

‘The Power of Social Media Likes’

A radio documentary exploring the
impact of social media on the psychology
of 18 – 24-year olds

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Media Communications, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

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ABSTRACT

One of the biggest changes in the society over the last 20 years has been the development of social media. Since its inception, social media has worked its way into every element of our day to day lives. As we continue to witness more people born in the post internet era, known as the 'technology generation', there has been an upsurge in screen time.

Social networking sites were largely seen as means to enhance communication but today, these platforms are also known for their negative impacts. In the last few years, the number of younger people suffering from mental health issues have increased. Could there be a correlation between the development of social media and this rise in young adults' psychological behaviours? With easy access to social networking sites and increased screen time, how can addiction level be determined? And what role does tech companies play in how people have become so engaged to social media?

Through the medium of radio documentary, this dissertation explores these questions by focusing on the experiences of 18 – 24-year olds.

The viewpoints from three contributors in that age group were attained. A clinical psychotherapist, an online safety campaigner and a social media influencer were spoken to. Through their voices, the 25 – minutes piece gives an insight into how social media affects the mind and behaviours of young people, how it is being used as well as threshold for problematic use.

This paper establishes that there is a rise in problematic social media use among youngsters who are naïve to understand how excessive social media use can negatively affect their mental health. It unearths facts that increased screen time has the most impact on our sleep pattern besides depression, anxiety, loneliness, and low self-esteem.

Ultimately, while there may be no hard evidence that prolonged social media use or addiction causes mental health issues it is a heavy contributor.

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Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation by practice explores the way social media is used in the society today and how it affects the behaviour of young people aged 18 – 24 years.

Besides the experiences of the demography in question, the research specifically hopes to answer questions on the level of impact the use of social networking sites (SNS) has on their social and emotional development.

Technological advancement has led to a social media storm and the mode of transmitting information. We have access to the entire world right at our fingertips and everyone is now connected at all times.

Over the last twenty years, social media use has grown. Since the launch of the first networking service in 1997 (Boyd and Ellison 2007), there have been changes not only in communication but in how we see and do things.

Today, the most popular platforms include Instagram, Tik Tok, Snapchat and Facebook. According to a survey by the EU's official statistical office, Eurostat, almost 9 in 10 of Europeans aged between 16 and 24 are on social media (Eurostat, 2019).

The average teenager now checks social media at least 60 times a day which has effects on the developing adolescent brain (Fortune, 2016).

This research focuses on the co-relation between time spent on social media platforms and its direct or indirect influence on their everyday lives (in ways they may never imagined).

In their study, Sawyer et al (2018) revealed that the human brain does not attain full maturity till age 24. This documentary will therefore address the following questions:

- How does social media affect the psychological development of young adults?
- How much use of social media constitutes an addiction?
- How much of an influence does it have on the behavioural attitude of young adults?
- What role does tech companies in social media addiction?

The aim of the documentary is to inform as well as educate. It would be of interest to young people particularly those who belong to "generation z" (born between 1996 – 2000). This group never experienced a world without the internet and constitute 32 per cent of the of the world's population (Spitznagel, 2020).

Radio was chosen for this research because it is a communication tool that is widely used in our society. Radio motivates listeners to visualise and imagine, unlike television where people are limited to pictures on the screen. With radio, the scale of imagination is as wide as listeners make them (McLeish and Link, 2015: 2). Listeners can focus on the facts and opinions being presented and create their own image of the characters portrayed throughout, enhancing the overall experience.

In Ireland today, among the younger population (15 to 34-year-olds), there is a 71% listenership daily (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, 2020).

Through this supporting document, I will chart the process by which this documentary has achieved its aims and how I created an educative piece by incorporating information from the different contributors making the it simple, explanatory and interesting for the listeners.

Chapter two provides a detailed evidence of research carried out while planning and executing this work. The chapter will elaborate on the origin and impact of social media. It will also review relevant literatures done on the subject in the past. This includes academic, online sources and comparative documentaries.

Chapter three will deal with the production design, construction and editing of the documentary itself. It will cover decisions that were made in the choice of technology, the editing process, as well as reasons for the choice of graphics, motion titles, subtitling and music. In addition, this chapter will cover editorial decisions that were made in choosing who to interview and why they were chosen.

Chapter four will discuss how the product came to completion from the initial stages to addressing the final edit – what worked well and what subjects were eventually omitted as well as why they were omitted.

The final chapter will offer my perspective on the finished product and will reflect my findings, views on the formulation and execution of the documentary, where it would be suitable for broadcast and further documentaries that could result from this area of news production.

Chapter Two: EVIDENCE OF RESEARCH

This chapter examines the research undertaken to complete this documentary. This includes academic textbooks, online journals, newspapers articles, websites, podcasts, reports of media organisations and other relevant material on the subject. The chapter will be presented in four parts.

Part one will look at the evolution of media, part two will focus on social media as a communication tool, part three will examine the psychological impact of social media and will be presented under the following sub-headings: addiction/dopamine, mental health, body image/shaming and sleep deprivation. The last part analyses the positive impact of social media

Part 1: Evolution of media

The origin of any form of media can be traced to the 15th century when Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable type printing press. It was immensely helpful in the mass production of print media. Until his invention, books had been handwritten. The transportation technologies also boosted the reach of texts to a wide audience.

In 1810, another German printer, Friedrich Koenig, improved media production by connecting the steam engine to a printing press leading to the industrialization of printed media. Koenig's machine saw a rise in the 480 pages per hour print rate to 960 pages per hour (Mattern, 2002).

With a wider outreach there was not and still is not strong legislation to set an age limit for consumers of newspapers when compared to other forms of media. This lack of censorship has exposed youths to dangerous content.

With the rise of the penny press - newspapers that were low-priced broadsheets, the major daily newspapers faced competition in the 1830s. The 20th century witnessed the birth of one of the most popular electronic devices, the television and later on, the radio. Gillan (2010) claims TV transformed the delivery of information. More recently, technological advancement has brought about the invention of the internet.

Since the invention of the first social networking service, Six Degree in 1997, multiple social media platforms have emerged: YouTube in 2005, Facebook in 2006, Twitter in 2006 and Instagram in 2010 (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

For the past 20 years, the social media landscape has continued to grow and the different social media platforms have continued to influence each other in one way or another. (McFaden, 2018).

Part 2: Social media as a communication tool

The Oxford Learners dictionary (2020) defines social media as websites and software programs used for social networking whereas, Brunskill (2013) says “social media” or “social networks” are terms that typically encompass websites such as Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, which connect friends and enable sharing of content in real time.

Today, social media has become an increasingly significant part of many people's everyday lives and has undoubtedly transformed the way in which people communicate.

Some of the most popular social media sites include Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Tik Tok and Snap Chat. According to April 2020 figures, Facebook had approximately 2.5 million active users, WhatsApp had 2 million while Instagram had 1 million.

Social media apps like Tik Tok and Snap Chat had 800 million and 398 million users respectively (Statistica, 2019).

Another survey reveals that the biggest Facebook user group globally were women between the ages of 18 and 24 years (Statistica, 2019).

There is even now evidence that people rely more on social media than traditional sources of media for information. A Pew Research publication in 2018 stated that in the US, social media has overtaken newspapers as the first choice for news. Today, in Ireland there is considerable use of the applications in question. A new figure shows that some 90 per cent of Irish people aged between 16 and 24 use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. (Eurostat, 2019).

Part 3: Psychological impact of social media

“When we go online, we enter a world of hurried, distracted thinking and superficial learning. The net delivers repetitive, intensive stimulus that results in rapid change to our brain circuits and functions” (Carr, 2010).

2.1 Addiction/Dopamine

Checking and scrolling through social media has become an increasingly popular activity.

A study found that 5% of teens have access to a smartphone and 45% say they are online 'almost constantly' (Pew Research Center, 2018). The survey also revealed that there was no clear consensus among teens about the effect social media has on the lives of young people. While minorities of

teens described that effect as mostly positive (31%) or mostly negative (24%), the largest share (45%) says that effect has been neither positive nor negative.

Kuss and Griffiths (2011) speak of a possibility of the existence of 'Facebook Addiction Disorder.' This postulation was backed by another research conducted by the Dutch National Statistics office in 2015, which revealed that nearly 17% of teenagers between the ages of 12 and 18 admitted to being addicted to social media. The study claims that the teenagers were "unable to function" without Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Skype or YouTube (Cluskey, 2015).

Social media addiction as described by Smith (2018) is a form of behavioural addiction that is characterized by being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable urge to log on to or use it so much that it impairs other important life areas.

For Arias-Carrión and Pöppel (2007), they linked the phenomenon of social media addiction to the dopamine-inducing social environments social networking sites provide.

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that controls the brain's reward and subjective pleasure signal whilst aiding the regulation of emotional responses (Iversen et al, 2010).

It is activated and released at any point an individual acknowledges something important or pleasurable. This cycle is often referred to as the 'reward circle' that explains why the human brain is wired to link specific activities with pleasure

That is why Vedantam (2016) states that the constant stream of retweets, likes and shares from these sites have effects on the brain's reward area to trigger the same kind of chemical reaction. Because social media approval has been shown to result in an addictive dopamine release, checking your phone to see who has liked or commented on a photo or post can become addictive, according to Homayoun (2017).

Winther (2017) however disagrees with the theory of social media addiction, insisting that it is a complicated issue neuroscientist have yet to fully understand.

He is of the view that classifying reliance on digital tools as an "addiction" is unfair to people whose lives might have been torn apart by things like alcoholism or drug use. He instead believes that people only spend more time on the internet because most of their hobbies are only accessible in digital formats and that those are what attract them and not necessarily "the internet".

There are also indications that social media companies are deliberately addicting users to their products for financial gain.

As former Mozilla and Jawbone employee once said: "It's as if they're taking behavioural cocaine and just sprinkling it all over your interface and that's the thing that keeps you like coming back and back and back" (Raskin, 2018). Likewise, Parakilas (2018) notes that the use of the colour red for notifications have been deliberately used to signal importance and light up parts of the human brain that other colours would not light up.

2.2 Mental health: Loneliness, Depression and Suicide

Being on social media does not necessarily mean one is social as virtual friends do not have the therapeutic effect as time spent with real friends.

A lot of studies during the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak which has forced many into quarantine and increased virtual communication on social media shows great connection between prolonged isolation and mental health problems. Xiang *et al* (2020) referred to a rise in mental health issues and interventions similar to those that occurred during the 2003 SARS outbreak.

Kraut et al., (1998) researched the use of the internet and its effects on social interaction and psychological wellbeing. The team examined 169 people in 73 households. After the first one to two years of using the internet, it was revealed that interaction between family members decreased while the level of loneliness and depression increased.

While there is evidence of more loneliness among heavy social media users, there is also evidence suggesting social media use decreases loneliness among highly social people (Nowland *et al.*, 2018).

In trying to explain the apparent contradiction that both the most and least lonely people are heavy social media users, Nowland *et al* notes that social media is most effective in dealing with loneliness when used to enhance existing relationships but can be counterproductive if used as an alternative for real-life interaction.

In a study conducted by Liu *et al* in 2016, it was discovered that social media use was significantly associated with increased depression particularly among young people. There is a strong relationship between social networking and suicide.

One 2010 study found teenagers who spend five or more hours a day on the new media (including social media and electronic devices such as smartphones) are 71% more likely to have a risk factor for suicide than those who spend less than an hour a day.

Also, as found in a study by Hinduja and Patwin (2010), there is a rise in cyber bullying among youths who use social media. The study shows a strong correlation between cyberbullying on social media and suicide.

2.3 Body image/shaming

Despite the popularity of social media, the direct relationship between the internet and body image/self-esteem has been examined in only a handful of studies.

An investigation on the effects of online social media profiles was carried out by Haferkamp and Kärmer (2011). In the first study, it was discovered that participants had a more negative body image after being shown profile pictures of physically attractive individuals than those who had been shown profile pictures of less physically attractive individuals.

The second study found that male participants who were shown profiles of more successful men reported a higher perceived divergence between their current career status and their dream career status when compared to male participants who were shown profiles of less successful individuals.

In a more recent study, Tiggemann and Slater (2013) focused more specifically on Facebook usage in over 1,000 high school girls. The association between amount of use and body dissatisfaction was found, with Facebook users reporting significantly higher levels of body dissatisfaction than non-users.

Social media sites have become increasingly common platforms especially among teenagers to bully. Online or cyber bullying is defined as the deliberate use of electronic communication to intimidate or threaten a child or adolescent typically by sending messages. (Ahn 2011)

Harmful cyberbullying behaviour has led to the deaths of young adults like the case of Anna Kriegel who was murdered in 2018 by two 13-year-olds (Standing, 2019).

2.4 Sleep Deprivation

In today's world, there's easy access to mobile devices. Phones, iPads and computer screens are often used to view social media sites using a variety of apps.

However, a study by Scott *et al* (2019), shows that young people who are regular users of apps like Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook have a greater chance of delaying bedtime. Scott *et al* argue that teenagers using social media for more than three hours a day are more likely to go to bed after 23:00 and wake during the night.

The team looked at data from almost 12,000 participants. They were asked how much time they spent on social networking, messaging sites or apps on schooldays and weekends, and questioned on their sleep habits. One third said they used social media for less than an hour a day while the average was between one and three hours. These groups were least likely to fall asleep late. Girls were twice as likely as boys to spend more than five hours on social media - and girls also had more disrupted sleep.

According to the National Sleep Foundation (2020), 8-10 hours of sleep per night is recommended for those aged 18 - 25; however, the average teenager sleeps less than seven hours, with increasing time spent on devices. Czeisler (2013) and Holzman (2010) both found that the blue light taken in by the brain during the day could be one factor affecting a healthy sleep cycle. Holzman describes the blue light in artificial light as the most dangerous to humans as it subdues the production of melatonin - the brain's "sleepy chemical," more vigorously than other wavelengths.

Part 4: Positive Impact of Social Media

Since its inception, social media has worked its way into every element of our day to day lives. Whether it is interacting with friends and family, booking holidays, shopping for clothes, allowing an insight into different lifestyles, it has affected the world and has made a lot of things quicker and simpler.

Despite the risks, social media can offer young people the valuable opportunity to acquire and develop skills to leave a good digital footprint.

Technical skills can be learned online, talents can be showcased, emotions can be expressed, and an online portfolio can be built. For example, the pop superstar, Justin Bieber was discovered in 2017 at age 13 after he posted homemade videos on *YouTube* of himself singing (abcnews, 2009).

Through social media, young people can socialize and appreciate different perspectives and worldviews. This can help them understand the world around them better and enhance their knowledge on various topics.

The social media platform, TikTok which was already a favourite among teenagers but became more popular during the Covid-19 lockdowns as many used it to pass the time. In addition to the existing 800 million reported in January 2020, the app saw an additional 65 million worldwide downloads in March (Chen, 2020).

Social media is a great tool for raising awareness or campaigning for a good cause. With Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, it has become very easy to create online communities.

In an ITV news report (2020), it was stated that climate change activist, Greta Thunberg became very influential globally through social media.

The report also states that: in 2019, nearly a fifth (18 per cent) of 12 to 15-year-olds in the UK used social media to express support for causes and organisations that may be environmental, charitable or political - up from 12 per cent in 2018.”

Part 5: Documentary examples

While researching, and by using key words such as “social media and youths” and “impact of social and mass media”, a few video documentaries and podcasts relating to this topic were found.

One of such is titled “the effects of social media on young minds”. In that production, Vedantam (2016) explored a study carried out on teenagers. Researchers placed the teens in a brain scanner and observed them as they engaged with social media. It was discovered that besides all the conversations that happens on social media, there was something about Twitter and Instagram that was qualitatively different than interactions in the real world. One of the researchers noted that when the teenagers saw that their own pictures had received many likes, they showed a greater activation in the part of the brain called the nucleus accumbens which is the brain's reward circuitry (the part which makes humans feel good about themselves).

Another piece which useful for this research was the VOA’s “social media’s impact on children” (2018). It tells a story of how the younger preteens and teens judge their level of acceptance by the number of likes they get on social media. Researchers noted that it can be harmful to their health. Another side effect of teenagers found was the high level of sleep deprivation and stress among that particular demography.

Chapter Three: CONSTRUCTING/DESIGNING THE PRODUCT

“The crafting of a radio documentary is a continuous process which starts with an idea; grows with each recorded interview; takes on multiple personalities during the cutting and scripting process; before final mixing locks in the ultimate shape. Because of the fluidity of the creative process, it is hard to pin down every decision which contributes to the shape of the final product” (Lindgren, 2011).

Planning

1. Story Idea, Research and Decision Making

The idea of exploring the relationship between social media and its psychological impacts was brought about by happenings around me. The Covid-19 pandemic forced many people into lockdown resulting to more internet engagement as coping mechanisms, leading to a rise in stress levels, anxiety, and depression (Rajkumar, 2020). Furthermore, O’Brien *et al* (2020) notes that increased social media use is responsible for a rise in some mental health problems during the health crisis.

So, realising young people would likely consume audio as opposed to video or written content and given that listening is mostly a secondary activity, it further ignited in me the thoughts of producing a radio documentary on social media addiction. British radio presenter and author Jim Beaman said, “to succeed you need tenacity, skill, talent and imagination” (Beaman, 2005).

Although the initial plan was to focus on social and mass media but from personal experience and preliminary research, it soon became clear that social media remained the most influential among young adults during the pandemic.

A decision was also made in narrowing the focus of the study to those between 18- 24 years-of-age as opposed to young adults in general. It also made sense because those under that age group belong to the post social media generation (Generation Z). Another decision made in this production was being more specific in the analysis of the psychological effects of social media. “Narrowing of a dissertation topic is necessary to ensure the research is kept within reasonable limits” (Kibbe, 2016).

Throughout the planning stages, thoughts were given to gender balance. However, a decision to interview more females regarding their social media use was made following research showing that women use social media more and for longer periods than men. A survey carried out in 2016 found that a quarter of Irish women spend at least 1-3 hours on social media every day compared to one-fifth of men (Ring, 2016). In a more recent study, it was reported that females (78%) in the United States use social media platforms more than men (65%) (Statistica.com, 2019).

1.1 Selection of Interviewees

The production of this documentary started when Ireland was on lockdown because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This prompted research seeking a range of suitable contributors. The research focused on people and organizations that are vocal online about young people's mental health and this enabled identifying and reaching out to most contributors.

Joanna Fortune

Joanna Fortune is a clinical psychotherapist who specialises in the parent-child relationship from infancy to young adulthood. For over 15 years she has been working with children and families. Besides being an attachment specialist heavily involved in psychological counselling, she has vast knowledge in social media use as it relates to young adults. Joanna is a regular contributor to media interviews and her articles have been published on many local and international media platforms.

She is a Sunday Times (Ireland) columnist and regular media contributor (Ireland AM, Newstalk FM amongst others). Joanna is also the resident parenting expert on the Sean Moncrieff Show on Newstalk FM every Wednesday. She speaks and presents at events and conferences.

The research examined many of her works including her TEDx talk titled "social media – the ultimate shame game?". In that talk, she used case studies to highlight how online shaming is affecting human relationships. "Social media can be such a positive and wonderful place, but it can also be a lonely, scary, cruel and devastating place" (Fortune, 2017).

Contacts were made with her by email and through her social media accounts. The interview with Joanna was to give an explanation on the correlation between increased mental health issues and the use of social media platforms. Also, the research sought to analyse how young people deal with social media addictions.

James Kavanagh

James Kavanagh is an Irish social media influencer, entrepreneur and television presenter. He rose to prominence on Snapchat in 2015 creating videos and parodies. He has since gained a large following online, amassing over 110,000 followers across Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. James is admired by his fans, mostly young adults, for his over-the-top reactions, observational humour and aesthetic choices. As an influencer, James earns a living either by posting his own content or advertising for brands.

According to a research, "Social media influencer" and "YouTubers" made the top five professions that British children aged between 11 and 16 are aspiring to, outranking teacher and veterinarian (Perrie, 2019).

The study uncovered that as many as 17% under that age group want to be social media influencers when they grow up whilst one in eleven were aiming to become YouTubers.

For an interesting and relatable piece, experiences from a social media influencer like James was needed. It is always interesting hearing such a public figure shed light on what his life is like, how much time he spends online and what effects that might be having on him. Expanding on other experiences like dealing with the public's expectation of perfection as well as hateful comments would interest listeners.

As James is highly active on social media, contact was made with him through his platforms and an email was sent as a backup communication.

Social media users (18 – 24-year olds)

Speaking to social media users between ages 18 – 24 was very important for this production. The age group captures those born during the social media boom. The research needed to explore their social media behaviours: what platforms they are on, what they post and why they post them, how frequently they post, the amount of time they spend online, including how they are affected by likes, follows and comments.

To get contributors, contact was made with the CEO of SpunOut.ie via email. SpunOut.ie is a website run by youths and whose content are targeted at those aged 16 – 25. They are Ireland's leading youth wellbeing information website with over 1.6 million young people using its resources in 2019 (SpunOut.ie, 2020).

The website was gracious enough to do a call out on their platform asking for contributors. Several people responded, and the interviews were scheduled. The social media users interviewed included those who have large following/level of activeness and those who are not as active.

Alex Cooney

Alex is the CEO of CyberSafelreland, a not-for-profit organisation that works to empower children, parents and teachers to navigate the online world in a safe and responsible manner.

Alongside being the co-founder of the organisation, she is currently completing a QQI Level 6 component certificate in Psychology. Being an ardent listener to the radio, I have heard her speak on many programmes and knew her knowledge and experience would be of benefit to the research.

CyberSafelreland does a lot of advocacy campaigns for policy reform. So, alongside getting her thoughts on the role tech companies play in social media addiction, the research aimed to explore ways to ensure a safer cyberspace for young adults. Initial contact with her was through LinkedIn but communication progressed through emails.

1.2 Ethics

Plaisance (2013) defined ethics as a form of inquiry concerned with the processes of finding rational justifications for our actions when the values that we hold come into conflict.

In dealing with subjects such as addiction and mental health, ethical considerations were involved.

Riddle (2014) carried out research on the impact of mental health documentaries on people suffering from mental health disorders. According to Riddle, four main themes emerged; sensationalization of mental health in documentaries, a fear of societal judgement, focus on only the most severe cases of mental health rather than a spectrum of severity and a lack of understanding of mental health disorders.

Knowing the sensitivity of the subject, caution was exercised in how questions to social media users were framed as well as how their stories were told in the final product.

For every interview conducted, preparation was carried out on the rephrasing of some sensitive questions in case interviewees got upset.

Also, contributors were well informed of what their interview would be used for and where the documentary would likely be published.

In my email to social media users, contributors with overly sensitive stories were given the chance to use anonymous names.

The work was done in line with the code of conduct and ethics outlined by the National Union of Journalists. Throughout the design process, the need to balance genders remained important.

Recording

1.3 Technical aspects and environment

In-person interviews were recorded using a Zoom H1n handy recorder and Samsung S7 Edge mobile device as a back-up. The Voice Recorder Pro app was used. All face to face recordings were done in the houses of the contributors. Before recording, checks were completed to ensure the environment was quiet and free from distraction. When noise or any sort of interference occurred mid-conversation, contributors were asked to repeat their answers. At the locations, test recordings were done for a few seconds followed by playbacks to ensure the devices were functioning properly.

Where it was impossible to do face to face interviews due to the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were recorded remotely on Zoom. The following steps were taken, and interviewees did the same:

Firstly, finding a quiet, comfortable, and confidential space rather than a communal area. However, when there was interference, interviewees were politely asked to repeat their answers.

Secondly, switching off other devices using WiFi or internet network to get better connection.

Thirdly, using external microphones (or headset with a built-in microphone) instead of in-built microphones in computers and laptops.

Fourthly, closure of audio notifications when recording with computers to avoid interference.

Finally, ensuring there is enough storage space available to save files.

With Zoom recording being a new way of recording, a test-run and mock interviews with friends were completed before the first interview. This was to gain mastery of the software.

In addition, before each session with contributors, retrospective analysis was conducted to identify the skills or techniques needed to be improved upon. This was done by examining previous completed interviews.

The narration links were recorded in the Griffith College studio.

1.4 Interview procedure

The interviews conducted were qualitative interviews. Makagon and Neumann (2009) offer an interesting and relevant approach to qualitative research methods which includes the use of audio both as a way of collecting fieldwork data and for publishing research findings in social science studies. They argue for the inclusion of documentary production practices as an important method for social scientists.

According to Burns and Grove (2009), qualitative research is a systematic and subjective approach to describing life experiences and giving them meaning. Qualitative studies allow researchers to

explore behaviours, perspectives, feelings and experiences in depth, quality and complexity of a situation through a holistic framework (Holloway and Wheeler 2002).

Both face-to-face and remote interviews were carried out. As the style of the documentary is mostly interactive, efforts were made to be descriptive with the questions asked to get descriptive answers. Attempts were made not to be too rigid at the same time not to veer too far from the themes. The questions were open-ended to elicit expansive replies (Beaman, 2011). No hesitations were made to ask follow-up questions when and where clarification was needed. McLeish (2005) says “the ability to listen and think quickly are essential attributes of the interviewer”.

While conducting interviews for this piece, my experience as an avid social media user provided a commonality that the interviewees responded to. This helped me quickly establish a relationship with them and influenced the kind of questions that were asked.

Before interviewing each contributor, proper research in their line of work was done.

“Rule no. 1 for me is preparation. Know everything you can – or everything you have time to study – about what or who the subject of the interview is. From there everything just sort of happens.” (Rysdall, 2017).

Those whose information were not on the internet, were contacted before the actual interview to give a background about themselves. This was important in helping frame good questions.

1.4 Narration

Documentarians, Alwyn Owen and Jack Perkins named the function of narration to include “introducing or ending a programme, linking sections of the programme, giving a programme editorial direction, telling a complete story as in a feature programme and conveying information as in an investigative documentary”, (Owen and Perkins, 2016).

Scripting is the bedrock of any good storytelling. Lindgren (2011) also explains that narration “is the glue holding together the many different components that make up the storyline”, guiding the listener by linking the stories together and providing relevant facts and details. McLeish (2005) agreed with Lindgren by describing the role of a narrator as one that links and does not interrupt.

Since the subject of this media product resonated with me, a decision was taken to narrate in my voice throughout the piece to immerse some of my thoughts and experiences. However, the documentary did not need too much narration as interviews were deliberately made conversational/interactive with descriptive words used almost throughout by all persons involved. For example, most contributors introduced themselves rather than the narrator doing so.

Editing the documentary

1.5 Making the final piece

This was arduous and at the same time thrilling. It was daunting because of the cuts that had to be made and many contents which had to be pieced together to meet the required time. The process was exciting because it was the final step of production and the beauty of my hard work began to emerge.

In the build-up to the final editing, there were a lot of content ideas and recording done. These include sound effects, music, and natural sounds.

However, when it was time to assess all recordings, it was a bit overwhelming. Scripting was done by listening to all the interviews again to enable me to identify clear top lines. This rough edit made the final editing easier. It also helped me time the clips.

There were a lot of rich content from my interviews so a lot of editorial decisions were made in accordance with Chantler and Harris (1997) who recommend ruthlessness in the editing process; the use of shorter rather than longer pieces of audio, and forcing the listener to listen by going out 'with a bang'. Those words stuck with me throughout the process.

Despite being ruthlessness, the need to make every clip and sound effect punchy and relevant to the piece was not undermined especially because of my awareness that people have a short attention span (Smith, 2015).

The themes that are important to this documentary were given prominence. These include the relationship between social media and mental health and screen time throughout the day. Another theme of interest was the comparisons between how users react to posts with many likes to posts with few likes.

This media product was designed to be serious at times and light-hearted at other times because the impact of social media use can be a mix of both.

To portray that, edits were carefully selected alongside blending music and effects in the background.

The audio of recordings done over Zoom and those done face to face were of different quality, so efforts were made to make audio levels the same using the "normalize" feature on Adobe Audition.

1.6 Soundscape

Despite being only an academic work, the aim was to make a documentary of broadcast standard. Care was taken not to use copyrighted free sounds and music.

The opening of any piece for radio is important. "It has almost become a cult to begin a programme with a cut. The idea is to grab the attention of the listener but there is a lot to be said for a simple announcement and then good clean opening narration" (Owen and Perkins, 2016).

The piece opens with minimalistic sound followed by media clips on the negative impact of social media. Those clips were accompanied by background music.

Sound effects like phone notifications, clicks from computer keyboards, camera and ambience were also used to emphasise points made by some interviewees and aid imagination.

Care was taken to ensure only sounds that were relevant to emphasise certain points were used. For example, music was not used over certain clips in which experts were speaking as the content was serious. Overall, there was a good blend of background sounds used ranging from calm, cinematic, drama and hip hop depending on what subject were being talked about.

1.7 Challenges/Limitations

Editing this documentary was challenging. It was a big challenge trying to cut lengthy interviews into 25 minutes.

Recording over Zoom also proved tricky. As recording over Zoom was new to me, a lot of tricks had to be learnt to get the perfect audio quality. Compared to in-person interviews, there were a lot of

things to worry about like the quality of my earphones, reliable internet access, building a rapport with interviewees, handling mood changes during interviews and providing non-verbal feedbacks. In addition, when interviewing remotely, there were some things beyond control like strength of the bandwidth from the other end and noise interference. There were times where the internet connection was lost mid-interview and questions had to be repeated.

Despite many attempts, it was impossible to interview a neurologist or neuroscientist for expert analysis on the science behind addiction and how the brain reward system works. Most emails sent to hospitals, clinics, and the experts themselves but in most cases no replies were received. Those who replied turned me down because they were busy on the frontline attending to Covid-19 patients. No positive responses were gotten either, when most hospitals/doctors were contacted by phone.

Although Joanna Fortune spoke in relation to that but since her expertise is not in neurology, deeper issues were not addressed.

Chapter 4: DISCUSSION

Production process and findings

4.1 Pre-production

The dissertation proposal was submitted on March 13th, 2020.

My pitch aimed to investigate the impact of social and mass media on young adults. It contained the research plan including an analysis of the aims and objectives and potential contributors best suited for the different themes to be addressed.

Whilst undertaking the literature review, a lot of valuable insight into the role social media plays in our normal lives was gained. My interest in the topic further aroused upon seeing young adults' social media behaviour during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Production of the piece commenced on April 13th, 2020 after being allocated to my supervisors.

Following their advice to narrow the focus of my topic, I changed it from "the impact of social and mass media to young adults" to "the impact of social media to the psychology of 18 – 24-year olds".

Other feedback from my supervisors proved helpful in the development of both the written and practical aspect of the documentary.

Having done my research, the following people were identified as potential contributors: Joana Fortune (clinical psychotherapist), Louise O'Hagan (CyberSafeIreland), James Kavanagh (social media influencer) and social media users (Ciaran Samahedi, Denise Harding, Amanda Rodrigues, Paula Melissa). Emails were sent out to all of them between June 3rd to 16th, 2020.

4.2 Interviews

My first interview was with James Kavanagh. The interview took place in his Dublin residence.

James provided a tour of his workspace and talked through the equipment and gadgets he uses, including his camera, laptop, phones and editing apps. He shared his journey of becoming a social media personality and outlined the content he likes to share and his own favourite social media apps

Knowing how addictive social media can be, questions were posed to him about the amount of time he spends every day on the internet.

While admitting he might be addicted to social media, James revealed that he spends at least 9 hours online every day. According to James, his engagement and interaction start from the minute he wakes up and continues even while in bed at night.

James described the online world can be "kind and brutal". He recounted his experiences being trolled online and how it used to affect his self-esteem until he developed a thick skin.

Although he agreed that being popular online has its advantages, he was quick to note that "influencing" can become a harmful compulsion which has affected his sleep patterns and drains him mentally.

Reacting to Perrie's report (2019) that says "influencer" and "youtuber" are now the most popular career aspiration for children, James said he uses every opportunity he has with young people to advise them not to be desperate for popularity or followership. He instead tells them to be driven by the need to create rich and impactful content.

Chatting with James was interesting, engaging and revealing. He was open as the quality of the recording was great.

The second interview conducted was with Alex Cooney. My initial contact was with Louise O'Hagan who is the Education Officer in the same organization as Alex but she did not turn up for the Zoom interview on the scheduled date.

When Alex was contacted on LinkedIn, she agreed to speak to me over Zoom.

Since it was going to be a virtual meeting, Alex had to be briefed on some technical requirements for the interview to work well (see chapter 3).

Like the first interview, my questioning was open and unbiased, allowing Alex to give a range of opinions and communicate on a range of aspects which she felt were relevant.

Using practical examples from her experience as a cybersecurity advocate, Alex expatiated on the potential risks involved in the use of social media by young people.

One of the most interesting things she pointed out was how technology companies are contributing to the harmful effects of social media.

"These platforms are largely designed to keep our attention, to stay on them as long as possible. There are a lot of design elements that encourage those things" (Cooney, 2020).

We also spoke about the positives of social media and the important role it has played during the Covid-19 pandemic.

She called for stringent legislation targeting designers of social media platforms for a safer cyberspace for all.

It was so pleasing to have chatted to Alex. Despite my initial concern over the audio quality from a zoom interview, it came out good. Overall, speaking with Alex gave me a different perspective on the subject. The biggest lesson learnt was that to address the negative impact of social media, a holistic approach must be taken.

To interview the young social media users, all the interviews were scheduled on Zoom for two reasons.

Firstly, the contributors are not Dublin residents and secondly, due to the sensitivity of some of my questions, a remote audio interview was more likely to make them feel relaxed and open.

They were asked a range of questions related to their usage; their favourite apps, who they follow, how early they go online daily, how long they can stay off their phones for, photo editing on social media and level of anxiousness or loneliness when they post. In total, four social media users (1 male and 3 females) were spoken to.

They all explained how they find themselves comparing their lives to others on social media. They elaborated that these comparisons can either be image-based or derived from any posts portraying how good other people's lives are. They said this often puts pressure on them. The contributors however said social media is their major source of information and that they enjoyed how social media helps them connect with family and friends especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

One of those interviewed is a growing YouTuber and a faith blogger who has been online for 10 years. She started creating content at age 13. She confessed that she edits a lot and that her persona online is quite different from who she is in real life.

What was common with all the youngsters was that they are attached to their phones and always feel good when their posts get many likes but bad when it does not. They all agreed that their social media use increased during the pandemic.

Overall, the social media users were passionate and open which was needed to make this documentary compelling.

In the final edit, one of the interviews was not used because the contributor sounded nervous, kept stuttering, and gave too monosyllabic answers, no matter how the questions posed to her were framed. The decision was made to exclude it because it would have ruined an otherwise good piece.

My final interview was with Joanna Fortune. The interview was conducted on Zoom. Joanna is a regular contributor on radio, so this helped as she already understood the technicalities involved in virtual interviewing.

She was remarkably interesting to listen to and gave thought provoking answers.

She explained why social media is so attractive to young people and the correlation between social media use and mental health problems. Joanna brought several issues to the table including the fact that social media alone cannot cause mental health problems. She said mental health issues as it relates to social media only arises if a person is already vulnerable or predisposed. In that case, extended use could most likely amplify mental health problems.

Another point of interest Joanna raised was that the biggest impact of prolonged social media has on people is on their sleep. "People who spend the night checking their social media are most likely to suffer from depression and loneliness" (Fortune, 2020).

It was a highly informative interaction and the recording came out great.

I was pleased to have interviewed Joanna. Given her engagement with different media organizations and her job as a clinical psychotherapist, she is always busy. My first contact with her was on June 3rd, 2020. At the time, she informed me that her entire month had been booked but made out time in early July.

4.3 Interview Findings

The entire process was good exposure for me. It taught me a lot about interviewing. For example, for a documentary such as this, it was helpful that questions were sent ahead of meetings. This helped interviewees prepare better to get broader perspectives and provide interesting answers.

It was also beneficial to listen to responses and not think too much about asking the next question. One important discovery was that while it might be okay to stick to written questions, sometimes the most intriguing answers are gotten from follow-up questions. These questions can only be asked if there is a lot of listening during the interviews.

In addition, using silence was highly effective. My decision not to interject when responses were given allowed the contributors not to lose their line of thought. Deliberate actions were taken not to help some interviewees complete their sentences when they were groping for the right words to

avoid imposing my thoughts on them. It was later realised during the editing process that long pauses could be edited out if it did not have any effect on the listeners interpretation of such responses. However, long pauses can also be effective depending on what is being asked.

Another thing observed was that breaking the ice before interviews got them comfortable and made them more open and expressive. To achieve that, I always had short pre interview chats with interviewees, giving a proper introduction of myself, telling them about my passion for the topic and the things about their work that interests me. It always worked. Being conscious of my facial expressions throughout the interviews and the occasionally nodding of head also helped to make conversation easier.

4.4 The Editing Process

As earlier explained in chapter 3, editing was the most challenging part in the production process. My interviews were rich in quantity and quality so there were a lot of materials to use. Although the rushes looked enormous at first, it became easier after listening to all the interviews, writing a script, and structuring the piece.

By replaying, a lot of repetitions and points that were off the subject matter were noticed. Rough edits were done for those ones to make the final editing easier.

Trying to stick to the required duration meant editing had to be ruthless. This proved difficult at times because there were a lot of salient points made by contributors.

In the end, materials that were not included in the documentary were those regarding social media use during the pandemic and how long users can stay off their phones.

For the social media influencer, responses on the content he regretted posting were omitted. Also omitted were whether he would feel guilty if people are having mental health challenges because of him, how lucrative being an influencer can be and how he deals with public expectations.

Overall, a lot of ingenuity was exhibited to make the storytelling work. For example, in one case, a lot of thoughts were given on how to make the response a contributor was giving to an important question still understandable despite temporarily losing audio. This glitch was only noticed at the editing stage. This was addressed by cutting a different part of the interview where the same word was used and blending it to the sentence without any noticeable alteration to the pitch or meaning of the sentence.

4.5 Lessons learned

Despite being extremely time consuming, making this documentary has been such an interesting journey for me. The biggest lesson learned is that anything is possible if one is ready to put in the work.

Another lesson is being open to ideas. Before this project, my only experience of making a radio documentary was for a different module but that was less demanding. From that experience, I had a similar structure in mind for this piece but after interacting with my supervisors and listening to a lot of podcasts, I realized that every documentary is different and that this one required a lot more research and planning.

The challenges experienced in making this documentary were embraced because of my conviction that it would give me the best opportunity to learn, grow and increase my skills in this area.

Interacting constantly with my supervisors taught me how to ask questions the right way, best angles to explore, ethical considerations, how to structure the piece, tips on narration and sound effects to use, among others.

Making the documentary taught me to contact potential interviewees early and if possible, have a backup for each one of them because even though they agree to an interview, they can cancel anytime.

For future productions, efforts would be made to have specific names of experts in mind early enough and book interviews with them instead of waiting to meet with my supervisors first.

Chapter Five: CONCLUSION

This documentary explored the world of social media and how it is used by young adults. The listener is taken on a journey to unearth why social media is so attractive to young people and its impacts on their psychological development.

Experts presented facts on the correlation between social media and mental health.

According to them, there are different ways social media affects the mind and behaviours of humans. They explained that social media like other pleasurable activities, is largely linked to the brain's reward system – a chemical reaction which gives triggers of excitement meaningful real-life communication that could result to loneliness. The study found other impacts to include low self-esteem caused by undue comparisons of other people's lives to those of the users. It pointed out that technological addictions have a positive correlation with stress.

Regarding what constitutes social media addiction, the resource persons described it as any engagement that impairs sleep or eating pattern. They identified another symptom of social media addiction as its pervasiveness to the detriment of real-life relationships.

It seems clear from this research that young people are increasingly becoming attached to the online world and displaying effects like depression and inadequate sleep, the later of which have been found to have the most impact on problematic social media use.

It was really fascinating to find out that all the social media users interviewed use their phones late into the night and have frequently fallen asleep while engaging online. Some admitted that they are experiencing or have in the past experienced many of the symptoms mentioned.

The experts assert that there is no hard evidence that prolonged social media use or addiction causes mental health issues, but they stated that it is a heavy contributor.

They also acknowledge that social media attachment has led to a rise in social media related problems among young adults.

The resource persons each explained how social media has enabled increased awareness of mental health issues and highlighted its importance as a communication tool. Citing examples, they blamed tech companies for contributing to mental health problems by designing products meant to deliberately keep users on apps and gadgets, sometimes for financial gains. This could either be the choice of colour used for notification badges or design techniques for certain apps.

This is an area that can be explored further in future researches. As social networks prioritize which content a user sees in their feed first or what is best for them, it would be particularly interesting to know how algorithms function and the codes that make them.

Another area that requires more research is the long-term effects of excessive social media use. The emphasis on only short-term effects could be because social media is a relatively new technology. Additionally, there is an apparent inadequacy of comparative studies in the area of social media addiction. This may be backed by the fact that the first studies on social media addiction did not occur until after 2010 (van den Eijnden et al., 2016).

Due to the lack of longitudinal studies and the relative newness of social media, information on long term impact may for now only be predicted through available information on short-term effects.

More research on access and privacy in social media use is also required. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter are easily accessible to anyone. A random user can view other people's page and follow

their activities online unrestricted. As this is invasive, social media users may suffer from psychological problems like anxiety or paranoia over who is accessing this data.

Although this documentary is targeted at those between ages 18 to 24, people of younger ages are being introduced to the online world everyday. This predisposes them to the negative sides of social media.

Currently, the minimum age to open an account on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok and Snapchat is 13. YouTube requires account holders to be 18, however a 13-year-old can sign up with a parent's permission. (Young, 2019).

Despite these age limits in place, an Ofcom report in 2019 found that children under the age of 11 are registering for social media accounts with some circumventing the procedure by using false age.

One reason for this could be because setting age limits are still only regulations and not laws that require more serious policing.

This justifies the need for enactment of laws guiding age limits for social media use.

According to Oglethorpe (2019), the reason why social networks use age 13 is; ‘to comply to the USA’s Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) which states that it is illegal for companies to obtain certain information and data from any child under the age of 13.’

It could be argued that, if not for COPPA, creators of social media apps might have set a lower age limit or no age limit at all. This is a pointer to the fact that tech companies are less concerned about the dangers social media predisposes to young people and more concerned about profit.

Today, the internet is awash with graphic images and videos. Sadly, these can also be found in contents supposedly meant for kids like video games. Such contents are harmful for the developing brains of children. Self-regulation practiced by social networking companies is not the way out.

Since 2011, Ireland has had a department for Children and Youth Affairs. The country also has a department for communications. Although both departments have made efforts to put policies in place like the recently proposed online safety and media regulation bill which seeks to put an end to self-regulation by social media companies. While this is a good move, like many other countries in the world, Ireland can do more to sure children are protected. Digital literacy education is still lacking in many Irish primary and secondary schools. Many guards still lack professional training on how to deal with cases like cyberbullying. These are area that can be improved upon.

In all, despite its problems, social media has its good sides especially as a tool for communication and the huge opportunities it provides. To avoid being a victim of the negative impacts of social media, the government, technology companies and users must play their part.

From the submissions of all the interviewees in this research, young people love social media and the future of social media looks to become even more prevalent.

Although there are a lot of documentaries done on social media and the impact it has on young people, this topic is still relevant as social media itself is an evolving issue. The documentary is unique because it was produced at a time of a global pandemic where online activities rose in popularity. This gives it a different feel and unearths new perspectives. It is my wish that this piece be listened to by a wider audience, especially young people.

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Appendix A – Documentary Structure

Audio Clip	Description	Duration
1. Opening	Voice of news readers/reporters on negative impact of social media accompanied by background music. Excerpt from interviews with young contributors on amount of time spent on social media daily.	2 minutes
2. Narration	Introduction to the documentary, outlining the importance of the subject accompanied by excerpt of experts' thoughts on the impact	1 minute
3. Narration/contributors' thoughts (18-24-year olds)	18 – 24-year olds describing their social media use (their favourite apps, what they use them for and why they like them)	4 minutes
4. Narration continues/contributors' thoughts (18-24-year olds)	18 – 24-year olds will describe their frequency on social media	3 minutes
5. Narration and Joanna Fortune	Social media facts and Joanna Fortune on relationship between social media and mental health issues	2 minutes
6. Narration and Alex Cooney of CyberSafelreland	Introduction of Alex Cooney of CyberSafelreland and her position on more impact of social media to young adults including the role tech companies play	3 minutes
7. Narration and James Kavanagh's interview	Introduction of James Kavanagh. He speaks on his favourite apps/software and his journey to being a social media personality	3 minutes
8. James Kavanagh	James Kavanagh speaks on his social media behaviour	2 minutes
9. Narration and Paula Melissa (young content creator)	Introduction of Paula, what social media means to her, why she finds it attractive and addictive	2.30 minutes

10. Joanna	Explanation of the science behind addiction	1 minute
11. Outro (narration)	Narrator sums up the documentary	1 minute
12. Joanna Fortune and Alex Cooney	Both contributors give their final submissions, stating the future of social media and role all parties can play (call for action)	2 minutes

Appendix B - Narrator's script

Intro – Excerpt from news reports and young social media users

VO: Social media, one of the most amazing creations of this generation. We like, swipe, tag, subscribe, follow and unfollow. It's a great networking tool but with hundreds of hours spent online, some are either ignorant or pay no attention to its addictive nature. Research says over 210 million people suffer from internet and social media addictions worldwide.

Today, apps like Facebook and Instagram are being used by young people mostly in pursuit of validation and fame and this can come with a price

Joanna Fortune

VO: That's clinical psychotherapist, Joanna Fortune. She spoke to me on how social media can interrupt the functioning of the brain

Joanna Fortune

VO: My name is Joseph Okoh and social media consumes my day. Over the last 3 months I've been digging into the social media behaviour of young adults and I spent time chatting to 18 – 24 year olds and quickly found out that for many of them, putting their lives on the internet is all about a new currency. The social media currency - the likes. It's all about the likes!

Amanda (social media user 1)

VO: But Amanda is not the only one attached to the wired world.

Ciaran (social media user 2)

VO: Ciaran's story is similar to the ones I heard again and again from youngsters. Not one of them could go four straight hours in a day without checking their phones. This revelation prompted me to a self-reflect on own my social media addiction.

Amanda

VO: In 2019, data from EU's official statistical office Eurostat showed that almost nine in 10 Europeans between the age of 16 and 24 are on social media.

Back to clinical psychotherapist, Joanna Fortune whose speciality is in child and adolescent psychotherapy. Joanna has spent over 15 years working with young adults

Interviewer's voice

Joanna

VO: Joanna tells me why social media could be contributing to our overall mental health issues but not necessarily the cause of it

Joanna

VO: So, despite the negative effects that comes with prolonged social media use, it's a money spinner for some like the social media influencers. I visited the Dublin home of internet star, James Kavanagh for a chat. As a fan myself, it was fascinating to meet James.

VO: Since 2015, James has had a steady rise in popularity. He now has over 130, 000 followers on Instagram and over 41,000 followers on Twitter. In James' world, every click can turn to money, so the need to engage keeps him busy. This is the kind of life many youngsters aspire for.

Soundbite of James' YouTube videos

Before we sat for a chat, James first showed me where he creates most of his contents. It's a small section in his sitting room.

James

Interviewer's voice

James

Interviewer's voice

James

Being an influencer sounds fun, but it can also become a harmful compulsion. Having spoken to Amanda and Ciaran earlier, I was curious to know how much time an influencer like James spends online everyday.

James

Interviewer's voice

James

VO: What's been of interest to me is that way young people have engaged with the web has changed over the years. The social media space is so dynamic and sometimes it's difficult to keep up with new technologies. For example, TikTok is one of the most downloaded mobile apps and kept youths engaged during the pandemic. Youths continue to find creative ways to make money from some of these platforms. Meet my friend, Paula

Paula (social media user 3)

VO: I have known Paula for quite a while and most times we communicate via social media. She's totally aware of its addictive nature

Paula

VO: I've always wondered if content creators get anxious for every post they put out and if what they put up online is the real version of themselves, so I asked Paula and James.

Paula

James

VO: I also asked Joanna the best way to handle this

Joanna

VO: Not everyone who sets out to spend hours online. Like Joanna pointed out, it could be our obsession for perfection. Other times it starts with one click leading to another click and more clicks. Are we asking the wrong questions by focusing more on users instead of the designers of these technologies themselves?

Here is what Alex Cooney, the CEO of cybersafe Ireland thinks.

The not-for-profit organisation works to empower children, parents, and teachers to navigate the online world in a safe and responsible manner

Alex

VO: The Addiction Centre describes social media addiction as a behavioural addiction that is characterized as being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable urge to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to it that it impairs other important life areas.

But social media so ingrained into our way of life, it can really be difficult to set limits on screen time. We can easily become addicted without being aware. Joanna discussed with me the signs to look out for

Joanna

Outro - Having interacted with close to a dozen young adults while making this documentary, I noticed a common pattern among all of them. They are so much in love with social media. Social media has a big impact on many issues affecting youths today and it's got a grip on all of us. But the internet is not going anywhere soon. It's still very much relevant in our world today. So, who really should take greater responsibility over social media use?

Joanna on regulation

Alex on the future of social media

Appendix C – Interview Questions

Young adults (18 – 24-year olds)

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself – where you're from, age and what you do.
2. Tell me about your social media use. What does it mean to you?
3. What are your favourite social media apps and why?
4. Describe to me your social media use throughout the day. When do you first check it and when do you last check it?
5. How long can you go without checking your phone or social media?
6. Describe your social media use during the pandemic
7. Do you get anxious when you post? How often would you check the post for feedback? Give examples
8. How do you feel when you don't get enough engagement on social media? for example, likes and comments and how do you feel when you get a lot of engagement from a post?
9. Have there been instances when social media made you feel good or bad about yourself? Can you give some examples?
10. Is your persona on social media the same as it is in real life? Explain your answer.
11. Do you alter pictures you post online? Why?
12. Do you post negative aspect of your life and why?
13. How do you feel when you see other people's post?
14. What is the impact of social media on the psychology of young people?

Social media influencer (James Kavanagh)

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself
2. What is a social media influencer? Can you explain your job?
3. How did you become popular on social media?
4. What do you post about and why?
5. Can you show me your phone and what apps you use to engage?
6. Describe your social media use in a day?
7. Have you ever regretted posting something and how did that impact you?
8. Do you get anxious when you post online or when you are live?
9. Social media is addictive. As a social media influencer would you say you are addicted?
10. How do you deal with the negative consequences of social media in relation to what you do for a living?
11. A lot of studies have shown the negative impact of social media on people (mental health, sleep deprivation, self-esteem issues etc). Have you suffered one of those? Can you share your experience?
12. You have a lot of social media following and there are some people who idolize you. Being such a public figure, would you feel guilty if you found out that one of your followers is suffering anxiety or low self-esteem because of some of your content?
13. As an influencer, does public expectation put you under pressure so much so that it affects your mental health?
14. Despite the huge following you have, there are people who follow you not because they like you. Have you ever been attacked on social media and what impact has it had on you?
15. What would you say are the positive and negative sides to social media?

Clinical Psychotherapist (Joanna Fortune)

1. Can you introduce yourself - tell me about the work you do?
2. Why is social media so attractive to young people?
3. How has social media changed throughout the years?
4. Several studies have shown that considerable use of social media can be linked to loneliness, anxiety, depression etc. Can you describe how destructive social media addiction can be to the mental wellbeing of younger people citing real life examples?
5. In your clinical experience, would you say there's correlation between increased mental health issues and the ever-increasing use of social media platforms?

6. Are there realistic ways to avoid social media addiction especially among the younger generation? You can give your personal experience of dealing with it given how active you are on social media.
7. For those who find social media addictive, how can they manage it?
8. How do one know they have social media addiction and need help?
9. What long term behavioural impact could excessive use of social media have on the young people?