Exploring Teenagers' Use of TikTok: An Emerging Multi-Faceted Method

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Teenagers are coming of age in a hyper visual social reality (Zuev & Bratchford, 2021). Social media allows teenagers to connect and engage with others on an unprecedented scale (Miller et al., 2016). TikTok, is a particularly popular social media application amongst 13-17 year olds (Vogels et al., 2022), with a somewhat negative perception of adversely impacting teenagers' well-being (Travers, 2022). There is scarce knowledge of how teenagers' use TikTok in exam periods, particularly the shared and collaborative consumption experience observed on TikTok during exams (Botsman & Rogers, 2011; Evitts, 2022). The aim of our research was to explore how teenagers use TikTok during this period.

Participants aged 15-18 were recruited who had used TikTok during the GCSE and A-Level exam period, using snowball sampling (Sadler et al., 2010). In a pilot study, the researchers, following Morgan et al.'s (2002) guidance for adolescent focus groups, recruited five participants. After two focus groups, the researchers reflected that five were too many participants to explore the topic in depth. This led to the researchers taking a multi-participant, dyadic and triadic approach to interviews, involving two-three participants and the moderator(s) (Kuhn, 2022; Morgan, 2016).

Traditional research methods are often not as effective where participants are young (Nakarada-Kordic et al., 2017). Previous research has also acknowledged the need to use active methods with adolescent participants (Banister & Booth, 2005). Projective techniques and visual methods were therefore employed to access participants' conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings (Boddy, 2005; Rabin, 1986). Two projective and enabling techniques were therefore used during the multi-participant interviews: *thought bubbles* and *sentence completion* to encourage participants to reflect on how they used TikTok before, during and after their exams. Thought bubbles allowed participants to delve deeper into how they used TikTok, with the sentence completion exercise then facilitating participants to project their inner and, at times, sensitive thoughts and feelings (Weiner & Greene, 2008). The method of storyboarding was then used. Storyboarding builds on film and television production techniques typically employed to communicate social, temporal and spatial aspects of an idea to others (Martin & Hanington, 2012). Scarce research, particularly in consumer research, has utilised storyboarding as a data collection method (Lupton & Leahy, 2019). Participants were asked to collaboratively create a three to six scene storyboard to illustrate how a typical student used TikTok in the exam period, before talking through the storyboard with the researcher(s) asked probing questions. Storyboarding facilitated participants to conceptualise and reflect on how TikTok was used by

themselves and their peers during the exam period. These methods were set amidst semi-structured questions that focused on the role of TikTok during participants' exams.

Kerrigan and Hart (2016) call for researchers to develop innovative research methods capable of dealing with the complexities of contemporary consumer life. Our methodology, through employing multi-faceted data collection methods combined with dyad/triad interviews achieves this. We put forward a creative and effective process for exploring how teenagers engage with TikTok, with the method collecting rich multimodal (verbal, visual and written) data.

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