Social Media: A Qualitive Research Study Undertaken to Understand the Effects of Social Media, on Mental Health, in Society Today.

Captstone Project

By Elaine O'Grady

X16412186

National College of Ireland

July 21, 2019

BA (Honours) in Business, National College of Ireland.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank National College of Ireland and their library staff for being so helpful and patient with me during my final year. I would also like to sincerely thank my thesis supervisor Robert MacDonald, for all his help, guidance and expertise in this area. Furthermore, I would like to thank my family and friends for being so patient and understanding during this process. Finally, I would like to thank the small community of people who undertook this project alongside myself for their constant guidance and advice, especially to my good friend Aisling O'Halloran who was there for all the difficult parts.

Abstract

The following thesis is the discussion and exploration of research undertaken to understand if Social Media has an impact on people's lives, and more specifically on their mental health. Beginning with an introduction into social media which will highlight the importance of the topic and how it needs to be recognised more widely. The aim of this study is to find out if people find social media sites are affecting them mentally and if they believe they are addicted to them. I will review previous academic research into this topic and use many other online sources (mainly) to complete my research. I will use much of this information in my literature review and conduct a survey, using 100 participants in order to legitimise my secondary research. In my results section I will do an in-depth analysis on the answers which are received for my survey. I will analyse and conclude all relevant information and attempt an answer on the hypothesis. In the conclusion section I will offer my recommendations for furthering my study or any other individual which it is appropriate.

(i)

National College of Ireland

Research Students Declaration Form

(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: Elaine O'Grady

Student Number: x16412186

Degree for which thesis is submitted: BA (Hons) Business

Material submitted for award

I declare that the work has been composed by myself.

(b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by

quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

(c) My thesis will be included in electronic format in the College Institutional Repository TRAP (thesis reports and projects)

(d) Either *I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other

submission for an academic award.

Or *I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a

submission for the award of

_____

(State the award and the awarding body and list the material below)

Signature of research student: _____

Date:_____

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library, National College of Ireland Student (ii)

Student Name: Elaine O'Grady

Student Number: x16412186

School: School of Business

Course: Business

Degree to be Awarded: BA (Hons) Business

Title of Thesis: Social Media: A Qualitive Research Study Undertaken to Understand the Effects of Social Media, on Mental Health, in Society Today.

One hard bound copy of your thesis will be lodged in the Norma Smurfit Library

and will be available for consultation. The electronic copy will be accessible in TRAP

(http://trap.ncirl.ie/), the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository. In

accordance with normal academic library practice all these lodged in the National College of Ireland Institutional Repository (TRAP) are made available on open access. I agree to a hard-bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library. I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of Candidate: _____

For completion by the School:

The aforementioned thesis was received by_____

Date:_____

This signed form must be appended to all hard bound and electronic copies of your thesis submitted to your school Submission of Thesis and Dissertation.

Table of Contents

<u>1. Introduction</u>

This thesis shall discuss Social Media today and its relationship with mental health. In order to gather the most up to date information regarding social media and mental health I have not set geographical boundaries for research. I will review findings, articles, journals and other sources to understand how social media and mental illness are related. I will then attempt to answer the research questions which surround my topic such as 'Is social media addictive?', 'Does social media have a negative impact on mental health?', 'when it comes to social media do the negatives outweigh the positives?'. I hope to answer these questions with my secondary research along with my primary research which is in the form of a survey.

According to Jeff Goins, author of The Art of Work, there are two types of social media users: "sprinklers" and "vacuums." The sprinklers of social media share content, and the vacuums suck it all up. It's in a way like the food chain, one can't exist without the other. (Tan, 2019) Sprinklers are referenced to individuals who share, perhaps even overshare and don't have much time to use social media. These people generous with their information and create content, they have good impulse control and leave the information to be absorbed by the 'vacuums'. The vacuums are the users who soak up any information they may come across, they have the fear they may miss out if they are not using their device at all times, and this is where issues may arise. Social Media is relatively new, although it first emerged in 1997 (Six Degree's), I believe people are still trying to understand the processes and developments social media brings to people. Although it is a virtual reality social media affects our real lives. During this thesis I hope to prove how social media has negative tendencies and is causing people harm. My hypothesis for this research is Social Media: A Qualitive Research Study Undertaken to Understand the Effects of Social Media, on Mental Health, in Society Today. For the duration of this research I will refer to social networking sites as SNS. (Goins, 2019)

Although SNS have been around for 22 years now, there is still a lack of research about how it is affecting people, majorly adolescents. A main reason for the lack of research could be because of its constant changing and evolving. People become fixated on SNS and its triggers. Triggers are a reference to the addictive tendencies which appear on your device in order to real you back in. these addictive triggers can be messages, likes, comments or any form of notification, I will revisit this topic in my literature review. Adolescents become defined by the number of likes beneath their photos and comments from carefully created profiles. Each like, retweet and comment are an affirmation of an individual's cleverness and

hilarity. These notifications can trigger good feelings, which means the user will continue to go back for more, but are these feelings as effective in the long run? (Hurley, 2019)

As spoken about in the results of this thesis, a growing concern in regard to social media is the increasing amount of time which is spent online. The underlying issue is people have come accustomed to having their device with them at all times, meaning they are always online which is a main cause for the massive amount of time which is spent on SNS daily. Many other reasons for addiction it SNS include face to face social failure, where individuals find it difficult to communicate and have introverted personalities. When these people use SNS they feel there is a barrier between them and the person they are communicating with meaning they are more comfortable to communicate this way. Many other individuals spend a lot of time online due to poor impulse control. This is a characteristic SNS want their users to possess so it is simple to keep them online. Many online retailers use this against their users also by sending tempting notifications such as 'Check-Out in next 24 minutes for 24% off!'. I discuss these issues in more detail in my literature review. SNS addiction can be described as an impulse control disorder, this is because users develop emotional attachments to online profiles and activities which they perform on their device. The development of SNS addiction is gradual and difficult to notice, making it more dangerous as it is difficult to rectify, users make up fantasies in their minds and begin to enjoy online connections more than real life connections. (Samantray, 2015)

The following quote was written by McCarthy-Jones of Trinity College Dublin, I think it displays how we need to be more cautious about how damaging social media can be. 'Social Network sites are slot machines that pay out the gold of self-relevant information. This is why billions of people pull their levers. So, can they be addictive?' (McCarthy-Jones, 2018)

2. Literature Review

Social media has become a huge part of people's lives and livelihood, it is a means of communication and a modern approach to exchanging information. Social media has many advantages and has transformed innovation, learning and creativity although more recently aspects of social media have been responsible for damaging mental health. Social media has become a focal point of social interaction. There is a strong connection between social media and mental illness. (R. Bhamare, 2019) In a report which has been published by the RSPH (Royal Society for Public Health) and YHM (Young Health Movement) called #StatusofMind the effects of mental health from social media can be identified. Anxiety and depression rates in young people have increased by 70% in the last 25 years according to RSPH. These mental disorders can deeply affect a young person's life at a crucial point for psychological development which can be hindered with excessive use of SNS. SNS can set unrealistic expectations such as photoshopped, cropped or staged pictures can make the viewer feel as if their life is inadequate. SNS is used as a tool for people to express the best elements of their lives and can make a viewer jealous or feel as if their life is mundane. Along with the viewer who feels incompetent in comparison to the poster, we must analyse the posters' mental health and distortion of real life. If a person finds it necessary to portray themselves in a certain way does this expose their true emotions? This unrealistic standard which is set by SNS can manifest into anxiety and depression which has been linked to the use of SNS. In Ireland 1 in 5 people will suffer from depression in Ireland (Stopsuicide.ie, 2019) this figure is growing and with expanding evidence has been linked to social media. Using SNS for more than two hours a day has been linked to lower self-esteem, poor mental health, increasing levels of anxiety and suicidal tendencies. According to Statista the 'Daily time spent on social networking by internet users worldwide' increased by 50% from 2012 to 2017, 90 minutes to 135 minutes. (Statista, 2019) Which means that on average people are using SN for longer than two hours daily. (Cramer and Inkster, 2019) Since the rise of SNS during the 1990's platforms such like Facebook and Instagram have become imbedded in the lives of many individuals. In particular younger people who have grown up with this emerging communication platform. An important question users must consider is whether social media is causing them to obsess and compare themselves to others based on images seen online. This can be due to SNS which are image based, Instagram having dominance in this area. (Makwana et al., 2019)

Adolescent egocentrism is a concept which has been developed by David Elkind (1967) he describes it as 'An adolescent's inability to make a clear distinction between their

perceptions and the perceptions of others'. (Thomas, 2019) Elkind believes egocentrism occurred due to the development of adolescent cognitive powers. He believes when adolescents reach the fourth stage Jean Piagets fourth stage of cognitive development, they begin to manipulate information and ideas. Elkind's concept incudes a sub-construct of the 'Imaginary Audience'. Elkind believes the Imaginary Audience occurs during the ages of 13-15. He believes by this age young adolescents have developed a frame of mind where they can think about their own thoughts along with other's thoughts. However, they cannot understand the direction of other people's thoughts and believe these thoughts are aimed at them, which increases their egocentrism. (Elkind, 1967) When the adolescents egocentrism is heightened, they then create an imaginary audience in their mind, who they believe, are constantly thinking and judging them. (Cingel, Wartella and Krcmar, 2014) The adolescents 'ideas of other people's perceptions had more to do with what the adolescent thought than what the person whose thoughts they were considering.' When the individual made assumptions about what others were thinking, they were making these assumptions only through their own imagination and did not consult others or test the perceptions in any format. (Thomas, 2019) This coincides with the individualistic cultures which are now commonly seen as against more traditional culture where people were less self-orientated. Adolescents now have adopted a personal fable where they believe they are completely unique and often use SNS to display this false uniqueness. Younger people now find themselves using SNS more often and in different ways than older adolescents and adults. Younger people find themselves posting more updates, leaving more comments and generally divulging their opinions which can often be narrow minded and closed to the consideration of other people's opinions. The nature of SNS reinforce egocentrism by forcing people to believe other's lives revolve around the activity of yours. The younger generation who only know their young teenage years with social media are more comfortable with the experience involved with technology and more likely to extensively use SNS as an outlet for their emotions and views. Older generations that were eased into social media find it more difficult to live their lives through profiles. Elkind believes this has something to do with the processes of development, and an elongation in the Imaginary Audience ideation may occur over time. Along with this, Elkind also believes it is a necessary part of cognitive development and at some point, everyone will endure it. (Cingel, Wartella and Krcmar, 2014)

A Netflix Original series, called Black Mirror, was first aired in 2011. It is described as a 'sci-fi anthology series', it highlights the social media obsession which is prevalent in today's

world. The series is a fore sighting into the way we will live with social media in the future if it continues to develop as rapidly as it is now. (Netflix.com, 2019) Charlie Brooker, the write of Black Mirror explains the 'Black Mirror' 'As the reflection you'll find on every wall, on every desk, in the palm of every hand: the cold, shiny screen of a TV, a monitor, a smartphone." (Brooker, 2019) The series are concerned with displaying the negatives on the internet with episodes highlighting how users can become inhumane without eye contact, fixated on objective self-awareness (the comparison of the way you perceive yourself as against who you are actually are) and other ways humans bring artificial intelligence alive. (Brooker, 2019) Black Mirror highlights how people live in an alternative reality and each episode highlights different aspects of exactly that which is frightening to watch. The main message that Black Mirror wants to express is, 'the way you use the internet is a good reflection of who you are'. (Brooker, 2019)

SNS addiction is predominately behavioural, the brain reacts to behaviours, similar to the way it reacts to drink and alcohol. Usually when reflecting on addiction, alcohol and drugs would be an individual's initial thought process, similar to how the brain reacts to these substances, behaviours can produce a strong reinforcement in the brain. This means the brain convinces individuals to repeat the behaviour. This brings along symptoms of an addict such as mood modification, salience (for example: behavioural, cognitive and emotional distraction during activity), (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011) tolerance and removal of the behaviour can cause withdrawal, meaning SNS users could experience personality changes, irritability and have trouble sleeping. (Grant, JD, MD, MPH, Odlaug, PhD, MPH and Chamberlain, MD, PhD, 2019) A clear example of how social media is tapping into human psychology without realisation is phantom ringing. Alex Blaszczynski, the chairman of the School of Psychology at the University of Sydney explains the phenomenon of the 'phantom vibration syndrome'. This syndrome is where individuals believe their phone is ringing or vibrating when it is not. Dr.Blaszczynski believes it is 'related to some of the electrical signals coming through in a transmission, touching on the surrounding nerves, giving a feeling of vibration'. Although, he has not completed any formal studies he believes this phenomenon is not a figment of the imagination. Along with this theory other theories exist such as people anticipating a phone call or message can mistake other sensations such as clothes rubbing together as a phone vibration. (Miller, 2019) Michael B. Rothberg a clinician investigator, undertook a survey in the Baystate Medical Centre which is in Massachusetts to establish the prevalence of phantom vibrations. This study showed how 68% of the clinical staff surveyed have experienced this

issue and believes it is a misinterpretation of sensory signals within the brain. Although, in his research he concludes that more research into aetiology of phantom vibration to see why this happens and how. (Rothberg, 2010) Another researcher, Robert Rosenberg studying at the Georgia Institute of Technology believes that detecting these vibrations becomes a habit. People carry phones around every day making them a huge part of lives. The body is accustomed to perceiving any sort of vibration or sensation as the phone because of your bodily habits. Some people call phantom ringing 'ringxiety'. (Locke, 2019)

While using the internet individuals engage in many different activities, that can all be addictive, this means users can become addicted to certain activities undertaken online. According to Kimberly Young, an expert on Internet Addiction and the creator of The Internet Addiction Test (1998) (Young, 2019), there are five different types of internet addiction including: Computer Addiction (Games) , Information Overload (Web Surfing Addiction), Net Compulsions (Online Gambling and Online Shopping Addiction), Cyber Sexual Addiction (Online Pornography/ Sex Addiction) and Cyber-Relationship Addiction (Addiction to the communication and report of other people including friendships and relationships.) (Young, 2019). For the means of my research I will explore two types of internet addiction, relevant to my question, according to Dr. Kimberley Young.

2.1 Net Compulsions

The use of social media and digital marketing bring a new form of communication which was not present before. This means that the rules of relationship marketing have changed. There has been a shift from company's promotional emailing and website to social media which brings them business but means they lose a sense of control over their consumer. Social media has alternated how the business communicates with their consumers, the customer has more control and their experience is an important goal of a business. SNS offer a huge opportunity to businesses for marketing, along with this individuals have an opportunity to post comments and reviews which can impact a business positively and negatively. Many SNS have spent much of their capital on creating a design team who work with creating techniques to make mobile phone users stay online for as long as possible, and to get them back online when not using their phone. These designers go to the core of human psychology and neurological patterns to create strategies. SNS tap into an individual's cognitive resources to create habits. Once an online platform becomes a habit for someone they are exposed to more marketing. How habits form in an individual's brain is the key to this issue, when a person does something

they like, the reward system within their body, known as the mesolimbic dopamine system, releases dopamine which is commonly known as the 'happiness hormone'. When this hormone is released within the body an individual tends to repeat these behaviours as it is pleasurable. The ATARI model has been created to understand the reoccurring activities individuals go through when a habit is forming relating to social media use. ATARI stands for Attitude, Trigger, Action, Reward, Investment. Attitude is concerned with what you see online which you agree with and once you feel you other people with the same beliefs as you, it makes you feel good about being online, a trigger is anything which can make you feel as if you want to go back online, addictive triggers can be notifications, messages and comments. This causes the user to take Action, once the trigger has been successful and the person will then fulfil their immediate need, which is to go online. Reward is the key to how the ATARI model works as when an individual is receiving validation online, they feel good, this can come in the form of 'likes' or 'matching' on dating sites. The last element of the model is then Investment, this refers to the money, time and data which has been necessary to complete this cycle. Once people have made this investment with social media, they find it difficult to part with it which can be known as 'loss aversion' in psychological terms. (Fenwick, 2019)

'The internet and social media remove the barriers that existed in the past in traditional word of mouth such as location time and access.' (O'Brien, 2019) Relationship marketing is applicable internally and externally for a business, this process relies on three vital areas, interaction, communication and creation of value (Gronroos, 2004). Before social media, brands couldn't directly contact or communicate with their consumers, social media helps to break down this wall and create stronger bonds with their customers as they feel emotionally involved with the business, social media allows these brands to become communities and people begin to crave to belong within these communities (O'Brien, 2019). Shopping can be an important source of 'self-expression, self-definition or therapy' however, if it becomes addictive and compulsive it is a problem. Compulsive buying can be a temporary relief from psychological issues which arise from low self-esteem. (Black, 2007) One of the main issues arising from compulsive online shopping is the fact the individual may not need the item and usually cannot afford it. Online brands have an opportunity to market their products using SNS, which makes it easy for compulsive shoppers to access products and buy without fully engaging with the sale. The rise of 'Apple Pay' and PayPal allow the process of online shopping to be painless and incredibly quick as they store details for payment and delivery within their systems. This makes online shopping exceptionally quicker and less engaging than physical

shopping where there are more opportunities for distraction and reason for self-discipline. Loss aversion aids decision making, and it wants the brain to avoid losses at all costs. People hate losing things, and the loss of something is much more significant than the joy of gaining something. This is why human brains have a strange way of averting losses, many companies use this marketing strategy as it is a stronger approach among other cognitive biases. This is another reason an online shopping outlet has a better opportunity to make a sale than physical shops. Research has been carried out by Daugirdas Jankus in the ISM University of Management and Economics to show how loss aversion works. The counterparts which were additionally tested included the Countdown Effect, where advertisements would entice customers by quotes such as 'You only have x time left to order!'. The second was the Bandwagon Affect, where the advertisement would say 'x amount of people have already ordered this, don't miss out!' and thirdly, the Gain Effect, which would say things like 'Order now, or regret later!'. Loss aversion ranked highest of the three and the advertisement would say 'This is already reserved for you! Go to the checkout now!' or similar. When looking at these four simple examples of the process marketeers go through when deciding how they will entice people, it is easy to see the difference between the four. Unlike the other three options, the loss aversion option suggests the item already belongs to the user, meaning if the owner did not buy the item they would be at a loss. (Saleh, 2019)

Unfortunately for the planet, Fast Fashion reaps the rewards of compulsive behaviour and it seems it is only the beginning. Traditionally, people purchased clothes that were high-end and more expensive because they would have the item for years to come, with the rise of social media and fast fashion this tradition has shifted. Although individuals still crave high-end designer clothing, they cannot afford to buy it and only wear it once. Social media has created this mentality, where clothes are created to fulfil an individual's moment of inspiration. This means people have shifted to buying clothing from retailers at a much lower cost meaning they can afford to wear it once and never wear it again if necessary. SNS keep this process alive by using paid advertisements where their clothes can be seen or paying influencers to model, photograph and promote the clothes to a predominantly younger audience. These influencers are commissioned through 'swipe up' links on their profiles and discount codes which are unique to themselves. (Tan, 2019) Fast Fashion is a huge problem for many reasons and each step of the supply chain has created global environmental justice issues, such as employees' low wages, chemical dyes being released into water courses and the growth of water-intensive cotton to name few. (Sirothia, 2019)

Another Net Compulsion which goes hand in hand with Online Shopping is Online Gambling. Although this is quite shocking to realise, social media experts have created more strategy's which are similar to the techniques used within the gambling industry. These methods work and stimulate similar mechanisms in the brain by creating psychological cravings. These mechanisms work in similar ways to drugs such as cocaine. 'In the online economy, revenue is a function of continuous consumer attention – which is measured in clicks and time spent' this quote is from Addiction by Design by Natasha Shüll. She explains how people get stuck into 'ludic loops' which is created by social media experts in the form of notifications, snapchat streaks (this reference to an ongoing snapchat being sent daily and the app tracks this), or playing games. When thinking about social media and its effects on people, physically, emotionally and financially many people would not relate this with gambling but delving deeper can show social media users how the principle is almost the same. Similar to gambling, which changes the brain structure and makes people more incline to develop mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, social media usage has also been linked to these illnesses, and its effect on psychological wellbeing cannot be overlooked. It begins with a trigger, followed by a reward which then makes the user invested, and through this process, habits form. Once a habit forms, there is no need for the triggers which once enticed the user. (Busby, 2019) 'The products are built to be engaging and what is engaging for some is addictive for others, that's clear' this quote was written by Nir Eyal the behavioural psychologist and author of Hooked: How to Build Habit Forming Products, has conceptualised how people become attached to social media. (Busby, 2019)

2.2 Cyber-Relationship Addiction

Cyber-Relationship Addiction is the addiction to 'social networking, chat rooms, texting, and messaging to the point where virtual, online friends become more important than real-life relationships with family and friends' (Ramdhonee, 2014) People are constantly connecting on social media by viewing profiles, liking pictures and commenting on posts. It is the newest form of communication and it is taking the place of real-life social situations and relationships. SNS users can manage their identity, receive 'instant gratification and have the ease of self-disclosure', this makes the online relationships addictive, users can filter their profile and create a more desirable person to show the world without the elements the individual may not be fond of. Individuals who obsess over social media because they are concerned about how other people perceive them predominantly and also how the user perceives other people. This is why SNS have a strong correlation with emotional contagion, this is the 'ability to influence the

emotions and behaviours of others, either directly or indirectly'. (Morris, 2017) Emotional Contagion is a regular occurrence for someone who obsesses over virtual relationships. Individuals who are addicted to these online relationships are vulnerable to emotional contagion, as feelings can be transferred virtually. This can also eventuate when an emotional mood or feeling is transferred from one individual to another unknowingly online. Many individuals use social media as an outlet for their feelings, people can read tweets, posts, comments and blogs which affect them mentally more than they realise. When conflict type posts are written on social media it can cause sadness, irritation or even rage when an individual reads an opinion that they are not in agreement with. If social media users were more aware of this emotional trigger it could minimise how social media affects mental health. As technology advances it links SNS through many devices making it difficult to escape and easily accessible. Especially in younger age groups, teenagers are more likely to control more than one social media account and explore more platforms whereas adults are inclined to stick to original SNS such as Facebook. When individuals use their platform to post negative content it can proliferate feelings of estrangement, separation and depression to the reader. The issue which comes with emotional contagion is that an individual may not recognise where their negative feelings have stemmed from, understanding how these interactions affect mental health can aid in using social media consciously. This can be avoided by unfollowing accounts, which make an individual feel inadequate. (Belluomini, 2019)

When an individual is addicted to relationships online, they can often be one sided meaning the individual obsesses over celebrities, influencers or even a person they may know in real life may not feel as connected to the individual as the individual is to them. This can cause many mental issues for the person who is addicted as they obsess over others. Perfectionism is the need to be perfect in every way, 'Perfection, is an abstraction, an impossibility in reality and often leads to procrastination'. (Psychology Today, 2019) Perfectionism is toxic, this is because an individual will always fail when trying to be perfect in every way meaning their main focus is not to fail, which is inevitable. As individuals compare, they cannot despair because in comparison their life is imperfect. (Psychology Today, 2019) Australian model Essena O'Neill decided to delete Instagram as she declared it to 'have no purpose'. She made headlines globally as she made this stance because her livelihood was based on airbrushed images and an 'instaperfect' life. She stated 'We are a generation told to consume and consume, with no thought of where it all comes from and where it goes'. The model admits to taking up to one hundred photos in order to get the perfect shot to post online.

She has made this stance o show girls how it is not a 'candid' life and these posts don't host inspiration. Professor Tracey Wade of Flinders University agrees with these statements and believes the power of social media are hindering people's expectations. In recent years, perfectionism and obsession with social media has been at the forefront of young people's minds and causes them anxiety, which did not contribute to the normal stress levels someone of that age group would have had 30 or 40 years ago. In terms of achievement young people would have been inclined to have anxiety about grades, deadlines and future prospects but now they have a lot more on their mind. This can cause depression and anxiety. (Walsh, 2019) Individuals make comparisons based upon content online which can be viewed as perfect lives in perfect homes with a perfect relationship, which is unattainable and unrealistic. In many recent years, this issue has stemmed from school and being surrounded by peers, due to the excessive use of social media today young adults are followed home by this through social media. As perfectionism is a strive to be perfect socially, social media can take this to a new level where young adults become obsessed with likes, comments and friends online. Along with creating a 'perfect real life' these individuals must create 'perfect profiles'. These pressures can be damaging to mental health as it leaves people feeling anxious. Perfectionism can also become prevalent due to seeing profiles where people have 'perfect' lives and appearance which has made normal become disposable. (Escobar Olszewski, PsyD, 2019)

Addiction to online relationships form a huge gap between traditional; face to face communication and relationships. Face to face relationships can be more difficult to engage in for some individuals. The idea of having a barrier between the other person and the individual can be so appealing as it allows for the expression of feelings and other engagements that's the SNS user may not possess in face to face communication. Addiction to online relationships is gradual which is frightening as the symptoms can be difficult to notice at the beginning and when it is recognised it can often be very difficult to rectify. The issue with SNS and web surfing in general, is the limitless possibilities which are offered. These limitless possibilities can make it easy to forget that the virtual relationships have repercussions in real life situations. Virtual relationships lack many elements of real-life relationships and can cause serious danger. When users engage in relationships with others online, they begin to use their imagination to form ideas of how the other person reacts in conversation because many elements are missing online such as, eye contact, facial expressions, body language and many more. Users fill this gap by using their imagination and creating the perfect person in their mind. When the user has created this perfect person, they lack the imperfections others have in their real-life

relationships making the user favour the virtual relationships. This can be extremely problematic because as the user has created a 'perfect' person to have an online relationship with the imperfections of individuals in real-life is more prominent and when these imperfections are highlighted, the user becomes less attracted to the real life relationships which leads to real life issues. (Samantray, 2019)

Kimberly Young would deem addiction to cyber sexual relationships as another a type of Internet Addiction along with four counterparts. However, I believe it is relevant to discuss this in connection with addiction to online relationships in general. Although online relationships can be in regard to romantic relationships, friendship or any other kind of ongoing communication between two individuals cyber sexual relationships are an important factor to discuss as any prolonged communication online can lead to this type of relationship. This is another risk to real life relationships and can cause people to receive fulfilment of fantasies and desires that wouldn't be accessible in real life. The internet makes people feel invincible and anonymous which makes it so appealing and addicting, it is convenient and promotes avoidance of real life. Cyber sexual relationships and intimacy are a huge issue as users engage in unrealistic sexual situations and when these expectations are not achieved in real life the person will feel dissatisfied. Gender is an important topic when it comes to cyber sexual relationships. the reason behind the engagement of cybersex is different for men and woman according to a study undertaken by the Centre of Online Addiction. According to this organisation woman engage in cybersex due to self-conscious tendencies around their body and weight, removal of stigma surrounding the enjoyment of sex for females, it also allows them to explore their sexuality. Males tend to enjoy cybersex as it can lower their anxiety surrounding physical appearance, penis size, hair loss and weight. It also eliminates their performance concerns. Understanding the psychology behind why people enjoy cybersex shows how damaging it can be to real life relationships. (Samantray, 2019)

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy

When creating an affective methodology, I found a development by Saunders et al. (2007) called the research onion. This is an effective approach to this methodology. As we can see in Figure 1 below, the research onion and its many levels. For the purpose of this study I will use interpretivist approach. I will use the interpretivism paradigm because the purpose of the study is regarding people, not objects. (Saunders et al., 2012 p.116). The interpretive paradigm is 'concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals. They use meaning orientate methodologies' (Uir.unisa.ac.za, 2019)such as surveys, or interviewing. Interpretivism looks for "for meaning and reason behind people`s actions like: behaviour and interactions with others in the society and culture (Chowdhury, 2014; Whitley, 1984) Another affective description of the interpretivism paradigm is 'knowledge which is collected is socially constructed, rather than objectively determined' (Carson et al., 2001, p.5) George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) is considered a founder of symbolic interactionism which is the focusing on relationships among individuals within a society, where communication is how individuals understand the social world. (Courses.lumenlearning.com, 2019) Herbert Blumer believed 'these basic premises: humans interact with things based on meanings ascribed to those things; the ascribed meaning of things comes from our interactions with others and society; the meanings of things are interpreted by a person when dealing with things in specific circumstances ' (Blumer 1969) (Courses.lumenlearning.com, 2019) An example of this would be if an individual liked being educated it is because they have learnt that education is positive from family, friends and peers.
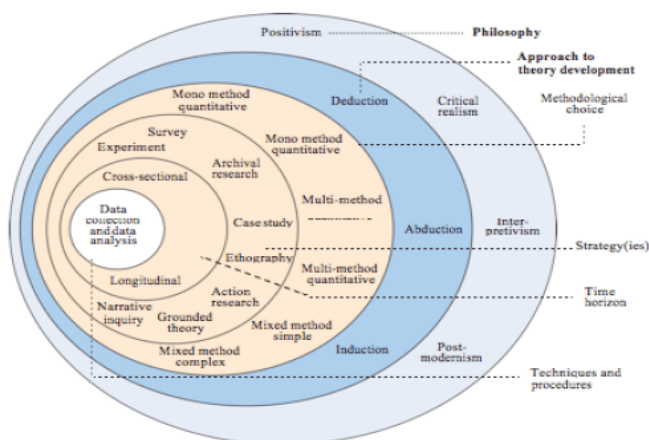

Figure 1. Research onion

(Melnikovas, 2019)

For the purpose of this research I have chosen to use the surveying method. This allows my research to become flexible and less rigid. I believe this paradigm coincides with my hypothesis. (Edirisingha, 2019) In order to display the effects of social media on mental health I have decided to use a qualitative method to make individuals aware of the negative impacts they could be imposing upon themselves unknowingly. When beginning my research, I needed to make decision whether quantitative or qualitive was the best option for myself. I found qualitive research would be exploratory based, and it is used to gain understanding and underlying issues surround certain topics, whereas quantitative research is quite different. Quantitative research was based around the generation of numerical data and statistics. Due to the fact that I am a business student looking into mental health and social media I opted for the qualitative approach. I found the quantitative approach would be more appropriate to science degrees, such as psychology. I hope this qualitative research can strengthen my findings within my literature review and retrieve evidence.

3.2 Data Collection

Data collection can be defined as the collection of intelligence from all related outlets which adhere to answering the research issue and evaluate the outcomes. Data collection can be divided into two categories primary and secondary. (Dudovskiy, 2019) In order to fulfil this thesis, I felt I needed a combination between both primary and secondary. I knew from the beginning that a qualitative approach was necessary to complete. The primary data which has been collected will be used in the analysis and findings section it will also contribute to the conclusion. However, the literature review has been written using many secondary sources including, Google Scholar, NCIRL eBooks, NCIRL eJournals and other internet sources which included blogs, News articles and research from Colleges globally. Collecting this secondary data from across the globe has not been an obstacle because the influence of social media does not have geographical boundaries. As researched in this thesis social media and the web in general operate at a fast-paced environment which means physical books are difficult to obtain that are relevant and up to date. To ensure I had the best knowledge and information to research I predominantly used the internet to find readings and journals rather than the use of books.

3.3 Survey

For this study I decided to conduct a survey (Appendix 1.0) in order to receive primary research feedback. I created the electronic survey using Survey Monkey. Initially I found this approach

difficult because I understood addiction and mental health are sensitive topics to ask individuals about.

I also understood the ironic nature of the survey because I was enquiring about participants social media habits through social media platforms. I was also aware of how my responses could be biased if the wording of the question seemed negative, this made me be mindful of the way I ask the questions as I would not want them to be interpreted in a negative manner. This also made me reflect on how I would distribute the surveys to receive adequate responses without being intrusive. Using my personal accounts, I released a web link for participants to voluntarily open. The main platforms where the survey took place were Facebook and Instagram. The survey was designed to see if people are addicted to SNS and ,using the internet in general, and if they believe they are or are not. The survey consisted of ten simple questions and it took approximately a minute and a half to complete according to Survey Monkey.

3.4 Participants

The target surveyors for this research were male and female age ranging widely that use social media to fluctuating degrees. I decided to use convenience sampling which married well with my research topic. Convenience sampling is a technique which is ideal for large populations because it would be impossible to survey everyone in the population. This worked for my research because I posted the survey on social media which helped to proliferate my responses. (Battaglia, 2019) When participants opened my survey there was an immediate disclaimer which read 'This is a research survey to provide personal information for my undergraduate research. When undertaking this survey, you can leave at any point without penalty. The research survey will take between 2 and 3 minutes and consists of 10 questions. Surveyor is contactable at lainey.ogrady@gmail.com'. The survey was created to investigate whether there was a correlation between social media usage and mental health. The survey was completely voluntary, no incentives were offered on completion. I have submitted my ethics form to the Board of Ethics at National College of Ireland and received approval for this research. At the end of the survey participants came to a page which thanked them for participating and gave a list of any helpful resources for anyone suffering with mental health issues.

3.5 Inclusion Criteria	3.6 Exclusion Criteria
Any social media user above the age of 18.	Any participant under the age of 18.

4. Results

The results of the primary research survey are available in the Appendix on page 37.

4.1 Usage

SNS are known as 'Global Consumer Phenomenon'. This is easily believed because of the number of people who use SNS daily. With online retailers now using SNS to market their items, they continuously boost their sales. Online retailers are becoming more popular, especially with the shift in way of life today. More people have main concerns such as their career and work rather than more traditional family orientated life. This is because the western world, (i.e. Europe and United States) have adopted an individualistic culture. People who are career driven but also have a family unit have less free time to physically shop locally or in shopping centres, consumers are now using online retailers for the simple fact, they are convenient. This is damaging to society, because less consumers support their local shops and producers, which means they will suffer. Alongside this, it could also have a major impact on communication, individuals are having less human contact which may not seem an issue in the beginning but as it accumulates it can be difficult to rectify. (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011) SNS usage is increasing and already at a very high level as it is unproductive. 40% of participants of my survey believe they spend 120 minutes or more daily on SNS. As previously mentioned in my literature review during the years 2012-2017 average usage increased from 90 minutes to 135 minutes (Statista, 2019) which is a worrying statistic and time goes on. Spending over two hours per day on SNS can be damaging to mental health, and it is also a waste of valuable time. If an individual spends an average of two hours per day on their phone for an entire year, they have wasted 730 hours which equates to 30 entire days! This is incredibly frightening for society today.

4.2 Motivations

92% of participants said they check social media when they first wake up in the morning. Many participants say they are concerned about what happened during the time they were sleeping. Some individuals say they would be anxious to check their phone the morning after a night out, to see if people had photographed them or people, they know on nights out. Other people admitted the following morning they would be concerned about what peers did they night before if te participant had not been involved in the activity. This is known as FOMO. FOMO is the 'Fear of Missing Out' (FOMO). A study was undertaken to investigate the 'correlation research linking social media use to worse well-being' at Nottingham Trent University. (Payne,

2019) This research shows individuals who suffer from FOMO find social media more addictive, and FOMO can be worsened by the continuation of looking at other people's updates. Although FOMO has always existed, social media has made the situation harder to overcome. (Lipson et al., 2019) Another study undertaken by scientists at Carleton and McGill University showed how young people showed negative emotions and stress from FOMO. They also found that these students missed out on sleep there for experienced more fatigue. This experiment took place over the period of a week with university students. The students completed a diary of their emotions and the research found that these young people experienced FOMO towards the end of the day and the end of the week. When individuals have FOMO, it is usually due to personal obligations such as work or college commitments which can also cause resentment in these areas and these people experienced a more extreme level of FOMO. The researchers continued their research with a follow up study. They wanted to find how social media played a role and was it directly linked to FOMO, they also wanted to argue that FOMO can happen all the time, even when the individual is 'missing out' because they have their own interesting and fun plans! This research found people experienced FOMO whether they had heard about a social event from a friend or social media. However, social media makes the communication much quicker. For example, if an individual has commitments which are less appealing than something their friends are doing, seeing pictures online can make the FOMO worse. This could be damaging to mental health as it can bring feelings of loneliness. (Hobson Ph.D., 2019)

4.3 Negative Issues

Predominately, my secondary research has been related to younger people and majorly adolescents. This is because that generation either grew up while social media emerged, or they haven't known life without social media. These people are commonly addicted to social media and this has been proven by my survey. 72% of my survey participants claim to be 18-24, and a further 10% were in the age bracket of 25-34, which is the majority of the participants.

Question 7 in my survey asked people if they had ever felt a mood change from something they had seen online. 73% of people answered that they had experience a mood change, I also had a comment box for some people to leave commentary about why they had a mood change to which 22 people responded. Out of the 22 responses one participant responded with positive mood changes such as seeing videos of puppies. Two other participants replied with comments which did not portray a negative nor positive experience for example 'seeing

something sad or happy that can put me in a bad/good mood'. All 19 other responses consisted of participants having mood changes over a variation of topics including: News, graphic videos/pictures, jealousy due to models/ influencers, series spoilers and inadequacy when seeing other people's lives through Instagram. I believe that receiving a predominately negative response when asked about a mood question, in terms of social media, speaks volumes about how it is affecting user's mental health. Question 8 of the survey was closely related to Question 7, but a more specific question about feeling offended/ targeted due to marketing campaigns. A 28% participant responded saying they have felt targeted. Nine participants left insight into their feelings. Many participants had felt targeted during the eighth amendment campaign, weight, diet supplements and how participants feel their phone is listening to them. People responded writing they would be talking about a product and suddenly an advertisement will be on their phone. According to Dr.Peter Henway, (senior security consultant for cybersecurity firm Asterix) for these participants are correct in short. Your phone is listening to you. Unless you use voice triggers such as saying 'Hi Siri' to your device the information your phone receives by your verbal communication is 'non triggered data' meaning your phone can use this information internally, such as created advertismeents which are relevant. When first downloading SNS we accept terms and conditions which allow SNS such as Facebook and Instagram to use this 'non-triggered' data within their applications too. (Nichols, 2019)

4.4 Addiction

As my entire thesis is based around the research into how SNS are addictive I believe it would be best to discuss this element of my results last.

Something that I failed to comment on in my literature review was gender differences within social media. I wrote briefly about gender differences in relation to cyber sexual relationship addiction however, SNS are shown to be gender equal, meaning both there is an equal balance between male and female profiles. However, studies show that woman are more likely to use SNS then men. People ultimately like to conform to social expectations meaning men will follow masculine accounts such as stocks and politics, where females are inclined to subscribe to feminine accounts such as beauty and fashion. According to the Pew Research Centre, woman have more accounts on most SNS, whereas men have more of a presence on LinkedIn and other forums. These statistics strengthen my argument of how woman have a more dominant presence on SNS. An interesting aspect of these statistics is how men prefer being on forums rather than photo or profile sharing SNS, this shows how men prefer to interact

online with a community of common interest rather than SNS which document a person's life. (Social media addiction, 2019) To confirm my findings about gender differences within social media the response received in the first question of my survey regarding gender was a 87.88% Female response and 12.12% male response.

The ninth question on my survey questioned people about what makes social media addictive for them. 71% of responses was boredom. One person anonymously said, 'I think it's just a cultural norm to pick up your phone and aimlessly scroll social media or if you're on your own to just sit and look at your phone'. (Anon, 2019) This comment sums up how this generation's frame of mind works. Other comments included satisfaction received, appreciation, clarity, need to be better than others, freedom to express yourself where you wouldn't in reality. All of these real life responses have backed up information discussed within my literature review and show how people are struggling with social media and how addictive it is, and how the use of social media in daily life is perceived as normal when it is, for the most part, a negative outlet. People are now adapting to the fast-paced environment which social media brings, if you use SNS and they bring you joy almost instantly, real life contentment and happiness are not achievable fast enough meaning they become inadequate compared to contentment received online.

Although my survey could be seen as invasive and slightly off putting for some participants due to the nature of enquiring about social media tendencies and mental health, 72% of participants believe they are addicted to social media. Despite the fact my survey consisted of a mere 100 participants to have 72 people out of 100 in one survey admit to being addicted is quite frightening. In light of my qualitative research I have found that SNS addiction is definitely a mental health issue that would need professional assistance to overcome. Although at the moment treatment, especially in Ireland, is widely unavailable. However, I will continue this discussion in my conclusion.

5. Conclusion

My thesis set out to use qualitive research to understand if the use of social media was affecting their mental health. The thesis set out to answer questions such as 'Is social media addictive?', 'Does social media have a negative impact on mental health?', 'when it comes to social media do the negatives outweigh the positives?'. My thesis has proven how difficult it is to obtain substantial evidence about SNS and peoples mental health. Although there are many theories that are proven to be true such as addictive triggers, loss aversion and phantom ringing.

Currently, the NHS (National Health Service, UK) will be opening an Internet Addiction Centre in London. The centre will treat young people and adults. This centre will predominantly be for children with gaming initially as the World Health Organisation deemed gaming disorder as a mental health condition last year. This centre will be solely funded by the NHS. The opening of the centre was decided because of the growing dependency about internet dependency. The centre will eventually offer services to people suffering from other mental health issues due to the internet. The centre will accommodate treatment, research and assist families in coping mechanisms. According to the Guardian, although many people agree with the opening of the centre, others believe it is premature and unnecessary. These people believe the funding could be used in different areas of health. The reasoning behind the initial treatment for young people with gaming addictions is to ensure they complete school. Henrietta Bowden-Jones, a psychiatrist and the centre's founder believes the UK are not keeping with the times, as there are many different services available in Asia, some even free public healthcare. Another issue raised by Bowden-Jones is the lack of consistent measurement that is available online to understand the amount of time spent online, the World Health Organisation have announced they are working on a tool that will work internationally to record the amount of internet usage. Many industry workers made comments about the centre, some believed it to be a great idea, others felt it was unnecessary and could lead to other issues such as misdiagnosis. Others believed the NHS could invest this money into addiction in general rather than such a particular addiction. Although I think this is excellent for the UK, it would be naïve to believe Ireland will follow in these footsteps in years to come, due to health care issues which are already prominent in our country. (Marsh, 2019)

Although my form of primary research has been incredibly relevant to information which was explored in my literature review, I must critique it in some ways. In my results, I use information provided by a study undertaken at Pew Research Centre, in regard to gender

related equality among SNS. This research showed how woman are predominately on SNS which are associated with photo sharing and profile sharing such as Facebook and Instagram. My own survey found there to be a 87.88% female dominance, which could be due to the fact my survey was shared on such SNS. This makes me query whether my survey is accurate for all parts of my study as it is not an even gender equality. However, if I was to continue my research at another stage, I would reconsider this type of qualitive research and perhaps opt for interviewing.

As mentioned previously in the methodology, qualitive research was the appropriate manner for me to undertake this piece of writing, however, if I was to continue the research or pose a recommendation for another individual going ahead, I would suggest using quantitative methods along with the qualitative. Qualitative research can show how individuals become fixated and individual significance to mental health, however, quantitative research would display the issues that are posed and how widespread they are. Undertaking quantitative research would be time consuming and more difficult to retrieve participants as it is a sensitive topic.

This thesis has provided a huge insight into very current matters which should be taken seriously and measures to handle these addictions should be put in place. Although, my findings prove how social media is a negative outlet, there are still many arguments to be made. It is possible in many ways to see how social media can be deemed a positive platform, although I firmly believe the negative will outweigh the positive. This area has a huge amount of information available however, a lack of research regarding addiction, and other mental health issues prevails.

6. Bibliography

Battaglia, M. (2019). *Convenience Sampling - SAGE Research Methods*. [online] Methods.sagepub.com. Available at: http://methods.sagepub.com/Reference//encyclopedia-of-survey-research-methods/n105.xml [Accessed 11 Apr. 2019].

Belluomini, E., 2019. *The Internet Made Me Depressed: Emotional Contagion Through Social Media.* [Online] Available at: https://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/technology-articles/the-internet-made-me-depressed-emotional-contagion-through-social-media/ [Accessed 22 02 2019].

Brooker, C. (2019). *Black Mirror Reflects the Psychology of 21st Century Technology*. [online] BrainKnowsBetter. Available at: http://brainknowsbetter.com/news/2015/4/21/black-mirror-reflects-the-psychology-of-21st-century-technology [Accessed 15 Jul. 2019].

Busby, M. (2019). *Social media copies gambling methods 'to create psychological cravings'.* [online] the Guardian. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/may/08/social-media-copies-gambling-methods-to-create-psychological-cravings [Accessed 2 Mar. 2019].

Carson, D., Gilmore, A., Perry, C., and Gronhaug, K. (2001). *Qualitative Marketing Research*. London: Sage. [Accessed 11 Jun. 2019].

Cingel, D., Wartella, E. and Krcmar, M. (2014). The Role of Adolescent Development in Social Networking Site Use: Theory and Evidence. *Journal of Youth Development*, 9(1), pp.29-40.

Chowdhury, M. (2014). Interpretivism in Aiding Our Understanding of the Contemporary Social World. Open Journal of Philosophy, 04(03), pp.432-438.

Courses.lumenlearning.com. (2019). *Reading: Symbolic Interactionist Theory | Sociology*. [online] Available at: https://courses.lumenlearning.com/alamo-sociology/chapter/reading-symbolic-interactionist-theory/ [Accessed 11 Jun. 2019].

Cramer, S. and Inkster, D. (2019). *#StatusofMind*. [online] Rsph.org.uk. Available at: https://www.rsph.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/62be270a-a55f-4719-ad668c2ec7a74c2a.pdf [Accessed 28 Feb. 2019].

Dudovskiy, J. (2019). *Data Collection Methods - Research-Methodology*. [online] Research-Methodology. Available at: https://research-methodology.net/research-methods/data-collection/ [Accessed 11 Apr. 2019].

Edirisingha, P. (2019). *Interpretivism and Positivism (Ontological and Epistemological Perspectives)*. [online] Prabash78.wordpress.com. Available at: https://prabash78.wordpress.com/2012/03/14/interpretivism-and-postivism-ontological-and-epistemological-perspectives/ [Accessed 11 Apr. 2019].#

Elkind, D. (1967). Egocentrism in adolescence. Child Development, 38(4), 1025-1034.

Escobar Olszewski, PsyD, L. (2019). *We Need to Talk About Social Media & Teen Perfectionism*. [online] Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center. Available at: https://teenhealthcare.org/blog/we-need-to-talk-about-social-media-teen-perfectionism/ [Accessed 3 Mar. 2019].

Fenwick, A. (2019). *Why is Social Media Addictive?*. [online] DecaDirect.orgHW. Available at: https://www.decadirect.org/2018/02/16/social-media-addictive/ [Accessed 22 Feb. 2019].

Goins, J. (2019). *Two Types of Social Media Users*. [online] Goins, Writer. Available at: https://goinswriter.com/social-media-users/ [Accessed 15 Jul. 2019].

Grant, JD, MD, MPH, J., Odlaug, PhD, MPH, B. and Chamberlain, MD, PhD, S. (2019). *What Is a Behavioral Addiction?*. [online] Psychology Today. Available at: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/why-cant-i-stop/201606/what-is-behavioral-addiction [Accessed 19 Jul. 2019].

Gronroos, C. (2004), 'From marketing mix to relationship marketing: towards a paradigm shift in marketing', Management Decision, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 4–20.

Hendricks, D. (2019). *Complete History of Social Media: Then And Now - Small Business Trends*. [online] Small Business Trends. Available at: https://smallbiztrends.com/2013/05/the-complete-history-of-social-media-infographic.html [Accessed 18 Jul. 2019].

Hobson Ph.D, N. (2019). *The Science of FOMO and What We're Really Missing Out On*. [online] Psychology Today. Available at: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/ritual-

and-the-brain/201804/the-science-fomo-and-what-we-re-really-missing-out [Accessed 3 Mar. 2019].

Hurley, K. (2019). *Social Media and Teens: How Does Social Media Affect Mental Health?*. [online] Psycom.net - Mental Health Treatment Resource Since 1986. Available at: https://www.psycom.net/social-media-teen-mental-health [Accessed 14 Jun. 2019].

Kuss, D. and Griffiths, M. (2011). Online Social Networking and Addiction—A Review of the Psychological Literature. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, [online] 8(9), pp.3528-3552. Available at: https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/8/9/3528/htm?hc [Accessed 11 Jun. 2019].

Lipson, C., Young, J., Marx, R. and Hunt, M. (2019). *No More FOMO: Limiting Social Media Decreases Loneliness and Depression*. [online] Guilfordjournals.com. Available at: https://guilfordjournals.com/doi/10.1521/jscp.2018.37.10.751 [Accessed 3 Mar. 2019].

Locke, T. (2019). *Do You Have 'Phantom Vibration Syndrome'?*. [online] WebMD. Available at: https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/news/20160111/phones-phantom-vibration [Accessed 3 Mar. 2019].

Makwana, B., Lee, Y., Parkin, S. and Farmer, L. (2019). *Selfie-Esteem: The Relationship Between Body Dissatisfaction and Social Media in Adolescent and Young Women | Magazine issue 1/2018 - Issue 35 | In-Mind*. [online] In-mind.org. Available at: https://www.in-mind.org/article/selfie-esteem-the-relationship-between-body-dissatisfaction-and-social-media-in-adolescent?gclid=Cj0KCQjw1MXpBRDjARIsAHtdN-0iOtIr7si7IO12yJr5CNQ6sPyemaXKU05_uyflG7X6qePsP4q6nQoaAi3CEALw_wcB [Accessed 19 Jul. 2019].

Marsh, S. (2019). *NHS to launch first internet addiction clinic*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/jun/22/nhs-internet-addiction-clinic-london-gaming-mental-health [Accessed 15 Jun. 2019].

McCarthy-Jones, S., 2018. *Is Social Media Controlling You?*. [Online] Available at: https://www.tcd.ie/alumni/assets/pdf/trinity-today/social-media.pdf [Accessed 27 11 2018].

Melnikovas, A. (2019). *Towards an Explicit Research Methodology: Adapting Research Onion Model for Futures Studies * Journal of Futures Studies*. [online] Journal of Futures

Studies. Available at: https://jfsdigital.org/articles-and-essays/2018-2/towards-an-explicit-research-methodology-adapting-research-onion-model-for-futures-studies/ [Accessed 10 Jun. 2019].

Miller, D. (2019). *Phantom phone ringing syndrome: Scientists say it might not just be in our heads after all*. [online] Mail Online. Available at: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2201806/phantom-ringing-syndrome-It-heads--Scientists-explain-cause-curious-phenomenon.html [Accessed 3 Mar. 2019].

Morris, C. (2017). *Emotional Contagion: Everything You Need to Know - CogniFit's Blog*. [online] CogniFit's Blog. Available at: https://blog.cognifit.com/emotional-contagion/ [Accessed 23 Feb. 2019].

Netflix.com. (2019). *Black Mirror | Netflix Official Site*. [online] Available at: https://www.netflix.com/title/70264888 [Accessed 7 Jul. 2019].

Nichols, S. (2019). *Your Phone Is Listening and it's Not Paranoia*. [online] Vice. Available at: https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/wjbzzy/your-phone-is-listening-and-its-not-paranoia [Accessed 11 Jun. 2019].

O'Brien, C. (2019). *HE EMERGENCE OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA EMPOWERED CONSUMER*. [online] Pdfs.semanticscholar.org. Available at: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e4a5/6febd1b374e049d12d438e619bb2cdfbd0fb.pdf [Accessed 15 May 2019].

Payne, J. (2019). *Fear of missing out (Fomo) one of greatest causes of social media addiction, study finds - Independent.ie*. [online] Independent.ie. Available at: https://www.independent.ie/life/health-wellbeing/fear-of-missing-out-fomo-one-of-greatest-causes-of-social-media-addiction-study-finds-36975296.html [Accessed 3 Mar. 2019].

Psychology Today. (2019). *Perfectionism | Psychology Today*. [online] Available at: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/perfectionism [Accessed 3 Mar. 2019].

Qualman, E. (2010), Socialnomics: How Social Media Transforms the Way We Live and Do Business, Wiley, Hoboken, NJ

R. Bhamare, P. (2019). *Effects of Social Media on Communication Skills*. [online] The Knowledge Review. Available at: https://theknowledgereview.com/effects-social-media-communication-skills/ [Accessed 28 Feb. 2019].

Rouse, M. (2019). *What is six degrees of separation? - Definition from WhatIs.com*. [online] WhatIs.com. Available at: https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/six-degrees-of-separation [Accessed 18 Jul. 2019].

Saleh, K. (2019). *13 Loss Aversion Marketing Strategies to Increase Conversions*. [online] Invespcro.com. Available at: https://www.invespcro.com/blog/13-loss-aversion-marketing-strategies-to-increase-conversions/ [Accessed 23 Feb. 2019].

Samantray, S. (2019). *Internet Addiction and Relationships: The Psychology behind It*. [online] MedCrave Online. Available at: https://medcraveonline.com/MOJAMT/MOJAMT-03-00024.php [Accessed 29 Jun. 2019].

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2012) "Research Methods for Business Students" 6th edition, Pearson Education Limited pg.116

Uir.unisa.ac.za. (2019). [online] Available at: http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/4245/05Chap%204_Research%20methodology%20and%20design.pdf [Accessed 11 Jun. 2019].

Schou Andreassen, C., Torsheim, T., Scott Brunborg, G. and Pallesen, S. (2012). *Development of a Facebook Addiction Scale*. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: http://file:///C:/Users/laine/Downloads/DevelopmentofaFacebookaddictionscale1.pdf [Accessed 28 Feb. 2019].

Sirothia, A. (2019). *Why fast fashion is bad for people and planet*. [online] The Economic Times. Available at: https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/environment/pollution/why-fast-fashion-is-bad-for-people-and-planet/articleshow/67496950.cms?from=mdr [Accessed 15 May 2019].

Social media addiction. (2019). *Gender Difference*. [online] Available at: https://theaddictiontosocialmedia.weebly.com/gender-difference.html [Accessed 14 Jun. 2019].

Statista. (2019). *Global time spent on social media daily 2017 | Statista*. [online] Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/433871/daily-social-media-usage-worldwide/ [Accessed 28 Feb. 2019].

Stopsuicide.ie. (2019). *Facts and Statistics | Stop Suicide*. [online] Available at: http://www.stopsuicide.ie/suicide-myths-and-facts/ [Accessed 28 Feb. 2019].

Tan, O. and Tan, O. (2019). *How Social Media Contributed to the Rise of Fast Fashion*. [online] Adweek.com. Available at: https://www.adweek.com/digital/oliver-tan-visenze-guest-pot-fast-fashion/ [Accessed 15 May 2019].

Thomas, J. (2019). *What Is Adolescent Egocentrism, And How Can I Deal With It As A Parent? / Betterhelp*. [online] Betterhelp.com. Available at: https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/adolescence/what-is-adolescent-egocentrism-and-how-can-i-deal-with-it-as-a-parent/ [Accessed 25 May 2019].

Warwick.ac.uk. (2019). *Development of WEMWBS*. [online] Available at: https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/development/ [Accessed 22 Feb. 2019].

Young, D. (2019). *The Internet Addiction Test*. [online] Stoeltingco.com. Available at: https://www.stoeltingco.com/media/wysiwyg/IAT_web_sample.pdf [Accessed 9 May 2019].

7. Appendix

7.1 Methodology: Primary Research Survey

Title: Social Media in your Life.

Q1. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

Q2. What age group do you belong to?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85+

Q3. How much time do you spend on social media daily?

- Less than 30 minutes
- 30-60 minutes
- 60-90 minutes
- 120 minutes or more

Q4. When do you access social media?

- During free time
- During work/school
- During social events
- During meal times
- All of the above
- Other (please specify)

Q5. Do you check social media when you wake up in the morning?

- Yes
- No

Q6. Do you think social media affects social interactions in your life?

- This answer was a bar with a movable shape, between 0 and 100 people could rate how likely they believe social media to affect social interactions in their lives.

Q7. Have you ever had a mood change from something you viewed online?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please give details.

Q8. Have you ever felt targeted/ offended by a marketing campaign viewed online?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please give details.

Q9. In your opinion what do you think makes social media addictive?

- Messages
- Comments
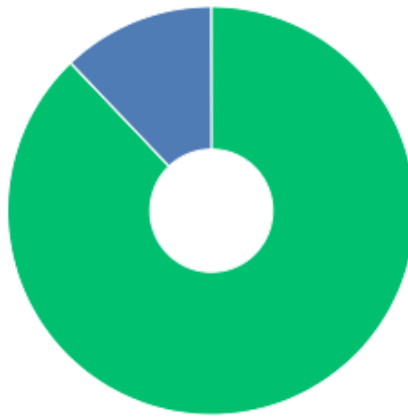- Notifications in general
- Boredom
- Other (Please Specify)

Q10. Would you consider yourself addicted to social media?

- Yes
- No

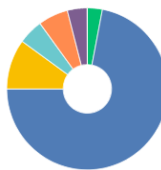## 7.2 Methodology: Primary Research Results

Q.1

1. What is your gender?

Answered: 99   Skipped: 1

Female	87.88%	87
Male	12.12%	12

Q.2

2. What age group do you belong to?

Answered: 100   Skipped: 0

Under 18	3%
18-24	72%
25-34	10%
35-44	5%
45-54	6%
55-64	4%
65-74	0%
65+	0%

Q.3

3. How much time do you spend on social media daily?
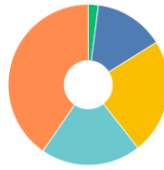
Answered: 99   Skipped: 1

Less Than 30 Minutes	2.02%
30-60 Minutes	14.14%
60-90 Minutes	23.23%
90-120 Minutes	20.2%
120 minutes or more	40.4%

Q.4

4. When do you access social media?

Answered: 100   Skipped: 0

During free time	41%
During work/school	2%
During social events	0%
During meal times	1%
All of the above	56%
Other (please specify)	0%

Q.5

5. Do you check social media when you wake up in the morning?

Answered: 100   Skipped: 0

Yes	92%
No	8%

Q.6

6. Do you think social media affects social interactions in your life?

Responses	100

Q.7

7. Have you ever had a mood change from something you viewed online?

Answered: 100   Skipped: 0

Yes	73%	73
No	27%	27
If yes please give details:		22

Q.8

8. Have you ever felt targeted/offended by a marketing campaign viewed online?
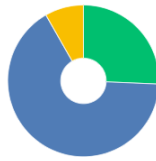
Answered: 100   Skipped: 0

Yes	28%	28
No	72%	72
If yes please give details:		9

Q.9

9. In your opinion what do you think makes social media addictive?

Answered: 100   Skipped: 0

Messages	26%
Comments	14%
Notifications in General	30%
Boredum	71%
Other (please specify)	8%

Q.10

10. Would you consider yourself addicted to social media?

Answered: 100   Skipped: 0

Yes	72%
No	28%