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Information Decluttering in a Connected Age: How to Educate Young Adults.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Date: 21 May 2018

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ETHICS APPROVAL

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee, (17/403 A Paradigm Shift in Minimalism and Information Decluttering: How to Educate Young Adults).

RESEARCH QUESTION

In a busy life of the everyday person who is imbued in technology, where people are overworked and overwhelmed by digital media, how could we look at the impacts of information overload to educate young adults in decluttering from it?

This research question covers all the valuable keywords to begin the research - such as who the intended audience is, what the current problem is, why it is a problem and how the research intends to be approached. The research question is appropriate because it is based on a controversial topic, which aims to solve a problem in a new dimension for a specific audience. It is clear, focused and researchable within the given time frame and location. It is also a topic which can be synthesised from multiple sources to present a unique argument.

ABSTRACT

Among the virtual communities and networks, we create, share and exchange information. For young adults, the excess of information has increasingly become a problem for their personal, behavioural, psychological and performance. Submerged within the use of technology, their patterns of consumption have influenced a shift in their productivity, well-being, work, decision-making and innovation. It is essential to understand the causes and consequences of information overload to address the issues within the research. This study investigates young adult's general use of digital media to ultimately create and refine methods on how to declutter. A group consisting of the same six young adults conducted both a focus group and one-on-one interview. It is predicted that the heavy reliance on digital media usage will be difficult to reduce. The results indicate that the pressure from life stressors forces them to adapt to the demands of technology by altering their daily routines and relationships to fit and favour around technology.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.   AIM AND PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Information is a key resource in our daily lives. It has opened opportunities for us to improve our society, medical care, decision-making, personal development, economic advancement and understanding of our presence and potential future. In the early days, we grew up in small communities where everyone knew of each other. We exchanged personal information by handing out little slips of paper with our phone numbers and addresses on them. But now, you can search people by their name, keep updated about what they are doing and to even find out what their houses look like before even going in. Modern life now is busy, young adults are overworked, and a constant barrage of information pervades almost all aspects of our lives. Many of us have forgotten what silence feels like. Our minds are inundated with data smog–trying to keep up with the age of information that is dominated by technology. We are submerged in the advent of the computer, Internet, mobile technology and social media with its accessibility and immediacy of information. We are absorbed in the constant stream of information, with an obsession to want to know about anything and everything. Although digital media is the catalyst for establishing connections, knowledge and skills, we are, however, coerced by the influence of information presented to us. Consequently, the notions of accuracy and authoritativeness have become ambiguous. "Many of us find that we don't know whom to believe, what is true, what has been modified, and what has been vetted" (Levitin, 2014). Furthermore, the excess of information creates negative impacts on personal, behavioural, psychological and performance issues.

Among the information overload, young adults grew up with the Internet, cell phone and social media. They can easily turn to their smartphone for social, emotional, informational and enjoyment support (Turel & Serenko, 2012). Young adults who are born between the ages of 18 and 29 years old (Menard, 2013) have different values, characteristics, and behaviour compared with previous generations (Eastman, Liu & Gurau, 2012). This generation is technologically savvy and naturally feel confident with using a variety of technologies, such as mobile phones, computer, computer gadgets etc.

(Eastman & Iyer, 2004). However, excessive use and time spent on these activities can also lead to addiction (Turel & Serenko, 2012). It is particularly prevalent among the Internet; extensive research has shown the impacts of excessive data and its effect among young adults. The three major common uses of the Internet for young adults were to search for information (95%), send and receive emails (97%) and to search for multimedia/music (70%). These were followed by shopping (47%), live chat (46%), participating in/searching for discussion forums on topics of interest (37%), blogging (28%) and downloading podcasts or vidcasts (24%) (Theunissen & Theunissen, 2008)

Leading computer scientist researcher and former VP of research at Apple Computer, Nielson compares the increase of information and technology to human-made pollution. This pollution of information overload has manifested to a loss of productivity, additional work hours, and a decline in true "vacation" times disconnected from work (Nielsen, 2003). He found that "a one-minute interruption can easily cost a knowledge worker 10 to 15 minutes of lost productivity, due to the time needed to establish mental context and re-enter the flow state." Similarly, a Pew Foundation study reports that young adults are steeped in digital technology and social media, and that they treat their multi-tasking hand-held gadgets almost like a body part. A shocking 83% of young adults' state that they even sleep with their cell phone. Young adults even prefer Internet networking over telephone-based voice communication (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). Philosopher Mario Bunge states that:

"we all would like to know more and, at the same time, to receive less information. The problem of a worker in today's knowledge industry is not the scarcity of information, but its excess. And to make the time we must use information filters to ignore most of the information aimed at us. We must ignore much to learn a little" (Bunge, 2001).

Attitudes to the seriousness of the problem have remained fairly stable. There is a recurring acknowledgement that the main negative effect for young adults is a decrease of productivity. This is not surprising as literature has described several core traits of young adults to be "special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured, and achieving" (Howe & Strauss, 2003). As a

result of these characteristics, however, they often struggle with independent thinking, decision making, and risk-taking. Taylor & Keeter and Bunge both indicate that young adults have a psychological dependence on being online (Taylor & Keeter, 2010) (Bunge, 2001). This suggests a result of anxiety, particularly when one feels disconnected, thereby leading to a fear of missing out or even pathological internet use (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan & Gladwell, 2013).

Research in information overload often discuss the sacrifice of physical commodities; however, there is a gap for calibrating methods in reducing content exposure from digital media information. This research is interested in how notions, applications and methods might intervene in these overwhelming experiences. The basis of the research is to educate young adults in decluttering from information overload. The ultimate goal is to provide young adults with a set of decluttering methods in the outcome of a graphic book. Particularly, the myriad of digital media will be analysed through conducting a focus group and one-on-one interview to determine their patterns and usage of social media. Through demonstrating the effects and consequences of these approaches, this research highlights the importance to shape communication. It is the position of the researcher that by acknowledging and understanding the impact of digital media in our lives, we might then seek ways to practice living with less complexity and noise, and therefore less distractions.

1.2. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This investigation is generally concerned with examining and understanding the impacts of information overload. Ultimately, in turn, a set of decluttering methods will be constructed after developing, reviewing and then refining them according to the feedback from a selection of young adult participants. Following the introduction, the thesis commences in chapter two with a literature review. This will provide an overview of the following theories: conventional information overload within digital media, social media usage and behaviours based from young adults, the internet of things: attention, communication and connectivity and practices of minimalism.

Chapter three explores the methodology section. A selection of six participants who are young adults between 18-27 years old, proficient in English, active on social media for the past three years and who have responded to the recruitment advertisement was employed for the research. The same participants were involved for both the focus group and interview.

This leads to the data analysis in chapter four, which examines the feedback and implications from the two methods. The focus group is interested in the young adult's general usage and experience of social media, as well as their practice of decluttering. From the discussion, the researcher then developed a set of ten decluttering tools and presented it to the same participants for feedback in a follow-up interview at a different date.

Drawing together the data and feedback, the two sets of decluttering methods will be discussed in chapter five. This section describes the process of the decluttering methods–from planning, concept generation and execution incorporated from personal experience and literature. It consists of two sets of decluttering methods: one set drawn from the focus group discussion and the other set refined from the feedback in the one-on-one interview.

Finally, chapter six will restate the objectives of this research and key findings before presenting the refined decluttering methods in the form of a graphic

book. It will present potential solutions for young adults to declutter, outline the implications of the methodologies, and finally the significance. The chapter will conclude with a self-reflective analysis of the process and outcomes, based on stated criteria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Information Overload: Background

The term "information overload" is a common trope in our digital age (Holliday & Li, 2004). A Google search for "information overload" itself generates more than 1.5 million hits, with the promise of solutions from office supply stores, management consultants and stress relief services among others. Notably, the "perception of and complaints about overload are not unique to our period." Authors from the ancient, medieval, and early modern period have already articulated their concerns about the overabundance of books and shortcoming of memory and time. King Thamus of Egypt (274b–279b) argued that the written word would infect Egyptians with misleading knowledge (Blair, 2011). A major philosophical and literary figure of the Roman Imperial period, Seneca the Younger (c. 4 BC–AD 65), admonished that "the abundance of books is a distraction" and that "too much information could be harmful to your mental health" (Vogt, 2007) (Levitin, 2014). When the printing press was introduced in the mid-1400s, the replacement of hand copying to the transfer of text and images on paper with ink (Briggs & Burke, 2005), envisaged more concerns of the overload. A classical Dutch scholar, Desiderius Erasmus, in 1525, blamed that the "swarms of new books" were a profit motive and regarded the technology as "foolish, ignorant, malignant, libellous and mad". By the late 1600s, intellectuals warned that people would "stop talking to each other, bury themselves in books and pollute their minds with useless and fatuous ideas" (Blair, 2011). However, it wasn't until the early 1970's which a significant shift in access to information introduced the 'digital transition'. The trend provoked with the rise of the Internet, and more specifically the World Wide Web in the 1990's and later to the social networking platform of Web 2.0 (Bawden & Robinson, 2008). Examples of the type of information in the 21st century include emails, advertisements, the Internet, social media and smartphones. Historically, an increased amount of information was considered to be a positive sign for the advancement of technology. However, the ability to process information did not keep up with the growth of information. Today, a low signal-to-noise ratio (proportion of useful information found to all information

found), and inefficient methods for comparing and processing different kinds of information, meaning that users are too overwhelmed to make a decision or remain informed about a topic (Sugumaran, 2008). A study of media usage and impact of information exposure by Media Dynamics found that people are exposed to over 5,000 advertisements and brands per day (Johnston, 2018). In comparison, New York Business estimated that a person living in a city 30 years ago, saw up to 2,000 advertising messages a day (Story, 2007). In the growth and accessibility of the digital age, we are actively exposed to a significant quantity of information from advertisements, 24-hour television, technologic devices, email, social networking sites and the Internet. This growth means that we now receive information five times more daily compared to 1986 (Swist, Collin, McCormac & Third, 2015). According to Dr Martin Hilbert from the University of Southern California, the average daily person produces six newspapers worth of information, compared with just two and a half pages 24 years ago. All this information needs storing and we now each have the equivalent of 600,000 books stored in computers, microchips and even the strip on the back of your credit card (Hilbert & Lopez, 2011).

2.2. Information Overload: Attention, Communication and Connectivity

Recently, perhaps following popular perception, there is an increase of scholars who have identified the need to investigate the adverse effects of overload upon users (Cao & Sun, 2018). Professor of Psychology and Behavioural Neuroscientist, Daniel Leviton stresses that we are "assaulted with facts, pseudo-facts, jibber-jabber, and rumour, all posing as information overload." He adds, "we are doing the jobs of ten different people while still trying to keep up with our lives" (Levitin, 2015). And as a result, he underscores the critical importance for young adults to take responsibility for their own attentional and memory systems to lead productive lives within organising their homes, social, time, decision-making and business world (American Psychological Association, 2018). Digital-age Business analyst, Daniel Newman recognises that the generation of young adults are "incredibly adept at filtering out everything except what they want."

Newman describes their behavioural response to information:

"...But they don't want to be talked at. They are used to having control over the information at their fingertips in their day-to-day lives, and their interactions with brands online are no different. They want to control their messaging. They expect to be rewarded for their loyalty, for their follows or likes ...they know what's good and they know what's bad, and they want the good" (Forbes, 2015).

Tapscott acknowledges that because the Internet has significantly become accessible, young adults may be skilled at controlling their messages, but this means that they have less of an attention span and are easily more distracted (Tapscott, 2009).

A research project was conducted towards young adults to understand the stress and fatigue perspectives within information and communication technology overload. Lee, Son & Kim surveyed 201 individuals from a South Korean University in online and offline surveys. They identified that the advancement of

digital applications forced young adults to pay attention to the information and to respond to the demand. Also, that the increase of energy requirements can induce young adults to physical and psychological strain (Lee, Son & Kim, 2016). Similar research was conducted to examine the effects of social and information technology overload on psychological well-being. A sample of 419 University students and employees in their 20s and 30s, who were frequent social media users in South Korea, participated in the study through online surveys. Choi & Lim both agree that productivity of young adults at work is affected due to an increase of time spent using the social network. Social overload (social exchange beyond an individual's communicative and cooperative capability) and technology overload (users receiving more information than they can process or use) were two concepts explored in the research. The results indicated that social overload established a greater impact on addiction than technology overload. This included social status comparison, feelings of unwanted social interaction when they are 'unfriended' on Facebook and feeling disconnected in social relationships (Choi & Lim, 2016). Both concepts were not exerted as a direct impact on psychological well-being, but instead, served as a mediator. Thus, meaning that the young adults perceived information as useful, supportive and enjoyable, up until they felt excessive use generated psychological impacts over a period. This includes lack of limitation of time or space, disinhibition, loss of contact with reality, loss of control, strong intimacy, and anonymity (Choi & Lim, 2016). More so, the signs of addiction were advocated, such as salience (behavioural, cognitive, and emotional concentration), withdrawal (unpleasant feelings with suspension of usage), conflict (between people or internally), and regression (Griffiths & Kuss & Demetrovics, 2014) (Choi & Lim, 2016). Arguably, based on the categorisation of participants in their diverse environment (University students and employees), this could have an impact on the results. The working environments are different–University students have the freedom to utilise their devices without consequences, while employees are restricted to their device usage for during their work breaks or after work. This would impact prominently on how often the participants engage with their devices and exposure to social, personal or general information.

Though, with the proliferation shift of digital "online" lives, the future growth of the Internet of Things (IoT) is essential to discuss because of its potential to flood us even further of information. An alarming concern from industry experts highlight that the increasing amount of data generated from the IoT will be difficult to control–"due to the lack of information capabilities adapted for the IoT" (Pettey, 2018).

2.3. The Internet of Things: Background

Among the realm of information technology, the Internet provides a ubiquitous network for connectivity, communication and exposure of information. The term, "Internet" refers to the global categorisation of information and communication protocols, which are integrated in a sophisticated interconnection of computer networks (Clark Science Center, n.d.). In 2011, there were 2.26 billion Internet users with an average of 70.5% and 24.5% of individuals using the Internet in developed and developing countries respectively (Techatassanasoontorn & Thaiprasert, 2013). Thus, the access to IoT implicates the concept of disparity within social inclusion. Warschaurer best illustrates the digital divide when he compares a University professor with high-speed connection in the office, a student in Seoul who uses the Internet from a cyber café and a rural Indonesian with no computer or landline, but requires her colleagues to download and print out information for her. The visualisation of these comparisons reflect the importance of access to information and communication within IOT, as it is critical to social inclusion in today's era. Further issues with identity, language, social participation, community, and civil society have become apparent (Warschauer, 2004). A paradigm innovation for inter-networking includes "The Internet of Things" (IoT), which promises to affiliate people and devices (fridge, cameras, buildings, sensors) as part of the Internet domain. This generates interactions among things and humans to enhance the quality of life in smart cities, infrastructures and resources (Vermesan & Friess, 2014). In 2016, more than 5.5 million connected devices are added every day, and IoT is well on its way to involving more than 20.8 billion devices worldwide by 2020. With the rise of Internet use for access to information, it is regarded as a natural lead to interconnectivity with devices in our homes and work to become linked and to become capable of communication

and control via local networks (Gartner, 2016). However, all the information that we carry on the Internet is part of us. Collectively, studies that examined the IoT and its impacts on people's lives, suggest that young adults growing up with these communication tools may lead to changes in their communication, information-sharing and behaviour (Theunissen & Theunissen, 2011). A controversial issue associated with these changes imposes inevitable risks comprehended by Facebook's questionable "transparency" of information. The company is facing a lawsuit regarding the company's use and protection of user data. Facebook collects information from you, such as your computer's IP address, type of internet browser you're accessing, the software your computer runs (Android, macOS, Windows, iOS, etc.), and other material. While Facebook does not sell the data, the data is used to generate content based on what the user likes (Haselton, 2018). With the company founded in 2004, the exposure revealed now means the young adults who grew up with this communication tool are coming into terms that they actually do not have "complete control" of their information online (Wong, 2018). The risks for young adults include their information being shared with third parties and that Facebook ads may contain malware (CBS, 2010).

A study was conducted in 2007 among young adults in New Zealand to determine their perception and Internet usage. A total of 100 respondents from AUT University, MIT and University of Canterbury participated in this survey through a combination of quantitative and qualitative elements. The results showed that the overall use of the Internet was varied and highly personalised (Theunissen & Theunissen, 2011). Young adults would select the information for their own personal, relevant purpose and attach their meaning to a selected message (Broom, Center & Cutlip, 2006). Though this implies that the user is in control of the knowledge that they gain, this manner is also, to a certain extent, a perceptual 'bias' (Theunissen & Theunissen, 2011). Heathfield acknowledged too, that young adults have their own way of doing things and that their connectedness can lead to behaviour that older colleagues consider rude, such as texting during meetings (Heathfield, 2012).

Another study was conducted which found that family correlation will predict subscales of mood alteration, social benefit, compulsivity, excessive time and withdrawal (Haddadain & Abedin & Monirpoor, 2010). This means that young adults who spend more time on the Internet, have lesser time to spend with their family, and this may lead to compulsivity, isolation and withdrawal among pathological Internet users. Further online risks include exposure to the sexually explicit material, harassment, sexual solicitation (Guan & Subrahmanyam, 2009). Wright worries that young adults do not recognise that everyday devices are becoming part of a deeply interconnected and insecure Worldwide network of smart objects. He states, "those devices are full-fledged computers nowadays, and with the increasing number of IoT devices that are being deployed, those vulnerabilities become a real concern" (Wright, 2018).

2.4. Social Media: Young Adults' Usage and Current Behaviour

Social media is deeply ingrained in the lives of young adults. Social media has devoted to the exploration of knowledge exchange, establishment of an instant connection and have opened up to skills and networking opportunities. Among the virtual communities and networks, we create, share and exchange information. Young adults are actively engaging in online digital communication, such as social-networking sites, entertainment-related activities, streaming music, TV shows, movies, blogging and playing games. According to Statista, a statistics portal, found that as of January 2018, the leading social networks in New Zealand in order are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Google+, LinkedIn and then Twitter ("Leading social networks in New Zealand as of January 2018", 2018).

Today Facebook is the dominant social media with a total number of 2.19 billion monthly active users ("Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 1st quarter 2018 (in millions)", 2018). Though, this could change with the controversial lawsuit of the company's use and protection of user data mentioned earlier. YouTube has 1.5 billion logged-in active users monthly (Thubron, 2018) and Instagram with 800 million active users monthly ("Instagram monthly active users 2017", 2018). Among the virtual communities and networks, the ability to create, share and exchange information with ease,

make our lives tightly connected to information. For young adults, this is especially true when their personalities are invested in these processes now. It is all too familiar now that young adults are 'Instagramming' pictures of their food and updating their daily feed, bringing their devices to work during vacations, texting throughout family dinners, crossing the road while immersed on their devices and splitting their attention with their phone and the people in front of them (Perlow, 2012). It is apparent that social media is the key platform for communication among young adults; thus, firms have taken advantage of this. Social media blogger, Aleks Eror identified that young adults are familiar with traditional marketing tactics and actively avoid the advertising, such as going to the bathroom during TV commercial breaks and downloading ad blockers. However, with social media advertisements, young adults are more likely to be drawn to and participate in them. For example, following Instagram influencers, buying products from the social media celebrities, responding to the clickbait and marketing themselves online. He states that it "blurs the divide between advertising and content so that the former is more readily accepted by consumers" (Eror, 2017). As a result of this, this complexity is part of the need for decluttering. A report conducted by Forrester Research found that in 2016, the average firm was expected to allocate 30% of their marketing budget to online, this rate is expected to grow to 35% by 2019 (Leone, 2018). Furthermore, global brands such as Google, Twitter and Facebook have employed teams of experts in areas of psychology and user interface to investigate ways to modify our behaviour and to hook us into the media. Tristan Harris, formerly a Design Ethicist at Google, talks about this as a consequence of the "attention economy" (Spangler, 2018). "Attention economy" is an approach to manage information for humans who treat "attention" as a scarce commodity. Economic theories are used to solve information management problems (Crawford, 2015). If companies have their way, Harris suggests that "we'll be watching even more cat videos, sharing "shocking" stories, and commenting to outrage" (TED Talks, 2017). This clarifies that in the "attention economy", young adults are becoming "overwhelmed in managing their relationships with others", where they are the subject of high level social solicitations (Jones & Hafner, 2012).

A fear of 'missing out' results in compulsive behaviour to monitor social media notifications. In the academic environment, a survey among 100 University students in the USA was conducted to investigate the impact of smartphone addiction on students' academic performance. The results demonstrated that there is a strong linkage between life stressor and smartphone addiction. The University students retreated to their smartphones for comfort, support and social networking services during their stressful transitioning from home to an unfamiliar environment (King & Dong, 2017). Excessive use of the smartphone can expose risks to young adults, such as academic performance (Samaha & Hawi, 2016), depression (Kim, 2015), escape mechanism (Roberts, Manolis & Yaya, 2014), sleep deprivation and attention deficits (Murdock, 2013). Consequently, the pressure of life stressors can coerce young adults to adjust to the demands by "adapting to the technology they use, alter their daily schedules, the way they work and even with the way they live with their family and friends (Perlow, 2012).

A generally accepted theory which explains how to reduce clutter in our everyday lives is to remove physical commodities we own, such as clothes, books, film, literature, toys and appliances we do not use or want anymore. By doing so, a minimalist lens can also be applied to information overload within social media platforms, digital communications and everyday tools. It would be more difficult to reduce digital information overload than to reduce physical commodities.

2.5. Minimalism Theory: Commodities and Data Smog

Minimalism is often practiced through elements of self-sacrifice (reduction of attributes), cleverness (finding new ways to repurpose salvaged items) and information seeking (do-it-yourself) (Pollak, 2016). The notion of minimalism is a theoretical tool to educate an understanding of reduction, as the means of achieving simplicity. A common modernist tenet, such as Dieter Rahms would agree that it is with the idea that simplicity and clarity lead to good design (Bürdek, 2015). "Less is more" is a commonly used phrase originated by Robert Browning in his painting 'The Faultless Painter' (Browning, Loucks & Stauffer, 2007). Over 100 years ago, modern minimalism was adopted and popularised

by Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe as a concept for minimalist design through architecture. The signature phrase advocates the value in simplicity–that more can be accomplished with less. Elegance, he believed, did not derive from abundance (Schulze & Windhorst, 2014). Minimalism is about decluttering and doing so practices living in the 'nowness'. In an article written by Tom Vanderbilt, *'Why Futurism has a cultural blind spot*, he states, "...we tend to believe not that the future will be very different than the present day, but that it will be roughly the same" (Vanderbilt, 2015). He believes the future is hype and that we are too consumed about the future to even acknowledge the present. Novelist Ursula K. Le Guin also acknowledges this idea, "We have fewer ways of life and most of us never know but one. It is a rich way, and its richness we have not yet exhausted." We have already attempted the future by duplicating our ideas of utopian futures, and it has proved near impossible. Hence, she suggests preserving our current existence, to encourage our society to live in a modest, conservative standard and adapt to our environment without destroying our current utopia (Le Guin 2015). While studies by Wang and Pollak generally claim that minimalism is an exercise of contradiction, they argue whether minimalism should be practiced now that technology has removed the physical burden of things in our household (Wang, 2012) (Pollak, 2016). Alternatively, VanEenoo argues that those items designed today are already following minimalist values, or are explicitly designed with the motive for reduction (VanEenoo, 2018). Furthermore, methodological differences raise questions about the design iterations. For example, Wang uses photographic ethnography to connect reflective practices of reality in daily life, or behaviour in an unmediated and unbiased form (Wang,2012). Whether these findings begin with the object itself, it establishes that perhaps the dependent of a network around things, like behaviour and usage should be identified first. VanEenoo conducted ethnography methods through user-testing in design products to see simple information processes (VanEenoo, 2018). Both examples share the same ethnographic methods, but the objects remain in different contexts–household and industrial. Consumers need to feel at ease with the tools: a clear design gives a feeling of understanding the purpose; hence, we see the importance of minimalism as a support of usability, but beyond that very concept, we see it as a significant reason to design and to live simpler.

Information overload in the workplace has been intensively studied due to their widespread occurrence in corporate environments. However, generated comparatively, the quality of life for young adults in everyday life are explored less.

2.6.   Quality of Life

Quality of life (QOL) is a multi-dimensional construct which refers to an individual's overall subjective well-being and life satisfaction. It involves the context of culture, value systems and in relation to goals, expectations, standard and concerns. Several important determinants of QOL have been identified, including lifestyle (e.g., habits), social and community environment (e.g., social network), clinical status and health care (e.g., medical conditions), and socio-economic and financial factors (e.g., financial resources) (Campisi, Folan, Diehl, Kable & Rademeyer, 2015).

Though the importance of information is crucial in the everyday lives of young adults (18-27 years old), communication can also generate excessive information in other negative aspects. Such as, in an article from the *Harvard Business Review*, the consequences of the surge of information, affects our well-being, work, decision-making, innovation and productivity (Hemp, 2009). A study found that people took an average of nearly 25 minutes to return to a work task after an e-mail interruption (Mark, Gudith & Klocke, 2008).

In Ezio Manzini's text, "*Design in a Changing, Connected World,*" he recognises that we are witnessing a wave of social innovation. Changes are unfolding in our present and our futures for design. For design to be solidified in its future stability, a distinguished comparison of diffuse design and expert design is essential to map out support in social change and focus on emerging forms of collaboration (Manzini, 2014). The point is to rethink the valuable role of design and designers in contemporary society. He wants us to reimagine design relationships to address social innovations by building a sustainable and resilient culture. To achieve that, it would be necessary to re-think what is "normal" and shift away from it to imagine what it ought to be. Given that, it can be concluded that design is used in several ways, but everyone practices it

differently and that there is often a misunderstanding for each other. People can talk about their design thinking capabilities because creativity is a gift which comes from within us. If you have a design idea, but you don't create something, you are a dreamer. This could be applicable if you utilise design and realise it from a critical sense and practice it. When you practice design, you use human modality and re-design existing things by disrupting and misusing it. The disruption incorporates learning through trial and error to unveil new imaginations.

The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is activated from the young adult's tendency to pursue the trending media–an unconscious means of survival in this digital age. Young adults avoid being labelled or ridiculed as 'social-outcasts.' However, it is with the fear of "missing out" which generates the noise of information overload. It is estimated that the average person will check their smartphone 157 times a day (Social Media Week, 2016). The alert of notifications on the smartphone will create opportunities for further distractions; resulting in young adults neglecting other important aspects of their life such as family, friends, hobbies and commitments. Certainly, information is our most valuable resource, but in contrast, Holliday and Li argue that young adults who are overwhelmed by too much information might not be our biggest problem. But instead, that the easily accessible information enables them to be "absolute" thinkers who seek their solution from the first result that they find (Holliday & Li, 2004).

Among the increase of information overload in quality of life, it can be challenging to outweigh the contradictions of whether the information presented to us are reliable or not. Social overload has harmful psychological and behavioural consequences (Maier, Laumer, Eckhardt & Weitzel, 2012). These negative consequences lead to exhaustion and become psychological, social, and physical hazards in the long term (Ragu-Nathan, Tarafdar, Ragu-Nathan & Tu, 2008). Consequently, social overload alerts the user to their inefficacy, which leads to the deterioration of psychological well-being. In other words, young adults experience a sense of duty to respond to social support and believe that all support must be repaid due to the law of reciprocity in social relationships. In reality, social relationships beyond one's communicative ability

encourage users to immerse themselves in social media excessively. Despite such immersion, when a response is judged to be inadequate, the individual realises that they are not behaving normally. For "normal" behaviour, Meyrowitz argues that the audience responds to social interactions by semiconsciously adapting to situations. "Normal" behaviour depends on the situation and behaviour defined by culture and the acceptance of society and influencers (Meyrowitz, 1986).

In conclusion, the trends in the research literature indicate that there is a pressing need to develop effective methodological approaches to allow the exploration of the boundaries between a balance of everyday life and their online life. The literature suggests overall that excessive use of technology exposes risks to young adults–from academic, sleep, attention, personal, communication, behavioural, psychological and performance. The literature demonstrates that information overload has proved controversial, due to the common factors in the life experiences of individuals who have felt overwhelmed by information in their workplace, academic studies and personal life. The current research is, therefore, essential because it would benefit young adults in learning methods to decluttering. A more comprehensive protocol can be developed in place of existing methods. This is achieved through producing a graphic novel book written in the lens of young adults who are active users of social media. The context of the book addresses current issues they face and how to overcome it. In the next chapter, the research proceeds to the methodology section where the focus group and one-on-one interviews are explained.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Excessive use of social media exposes risks to young adults, such as performance, psychological, personal, attention, behaviour and sleep. Key ideas identified from the literature review, such as fear of missing out, adapted habits, influence from peers and social, emotional and informational support, indicate that these factors are a general concern for young adults who feel pressured to modify their lifestyles to keep up with the rapid pace of technology. To contest the challenge of the research, the goal is to understand their general usage and feelings, and then produce a graphic novel to address the ideas, insights and concerns from the young adults who were surveyed. This chapter is split into sub-sections, where the first three sections contribute to the strategies and approach to the data collection methods. The next three sections describe the issues encountered and the research procedures. And finally, the final chapters deal with the ethical considerations, limitations and data analysis within the practice.

3.2. Research Methodology

Research methodology is derived from social science and design practice. The qualitative research investigates a social and behavioural perspective in the nature of reality. It is also about the relationship between the researcher, participant and research topic, with an emphasis on how social experience is created and given meaning. In contrast, quantitative research emphasises on numerical measurement between variables, not processes ("Research Guides: Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: 6. The Methodology", 2018).
A qualitative approach was utilised with a one-group pre-test and post-test design model. The selected methodologies, focus group and one-on-one interviews have been informed by the literature review and general schema for understanding social media. Both methods were divided into two sessions, one with a focus group for 2 hours with a group, and the second session one week later with a 20-minute interview for each participant.

Decluttering Methods	
Phase	**Tasks**
Phase 1: Focus Group	- Define the research purpose - Review the literature to outline potential research directions - Develop an overview of participant's (18-27-year-old, three females, three males) general usage of social media and whether they currently declutter from social media
Phase 2: Preliminary Prototype	- Read over the data for emergent issues - Create a set of ten decluttering methods based on the focus group - Create structured questions informed by literature review to extrapolate the discussion of the ten decluttering methods
Phase 3: One-on-One Interview	One week later, the researcher asked the same participants to provide feedback on the methods and to offer their insights and suggestions
Phase 4: Refinement of Design	- Interpret, transcribe and analyse data - Refine the ten decluttering methods based on the interview - Develop practical implications and recommendations in the form of a graphic book

Table 1 Phases of Process for Creating the Decluttering Methods

3.3. Data Collection Method and Tools

3.3.1. Focus Group

A focus group provides a model of a method to generate multiple perspectives in their general usage, patterns and behaviour. This method encourages conversation and allows participants to challenge and interact with both fellow participants and the researcher. It is seen as an avenue for the researcher to understand and gather general experiences of social media, discuss features in social media platforms, as well as current methods the participants are using to declutter from information. The set of thirty questions were directed to their opinions of design and interface of social media platforms, what attracts them to particular platforms, how often they use it, their feelings and behaviour of usage in certain situations. The method best apprehends the participants' attitudes, opinions, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way in which would not be feasible using other methods. For example, ethnography would provide specific detail and accuracy about the participant's actual hourly usage, daily activities and patterns of usage if the researcher were to follow a day of the participant. However, this method is highly invasive and requires a substantial amount of time having to build rapport and trust with the participants before conducting the research.

Figure 1 Focus Group

3.3.2. One-on-One Interview

Based on the information collected from the focus group, the researcher then creates a set of decluttering methods for preparation of the follow-up interview. All of the same participants are invited back in the follow-up interview to provide feedback on a set of ten decluttering methods. Each participant is called up one-by-one for their 20-minute interview, where they are seated with the researcher and shown ten sheets of paper with a method on each one. Participants are asked to read each method separately and either discuss their perceptions or to it write down on the sheet. The interviews identified their individual perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards the themes of methods.

Each method has been informed by both the literature review and data collected from the focus group. Majority of the influences for the methods are derived from problems or topics discussed in the focus group, such as their concerns in their usage during exams or assignments, feeling overwhelmed with a friend's issues in their timeline that they do not want to be part of and how they feel less informed when they are away from technology for a specified period. A set of ten decluttering methods were shown to the participants for feedback (see Appendix B), where the data was collected by audio and visual recording. Participants are asked to discuss each method and write answers to further questions (see Appendix B) proposed by the researcher. The feedback will provide insights into refining the decluttering methods, presented in the form of a graphic novel.

Figure 2 Researcher Interviewing a Participant (A)

Figure 3 Researcher Interviewing a Participant (B)

Figure 4 Researcher Interviewing a Participant (C)

Figure 5 Researcher Interviewing a Participant (D)
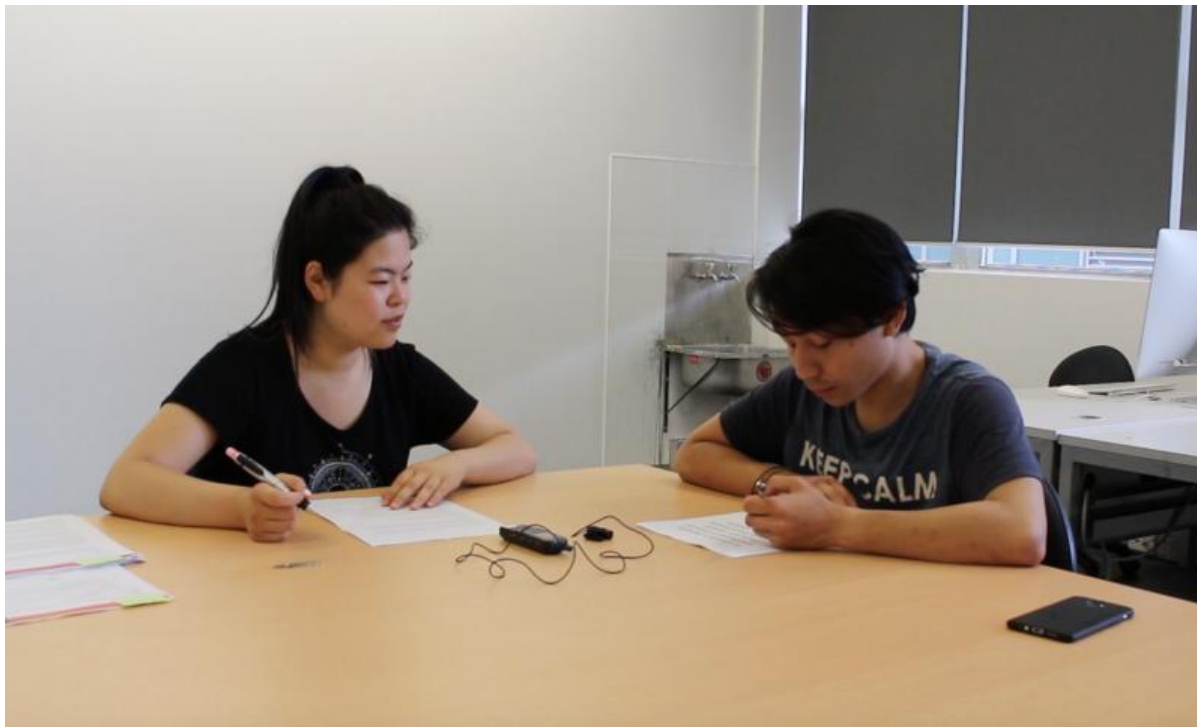
Figure 6 Researcher Interviewing a Participant (E)

Figure 7 Researcher Interviewing a Participant (F)

3.3.3. Graphic Novel

Methods were refined further by developing, transferring and re-evaluating their conditions in engagement with information from the social media platform and presented in the graphic novel. A graphic novel conflicted with those who argued that the medium was a contradiction to decluttering. Decluttering as the means of not only reducing digital information but in physical commodities too. However, the researcher challenges that in a database search, local library or bookstore, the majority of the existing resources which educate young adults in decluttering, are physical books. The researcher has identified that many of the recent books about information decluttering techniques, are heavily-text based and have an academic context.

Demonstrated in Table 2 below, are a selection of recent and popular books listed on Amazon, about how to declutter from information overload. The average range of pages in the books have 200-500 pages, is rich in text and theoretical concepts. According to the literature review discussed, it is important to mention that young adults have a short attention-span, meaning that this type of book would likely not appeal to them. Young adults require an easy-to-follow graphic book which explicitly addresses the decluttering methods, without overwhelming them with information. This is achieved by humour, the design to be image-rich and to provide references, context and language which will communicate relevance to young adults (See Figure 8-12 for sample pages of the graphic novel).

Competitor Analysis				
Company Name	**Size**	**Summary**	**Year**	**Reputation Rating**
Digital Detox: The Ultimate Guide To Beating Technology Addiction, Cultivating Mindfulness, and Enjoying More Creativity, Inspiration, And Balance In Your Life! By Damon Zahariades	198 pages	Amazon's best-selling author, Damon Zahariades provides an effective, step-by-step plan to a digital detox.	2018	4.2 stars average, 36 Customer Reviews
Declutter Your Mind: How to Stop Worrying, Relieve Anxiety, and Eliminate Negative Thinking by Barrie Davenport	156 pages	Solutions are provided to practice <u>specific mindful techniques</u> that create more "space" in your mind.	2016	4.2 stars average, 381 Customer Reviews
The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload by Daniel J. Levitin	544 pages	*New York Times* best-selling author and neuroscientist Daniel J. Levitin demonstrates how people can use decluttering methods to regain a sense of mastery over the way they organise their	2015	4.1 stars average, 92 Customer Reviews

		homes, workplaces, and time.		
Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less by Greg McKeown	272 pages	Greg McKeown writes, teaches, and speaks around the world on the importance of living and leading as an Essentialist.	2014	4.6 stars average, 1371 Customer Reviews
Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age by Ann M. Blair	416 pages	Blair explores in detail the sophisticated techniques that scholars and readers developed in an era of new technology and exploding information.	2011	4.8 stars average, 9 Customer Reviews

Table 2 A Comparison of Current Information Overload Books
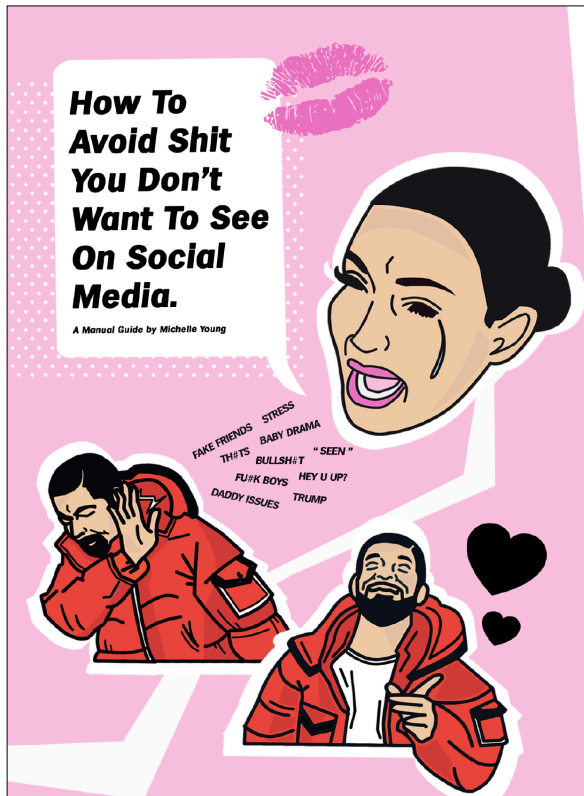
Figure 8 Front Cover of the Graphic Novel

Figure 9 Back Cover of the Graphic Novel

Figure 8 Double-page Spread of a Decluttering Method (A)

Hey Girl.

Keep up the studying.
It looks good on you.

Error: Message not Sent

Don't use your phone as a study break reward.
Go stretch, walk outside or pet your dog instead.
A study from Harvard found that people took an average
of nearly 25 minutes to return to a work task after an
email interruption. All the minutes can add up to hours if
you're not being mindful. Chase the grades. Chase the
money. You got this.

Figure 10 Double-page Spread of a Decluttering Method (B)

WERK
WERK
RK
ERK
WERK
WERK

**When they go low,
we go high**

Go to the Library or re-visit your bookshelf.
Find a novel or magazine to read before bed. I promise
you that you will sleep better from reading than staring
at a bright screen. If reading isn't your thing, then maybe
pick up an old hobby or learn a new skill – just get busy.
There are many other remedies to try if you are finding it
hard to fall asleep. Try the classic warm milk before bed,
force yourself to face your worries before bed, drink
sleepy tea, massage your feet, exercise intensely, wear a
sleeping eye patch, read a dictionary, cuddle with a
pillow or listen to relaxing music.

Figure 9 Double-page Spread of a Decluttering Method (C)

3.3.4. Validity and Dependability

When measuring the authenticity of the qualitative research, validity and dependability are essential values to consider. These values are part of a world-view which provides the foundation and anchor for a framework in an interpretive approach.

Validity refers to the "extent to which the instrument measures what it was intended to measure" (Bui, 2009), and dependability can be defined as a "measure of the extent to which a reader, on the basis of evidence presented concurs with the findings of the research" (White, 2011). While Creswell & Miller suggest that validity is affected by the researcher's perception of validity in the study and their choice of paradigm assumption (Creswell & Miller, 2000), Linn & Gronlund suggests that validity cannot be adequately summarised by a numerical value, but rather as a "matter of degree" (Linn & Gronlund, 2000). Arguably, for the purpose of this research, it is more appropriate to establish both validity and dependability by striving for breadth at the expense of depth. This is deliberate for the utilisation of the focus group method, where participants are encouraged to engage i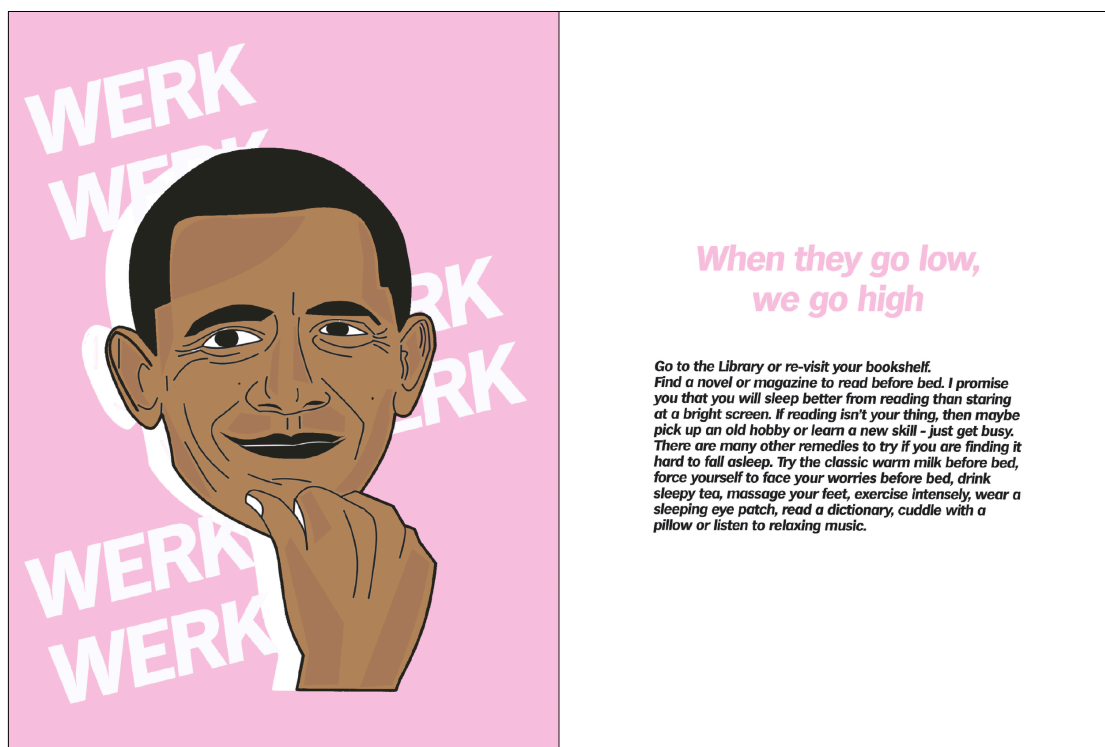n a conversation-like discussion about their general thoughts, feelings and usage of social media. The breadth will provide a summary of themes, which give a broad sense of the multiple levels of tasks and challenges the participants face. For each participant, their unique experiences, history and location differ; therefore, it is impossible to reduplicate the same outcome. Measures to ensure validity and dependability of the research will contribute to the way we determine what is true and accurate in both the world-view.

Though it is important to note that, although threats to the research regarding the values may not be eliminated entirely, factors to minimise are considered below:

a) An appropriate time for the study to be conducted (appropriate times in between the focus group and interview, duration of the research to allow enough time for discussion)

b) Selection of appropriate methodology (suitable for the design of the research)

c) Participants must not feel pressured to select specific choices or be given any cause consciously or unconsciously to construct a biased version of their experiences

d) Design and test of the values can be justified by creating questions which reflect the issue of the research

3.3.5. Sample Selection

The sampling procedure used by the researcher was a purposive sample. The participants who met specific criteria were employed, this included: the age between 18-27 years old, being proficient in English, active on social media for the past three years, did not currently study a Master of Design and who could participate in both the days provided. Participants of this research study included three males and females—three students studying at University and the other three are working full-time. The participants were also selected because they were from diverse backgrounds, age and different uses with social media platforms. The participants in the study were from diverse social media backgrounds, shown in the table below.

Participants	Gender	Age	Occupation	Social Media Use
Participant	Female	22	Own Start-up Business	Facebook Messenger Viber WhatsApp LinkedIn
Participant	Female	22	University Student	Facebook Messenger Snapchat Twitter
Participant	Female	27	Beauty Department	Facebook Instagram
Participant	Male	22	Digital Marketing	Facebook

				Messenger
				LinkedIn
				Instagram
Participant	Male	22	Marketing Internship	Facebook
				Messenger
				Instagram
				LinkedIn
Participant	Male	18	University Student	Facebook
				Messenger
				Skype

Table 3 Background of Participants Showing Age, Gender, Occupation and Social Media Platforms they use

3.3.6. Setting

The study was conducted in a contemporary University in the heart of Auckland city with a total of 6 students. The room used was the University's AUT Employability Lab–a service provider for University students to get help in gaining soft skills to becoming employable after graduation. The Lab provides services such as networking opportunities, help with CV and cover letter writing, workshops for upskilling and to events such as a career fair and networking opportunities. This location was selected because the AUT social media and marketing staff heard about the research and was interested in this topic. It was also the most convenient location for all participants to meet. An AUT staff offered to supervise the research and to listen. The room is a spaciously designed lab with contemporary furnishings and had chairs and tables set up for open discussion.

3.3.7. Ethical Considerations

In this qualitative research, participants were involved with answering key questions to how they apply decluttering methods in their daily lives. Because the study is targeted at young adults, the ethics approval is required to provide rich, holistic insight into various cultures and sub-cultures (people's views and actions), and the environments that surround them (sound, sights, spaces, locations). To strengthen the ethics application, the researcher has

attended AUT University's workshop in "Designing Ethical Research" and another workshop, "Research Ethics Drop-ins" to verify the research methods components of the ethics application. Permission from the participants to video record was processed while writing field notes. Research material will remain confidential until it needs to be communicated as part of research findings. If necessary, the researcher will agree to the anonymity of participants when requested. In sharing the understandings of the research, the researcher has communicated regularly with the participants to report progress. In return, feedback, reflection and suggestions to improve will be asked. However, it is important to be considerate to the privacy of the participants and to avoid misuse of information and to devise from an offence.

3.4. Data Analysis

Once the focus group and interviews were completed, the data collected were transcribed and coded into prominent themes in the NVivo qualitative software: awareness, feelings, challenges, fear of missing out, accessibility and methods. Interview questions were prepared and tailored specifically to answer the research question. Audio and visual recordings were transcribed manually by typing out the content on a computer while listening. For readability, distracting components of speech such as "like", "um", "ah" and content that did not relate to the discussion, were deleted from the script. Discrepancies in grammar were not corrected, but the transcription has been reinterpreted twice to ensure accuracy. Themes developed from the data are discussed in the results chapter. Quotations were then selected from the focus group and interviews to support as evidence of key issues in the discussion. The first set of decluttering methods were generated from the literature review and had been further refined after the feedback from participants in the one-on-one interview. During the process of data collection, a surprising process occurred 1-hour before the gathering of the one-on-one interview. The researcher identified that while they would interview each participant individually, the other participants needed to be occupied with activity while they waited. Prior to the meeting, the researcher created a group quiz, 'Are you a social media #addict?' There were a set of 29 entertaining questions with multi-choice answers that required participants to talk with each

other and discuss questions which test how they respond to social situations and
how reliant they are with social media.

4. RESULTS

Themes in Focus Group	
Themes	**Percentage**
Awareness	17.56%
Feelings	1.55%
Challenges	4.86%
Fear of missing out	1.03%
Accessibility	9.44%
Methods	6.45%

Table 4 Frequency of Themes in the Focus Group

Figure 13 Pie Graph Demonstrating Frequency of Themes in the Focus Group

Frequency of Themes in the One-on-One Interview		
Themes	**Male**	**Female**
Awareness	72.48%	25.09%
Feelings	12.76%	28.63%
Challenges	4.24%	5.23%
Fear of missing out	13.31%	20.93%
Accessibility	4.11%	13.86%
Methods	38.65%	25.92%

Table 5 Percentage of Theme Frequencies Categorised in Gender

4.1. Identified and Summarised Themes

Key findings of the data analysis are initially identified for the general media consumption patterns. Themes adapted from the two methodologies are then explored on the analysis of interview and focus group data (see Table 4 and Table 5).

4.1.1. Awareness of Usage

Participants were asked what and how many social media platforms they use, how many hours they typically spend a day and were asked to rate which platforms they liked best and why. Awareness of personal usage was a theme most frequently discussed (see Figure 13), meaning that this is not a new concept for the young adults. They are already conscious of their usage and have thought about methods to reduce. Such as in the one-on-one interview, the percentage of theme frequencies ranked highest in the male category with 'Awareness' at 72.48% and 'Methods' at 38.65%. Five out of six participants average 6 hours of daily social media use. One participant was particularly prominent, averaging at 10 hours and labelling themselves as a "social media addict" and explains that "If I'm not online for twenty-four hours a day, my friends will think I'm dead". Four of the participants admitted that they specifically chose to participate in the research because they were somewhat concerned about their current usage behaviour. The remaining two participants

were curious whether the research could provide a unique method that they have not heard of to reduce their phone usage.

4.1.2. Feelings of their Usage

When participants were asked how many hours they spend on social media in a day, one participant asked: "are you trying to make us feel guilty?" Following the response to their answer of hours in usage, they asked: "is it a lot?" Interestingly, not only did the participant feel confronted, but they were seeking for validation of approval. This validation of approval reflects back to their behaviour with following trends, where young adults have the mentality of "I don't want to miss out–everyone is doing it, so I must too." Furthermore, when participants were asked what they thought about first, when they heard the term, 'information,' they responded:

"First thing I think of is writing articles, the news and documentaries. Too much to read but not enough time."

"I would say housing. I'm actually looking for houses right now in Wellington, and there is a lot of information…but I have not yet found the answer I want." "Flights and planning a trip. It requires a lot of retaining of information of where to go and what you're going to do. It's very stressful."

"Terms and conditions. Sometimes you have a paradox of choice but always too much information."

4.1.3. Challenges

Texting, calling and messaging online are key forms of communication for participants. In the focus group, "challenges" were discussed 12% of the time, meaning that participants have accepted the "normalisation" of communicating via digital platforms is a challenge in itself. Further difficulties of communication were brought up from participants who mentioned that the digital platform opened a more accessible gateway for cyber-bullying:

"It is a lot easier to bully somebody on Facebook. You may not know who this person really is when they post something about an issue, but it is easier to debate behind a screen. People love to debate."

"People will either be on one side of the spectrum or be interacting, people kind of start bullying each other. But if you bring up the same conversation in person, they do still talk about the problem but less harsh to each other–less hostile."

4.1.4. Fear of Missing Out

University assignments and loved ones who are overseas were the two main reasons participants found it difficult to reduce their phone usage. They felt "less informed" about what is happening in both their own lives and the lives of their loved ones, especially when they are away from their phone for more than a couple of hours. University assignments and examinations were a conflicting reason for participants who wanted to withdraw from social media to become more productive, yet they were conflicted because they needed to communicate to their classmates.

4.1.5. Motivations of usage

Participants were asked what their main uses of social media were for. According to the level of most frequent, the response was:
1. To communicate with family, friends and other contacts
2. Update family, friends and other contacts on their activities and events
3. Network with new connections or potential employers
4. Look at social media profiles
5. Online media storage

4.1.6. Methods they've tried

The participants were asked to fill out a sheet of what methods they have used to declutter from social media. Two participants have downloaded phone restriction apps from their phone such as "Forest: Stay focused" and "Block Apps – More productivity and focus." While another participant leaves their

phone at home when spending time with friends to ensure all the attention is focused towards them, stating:

"I think this generation of youth have become more self-absorbed and lost their touch with basic manners. Such as texting while having dinner with family–it's blatantly rude and unnecessary. Keep the phone and family time separate."

All participants agreed that a change of mindset would certainly be the most effective method, stating:

"I just think it's a change of mindset. If you genuinely want to change, then you need to change the mindset. You need to do something about it."

"Nowadays in this generation, social media is going to be a norm. But for me, it is not the norm because I think it is about you how you can control your own mind. I believe the major contributors to real change is in your own mindset which is reflected by your actions."

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

The researcher asked participants which social media platforms they use and what possible issues they face with it. A separate set of questions were asked during both the focus group and one-on-one interview. At the end of each sub-topic, all the questions and discussion focused back to the research question: In a busy life of the everyday person who is immersed in social media, where people are overworked and overwhelmed by digital media, how could we look at the impacts of information overload to educate young adults in decluttering?

5.1.1. Limitations of the Research

It is common practice to identify constraints in research to identify potential areas to improve. According to the time frame of 1.5 years for the entire research project, time was a significant influence which affected the decision for a small sample of participants. In standard procedure for completing an ethics application to approval, it would have taken an average of 6-9 months–a compacted timeframe. Another limitation is the cultural background, all participants were of Asian descent. Although the measure of recruitment itself eliminated preconceived conceptual bias by selecting "first-in, first-serve" recruiters who volunteered and met the requirements. The researcher recruited participants by extending the invitation from their own social media circle and relied on a "snow-ball" effect. Perhaps, the sample of participants were still relatively closely connected within the social community. A diverse range of ethnicity could have impacted on the outcome of the result, due to different cultural differences, beliefs and upbringing.

5.1.2. Decluttering Method Book/Cards

Since the examination, I found new knowledge for the controversial conversation in a newspaper article. The issue is current and people are discussing it. In a recent article from the New Zealand Herald, 'Teen's smartphone addiction: I only slept three hours a night,' it highlighted the

behaviour of phone usage by young adults today. It was shocking to read that the first year University student from the article, was staying up till 2 am each night on Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram. Her studies were suffering and she even stated that she didn't know how her generation communicates anymore, unless it is with a hashtag or tagging them in 'memes'. But what was even more shocking about the article, was that the issue of social media and smartphone addiction was so serious, that there is a 9-day boot camp in the Gold Coast to deal with this addiction. The boot camp is run by the Australian army and veteran mentors who teach them certain strategies and skills. It includes mental and physical resilience, effective communication, conflict resolution and fear/stress management. It is bizarre that today's young adults need help like this, it really highlights the need for information decluttering. Nowadays, there is rehabilitation for social media addiction, just as there is rehabilitation for alcohol and drugs.

This leads me to the discussion of two of the most graphically strong, controversial methods which have the most potential for story-telling. I will explain why they are useful and how the context is used:

Card One: Face friend, not Facebook.

If you are discussing important things, don't bother writing long paragraphs. Cardi B agrees ain't nobody got time for that. Arrange to meet them in person. It is way too easy to miscommunicate behind a screen - "k" is bad, too much "lol" is annoying, no emoji means they're probably mad at you and "fine" always means disaster. Okuuur?

Communication can be misleading over the phone. You miss out the tone of their voice, misread the meaning of the emoji and cannot see their facial expression. This method was formed by the suggestion of two participants who said that the only time that they don't use their phone, is when they're on holiday or forced in a situation where there is no reception. One participant even stated, "If I'm not online for twenty-four hours a day, my friends will think I'm dead". This method encourages the idea that face-to-face communication can resolve miscommunication.

<u>Card Two: Re-visit your ex-files</u>

This one is hard. You've probably already burned and trashed your ex's stuff, but if not, change your phone wallpaper to a picture of your ex... or someone you don't like. That way, it helps you to avoid looking at your phone and seeing their unpleasant faces.

In one of the recurring themes of the discussion, participants discussed "methods they've used" by downloading self-discipline apps such as tree-planting and block-site apps. The method of placing an image of your ex-partner on your phone wallpaper is daunting enough for a young adult since they would already actively go out of their way to avoid their exes anyways. This method is simple, but its impact is powerful for young adults who are already willing to repel from their ex, or in other words, their phone. Avoiding their phone for even a couple of hours can save them from embarrassing drunk texts or regretful paragraphs where they confess their love for them.

6. CONCLUSION

It is important to consider the surge of information within social media for young adults today. The results contribute to existing literature by validating that the pressure from life stressors force young adults to adapt to the demands of technology by altering their daily routines and relationships to fit and favour around technology. More so, a shift in their productivity, well-being, work, decision-making and innovation is affected. My findings conflict with Holliday and Li who argue that the young adults who are overwhelmed by too much information might not be our biggest problem. But instead, that the easily accessible information enables them to be "absolute" thinkers who seek their solution from the first result that they find (Holliday & Li, 2004). On the basis of the evidence provided, it can be seen that young adults struggle with the balance of everyday life and online life. In the quotations from participants in the Results chapter, the findings showed that participants found it difficult to filter out and obtain the information they required because it was merely "too overwhelming." Focus group and one-on-one interviews are useful to capture certain phenomena in their feelings, patterns, attitudes and behaviour with

social media. These methods should enable further studies to compare with other young adults. While the results of this study are consistent, the outcome might not apply to other settings. Another gap and therefore potential object of investigation are listed below. In order of importance and achievability, these are possible directions for future investigations stemming from this work:

1. More diversity in the ethnicity of participants
2. A larger group of participants
3. A second follow-up interview for participants to critique on the refinements of the decluttering methods
4. A deeper understanding of participants' cultural background and childhood relationship with digital media
5. A comparison of young adults who are studying and working

After writing the thesis, I learnt that the participants were open and willing to discuss their excessive use of social media. It has become such a controversial 'normalisation' in the topic, that it was not difficult to get the participants to share their experiences and personal emotions.

I learnt that through the platform of social media, participants were able to be transported to many places while staying in one. Sometimes we resort from sharing our processes because we fear what people may think of us. Our tendency to be liked, creates a barrier for others to realise the potential of our work. We often feel safe and accepted by fitting into the crowd, hence, by conforming to the set standards, we survive by not being labelled or ridiculed as 'social-outcasts.' This can resort to us reaching out to connect with others for companionship.

Thus, the online platform of social media even allows young adults to be heard while being anonymous. Being anonymous doesn't always necessarily mean the person is afraid of being judged or is hiding in fear. The anonymity goes back to the idea that diaries are an intimate and personal documentation. That staying anonymous, gives an equality of focusing on the issue topic without someone else probing on our personal information. Diaries often use personal pronouns and if we were to pick up any diary, we want to understand and listen to their

story without making presumptions. Social media ultimately gives the young adults a voice - they can choose to participate in discussions and connect in a medium which enables them to be as complex or as simple as they want. Participants demonstrated keen interest in learning potential methods and were motivated to rethink their current behaviour and phone usage.

Figure 11 Final Exhibition - Graphic Novel and Cards

Figure 12 Final Exhibition - A3 Poster, Graphic Novel and Cards

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Ethics Approval

AUTEC Secretariat

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5 December 2017

Ming Cheung
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Ming

Re Ethics Application: **17/403 A paradigm shift in minimalism and information decluttering: How to educate young adults**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 5 December 2020.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation then you are responsible for obtaining it. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: vxf2132@aut.ac.nz

Appendix B. Tools

Appendix 1. Focus Group Questions

1. List the top 5 social media platforms that you typically use.

2. Could you give an approximation of how long you spend on social media in a day?

3. About how often do you contribute to the content on social media sites? For example, posting a status update, pressing "like" on Facebook, writing a review on Yelp, tweet or comment.

4. Name the top 3 most common activities to which you contribute on social media?

5. What kinds of things do you see going on in the social media platform? What stands out and why?

6. What do you like or dislike the most about a particular social media platform of your choice?

7. Have you used social media sites as an educational tool for your studies? If so, were they effective?

8. When you decide to join a social media platform, what do you look for? Design, functionality, popularity, friend recommended?

9. What are your general thoughts on young adult's use of social media today? Do you think they are using it at a normal rate or are excessive users?

10. What are your thoughts on social media usage compared to 5 years ago?

11. Are there any social media platforms that you miss using? If so, what brought about the change?

12. What solutions would you suggest for young adults who might be interested in reducing their daily social media usage?

13. If you could add any features to any social media platforms, what would they be?

14. When you think about an overload of digital information, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

15. Do you have any concerns about social media in general? E.g. privacy, information, safety.

16. Are you actively aware of the kind of information that you post or show on your profile?

17. What actions do you take to ensure your privacy and safety is protected online?

18. Do you have separate social media accounts for certain audiences? For example, a Facebook profile for close friends and family and a separate Facebook profile for your co-workers and boss?

19. If you could estimate how often you check your social media notifications in a day, what do you think the estimation will be?

20. What are your reasons for using social media?

21. How many friends on social media networking sites do you have that you have never met in person?

22. What are your general feelings to social media? Identify the positive and negative aspects.

23. Do you or anyone you know of personally use any particular strategies to free up your time?

24. How would you describe your social media usage - heavy, moderate or light? If heavy, what are your reasons to why it could be so engaging?

25. How often do you check your notifications in the span of 1 hour? And what notifications are you particularly looking forward to receiving?

26. Have you at any point considered reducing your social media usage? If so, what methods have you previously tried or would like to try?

27. Are you familiar with the term, 'information decluttering'? Define the term in your own words.

28. What strategies/marketing tactics do you think social media companies are using to engage us?

29. What are your thoughts on the social media usage for your own circle of friends?

30. Are there any habits that you want to change for yourself regarding your own social media usage?

Appendix 2. One-on-One Interview

Appendix 2.1. Steps to Take

1. Show participant one decluttering method

2. Wait 2-3 mins for the participant to process it

3. Ask for their thoughts, feelings, comments, criticism

4. The researcher will explain the meaning of the decluttering method

5. Ask whether they agree or disagree and for their insights

Appendix 2.2. Ten Decluttering Methods

1. Give yourself time limitations to social media usage

2. Personalise your social media settings, such as turning off social media notifications

3. Create a benefit-and-feature chart of how you would benefit from having less information

4. Set up a schedule for regular progress checks

5. Curate the content that you want to see. Set up your feed based on your relationship to the accounts you follow.

6. Wake up with a to-do list which states your high priority and low priority activities

7. Select a couple of favourite social media sites to use and stick to it. Delete the ones you do not use anymore or barely use.

8. Change the way you think about social media and information: Understand your 'why' to using it

9. Set challenges with your friends or family to limit your social media use

10. Create new habits to simplify your use of social media, such as turning off your device before going to sleep

Appendix 2.3. Questions

1.   The information-decluttering method suggests that you give yourself time limitations to social media usage. Do you think there is a need to do so?

2.   What are your thoughts on the quantity of digital information that you see on Facebook? How do you think Facebook should manage unwanted information in the news feed?

3.   This is an activity which I would like for you to take a few minutes to fill in.

4.   Minimalism simply means to live simpler - with less clutter and to practice being mindful. What suggestions do you have for living minimalistic? Do you practice it yourself?

5.   Good habits refer to small changes that you could make in your daily life to improve your health. For example, by changing certain settings on Facebook, I could group my friends as 'Close Friends' to only see specific content on my newsfeed. What would you consider as good habits?

6.   To-do lists are effective productivity tools. What do you think the positive and negative factors are for that tool? Do you have alternative ideas?

7.   What are your thoughts on young adult's use of social media today? Do you personally keep your social media platforms minimum or do you like to experiment each of them?

8.   Trends often influence young adults to buy into an idea or product. If there is a movement to change the way that we think about social media, what do you think it would be? For example, young adults don't watch TV anymore. They have migrated to Netflix.

9.   Challenges are often a fun and interactive way to compare with our friends and family with a goal or activity. Can you think of ways that could challenge millennials in reducing their use of social media?

10.   It may be very difficult for young adults to turn off their phones during the day, or even when they are sleeping. There is a fear of missing out on notifications. What other suggestions do you have to practice the habit? Would you encourage the practice?

6

It is your partner's Birthday and you want to bake a cake. However, you're feeling unsure about how to go about making it. What do you do?

A. Start your search on Pinterest, YouTube, Instagram, Amazon
B. Start your Google search
C. Call a friend or family member for help
D. Join a local cake-making class or buy a cooking book

3

When out with your friends/partner, what do you mainly use your phone for?

A. Selfies, update your story of the day, text others
B. Text your friends about their whereabouts
C. Emergency calls and to check the time
D. I leave my phone at home to make sure all my attention is towards my friends/partner

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW

ARE YOU A SOCIAL MEDIA #ADDICT?

TAKE THE QUIZ

7

When studying for your exam or finishing your assignment, does your social media usage increase?

A. Procrastination at its finest - too many memes, so little time!
B. 50% studying, 50% watching random videos/memes
C. I will study and then check my notifications in my study break
D. My devices are switched off because my exams are priority

4

You post content on Facebook, and no one reacts. What do you do/how do you feel?

A. Delete immediately, you're embarrassed and frustrated
B. Kind of disappointed, you wait 1-2 more hour before deleting
C. I leave the content, there'll be more Likes for next time
D. Don't care, you don't post much anyways

1

What is the first thing you do when you wake up?

A. Check your phone notifications
B. Morning routine and then check your phone
C. Breakfast, or head out to work/school/errands
D. Snooze more and only get out of bed for the bathroom

8

Have you integrated texting language in your daily communication? E.g. Saying 'LOL', 'BRB' or #YAAS in a conversation

A. #YAAS I normally talk like this
B. I've picked up a few of them
C. No, I leave that for social media
D. I generally don't use it because it's not proper grammar

5

There has been a flood in a city near you. How do you find out first?

A. On my social media feed, I must then post about this now!
B. Mindlessly scroll my newsfeed
C. A friend or family messages me the details
D. Newspaper or neighbour

2

During your lunch break, which activity sounds more like something you would do?

A. Sit alone to interact with my phone while eating lunch
B. Check my phone briefly before joining others to eat
C. Go out with my colleagues
D. I keep working, my phone is turned off until the end of work

15

Do you feel more comfortable expressing yourself online than offline?

A. Yes, the online community is my home and comfort place
B. I am open to online friends but I am cautious
C. My offline friends know more about me than my online friends
D. You just can't beat face to face communication

12

What would excite you more?

A. Having 5,000 new followers on Instagram
B. Winning a $100 voucher
C. Your boss gives you 1 week off from work
D. You get an unexpected call from an old friend/relative

9

You're exhausted. You have just arrived home from your hiking adventure where there was no Wi-Fi for 1 week, what is the first thing you do?

A. Check my social media, immediately upload photos/status
B. Check my missed notifications
C. Text your friends/family that you're back
D. Raid the kitchen and then go straight to sleep

16

You need to tell your friend something important, how do you contact them?

A. Send a message online / send a text / snapchat
B. Video-call your friend
C. Phone your friend
D. Invite them out for coffee to discuss in person

13

You've just gone through a break-up. How do you respond online?

A. Refresh your ex's social media every few minutes and post updates about quotes/new photos of yourself
B. Block the ex
C. Remove the relationship status
D. I originally don't have information about my personal dating life online. I like my privacy.

10

Before uploading a photo, what steps do you take beforehand?

A. Use Photo editing apps, consult with friends about which angle looks better and test out each filter
B. Try a few filters and adjust some brightness/contrast
C. Upload most of it, but leave out the bad/blurry photos
D. Upload it without checking

17

Do you hide your social media usage at work?

A. My tabs are all over the place, it's too hard to hide it!
B. I leave 1-2 tabs open and only check when I have notifications
C. I leave it on my phone but don't use it on the work computers
D. No, I'm too busy to be slacking off on social media

14

Do you think you have a lot of content open to the public eye?

A. Yes, my life story is an open book. I want more followers
B. I've kept key highlighted content public
C. There's a few photos the public can see like my profile picture, cover photo and maybe 1-3 other photos
D. My profile picture/other photos are random scene/objects

11

You send a friend request to your crush and he doesn't respond for two days. What do you do?

A. Rant to your friends and then unfriend and block them
B. Delete the friend request
C. I leave the friend request
D. Don't care

24

A new social media site is gaining steam! How likely are you to join?

A. Already on my way to installing the app
B. Might test the app
C. Only if my friends start using it
D. Not interested

21

What is your current Facebook profile picture?

A. Selfies collaged into one - can't decide which angle looks best, so I'll have all of them in one
B. Selfie photo or a photo with me and some friends
C. LinkedIn style - ready for my potential employer to see
D. A random object/scene/character

18

Do you Like your own status?

A. I have too many followers to worry about how many Likes I get
B. Well, sometimes I need to support myself
C. No, I leave it to whoever wants to Like it
D. Haven't posted for a while

25

Have you ever stayed up ridiculously late because you were using social media?

A. Ridiculously late... that's my average
B. Only if the social media content is interesting
C. I'll do some mindless scrolling before bed
D. Nah, beauty sleep is more important

22

Do you accept people as 'friends' on social media if you aren't friends in real life?

A. If that makes me look popular with my friends list, then yes
B. Only some, if they look decent
C. No, just people I have met in person or know of
D. I keep my friends list small and allow close friends only

19

How often do you post pictures of your food?

A. I have a dedicated separate page for my #foodie adventures
B. From time to time I will post food photos
C. Only if it's really unique, or else I just leave them in my album
D. I just eat the food and let my tastebuds appreciate the craft

---

26

How often do you check your social media accounts?

A. Every 6 minutes
B. Every 1 hour
C. In my breaks
D. Once in a while if necessary, like emergencies

23

You've just started dating someone, but they haven't changed their status on Facebook. How do you feel?

A. Freaking out - I've already posted couple-y photos online!
B. It's okay - no hurry
C. I probably didn't notice
D. Again, I like to keep that private

20

Do you often pretend to have an excuse to post a selfie when really you just wanted to post one?*

A. Yes, my caption 'new hair, new me' isn't relevant to a photo of my gym/booty selfie
B. I don't always get good hair days like this, so I need to post
C. I just post when I feel like it
D. Selfies are saved on my phone only for me to see

27

How many pictures do you have on all your social media accounts combined?

A. Oh gosh - I have no idea!
B. Probably around 100
C. Maybe 50
D. Profile picture and cover photo

28

You're applying for a job, and they want to see your social media accounts for screening purposes. How do you feel?

A. I should probably delete some photos and posts
B. A bit nervous, I should double-check first
C. Fine, my content is harmless
D. No worries, there's nothing to see anyways

29

Have you ever tried to lose weight because you didn't like how you looked in your social media pictures?

A. Well, I've already photo-shopped them beforehand so I'm not worried
B. Yes, deleted them and now its time to repost new gym selfies
C. Yeah, probably around Summer time
D. Don't care

Appendix 4. Participant Information Sheet: Focus Group

Participant Information Sheet

AUT
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Date Information Sheet Produced:

Tuesday 14 November 2017

Project Title

A Paradigm Shift in Information Decluttering: How to Educate Young Adults

An Invitation

Hello – my name is Michelle Young. I would like to invite you to participate in a research about your usage of social media. This research contributes to a thesis publication for my Master of Design degree. Firstly, I will outline the process of your participation in the research: today I want to learn about you. Today is about understanding your current social media experience and ways that you declutter from information overload in social media. This will require you to be involved in an active discussion. In the next step once we have completed the focus group, I will go away to create ten decluttering methods based on the findings and data from today. You will then be invited back for a follow-up one-on-one interview to provide feedback of the decluttering methods. But don't worry about that for now, you will be notified about the follow-up interview at a later stage. Now, before we begin, I would like to mention that you will be observed and recorded on a video device. If you choose to not have your face shown on the video device, you may request to do so. Let me know how you feel about this by asking me questions.

What is the purpose of this research?

Many of us have forgotten what silence feels like. Our minds are inundated with data smog - trying to keep up with the age of information that is dominated by technology. We are absorbed in the advent of the computer, Internet and social media with its accessibility and immediacy of information. We are absorbed in the constant stream of information, with an obsession to want to know about anything and everything. Although social media is the catalyst for establishing connections, excessive information can generate other negative aspects such as time management, stress, disconnection with personal contact and energy levels. Information overload is defined as an overwhelming feeling upon the receipt or collection of an indigestible or incomprehensible amount of information. This research aims to acknowledge and understand the impact of social media on the lives of young adults. By documenting your social media usage through a focus group and in-depth interview, these models of methods are expected to generate an impact based on your usage, patterns and behaviour. Through demonstrating the effects and consequences of these approaches, this research highlights the importance to shape communication. We might then seek ways to practice living with less complexity and noise and therefore less distraction. You may also want to find out about how you could reduce your social media and phone usage to create better habits with managing your priorities, time and with overcoming procrastination.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been asked to participate in a focus group because you have seen a recruitment advertisement on a social media site and have been in contact with me to express interest in being involved. You have been identified as a young adult (21-30 years old) who is currently a university student involved in the online community of social media and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, active online engagement in social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Behance, Pinterest, or WeChat.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

For this research, your participation will be required in both the focus group and interview. Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. Consultation about further information in the research can be arranged before you are required to complete a Consent Form. Agreement ceases when you have agreed to research but withdraw due to something that has come up. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

You will be asked to participate in a group discussion about information overload and social media. You will be involved in taking part in the research by sharing information or data based on your experiences, thoughts and insights on the topic. The focus group will take approximately 2 hours to complete and will require you to meet with myself and other participants at an arranged destination. The focus group will be video and audio recorded. The focus group is seen as an avenue for me as a researcher to understand and gather your general experiences of social media, as well as current methods you are using to declutter from information. You will then be required to attend a single 2-hour follow-up interview after the focus group on another day. The follow-up interview will ask you for feedback on the ten decluttering methods I would have created based on the information of today's focus group. I hope to gather a deeper insight into young adult's social media usage so that we can reduce our social media and phone usage to create better habits in our productivity, priorities, time and with overcoming procrastination.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There are no foreseeable discomforts or risks for the participants.

What are the benefits?

Personal Benefits
- Engagement with the research can potentially benefit you with awareness and re-evaluation of your own social media usage to improve personal well-being, work, decision-making, innovation, and productivity
- Refreshments will be provided
- You will receive a thank-you gift at the end of participation
- Build confidence and the ability to work with a group

Educational Benefits
- Develop understanding for the process of a focus group
- Learn about issues and methods in a contemporary topic of discussion
- Apply concepts from the research to your "real life" situations

Professional Benefits
- Enhance your professional communication skills
- Learn new techniques and skills for decluttering in social media
- Networking opportunity

How will my privacy be protected?

1. Respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality: An Information Sheet, Video Protocol Sheet and a Consent Form will be provided to you. The forms will cover your respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality. The information collected will be used for research purposes only. I will not share, use or expose any of the participants' private information with any third parties or for any other purposes, unless explicit consent is stated in the agreement and that the participants agree to;
2. Findings of the research will be reported in a way which you cannot be individually identified;
3. Videos of identifiable persons will be used for analysis purposes only and will not be viewed by anyone other than myself and my project supervisor.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no costs of participating in this research, other than the two hours you will spend on participating in the focus group and then another two hours in the interview. You will be provided with refreshments during the focus group and interview as well as a gift in recognition for your contribution to this research project.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

One week.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

If you would like feedback, I will email a condensed summary of the findings to you.
The summary of findings includes:

- A brief statement about the main purpose of the study, number of participants, the duration of the study, methodologies, and an overview of the research;
- Clarity of findings and factual information from the inquiry;
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- Recommendations to solve the problem.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Professor Ming Cheung, ming.cheung@aut.ac.nz.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Michelle Young, vxf2132@aut.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Ming Cheung, ming.cheung@aut.ac.nz

Appendix 5. Participant Information Sheet: One-on-One Interview

Participant Information Sheet

AUT
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Date Information Sheet Produced:

Tuesday 14 November 2017

Project Title

A Paradigm Shift in Information Decluttering: How to Educate Young Adults

An Invitation

Hello – my name is Michelle Young. I would like to invite you to participate in a research about your usage of social media. This research contributes to a thesis publication for my Master of Design degree. Firstly, I will outline the process of your participation in the research: today I want to learn about you. Today is about understanding your current social media experience and ways that you declutter from information overload in social media. This will require you to be involved in an active discussion. In the next step once we have completed the focus group, I will go away to create ten decluttering methods based on the findings and data from today. You will then be invited back for a follow-up one-on-one interview to provide feedback of the decluttering methods. But don't worry about that for now, you will be notified about the follow-up interview at a later stage. Now, before we begin, I would like to mention that you will be observed and recorded on a video device. If you choose to not have your face shown on the video device, you may request to do so. Let me know how you feel about this by asking me questions.

What is the purpose of this research?

Many of us have forgotten what silence feels like. Our minds are inundated with data smog - trying to keep up with the age of information that is dominated by technology. We are absorbed in the advent of the computer, Internet and social media with its accessibility and immediacy of information. We are absorbed in the constant stream of information, with an obsession to want to know about anything and everything. Although social media is the catalyst for establishing connections, excessive information can generate other negative aspects such as time management, stress, disconnection with personal contact and energy levels. Information overload is defined as an overwhelming feeling upon the receipt or collection of an indigestible or incomprehensible amount of information. This research aims to acknowledge and understand the impact of social media on the lives of young adults. By documenting your social media usage through a focus group and in-depth interview, these models of methods are expected to generate an impact based on your usage, patterns and behaviour. Through demonstrating the effects and consequences of these approaches, this research highlights the importance to shape communication. We might then seek ways to practice living with less complexity and noise and therefore less distraction. You may also want to find out about how you could reduce your social media and phone usage to create better habits with managing your priorities, time and with overcoming procrastination.

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Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Ming Cheung, ming.cheung@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, **AUTEC Reference number** *type the reference number*.