

Social network BeReal shares unfiltered and unedited moments from our lives—will it last?

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Credit: Ketut Subiyanto from Pexels

BeReal hit the social networking scene in late 2019 but didn't take off until downloads started skyrocketing in 2022. So, what is BeReal all

about, and is it here to stay?

BeReal is based in France and was founded by Alexis Barreyat in December 2019. At this stage, it doesn't feature any paid advertising and is funded by venture capital. Although the big names such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram still dominate [global social networking popularity rankings](#), BeReal's rapid growth has grabbed attention this year.

BeReal reached number one on the [iPhone charts](#) for free apps in July 2022 and currently has [more than 21 million active users per month](#).

The platform works by sending one randomly timed notification per day to users and gives them two minutes to take simultaneous photos with the front and back cameras on their phone and share it with friends. Users cannot manipulate the timing of the notification and it's sent at the same time to every global user.

BeReal mandates no filters, no editing, no followers (except friends), and no cheating.

Although users can delay their daily photo, friends will see that the post was late and how many photo attempts were made. On the App Store, the company says "BeReal is your chance to show your friends who you really are, for once."

Reality and gamification

But the risk here is that reality can be boring. To combat this, BeReal has employed several gamification strategies to keep users engaged.

Gamification is the application of game elements in non-gaming contexts, which means the fun parts of games can be applied to other

things, including social media. BeReal uses scarcity (limiting users to one post per day) and mystery (users don't know ahead of time when the notification will appear) to hook users. And like Snapchat, photos disappear after 24 hours. Disappearing media can be an incredibly effective motivator—users check the app regularly because they don't want to miss out.

If you've ever known the devastation of losing a [Snapchat streak](#), you understand how gamification can emotionally engage us. But the trade-off is that gamification strategies can also be addictive.

So, although BeReal is trying to move away from some of the negative cultures (and endless scrolling) that have developed around platforms like Instagram, users could still end up frustrated and tied to their phones, waiting for the daily notification.

Despite potential frustrations, people are nevertheless flocking to BeReal.

What's the big deal with BeReal?

BeReal's growth in 2022 has largely been driven by its [college ambassador program](#) in the United States and United Kingdom, where [college students](#) are recruited as paid ambassadors for the brand, and BeReal's ethos appears to be resonating with users.

In an age when the Instagram algorithm requires some [serious strategy to navigate](#), and influencer culture is dominant, some young people are searching for a different and more authentic online experience. Tired of finding the perfect light or event for an Instagram post, sharing random daily moments on BeReal can be liberating.

Steph, a 27-year-old BeReal user and full-time marketing officer, said

that sometimes when she sees her friends' photos on the app, "it's nice reassurance that I'm not the only one who sits at home and does nothing." She gestures to the validation that [social media](#) users seek (consciously or unconsciously), and her relief in knowing "it's not just me."

Does BeReal have staying power?

Steph explains that although the app has been fun to experiment with, some features can be annoying, such as notifications that pop up in the middle of the night, and difficulty in framing both photos because you can only see one view at a time. "I have a feeling this app may not last," she said.

Reviews on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#) reveal users who love the concept of the app but have been frustrated by technical issues. It's a promising sign that developers have been responsive to these reports, but fixing bugs is just one of several challenges BeReal faces.

For long-term viability, BeReal needs to consider how advertising or other commercial partnerships will appear on the app, and the impact these might have on user experience. Competitors also have their eyes keenly trained on BeReal.

In July 2022, Instagram Dual was launched, which allows users to snap photos with their phone's front and back cameras simultaneously on Reels. Although this feature alone doesn't copy the complete BeReal experience, it's likely only the beginning of competitor pressure.

Ultimately, for an app that by design resists virality and "[doesn't care if you have millions of followers or if you're verified](#)", keeping enough users engaged in the long term could be difficult.

Perhaps the biggest question is, are our daily unfiltered and unedited lives too mundane to keep us coming back for more?

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