всегда
Вы отмечаете в соц. сетях бренды, магазины, когда делаете пост (не рекламный)					
Вы делитесь информацией о компании/продукте в своем личном блоге/на личной странице					
Вы защищаете свои любимые компании при обсуждении в социальных сетях					
Вы участвуете в конкурсах и розыгрышах, которые проводятся в соц. сетях вне зависимости от вашего отношения к компании					
Вы участвуете в конкурсах и розыгрышах, которые проводятся в соц. сетях только если конкурсы проводятся любимой компанией					

Вы участвуете в конкурсах и розыгрышах, которые проводятся в соц. сетях только если конкурсы проводятся известными блогерами				
Вы используете купоны, скидки, промокоды которые предоставляют онлайн-магазины и службы доставки в социальных сетях				
Вы пользуетесь онлайн-переводами денег в соц. сетях				

Укажите год вашего рождения? (открытый вопрос)

Укажите ваш пол (Один ответ)
- Мужской
- Женский

Укажите уровень своего образования (Один ответ)
- Неполное среднее
- Среднее
- Среднее специальное
- Неполное высшее
- Высшее
- Другое

Как бы вы охарактеризовали материальное положение своей семьи (Один ответ)
- Нам не всегда достаточно денег даже на еду
- У нас хватает денег на еду, но купить одежду для нас - серьезная проблема
- Нам хватает на еду и одежду, но купить телевизор, холодильник или стиральную машину нам будет сложно
- Мы можем купить основную бытовую технику, но на автомобиль нам не хватит

- Наших средств хватит на все, кроме таких дорогих приобретений, как квартира или загородный дом
- У нас нет никаких финансовых затруднений. При необходимости мы можем купить квартиру или дом

Укажите регион своего проживания (Один ответ)
- Москва
- Санкт-Петербург
- Центральный Федеральный Округ (кроме Москвы)
- Северо-Западный Федеральный Округ (кроме Санкт-Петербурга)
- Приволжский Федеральный Округ
- Уральский Федеральный Округ
- Южный Федеральный Округ
- Дальневосточный Федеральный Округ
- Сибирский Федеральный Округ
- Северо-Кавказский Федеральный Округ

Сколько времени вы проводите в социальных сетях ежедневно? (Один ответ)
- 15–30 минут
- 30–60 минут
- 1–2 часа
- 3–4 часа
- Больше 5 часов

Для чего вы чаще всего используете социальные сети? (Один ответ)
- Для общения
- Для времяпровождения (развлекательный контент)
- Для чтения новостей (новостной контент)
- Для отслеживания образовательного контента

С какого устройства вы чаще всего заходите в социальные сети? (Один ответ)
- Мобильный телефон

• Компьютер
• Ноутбук
• Планшет

Все! Спасибо большое за помощь! Желаю вам прекрасного дня!

Если вам будет интересно узнать результаты исследования и поучаствовать в розыгрыше призов, то оставь мне свою электронную почту:

PS: розыгрыш будет проводиться с помощью рандомайзера с 3 по 7 апреля

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSepcdyFQsk8jMsSm2tbQla6vj9qdeor5ris aFfYmgKORBMFJA/viewform

Survey in English

INTRODUCTION
Hi!
My name is Masha and I am doing research for my master's thesis. I need your help! I ask you to answer the questions in this questionnaire honestly. All data will be analyzed anonymously. The questions are very simple – they are about you and your feelings regarding social networks in the Russian market!
A nice bonus: among all those who passed the survey, 2 subscriptions to VK music for 3 months and 1 Ozone certificate will be played.
In this survey, there are mentions of social networks Facebook[44]* and Instagram*, which belong to Meta, a recognized extremist organization and banned in the Russian Federation.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA
List all the social networks you used before March 2022 (Multiple Choice)
• Instagram*
• VK
• Telegrams
• Facebook*
• Tik-Tok
• Odnoklassniki
• Twitter*

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[44] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

• Other

Which one social network would you call your main one before March 2022? (One answer)

• Instagram[45]*

• VK

• Telegrams

• Facebook*

• Tik-Tok

• Odnoklassniki

• Twitter*

• Other

Which social networks do you continue to use now? (Multiple choice)

• Instagram*

• VK

• Telegrams

• Facebook*

• Tik-Tok

• Odnoklassniki

• Twitter*

• Other

Which of the listed social networks did you use MORE ACTIVELY than OTHERS from this list before March 2022 (One answer)

• Instagram*

• Facebook*

• Tik-Tok

• Twitter*

• None

A SOCIAL NETWORK THAT YOU HAVE USED MORE ACTIVELY THAN OTHERS. *The next block of questions will be about the social network that you specified in the previous question.*

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[45] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

Please specify how exactly you used this social network? (Multiple choice)

• Read the news feed

• Watch/ read bloggers

• Like other posts/ photos/ videos

• Made reposts of interesting information

• Have own blog/community

• Create content for other users

• Write comments

• Watch videos/photos

• Post videos / photos

• Use an account to register in third-party applications

• Make purchases

• Follow the news of favorite brands

• Communicate with friends in private messages/conversations/ chats

• Other

Note how much you agree with the following statements regarding your experience using this social network before March 2022 (One answer in each line)

	Completely disagree	Partially disagree	Neutral	Partially agree	Completely agree
I think using this social network is a good idea.					
I have a positive attitude to this social network					
I think it's interesting to use this social network					
I think using this social network was beneficial					
I think the experience of using this social network was pleasant					

Note the statement that characterizes you in relation to this social network. (One answer)

• I stopped use this social network in March 2022

• I started using this social network less -> go to the additional question

• My use of this social network has not changed in any way

• I began to use this social network more actively -> go to the additional question

• Other

(Additional question) Please specify what exactly has changed in your use of this social network since March 2022? (One answer in each line)

	Make more	Hasn't changed	Make less
I'm reading a news feed			
I watch/read bloggers			
I like other posts/ photos/ videos			
I make reposts of interesting information			
I have my own blog/ community			
I create content for other users			
I write comments			
I watch videos/ photos			
I upload videos / photos			
I use an account to register in third-party applications			
I make purchases			
I follow the news of my favorite brands			
I communicate with friends in private messages/ conversations/ chats			

ATTITUDE TO THE BLOCKING OF SOME SOCIAL NETWORKS. *Your attitude to the restriction of the use of this social network. The social network that you chose from the answer options: Instagram[46]*, Facebook*, Tik-Tok, Twitter.*

I feel a sense of discomfort due to the restriction in the use of this social network, but I have already resigned myself. (One answer)

• Totally not about me

• Partly not about me

• I don't know

---

[46] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

• Partly about me

• Completely about me

For me, the restriction in using this social network happened painlessly. (One answer)

• Totally not about me

• Partly not about me

• I don't know

• Partly about me

• Completely about me

I have sharply negative feelings in connection with the restriction in the use of this social network. (One answer)

• Totally not about me

• Partly not about me

• I don't know

• Partly about me

• Completely about me

USING SOCIAL NETWORKS NOW. *Let's talk about your social media usage now*

Which social network would you call your main one now? (One answer)

• Instagram[47]*

• VK

• Telegrams

• Facebook*

• Tik-Tok

• Odnoklassniki

• Twitter*

• Other

Have you used the VK social network in the last 6 months? (One answer)

• Yes (go to the section - VK users)

• No (go to the section - not VK users)

VK USERS. *Attitude to VK*

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[47] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

Note how much you agree with the following statements: I think that the social network VK... (One answer in each line)

	Completely disagree	Partially disagree	Neutral	Partially agree	Completely agree
Gives me pleasure					
Satisfies my needs					
Is pleasant					
Is useful					
Is important					

VK USERS. *Intensity of Engagement with VK*

Answer the questions related to your use of VK. (One answer per line)

	Never	Rare	Sometimes	Often	Always
I read a news feed					
I watch/read bloggers					
I like other posts/ photos/ videos					
I make reposts of interesting information					
I have my own blog/ community					
I create content for other users					
I write comments					
I watch videos/ photos					
I upload videos / photos					
I use an account to register in third-party applications					
I make purchases					
I follow the news of my favorite brands					
I communicate with friends in private messages / conversations / chats					
Other					

VK USERS. *Satisfaction with VK. Rate your satisfaction with the VK social network*

I am happy with my interaction with VK (One answer)

• Totally disagree

• Partially disagree

• Neutral

• Partially agree

• Totally agree

VK content meets my needs (One answer)

• Totally disagree

• Partially disagree

• Neutral

• Partially agree

• Totally agree

In general, I am satisfied with VK (One answer)

• Totally disagree

• Partially disagree

• Neutral

• Partially agree

• Totally agree

If you did not give the maximum rating in the three previous questions, write down what exactly you are not satisfied with? (Open question)

What do you dislike about the VK social network? (Multiple choice)

• Insufficient functionality

• Visual design

• People with the same point of view

• People with different points of view

• Clips

• Stories

• Paid music

• The absence of people with whom I communicate most often

• Other

NON-VK USERS.

Why don't you use /stop using the VK social network? (Open question)

Write down why you are not satisfied with the VK social network (Open question)

What do you dislike about the VK social network? (Multiple choice)

• Insufficient functionality

• Visual design

• People with the same point of view

• People with different points of view

• Clips

• Stories

• Paid music

• The absence of people with whom I communicate most often

• Other

What could motivate you to start using the VK social network? (Open question)

DEMOGRAPHICS. *This block of questions is about your use of social networks in general and your demographic characteristics*

Answer questions related to your interaction with social media content (One answer per line)

	Never	Rare	Sometimes	Often	Always
You read the news feed on social networks and news in messengers					
You watch/read bloggers on social networks					
You read reviews about companies/products on social networks					
You respond to reviews of other people about companies/products on social networks					
You read reviews about companies/products on social networks					
You react to posts in social networks with "likes"					

You make reposts of interesting information in social networks. networks					
You run your own blog on social networks (Instagram[48]*, YouTube, Facebook*, etc.)					
You publish your created texts, poems, music on social networks					

Answer questions related to your interaction with other users on social networks (One answer per line)

	Never	Rare	Sometimes	Often	Always
You communicate with other users in public chats, forums					
You communicate with other users in private messages (including direct message on Instagram*)					
You leave comments to posts of other users, companies, bloggers in social networks publicly					
You write comments, express your opinion about the posts of other users, companies, bloggers in social networks in personal messages (including direct message on Instagram*)					

Answer the questions related to your interaction with companies on social networks (One answer in each line)

	Never	Rare	Sometimes	Often	Always
You mark brands, stores, when you make a post on social networks (not advertising)					

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[48] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

You share information about the company/product in your personal blog/ on your personal page					
You protect your favorite companies when discussing on social networks					
You participate in contests and sweepstakes that are held on social networks, regardless of your attitude to the company					
You participate in contests and sweepstakes that are held on social networks only if contests are conducted by your favorite company					
You participate in contests and sweepstakes that are held on social networks only if contests are conducted by well-known bloggers					
You use coupons, discounts, promo codes provided by online stores and delivery services on social networks					
You use online money transfers on social networks					

When were you born? (Open question)

What is your gender (One answer)
• Male
• Female

What is the level of your education (One answer)
• Incomplete secondary
• Secondary
• Secondary special

• Incomplete higher education

• Higher education

• Other

How would you describe the financial situation of your family (One answer)

• We don't always have enough money even for food

• We have enough money for food, but buying clothes for us is a serious problem

• We have enough money for food and clothes, but it will be difficult for us to buy a TV, refrigerator or washing machine

• We can buy basic household appliances, but we don't have enough for a car

• Our funds will be enough for everything, except for such expensive purchases as an apartment or a country house

• We have no financial difficulties. If necessary, we can buy an apartment or a house

Specify your region of residence (One answer)

• Moscow

• Saint Petersburg

• Central Federal District (except Moscow)

• North-Western Federal District (except St. Petersburg)

• Volga Federal District

• Ural Federal District

• Southern Federal District

• Far Eastern Federal District

• Siberian Federal District

• North Caucasus Federal District

How much time do you spend on social media every day? (One answer)

• 15-30 minutes

• 30-60 minutes

• 1-2 hours

• 3-4 hours

• More than 5 hours

What do you most often use social networks for? (One answer)			
• For communication			
• For pastime (entertainment content)			
• For reading news (news content)			
• For tracking educational content			
Which device do you use most often to access social networks? (One answer)			
• Mobile phone			
• Computer			
• Laptop			
• Tablet			

That's it! Thank you very much for your help! I wish you a wonderful day!

If you would be interested to know the results of the study and participate in the prize contest, then leave me your email:

P S: the contest will be held using a randomizer from April 3 to 7

Appendix 5. Main characteristics of 3 clusters

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Demographics			
Age	From 23 to 30	From 23 to 30	From 23 to 29
Gender	Female (54%) and Male (46%)	Female (62%) and Male (38%)	Female (52%) and Male (48%)
Top 3 regions of residence	Saint-Petersburg, Central Federal district (except Moscow), Moscow	Saint-Petersburg, North-Western Federal District (except Saint Petersburg), Volga Federal district	Saint-Petersburg, Moscow, South Federal District
Education	Higher	Higher and incomplete higher	Higher
Purpose to use social media	Communication, work	Communication, pastime	Communication, pastime, news
Time spent in social media every day	3-4 hours	1-2 hours	1-2 hours, 3-4 hours
Technographic characteristics			
Content and Company Interaction	**Moderate Content and Company Interaction** **Often/ Sometimes:** read news feed, watch/read bloggers, put likes, protect companies when discussing on social networks **Sometimes:** share	**High Content and Company Interaction** **Often:** read news feed, watch/read bloggers, put likes, protect companies when discussing on social networks, share information	**Low Content and Company Interaction** **Sometimes:** read news feed, watch/read bloggers, put likes **Rare:** protect companies when discussing on social networks, share information about

	information about company/product on personal blog/page	about company/product on personal blog/page	company/product on personal blog/page
Social media use comparison before and after March 2022			
The main social media before March 2022	Telegram	Instagram*[49]	VK
Top 3 platform used before March 2022	Telegram (65) VK (64) Instagram* (56)	Instagram* (105) VK (100) Telegram (96)	Telegram (60) VK (65) Instagram* (63)
The main social media now	Telegram	VK	VK
Top 3 platforms used now	Telegram (65) VK (63) Instagram* (51)	Telegram (104) VK (99) Instagram* (81)	Telegram (60) VK (65) Instagram* (26)
The mostly used social media that is currently banned	Instagram*, Tik-Tok	Instagram*	Instagram*, Tik-Tok
Set of 5 priorities for banned social media use	I liked other posts/ photos/ videos Communicated with friends in private messages/ conversations/ chats Read the news feed Watched/ read bloggers Posted videos / photos	I liked other posts/ photos/ videos Watched/ read bloggers Read the news feed Communicated with friends in private messages/ conversations/ chats Posted videos / photos	Read the news feed I liked other posts/ photos/ videos Posted videos / photos Communicated with friends in private messages/ conversations/ chats Watched/ read bloggers
Reaction to ban			
Attitude towards banned media	Positive	Very positive	Moderate positive
Behavior with relation to the blockage	Don't change their use	Started to use this media less	Started to use this media less Stopped usage of this media
How the behavior changed (for those who started to use banned media less or more)	**Make less:** Repost of interesting information, use an account to register in third-party applications **Hasn't changed:** Read a news feed, watch/read bloggers, like other posts/photos/ videos, have my own blog/community, create content for other users, write comments, upload videos/photos, make purchases, follow news of favorite brands. **Make more:** watch videos/photos, communicate with friends in private messages.	**Make less:** Read a news feed, watch/read bloggers, watch and upload videos/photos, follow news of favorite brands, communicate with friends in private messages. **Hasn't changed:** Repost pf interesting information, have my own blog/community, create content for others, write comments, use an account to register in third-party applications, make purchases.	**Make less:** Read a news feed, watch/read bloggers, like other posts/ photos/ videos, repost interesting information, have my own blog/ community, write comments, watch and upload videos / photos, make purchases, follow the news of favorite brands, communicate with friends in private messages/ conversations. **Hasn't changed:** Create content for other users, use an account to register in third-party applications.
I feel a sense of discomfort due to the restriction in	Feel discomfort, are not resigned	Very discomfortable and not resigned	Don't feel discomfort, are resigned

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[49] *Considered an extremist organization in Russia

the use of this social network, but I have already resigned myself.			
For me, the restriction in the use of this social network was painful.	Not so painful, but still, it's there	Very painful	Not painful at all
I have sharply negative feelings in connection with the restriction in the use of this social network	Not sharply negative, but still have negative feelings	Very negative	Not negative at all
Attitude towards VK			
Attitude towards VK	**Moderate Positive** Believe that VK is useful, pleasant to follow, and overall satisfies their needs, however, this social media is not of great importance for them.	**Low positive** Don't find VK very important and useful for them, even though they feel that this social media more or less satisfies their needs and is quite pleasant to follow.	**Very positive** Find VK platform to be a very pleasant and useful one. Majority also stated that it satisfies their needs and is very important to be followed.
Intensity of Engagement with VK			
Intensity of Engagement with VK	**Moderate use** **Always:** Communicate with friends in private messages **Often:** Read news feeds, watch videos/photos **Rare:** like other posts/photos/videos, upload videos/photos	**Low use** **Always:** Communicate with friends in private messages **Often:** Read a news feed **Sometimes:** watch videos/photos, use account to register in third-party applications **Rare:** watch/read bloggers, like other posts/photos/videos, make reposts of interesting information, write comments, upload videos/photos	**High use** **Always:** Communicate with friends in private messages **Often:** Read a news feed **Sometimes:** watch videos/photos, like other posts/photos/videos, use an account to register in third-party applications **Rare:** make reposts of interesting information, watch/read bloggers, write comments, upload videos/photos
Satisfaction with VK			
Satisfaction with VK	**Moderate satisfaction** Representatives partially satisfied with their interaction with VK and the content of VK quite well meets their needs	**Low satisfaction** Representatives are not content with their interactions with the platform and feel that the content provided does not sufficiently meet their needs.	**High satisfaction** Representatives are extremely pleased with their interactions with the platform and feel that the content provided meets their needs exceptionally well.
Dissatisfaction with VK	Too many new services Difficulties to navigate through Slow down because of	Not user-friendly interface Lack of foreign content Poor recommendation algorithm of content preferred	Paid music Advertisement Too many updates Slowdown of time response

	updates Content doesn't meet needs	Too many copies pasted from another platforms	from mobile app Abundance of extra services