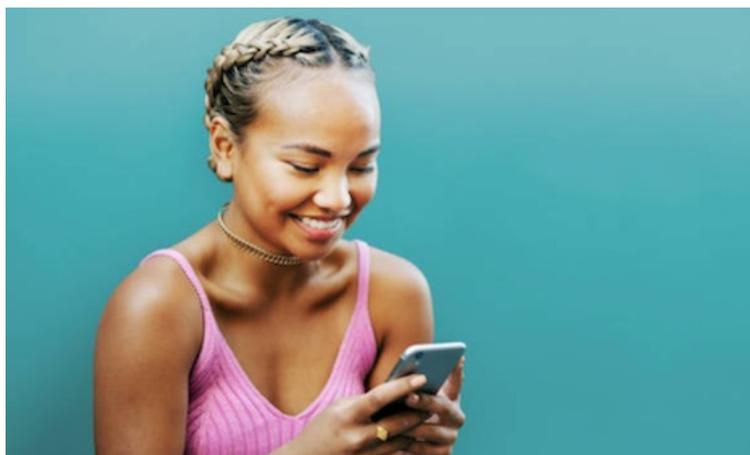


SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

Time to BeReal: engaging young consumers through the new app

August 19, 2022



BeReal harnesses the power of spontaneity and authenticity. Image credit: Getty

By NORA HOWE

As technology progresses more rapidly than ever, new social media channels and apps continuously emerge to appease the likes of younger generations the latest of which is BeReal.

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Developed by Alexis Barreyat and launched in France in 2020, BeReal has skyrocketed in popularity this year, rising to number one in the iOS app store. During a virtual webinar on Aug. 17, creative agency **Movers+Shakers** explored opportunities for brands on BeReal and how they can generate lasting impact through the platform advice luxury brands would be remiss to ignore.

"There is a real shift from only sharing moments that are curated or sculpted to being pushed by the whims of this platform to share real and timely moments," said Tom Hyde, vice president of strategy at Movers+Shakers, Boulder.

Getting to know BeReal

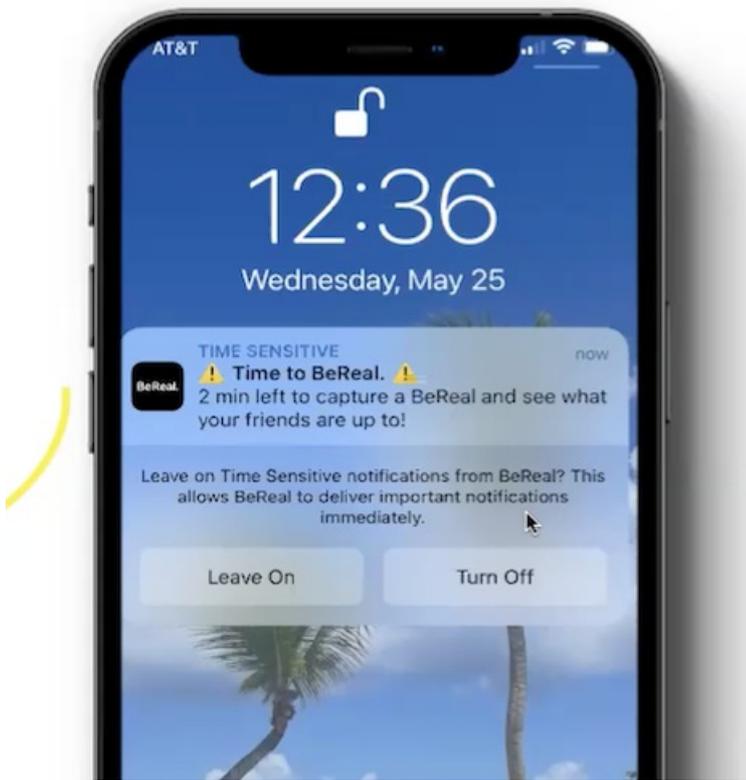
Perhaps a form of resistance to the glossy, highly manufactured appeal of Instagram, younger generations, particularly Gen Z, are looking for more spontaneity and authenticity in their social interactions.

Enter BeReal.

The BeReal app sends a daily notification that prompts users to share a photo of themselves and their exact surroundings within a random two-minute timeframe a stark contrast to platforms like Instagram or even TikTok, which require varying degrees of thoughtfulness and editing.

Since its inception two years ago, BeReal has received 28 million downloads, with 40 percent of U.S. adults ages 18-24 using the app. Notably, it has surpassed TikTok as the number one app on Apple's iOS app store.

So what is the appeal?



Every user receives the BeReal notification at the same time no matter where they are located. Image credit: Movers+Shakers

Unlike its social media predecessors, BeReal offers no filters, no editing software and no way to upload images or videos, encouraging people to present truly unfiltered depictions of their lives.

Arguably accelerated by the collateral effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, personal values have shifted to favor authenticity and transparency, especially among younger generations like Gen Z.

The app prompts users once per day to post a picture of themselves and their surroundings, although the timing varies, so users are unable to anticipate when they can post.

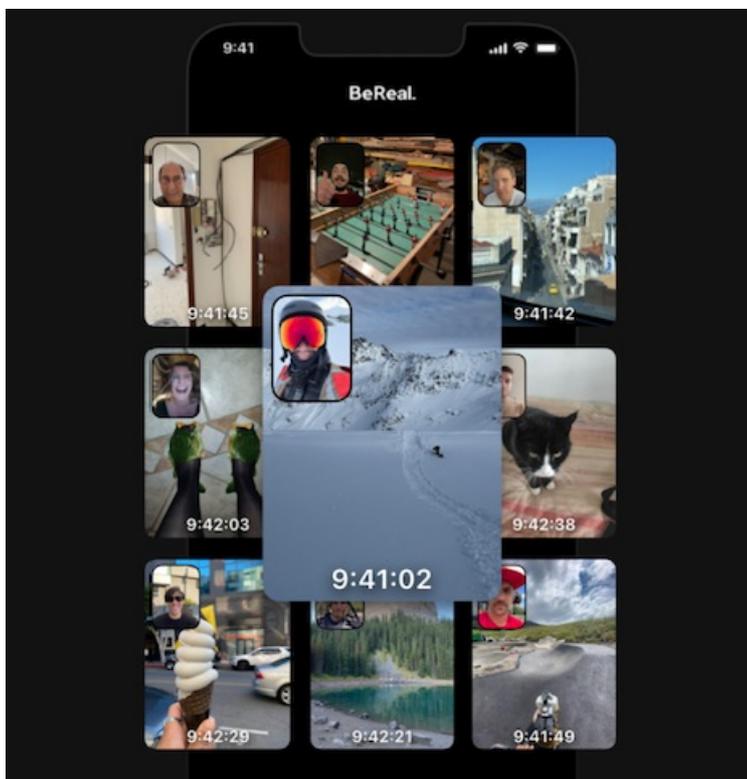
One major difference with BeReal is a user's inability to view other posts without posting their own, ultimately removing the element of "doom scrolling" or "ghost following" present on so many other social platforms.

In other words, users must pay to play figuratively, speaking. There is no financial cost to downloading and using the app.

"We talk about this being, sort of, anti-Instagram or anti-social media because everyone is getting the notification at the same time and is looking at the app for only about 10 minutes, as opposed to scrolling for hours," said AJ Pulverenti, culture strategist at Movers+Shakers, Los Angeles.

As with any new platform or technology, brands remain relatively skeptical of its influence, vitality and profitability, especially when, at its core, the app defies typical marketing strategies and schedules.

At this point, BeReal does not offer advertising services or paid media placements, so it is up to brands to simply create their own content.



Users may only view their friends' BeReals once they have posted for the day. Image credit: BeReal

Some mass-market brands like E.L.F. Cosmetics and Chipotle have taken the plunge, while others like Delta and Pacsun are playfully using the BeReal post format via memes on other platforms like Twitter and Instagram to prove they are keeping up with social media trends.

Craving realness

Social media marketing is no longer about a brand making its presence known on every platform, but instead focusing on what type of content will engage consumers best on which platforms.

Specific social media platforms are becoming more popular and pertinent to brand success, according to a [report](#) from analytics firm ListenFirst. While some platforms, like Facebook, saw less content from brands over the past year, short-form video sharing app TikTok saw a surge of brand-produced content ([see story](#)).

According to a 2021 survey by Forrester, Instagram weekly usage by Gen Z, ages 12-17, fell 4 points from 2020 to 2021, while TikTok weekly usage increased by 13 percent.

Gen Z youth members cited entertainment value, short-form variety and positive self-expression as the top reasons why they prefer TikTok over other apps like Instagram and Snapchat, with Facebook having seemingly disappeared from this young cohort's cultural zeitgeist ([see story](#)).

With BeReal on the rise, however, is it possible that TikTok's filtered authenticity is no longer enough?

"Gen Z's habits on social media and just their value set, in general, all boils down to authenticity," Mr. Pulverenti said. "As digital natives, they were born into the Facebook era, and while they are not using it as much, they assumed certain rules in how to approach social media.

"Now, they are getting over that and moving away from edits, face tunes and filters," he said. "They are really pushing forward with their values first, and that will inform the platforms that they use on a daily basis."