Sharing in the echo chamber: Examining Instagram users' engagement with infographics through the frame of digital literacy.

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Abstract

Social media platforms have had a tangible effect on the ways users share information and their digital literacy skills. However, few studies have examined digital literacy as enacted through Instagram, specifically infographics. Infographics are a primary method of online sharing on Instagram, but they harbour the potential for misinformation as users do not always fully research posts before sharing them, and the nature of the site as a social platform influences how users behave. In this study I investigated digital literacy from a user perspective, examining how users' digital literacy skills interacted with their sharing of infographics, how they used infographics for activism, and the social and visual affordances of Instagram which helped to dictate this relationship. The study used a qualitative method consisting of interviews with six participants. Participants were asked about their Instagram behaviour, choices of infographics and how they judge reliability when sharing. Coding using a grounded theory approach, participants' responses were analysed. They revealed that users are familiar with traditional concepts of information literacy such as referencing sources, but often prioritise other areas such as the social and personal contexts of an infographic when deciding what to share. They also dialogue with their followers through visual imagery. Moreover, participants engage in activism by sharing infographics which amplify marginalised perspectives, and which contain action points for their followers to carry out. These practices are contextualised within Instagram affordances and the behaviours it enables and constrains.

Declaration

I have read and understood the College and Departmental statements and guidelines concerning plagiarism. I declare that:

This submission is entirely my own original work.

Wherever published, unpublished, printed, electronic or other information sources have been used as a contribution or component of this work, these are explicitly, clearly and individually acknowledged by appropriate use of quotation marks, citations, references and statements in the text. It is 14,661 words in length.

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1. Introduction

In early 2020, in the wake of the Australian bushfires, several posts began to circulate on Instagram which claimed that for every repost they would donate money to help with Australian recovery efforts. One such post came from Plant A Tree Co. (Plant A Tree Co., 2022), which simply read: 'Repost to donate to Australia' (Exposing Instagram Scams, 2020). The post went viral, with the account's follower count tripling in the course of a month (Social Blade, 2022). However, questions arose about who the company were, and investigations then showed some suspicious activity. They had not linked to any specific organisation they would donate to, and were selling cheaply produced jewellery on their website, the profits from which they claimed would go to charity, but which actually seemed to be a source of 'passive income' for the creator of the page (Marlborough, 2021). As it turned out, this was not the first, nor would it be the last donation drive from Plant A Tree Co. (Wilson, 2021). They no longer claim they will donate money on users' behalf, but their Instagram page does state they have fundraised for several causes. Palestine, Black Lives Matter, the Australian bushfires recovery, Pride and Save the Elephants all seem to have benefitted from their fundraising efforts (Plant A Tree Co., 2021), although the 'proof', in the form of links to their website, is unavailable, so this is difficult to verify.

At the time of writing, Plant A Tree Co. still has a follower count of close to a million, and although many news articles and Instagram pages have exposed them for potentially misleading claims (Cook, 2020; Exposing Instagram Scams, 2020; Hu, 2020; Marlborough, 2021; Wilson, 2021) they continue to receive engagement on their posts.

This is a perfect example of the ways that Instagram accounts with dubious intentions can go viral multiple times, and it demonstrates the lack of fact-checking done both by Instagram and by individual users before content is allowed to spread across the platform.

Instagram has always been a photo-centric platform (Valdivia, 2021, p.180; Marwick, 2015, p.139). The early days of Instagram began with the Instagram 'feed', the platform's homepage where users share photos and videos which are visible to their followers and potentially discoverable by a wider audience through hashtags (Hsiao, 2019). These posts stay up indefinitely unless the user deletes the post or their account, or Instagram removes them. In August 2016, the 'stories' feature was introduced, which allows users to post images onto their story, a separate sharing space from their feed, which stay up for 24 hours and then disappear (Leaver, Highfield and Abidin, 2020, pp.26-28). This feature appears at the top of the Instagram feed and was originally intended to capture the market from another social media platform, Snapchat, which it did, massively increasing engagement on Instagram and ensuring the platform's continued success (ibid.).

Stories are the main vehicle through which posts such as that of Plant A Tree Co. 'go viral' (are widely shared on the platform). They are also the vehicle through which Instagram infographics are shared. These are graphic posts shared on Instagram with a specific message, often intended to inform or engage, and generally covering current events. They are usually created by or posted on a user's feed and are then transmitted via sharing on other users' feeds or stories. Much like Plant A Tree Co.'s posts, infographics have often been used to spread misinformation, particularly when shared

through stories as they are temporary and as such harder for Instagram to control (Binder, 2022; Spencer-Elliott, 2022; Weekman, 2022).

Thus, it seems that social media platforms have had a tangible effect on the ways users share information. Infographics are often a feature within online activism, sharing information to raise awareness or as a catalyst for action. My definition of activist for this study is any person involved in activism, which is defined by Graham (2018, p.2) as including 'the widest range of attempts to effect social or cultural change' either in or out of traditional politics. As identified above, there is potential for misinformation when sharing, as users do not always fully research posts before sharing them, and the nature of the site as a social platform influences how users behave. Additionally, the origins of the infographic and relationship of the user to the account owner can affect sharing, in particular if the post comes from a verified account. Verified accounts are defined as Instagram accounts which have been authenticated by Instagram to belong to the public figure or organisation with whom they are associated. Verified accounts have a 'blue tick' next to the account name as displayed on Instagram to indicate this authenticity (Meta, 2022).

All these factors are examples of the digital literacy behaviours of users on the platform. While digital literacy has many definitions, which I will explore in my review of current literature, when used in this study, it should be taken to mean 'those capabilities which fit an individual for living, learning and working in a digital society' (Jisc, 2014). In this study, I will investigate digital literacy from a user perspective, examining how users' digital literacy skills interact with their sharing of infographics, how they use infographics

for activism, and the various affordances of Instagram which help dictate this relationship. With that in mind, I will aim to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What role does digital literacy play in infographic use on Instagram?

RQ2: How do users perform digital literacy on Instagram?

RQ3: How do the social and visual affordances of Instagram affect infographic usage?

RQ4: How do Instagram users navigate activism on the platform through the use of infographics?

In this area of research, few studies have been undertaken which explore the specific relationship between infographics and digital literacy from an information studies perspective. This study aims to rectify that by examining what users consider to be important when sharing infographics. With this knowledge, we can better understand how information professionals can adapt their teaching to reflect sharing on platforms and equip students to find and disseminate reliable information.

This study begins by reviewing the recent literature surrounding Instagram as a platform and information literacy. I will then describe my methodology, the findings of the study and discuss those findings. Finally, I will conclude and respond to my research questions.

2. Literature Review

The established literature around digital literacy as performed through infographic usage falls into two main areas, which I will bring together during this study. Firstly, the concept of information literacy, specifically digital literacy, and data visualisations, all of which I will explore below. Secondly, the platform of Instagram itself: affordances, social sharing and activism.

2.1 Digital literacy and visualisations

2.1.1 Digital literacy theories

Users sharing of infographics shows the ways in which they perform digital literacy. Theories around digital literacy emphasise the need to integrate traditional information literacy practices with digital technologies, while acknowledging the challenges posed by new formats and ways in which traditional understandings of information literacy have to adapt to these changes. Gilster (1997, cited in Bawden, 2008, pp.18-19), poses some of the earliest theory around digital literacy, positing it as an understanding of ideas around digital technology as well as an ability to use the technology itself. Gilster also recognises the importance of seeing the limits of digital mediums, and therefore when traditional sources would be better suited to a user's needs. The need to integrate newer theories of digital literacy theory with existing concepts of information literacy is stressed by Bhatt and MacKenzie (2019, p.303), who see all information literacy as

'socially situated'. Thus, as digital technology is now ingrained in day-to-day life, all literacies are inextricably linked – our social practices now move seamlessly between online and offline spaces, so information literacy must necessarily do the same.

Bawden (2008, p.29) reiterates this view while distinguishing media literacy from information literacy, arguing media literacy covers 'information formats "pushed" at the user' while information literacy describes 'actively finding and using information in "pull" mode' (ibid., p.17). However, these differences are not always clearly separated by users, as Mansour (2020, p.221) finds in the study identified above. Thus, in this study, I will consider media literacy to be one element of digital literacy as a whole. Buckingham (2015, p.22) suggests young people regard digital technology as a 'cultural form' and that understandings of digital literacy must consider the 'emotional dimensions' of this technology, not just the information found on it (ibid., p.24). This understanding urges researchers to look beyond the view of digital literacy as a rudimentary understanding of how digital technology operates and how to carry out 'basic information retrieval tasks' (ibid., p.23). It is therefore important to understand how technology's affective qualities might impact users' sharing of infographics.

Lankshear and Knobel (2015) critique digital literacy research in which digital literacy is seen as something users either do or do not possess. Instead, they argue that digital engagement is often viewed as 'a resource for participation' in a community, and as such, traditional methods for analysing literacy such as source evaluation are only possible when considering the context such as the 'values', 'social groups' and 'images they seek to project' (ibid., p.13). This study is an opportunity to examine this theory in practice by exploring the digital literacy of participants while accounting for the different

contexts surrounding their infographic use. A study of the digital literacy practices of fact-checkers, students and historians by Wineburg and McGrew (2019) finds that the latter two groups, although judged to be 'skilled internet users', often mistake biased websites for legitimate sources because they contain non-digital markers of reliability such as references and glossy aesthetics (ibid., pp.4, 14). Addy (2020, p.29) also identifies that US university students using online resources often focus on 'surface features' such as the use of statistics when evaluating source reliability. In contrast, the most effective method for judging reliability in the digital sphere according to Wineburg and McGrew's study (2019, p.30) is 'taking bearings' by 'lateral reading'. This means leaving the original website to use secondary sources to contextualise the information, rather than studying the site itself to look for evidence of reliability. Social media platforms are usually designed to keep people engaged for as long as possible but leaving Instagram is necessary to do this 'lateral reading'. It is therefore relevant to consider if this digital literacy practice takes place when users interact with Instagram infographics.

Additionally, there are many other areas of research that need to be considered within the study of digital literacy on Instagram. In Wineburg and McGrew's study of digital literacy practices, the fact-checkers identify issues with search engine optimisation (ibid., pp.32-33). Search engine algorithms can be manipulated to place less reliable sites higher up on the list of results; this is an area of information literacy that is specific to new technologies. When ubiquitous search engines such as Google, which have been shown to have clear racial bias and a profit motive (Noble, 2018, p.5) are used uncritically, any search that is undertaken through them will inevitably be biased. This

study will consider whether users are aware of Instagram's potential influence on their

infographic sharing. The ever-present spectre of Google is problematised by Bhatt and

MacKenzie (2019, p.304) who see search engines like them as 'sponsors of literacy'

because understanding how they work and being able to navigate them effectively has

a huge impact on online literacy. Indeed, a recent study by Google suggested that

social media sites such as TikTok and Instagram are now used as search engines by

around 40% of 18–24-year-olds (Perez, 2022). The problems of bias found on Google

are no less present on these social media sites, so one could argue they have now

become 'sponsors' of literacy. Although many younger Internet users have grown up

using these platforms, Addy (2020, pp.19-20) cautions against the idea that this places

them as naturally comfortable and capable when using online resources. Given the

'overwhelming' amount of information found online and the sometimes-hidden motives

of companies which profit from the web, there is still the potential for misinformation

even on platforms on which young people are experienced users. As such this study will

seek to understand how users recognise misinformation and if they have strategies to

avoid it.

2.1.2 Data visualisations

Infographics are a form of data visualisation, and so any study of them must consider

the ways visual imagery conveys meaning. In addition to suggesting that young people

are increasingly likely to favour Instagram and TikTok as search engines over Google,

Google executives have highlighted the increasing role of the visual in digital navigation

(Perez, 2022). Cairo (2016) defines infographics as 'a multi-section visual representation of information intended to communicate one or more specific messages', while critiquing more recent interpretations of the term, perhaps like those often found on Instagram, as 'puerile posters used as clickbait […] based on shaky data'. Therefore, Instagram infographics might be seen to be somewhat distinct from traditional data visualisations.

Drucker is a key scholar in this field, advancing the ideas around data visualisations. Their book argues that 'graphics make and construct knowledge' (2014, p.9), so they are not simply representations of existing data, but also create new knowledge. Additionally, they are 'acts of interpretation' (ibid., p.10). As such, they are not neutral, but present a view of data which is specific to a time and place (ibid., p.19). According to Drucker (2017, p.911), aspects such as 'size, shape, proximity, order, color, tone, texture of visual features all work as elements of the enunciative graphical system inflected with cultural values or references'; every area of a graphic can be examined to find meaning. Therefore, graphics are 'potent rhetorical instruments of cultural power' (ibid., p.913), imbued with significance and cultural context. Infographics found on Instagram will therefore have specific visual contexts.

Kennedy and Engebretsen (2020, p.20) suggest that visualisations are now used 'for informative, persuasive, and rhetorical purposes in political campaigns, health communication, education, and in newsrooms', highlighting how they are used to legitimise information. However, they argue that misused visualisations can be 'confusing or manipulative' (ibid., p.19); thus, indicating that the organisations that use these graphics are aware of that power and the manner in which it can be exploited.

They indicate the close ties between 'emotional engagement' and the 'aesthetic aspects' (ibid., p.24) identified above by Drucker. Effective graphics induce viewers' emotions and this emotional response forms part of the power of the graphic. They foreground the question of epistemology (ibid., p.23) – graphics that privilege statistical data also portray that type of data as the most legitimate, as opposed to non-qualitative data.

Since visualisations are used in civic and educational contexts, some scholars see data visualisations as a component of data literacy, an important skill within digital literacy. As data is increasingly communicated by visualisations, 'the ability to find, analyse, interpret and effectively communicate data' becomes paramount for students in a digital world (Usova and Laws, 2021, p.84). An understanding of data visualisations is viewed as 'support[ing] a range of literacies' and thus integral to 'information literacy goals' (Womack, 2014, p.12-13). Therefore, analysing data visualisations in this study will strengthen any understanding of how digital literacy functions on Instagram.

Within the context of Instagram, Valdivia (2021, p.180) notes the essential link between the visual and textual elements of the platform, where the text can 'articulat[e]' the image in a way that 'is crucial to the functions of identity, sociality, audience, and participation'. As such, theories of visualisations on the platform cannot be divorced from the manner in which they interplay with the accompanying text, as most users will consider these elements in tandem.

2.2 Instagram affordances, social sharing and activism

2.2.1 Affordances

Users' engagement with infographics is shaped by the technological affordances offered by Instagram, about which there is a significant amount of research. The term 'affordance' has various descriptions. Davis and Chouinard (2016, p.241) describe them as 'the range of functions and constraints that an object provides for, and places upon, structurally situated subjects'. In the context of Instagram, this means what users are and are not permitted to do on the platform. They outline six potential functions of affordances: 'artifacts *request*, *demand*, *allow*, *encourage*, *discourage*, and *refuse*.' (ibid., p.242), while arguing that users might not always be aware of all the affordances that an 'artifact' offers, or if they are, may not be able to use them (ibid., p.245). The importance of users understanding what the affordances of a piece of technology are is paramount for that affordance to have value (Lloyd, 2010, p.169). Lloyd (ibid., p.170) views affordances from an information literacy perspective, arguing that engaging with affordances 'facilitates meaning making' and enables users to become part of a community. Thus, understanding affordances is central to users' ability to navigate Instagram and to participate in the social world offered by the platform.

Equally, Davis and Chouinard (ibid., p.246) argue that users can 'circumvent [the] intended functions' of an object. They therefore perceive the restrictions placed on the user by an object such as Instagram but acknowledge the power of the user to renegotiate their relationship with said platform. Scholars such as Norman (1999) theorise that there is a difference between real and perceived affordances, with 'cultural

constraints' (ibid., p.40) potentially dictating users' behaviour when using a system, regardless of the actual affordances offered by a piece of technology.

A critique of the scholarship surrounding affordances is made by Evans et al. (2017, p.36), who argue that there are no consistent criteria for affordances, and as such their usage is inconsistent. They therefore posit their own principles for affordances: they must be the 'possibilities for action' when engaging with a feature of a technology, not the outcome of usage, and must be able to be employed to a greater or lesser extent when using said technology (ibid., p.36-37).

Various affordances of social media have been suggested by scholars. 'Persistence', 'replicability', 'scalability' and 'searchability', 'visibility', 'associations' and 'accessibility' are some common affordances of online systems which researchers identify (boyd, 2010, p.34; Ellison and Vitak, 2015, p.223, Evans et al, 2017, p.40, Mansour, 2020, p.221). Moreover, Ellison and Vitak (2015, p.206) argue that framing scholarship concerned with social media around affordances enables it to stay relevant when new social media sites inevitably emerge. This can be seen in TikTok's recent rise popularity, especially among young people – it overtook Instagram as the most downloaded app in 2021 (Apptopia, 2021). As such any research that focused on a very specific analysis of an older platform, such as Myspace, would quickly become obsolete if it did not provide an analysis which could be generalised. Affordances will be an important consideration in my research. It will allow me to prioritise how users engage with the possibilities of the platform and how Instagram might be shaping this, rather than just what those possibilities are. It also shows the potential for the community and culture of a platform to shape user experience. It will therefore be illuminating to

examine how users' infographic sharing choices and digital literacy practices might be influenced by Instagram's affordances.

2.2.2 Social sharing

As we have seen, Instagram's affordances can facilitate community-making on the platform, and infographics circulate within these communities as a method of social connection. Bucher (2018, p.1) writes on the power of algorithms and potential political impact, indicating that 'life […] increasingly takes place in and through an algorithmic media landscape.' The book notes the power of the algorithm, which creates a 'desired user' by rewarding higher levels of engagement with the news feed of social media platforms (ibid., p.89). boyd (2010, p.30) coins the term 'networked publics' to describe the ways that social networking sites such as Instagram not only serve as a space for people to interact, but create a community within said space as well, moulding the behaviour of those who engage with them. My research will explore how the shaping of the user through the algorithm and the 'networked publics' might influence their digital literacy behaviour on the platform. Research by Abidin (2021) follows the shifts in influencers' relationships with their audience during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the move to sharing more content on Instagram stories rather than on the permanent feed reflected increasingly 'conversational content' (ibid., p.697). Because Instagram stories are a temporary method of sharing content, they can be seen as a more informal space, but few studies have examined whether this is a perception shared by non-influencer Instagram users. In a study of mothering groups on Facebook, Mansour (2020, p.221)

finds both searching for and sharing information to be 'interdependent and collective'

activities, and my research will analyse this awareness of the audience when sharing

infographics on Instagram.

However, these strong bonds within communities can also create an opposition to a

perceived 'other'. That social media spheres are increasingly 'balkanised' spaces is a

critique leveraged by MacKenzie and Bhatt (2020, p.12), who identify the limited

exposure social media users get towards ideas that contradict their pre-existing

perspectives. In this way, social media communities can be isolated from one another,

however the ideological spaces constructed within these communities might increase

the level of trust participants feel towards each other. This study will seek to confirm

whether this use of social media platforms to reaffirm users' existing beliefs holds true

for my participants.

2.2.3 Social media activism

The communities developed on social media sites such as Instagram can be a source

of digital activism, through which infographics function as to spread information. Amin

(2010, p.64) defines digital activism as 'how citizens can use digital tools to effect social

and political change'. Scholarship around digital activism focuses on the ways that

recent activist campaigns have harnessed the tools offered by social media sites as a

method for 'otherwise marginalized' groups to vocalise their views, when 'mainstream

media' may previously have silenced them (Amgott, 2018, p.332). Infographics could be

one of the tools used to communicate these perspectives. Additionally, Amgott (ibid.,

p.331) stresses the manner in which these movements have combined digital activism with 'concrete actions' off the platform to build communities and create change. Lim et al (2021, [no pagination]) note that these uses of social media such as the campaign to defund the police 'def[y] popularity metrics' by calling for 'material change' over the traditional self-promotion for which social media sites are known. This indicates the necessity to examine how users understand the relationship between digital activism such as sharing activist infographics, and enacting change outside of the platform. Few studies have analysed this relationship from a digital literacy perspective, although recognising the difference between online and offline spaces is an important digital literacy skill, as I will further examine in the next section of this literature review.

While these uses of social media can create democratic change offline, Lim (2021, p.3) is wary of the potential for digital activist spaces to be monetised. Their article employs the term 'personal identity economics' to describe the social media practice of individuals using their individual marginalised identities for personal gain instead of encouraging 'group solidarity' (ibid.), whether this be for financial or social benefits. Because these activist spaces are 'balkanised' as MacKenzie and Bhatt suggest above (2020, p.12), users who 'consciously and unconsciously study platform algorithms to gain social attention and approval' (Lim, 2021, p.4) would find it easier to position themselves as activists by mimicking the language and ideologies found in these spaces. Hence, this study will examine the degree to which users share activism-focused infographics for their own social gain.

3. Methodology

To conduct appropriate research for my study, I chose to use qualitative methods. This allows for a more flexible and exploratory approach to collecting data, providing a 'rich picture' (Pickard, 2017, p.16, 21) of participants' experiences of interacting with Instagram infographics. This was particularly useful as I was interested in digital literacy practices; conducting interviews allowed me to engage with participants' 'lived experience' and the 'meaning they make of that experience' (Seidman, 2019, p.9). Moreover, a semi-structured interview format let each interview develop in a way that stayed loyal to my study aims while tailoring the interviews to account for the thoughts and ideas expressed by each participant. The interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams. Research carried out using another video platform, Zoom, suggested it creates more 'convenience' than traditional face-to-face interviewing (Archibald et al., 2019, p.4). Indeed, I found it provided me greater flexibility as my participants did not have to be based in London and it was safer given the COVID-19 risks at the time. I chose Teams over Zoom because this is the platform I am most familiar with, so it led to a more relaxed atmosphere during the interviews when organising technical elements such as such as screensharing and recording.

I conducted six interviews with an average length of 49 minutes during June and July 2022. I asked a variety of questions ranging from general questions about participants' Instagram usage and behaviours, and what they consider when sharing infographics, to their emotional responses, activism, and the social aspects of sharing (see Appendix 1 for my list of interview questions). I also showed participants examples of infographics

from Instagram as part of the discussions. These visual research methods are described as 'methods which use visual materials of some kind as part of the process of generating evidence in order to explore research questions' (Rose, 2014, p.25). These methods are essential for considering how the visual elements of infographics impact how they are perceived. The fact that they are 'highly accessible' and present 'more representative narratives' of 'everyday life' (Hicks and Lloyd, 2018, p.22) makes them a suitable choice for my research, which is focused on the everyday use of Instagram. It is a visual platform, and the aesthetic qualities of infographics are key to their reception; Rose (2014, p.28) comments on the 'implicit knowledges' discovered through visual research methods. These methods allowed my participants to focus on areas of the example infographics that they considered meaningful and helped to further develop the interview discussion.

I chose three infographics from the past two years which had differing authors, features and visual narratives. The first post is from an Instagram account run by popular, verified non-profit the Slow Factory (Slow Factory, 2022b). The post consists of four slides of text describing the destruction of the Atlanta Forest. The first slide has a picture of a forest with a city in the background, then three further slides of white text on a green background. It has no sources or specific call to action (Slow Factory, 2022a). The second is a post by a small activist organisation based in the UK, SOAS Detainee Support (SDS). It details the airline TUI's role in deporting UK asylum seekers. It comprises ten slides of cream and red text on a contrasting background and contains illustrations and pictures of the executives of TUI with descriptions of their renumeration. It has sources, data, and actions to take as part of the post (SOAS Detainee Support

(SDS), 2021). The final post is a repost by Munroe Bergdorf, a public figure. The infographic is a series of quotes from an article in the Guardian magazine by Nemonte Nenquimo, an indigenous activist (Nenquimo, 2020). The infographic is about the climate crisis' effect on indigenous communities and is a series of seven slides with quotations and pictures of indigenous peoples. It has credits but no link to the original interview and has no specific call to action (Bergdorf, 2021).

After conducting the first interview, I realised that participants might not all have the same perception about what constitutes an Instagram infographic. As such, I incorporated a further few infographics as examples to show briefly at the start of the interview, so that we began with the same understanding. These infographics contain guidance on how to protect against COVID-19 (NHS, 2022), the UK government's changes to universal credit (hate zine, 2022) and the impact of whales in the climate crisis (LIVEKINDLY, 2022). I chose these to illustrate that infographics' topics and imagery can vary. I then discussed the three from the Slow Factory, SDS and Munroe Bergdorf in more depth with interviewees. I audio recorded the interviews and used automatic captioning software built into Microsoft Teams to produce a transcription (see Appendix 2 for the transcript of the interview with my fourth participant). I then edited this transcription as it contained mistakes and removed filler words such as 'erm'; academics suggest that only if conducting linguistic analysis do you need to maintain a literal transcript (Flick, 2018, p.438; Seidman, 2019, p.130).

The six participants I interviewed were all aged 20-25 and English-speaking. To qualify for my study, participants needed to use Instagram regularly, at least multiple times a week, and have previously shared and/or created an infographic on the platform. I

chose to study this demographic as over 60% of Instagram users are aged 18-34 as of

April 2022 (We Are Social, Hootsuite, DataReportal, 2022), and thus it is a popular

platform among this age group. Studying a demographic who have grown up with social

media platforms enables me to understand how digital literacy practices are enacted in

a setting familiar to people of this age group. I recruited through a post on Instagram

asking for participants, and then used a snowball sampling method in which participants

recommended others who might be interested to recruit further participants (Pickard,

2017, p.326). This ensured I interviewed people who were active on the platform. I

stopped after I had conducted six interviews as this gave me an appropriate amount of

data to analyse for the length of my study.

Ethical considerations took precedence in my choices for the study. To ensure

participants were comfortable, they received an information sheet and consent form to

agree to before being involved in the study. Pickard (ibid., p.93) suggests it is

impossible for data to be fully anonymous, but I used pseudonyms for all participants to

'promise and provide confidentiality'. Platform studies is an area with specific ethical

issues. When collecting infographics to use in the study, I ensured they came from

public Instagram accounts and did not show identifying data such as the comments on

the posts when featuring them in my research 'to ensure the privacy and dignity' of

those commentors (franzke et al., 2020, p.12). Although this information was public, the

users themselves might be private accounts and they would not necessarily be aware of

their interactions with public accounts being used in research; data from other platforms

indicates users do not always fully understand what their privacy settings permit (boyd,

2008). Finally, using visual research methods can elicit a greater reaction in participants

(franzke et al., 2020 p.22), so to account for this potential impact I did not include infographics with sensitive or violent imagery.

To ensure data protection I took several precautions. Data was collected pseudo-anonymously, with all participants given a pseudonymous code in the final research. The file linking their code with their name, email and Instagram username was kept on the UCL OneDrive cloud storage. Once participants had signed the consent form, and had time to read the information sheet, as detailed above, I scheduled the interviews. Participants were asked at the beginning of the interview if they had any questions or needed clarification on any of the information they had been given. Audio recordings and transcriptions were stored on the UCL OneDrive cloud storage; audio-recordings were kept for a week while transcription took place before being securely erased, while transcripts will be kept for one year before being erased.

For the process of data analysis, I used coding. This allowed me to find themes across my data and draw out meaning to answer my research questions. The coding process involved printing out the transcripts and annotating them by hand. I highlighted key comments and used key words and summaries of meaning. This method of coding is known as 'constant comparative analysis' and a grounded theory approach (Pickard, 2017, p.269). I then conducted a second round of coding, looking for further similarities and key ideas (see Appendix 3 for a sample of my coding). The codes I produced were both 'analytical' and 'descriptive' (Charmaz and Thornberg, 2021, p.308). At the end of this process, I had around 120 codes. I recorded these codes on a separate piece of paper and then mapped out the codes to identify broader themes and group similar

ideas together (see Appendix 4 for an example of this mapping). I could then narrow my codes down to around 20 which I used in my final research.

There were several limitations in this study. Research shows online interviews can make the researcher appear less interested (Seidman, 2019, p.118); it is harder to read body language and convey enthusiasm. As such, I had to work harder to convey a greater level of enthusiasm. Moreover, some of my interviewees chose to keep their cameras off, which could remove some of the 'non-verbal clues' received when conducting interviews where researcher and participant can see each other (Archibald et al, 2019, p.4). Online interviews also have the potential for technical issues (ibid., p.5), although this did not occur during my interviews. Additionally, because I recruited using my personal Instagram account and used a snowball sampling method, my participants were from a limited pool of people; I did not ask questions about their gender, location, socioeconomic status or education level, all of which are factors which might have affected their responses. For this reason, gender-neutral pronouns are used when describing participants.

4. Findings

My findings reveal three key areas of infographic sharing practices: how participants share, what they consider when sharing and why they share.

4.1 How participants share infographics on Instagram

Participants' sharing behaviours on Instagram are reinforced and negotiated through the platform.

4.1.1 Approach to sharing

Participants vary in the speed with which they share infographics, with several responding impulsively when faced with new information, such as Participant 2 (P2), who says they would share infographics 'in the moment if [they] felt like it' but that they 'would have checked everything beforehand'. This suggests a dynamic and spontaneous approach to sharing, which contrasts with Participant 3 (P3), who describes it as a 'conscious choice because it's not something that I do that often'. P3 explicitly links their lack of regular sharing with a more cautious approach. Participant 1 (P1) is unique in saying that 'sometimes it's very calculated and important and sometimes it's very much - no thinking goes into it whatsoever'. Thus, participants do not show a uniform approach to deciding when to share, perhaps demonstrating this is dependent on other contexts.

4.1.2 Styles of sharing

In terms of styles of sharing, all participants prefer to share infographics on their Instagram story rather than their feed, with many contrasting the careful curation of their feed with the more relaxed approach to sharing on their story. P1 notes that 'the trend these days is to have a really curated feed', which they reserve for 'something about me or my work', whereas stories are 'transient' and you 'can post as much as possible'. Thus, the feed is reserved for personal posts. P3 also alludes to a certain freedom when posting on their story:

> People get really stressed about what your feed looks like. You have to curate it and do this whole thing and I can't be bothered with that. Whereas if it's just a story, you can just - there's no pressure for it to align with whatever you decide your feed has to be. You can just post something because you want to post something.

P3 therefore sees the stories feature as a more relaxed approach to using the platform, indicating a concern with consistency and careful consideration when posting on the feed which is not present when sharing on their story. In saying that they 'have to curate it', they show the pressure of external expectations of how a feed should appear. Various other reasons for sharing to their story over their feed are posited: P2 describes it as easier to link to the original poster when sharing an infographic, while Participant 4 (P4) indicates you can choose exactly which image in an infographic carousel you want to share and highlights the importance of the transient nature of stories:

> The impermanence of it is good as well because I know my opinions change and I know situations change quite rapidly so things can quickly become outdated, not only just in terms of what's going on in the real world, but also in terms of my opinion.

Therefore, the transience of stories allows P4 to share infographics which align with their opinions at the time, without forcing them to commit to that opinion in a permanent manner by sharing it on their feed. Stories are therefore seen as a more informal place to share infographics.

4.1.3 Self judgement and overuse

Participants are critical of themselves and the way they engage with the platform. P1 notes: 'my screentime is 5 hours a day and I think 2 hours of it is on Instagram. That's too much' while P3 describes their day-to-day behaviour on the platform as 'mindlessly scrolling'. Therefore, some participants have a negative view of their perceived overuse of the platform and their behaviour on it. Several participants highlight a change in their behaviour on the platform due to COVID, with P1 choosing to engage with it less:

> I think the pandemic made me feel like I needed to tune out. So, I was like, privileged and [it's] probably not ethical to say - I just kind of plugged out from the world for a bit during the pandemic and tried to not pay attention to things other than things immediately going [on] around me and my community.

P1, while engaging in information avoidance because of the stress of the pandemic, paints themself as 'privileged' to be able to tune out, despite them still 'pay[ing] attention' to local issues. They feel that being 'plugged out' from Instagram is inherently unethical, no matter what the circumstances are.

4.1. 4 Instagram authority markers

The presence of a verified badge (a blue tick) on an account, issued by Instagram to denote the real accounts of public figures, is seen by four out of six interviewees as a marker of authority, if not reliability. P3 comments:

> I know this isn't a reason to say that it's reliable, but there is a little – there's the blue tick and it's got a lot of likes, which means that I would have - I'm more likely to think that it holds some weight in terms of its views on things and therefore is probably more valid. Rather than if it was some rogue account with 4 followers and 2 likes.

Thus, P3 indicates, despite disavowing the reliability of the verified badge, that this does make them trust the content of the infographic more. As such, we can see the way that Instagram confers authority through verification. This quotation also shows the relevance of likes and followers to reliability, which P1 echoes, stating that infographic one is more reliable as it has a 'huge number of likes'. They suggest that in the case of larger accounts, 'the public wave' will prevent an infographic containing misinformation from getting too popular: 'surely, at some point someone would be like: 'this isn't true', and it would get attacked and taken down.' Legitimacy is confirmed through the absence of critique on a popular post, even though Instagram allows people to delete comments on their posts and therefore an account owner could counter any attempt from others to correct misinformation. In this way, the features of the platform grant certain accounts more legitimacy, which in turn impacts how users share.

4.2 What participants consider when sharing

Study participants identify a number of factors of varying importance which contribute to the infographics they choose to share.

4.2.1 Social relationships

The social relationships that users have are a major factor in this choice. Being familiar with the account that originally posted the infographic is important to most participants, such as P4, who notes with regard to the third infographic: 'the account is a public figure who's widely known, and because I know of her, I don't think it would be that likely for her to share something that wasn't verifiable.' Although P4 does not know this public figure personally, they trust what she posts because she is a familiar figure. That P4 is prepared to believe that the account that posted the infographic has good intentions perhaps points to the social contexts of Instagram. If participants are mostly seeing posts shared by accounts they follow, they might be less likely to believe that they have bad intentions.

In a similar way, familiarity with the person who reshared the infographic was important. In fact, P3 suggests this supersedes familiarity with the original account: 'it's probably more important that [the] account that's reposted it is someone that I recognise and someone that I respect'. Because they have an existing social relationship and P3 'respect[s]' the sharer, they feel confident sharing infographics from them. Moreover, participants recognised the potential implications for the post creator when you reshare, and the need to be careful because of this: 'you create a platform for the content creator

as well without them knowing it.' P2 shows an awareness of the reach of Instagram,

where posts can be shared with an audience which the original creator did not intend.

The idea of an existing social relationship applies here: P2 feels a responsibility to the

creator to decide if they would be comfortable with their infographic being shared.

4.2.2 References

The participants consistently cite references in an infographic as a marker of reliability

which makes them more likely to share a post. Participant 5 (P5) notes the importance

of sources in the second infographic:

> It's really good that it's got the references in the end so that you can follow it up
> and check with potentially other sources that you think are more reliable. [Rather]
> than, kind of, a face value, you know, look at something on Instagram.

Therefore, participants indicate that infographics can be unreliable and should not be

taken at 'face value', but that secondary sources alleviate this unreliability. Beyond the

simple factor of having sources, the type of source was identified as a key marker of

reliability. Participant 6 (P6) recognises the sources in infographic two, which adds to its

feeling of reliability:

> I am familiar with Corporate Watch and [the] Financial Times and, you know, the
> Guardian, and they've used some of TUI's own websites - so it does feel reliable
> and well researched.

That the sources are reputable news websites thus further legitimises the infographic for

P6. This demonstrates the importance of traditionally authoritative sources in judging

reliability.

However, despite participants agreeing that sources are a clear marker of reliability, five out of six also say that they do not usually follow up with the sources to check whether they were legitimate before trusting or sharing an infographic, as P4 states:

> Generally [I wouldn't] unless it's something that I really want to learn more about. Partly because if it's just on an infographic, I can't just click on the source, I would have to go and type in the full website, which can be quite time-consuming if I'm just looking at Instagram on a break [at work] which is what I usually do.

This response raises two important points. Firstly, in revealing that they do not regularly check to see if sources are legitimate, they suggest that the performance of reliability is enough to render infographics reliable. Secondly, it shows the way Instagram's affordances discourage users from leaving the platform – only posts in stories can contain a direct hyperlink, and even then, not more than one per image shared. So, when reading a feed post, if a user wants to check a source, they have to copy the source link, exit the application, open their browser and then paste the website into the search bar to access it. As P4 indicates, this is impractical to do when using Instagram for short periods of time, so even if they do want to check a source, the process is complicated enough to discourage them from fact-checking. P3 acknowledges this issue in their comment on sources:

> Sometimes, which I know isn't necessarily a good thing, but if I just see that it is referenced and if I see that it's from sources that are considered reputable, I will kind of just leave it there. […] Often just seeing that it's referenced is like: 'OK, fair, that's more likely to be legitimate than not'.

Thus, P3 corroborates P4's understanding of sources, implying that the post creator taking the time to include references is enough to increase the reliability and make them more likely to share it, although they simultaneously acknowledge the flaw in this idea.

Additionally, P3 notes that not all posts need references to be reliable, such as in the case of infographic three:

> If it's a personal experience or something, there might genuinely not be references to back that up and that obviously doesn't mean that what they've said isn't valid and reliable and accurate.

Several other participants comment similarly, highlighting the unique place of lived experience within infographics. Personal narratives can still be a vital source of information although they may not be referenced in way that would be considered reliable in traditional academic spaces.

4.2.3 Temporality

Temporality is a critical factor in participants' choice to share something. Although most of them have not experienced a change in their infographic usage during the pandemic, they are still aware of the more immediate effects of time on their sharing. Social media platforms such as Instagram rely on the promise of new content to draw in their users, and this was reflected in participants' sharing choices. P2 evidences this in their comments on sharing older infographics:

> Usually, I wouldn't reshare something that was about something that happened ages ago. I guess it's harder to find relevance in older infographics. I think there is definitely a timeliness to the content and everything because the facts also keep getting updated as well.

Two factors stand out in this statement: primarily, that infographics lose their 'relevance' as they age. This shows how connected they are to current events – even if the information in them is still correct, they might no longer be relevant to the current

information trends on the platform, and thus become less desirable to share. Secondly,

that just as users' opinions on a topic can change, as detailed in section 4.1.2, so too

can the facts of an event as people gain more knowledge. This is particularly true if an

infographic is providing information on a very recent event, where the full context of the

situation might not yet have been discovered.

4.2.4 Personal context

One consistent theme which appears throughout many of the participants' discussions

of sharing infographics is the importance of personal context when deciding what to

share. P3 illustrates this when commenting on the first infographic:

> Usually, when I see infographics, I have a frame of reference. So even if I don't
> know about the specific issue, it's drawing on things that I've heard […] or it
> refers to other things. So - and I feel like that usually helps me in my belief of
> whether or not it's reliable, because, yeah, 'cause I know at the very least that
> there are reliable bits within it.

P3 uses the context of the infographic to determine if it is reliable and thus if they should

share it. This reveals the way prior knowledge helps participants to determine what to

share on a platform where, as demonstrated by the importance of temporality above,

decisions about whether to repost something are often made very quickly. Additionally,

it indicates the insularity of Instagram, or the idea of an echo chamber, as in order for

P3 to have a 'frame of reference' about a topic, many of the infographics they are

seeing must be in a familiar area.

A further example of this is P6's critique of the second infographic, which broadly they find to be reliable and which they say they would share. One aspect of the infographic they do not like is the lack of context provided as to who TUI (the airline being targeted in the infographic) are:

> I do wish they talked about TUI in more of a relatable way. I sort of looked - the reason why I had to go back [and look at the first image in the post again] was 'cause I thought 'does TUI stand for something?'. I haven't heard of this airline specifically. [I would have liked] a little background information on who TUI are.

It is thus clear that infographics can contain local context that makes them more difficult to understand without previous knowledge, and that this can be a barrier to those wishing to share them. Infographics need to contain enough explanation and references to other issues to situate themselves within the wider political or social context so that they can be understood by users. That lack of context might make users more likely to ignore an infographic if they have little knowledge of an issue and therefore do not see how it is relevant to them.

The emphasis on personal context extends to all the participants' beliefs. Participants suggest that they need accounts they share from to fully reflect their views, as P2 illustrates:

> I think once you create that link to the content creator, it also is a way of you aligning with that person's other views. [...] I don't want to create a confusion between what this one post is about and what I also think about other topics that they might have shared their views on as well.

This shows that P2 feels a need to scrutinise every account they share from, as their audience could assume they agree with everything that the account has posted. This is quite a large responsibility, as accounts might have hundreds of previous posts. It could

therefore be a time-consuming process, which perhaps explains why many users

choose to post only on stories, as it relieves the pressure to keep checking whether the

content creator still shares your views.

Personal context and agreement with the sharer lead participants to disregard factors

such as the inclusion of sources and familiarity with the account which posts the

infographic. P5 reveals that these are not always prerequisites for sharing when

discussing one of the accounts they sometimes share infographics from, a content

creator critical of the U.K. Conservative government run by Danny Price,

@dannyfuckingprice (Price, 2022):

> A lot of his don't have any sources, they're just, kind of, his own personal little
> rant on whatever's happening in the news […]. And I don't know who the hell this
> guy is, to be honest, but […] I would be more inclined to share stuff like his
> because […] it's not somewhere murky in the middle. […] It's just very obviously
> an opinion, if that makes sense? So, it's easy to categorise and not get confused.
> So, I don't mind sharing stuff like that when it's something I agree with.

In this case, although P5 follows the account, they appear not to know much about who

he is, but do not regard this as necessary to share his infographics because it is 'very

obviously' his opinion and not factual information. However, this is subjective, as what is

clearly opinion and 'easy to categorise' for one person may be viewed differently by

another with less contextual understanding. A key difference here may be that P5 holds

the same views as Price, as they acknowledge, and thus the lack of sources becomes

less important as they can use their prior knowledge to determine if it is accurate.

4.2.5 Emotive language

Another aspect of infographics that receives a mixed reaction are emotive infographics,

particularly where exaggerated language is used. P5 is unaware of the subject of the

first infographic, and critiques it for its use of language, calling it:

> Quite unsubtle, I suppose, in its approach? It seemed very… Kind of angry-
> sounding and opinionated. It - I don't know, just the way it was written made it
> sound maybe less... Factual, somehow? […] Like they're trying to rile people up
> and make it sound worse than it is.

Evidently, for P5, the 'unsubtle', 'angry-sounding' language renders the infographic less

factual, a transparent attempt to play on users' emotions which falls flat. This could

suggest that they find less emotional language more appealing. In fact, P5 praises the

third infographic for its use of emotive language, because:

> I know how serious of an issue that is and that it is an emotional issue and how
> seriously it affects people. So […] people need to, kind of, feel the reality of it
> because it's so pressing […] which I think is most, kind of, effective through that
> kind of compassionate, emotive presentation.

When it comes to infographic three, the emotional language is a useful method to

impress upon users the severity of the situation. The difference between P5's readings

of these two infographics appears to be their awareness of the issue. Once they are

familiar with the cause, they can understand why emotional language is used. Thus,

one can see how the reception an infographic receives is highly subjective, with the

same tactic being disparaged or praised depending on participants' existing knowledge.

4.2.6 Aesthetics

The aesthetic element of infographics is key to how they are understood and shared. Almost all participants comment positively on the use of appealing images as adding to the power of an infographic. P2, when describing their preference for the second infographic, says:

> Because there's more visual elements to the infographic, it's definitely more engaging and you can kind of put faces to facts […] And then they also have illustrations that make it look more interesting to read.

The use of images of TUI executives by SDS to illustrate the criticism of their deportation policies is therefore very effective. Using images of people and relevant illustrations humanises the issue and makes it feel more trustworthy and engaging. Participants are thus more likely to share it; in fact, all participants said that they would share the second infographic.

P3 sees 'clear images' and 'not very much text' as features which can immediately engage their followers, and which therefore influence their decision to share. P3 comments: 'maybe it's my attention span - I always favour infographics with fewer words. Because I probably won't take the time to go through [it all]'. Although they allude to this being a personal preference, they are also considering others' perceptions, imagining that infographics need to brief to gain traction on Instagram. Thus, images can be a vital clue to users' understandings of infographics, perhaps more important than text when captivating an audience, which is essential when sharing.

Accessibility is a concern for many of the participants, and design is seen as an important way to make infographics more legible. Participants are more likely to share

infographics which are clear and easy to understand, with P1 saying that they would

share an infographic where 'there's a very complex issue and the design of the

infographic has broken it down so it's really clearly understandable.' This perhaps links

once again to the idea of attention spans on the platform and indicates that participants

prefer simpler infographics to communicate knowledge efficiently.

The final aesthetic decision participants provide feedback on is the idea that some

infographics can appear too polished. When comparing the three infographics, P1

negatively describes infographics one and three as 'quite 'aesthetic'', commenting that:

> To be honest, infographic[s] one and three were really well designed. But there's
> something about a badly designed infographic that can kind of make it seem
> more authentic sometimes.

The messier style and design are therefore markers of reliability, suggesting the

infographic has been made by a smaller organisation. A slicker infographic might place

a lot of emphasis on appealing design and could look very aesthetically pleasing on an

Instagram feed or story. For that reason, however, it might read as more superficial –

designed less to encourage action and more to garner attention or virality on the

platform.

The text and visual elements being complimentary appears as an important element of

the infographics. Regarding the text in infographic one, P5 notes that the images are not

'illustrating what [the text is] saying very well'; this makes it less believable for P5,

leading them to question whether it is a real infographic and making them less likely to

share it.

4.2.7 Data and statistics

In general, the textual elements of the infographics are an important area of interest. Using data in infographics is praised, with half of participants saying statistics add to the reliability. P6 says: 'that's where infographics almost thrive is if you do your - if you do research and you come up with numbers and figures'. The idea of Instagram users taking time to 'do research', as illustrated above with the use of sources, is therefore viewed positively, and gathering data is seen as a marker of this research. These data-heavy infographics, when shared, perhaps have a veneer of authority.

4.3 Why participants share

Participants highlighted several reasons why they shared infographics on Instagram.

4.3.1 Appealing to audience

The first reason participants give as to why they share is related to their audience. They demonstrate different perceptions of who will engage with their content. P1 states:

> If I see a gap in what I think my friends are paying attention to, because I know my audience is my friends, then I'll share something. If I think it's something they should care about, I'll share it.

Thus, when posting infographics, P1 shares with a knowledge that most people viewing their story will be friends, and so shares to increase their friends' awareness of an issue. However, P2 suggests 'co-workers' might be viewing their stories and so adjusts what

they post accordingly. With that in mind, two participants say they will moderate their

posts when they concern sensitive issues, as P4 explains:

> If I see certain content that I'm not prepared to see, I can find it quite distressing. So, in turn, I don't really want to share that on somebody's social media where they might just be using that to relax.

Therefore, they will not share content that they find difficult to watch, with an awareness

that Instagram is used in many ways by users and an empathy for how content they

share might be perceived. P4 notes that users can be 'overwhelmed' by this type of

content and thus tries not to share too often so that their followers will not 'just skip past'

the posts. Thus, in moderating what they share they try to ensure that when they do, it

will be viewed by their followers and so will have a greater impact.

The importance of a 'frame of reference' for an issue also extends into the geographic

location of followers. Two participants highlight infographic two as something they would

share; P1 states this is because 'I'm aware that my orbit, or my followers, are UK-

based'. They are therefore choosing to share a local issue which will resonate with their

followers, perhaps because this will lead to greater engagement with the post and make

them more likely to take action because of it.

4.3.2 Impacting off-platform

Most participants want to share infographics that can have an impact off the platform,

encouraging their followers into activism. P3 says: 'if I'm gonna post an infographic, it's

more because I have a specific thing that I want people to do rather than just raising

awareness of something'. This is echoed by other participants, suggesting that activism

is an integral part of their sharing choices, and that they see infographics that do not

contain a call for action as less valuable to share. Although P4 used to share posts

simply to raise awareness and 'express outrage' they now post fewer infographics that

contain information and not action:

> It kind of feels like a passive form of protest […] So rather than sharing
> infographics now, I'd usually share petitions where somebody could actually do
> something.

Infographics are therefore deemed the 'passive' option if they do not contain a specific

action point that users can take. All six participants have taken action such as signing a

petition, attending a protest or donating to a cause after seeing information about it on

Instagram, revealing that infographics can be a method of activism.

4.3.3 Creating community

The interviews show that participants are using infographics to create community. P6

uses infographics to socialise with their friends, saying that:

> My engagement is very much a dialogue with people. Like a little way of
> communicating: 'oh I saw this thing. That was really cool'. I don't send [it to] them
> directly, I just post it on my story, but I think it basically does mean I send it to
> them directly. As well as, you know, 10/20 other people who maybe spend a
> second looking at it.

Infographics therefore become a language in their own right; a way to share information

and converse with others. This also demonstrates an assumption that only some of their

followers will be engaging with their story in a deliberate way, as opposed to the

majority who will engage fleetingly.

4.3.4 Democratising

For participants, sharing infographics can be a democratising force. P1 uses

infographics to amplify marginalised perspectives, stating that they would share the

second infographic because: 'I'd want to amplify causes that don't get much attention.

So, like the SDS one, they'd have the least number of followers and they're local.' P1

therefore recognises inequalities in exposure on Instagram and is seeking to address

those imbalances when posting. In a similar manner, participants will not share

infographics they feel are already overexposed, as P4 illustrates: 'if I saw lots of people

sharing it, I'd probably be less likely to share it because I would assume that people

would have already seen it.' They do not want to echo what many others are saying,

perhaps in the knowledge that people might skip past their stories or lose interest if it

seems repetitive. Additionally, the ease of sharing is a factor in participants' decisions to

post; because, as P1 says: 'there's not a cost barrier'; anyone can voice their opinion on

an issue relatively easily. This could be seen as making Instagram a more democratic

platform as all users have a voice.

The democratised nature of the platform also means information can be shared before

news media has the chance to report it. Although P1 says they do not 'rely' on

Instagram as a source of news, they also comment:

> I have some friends who are journalists too - or friends who are activists in particular communities. So, they sometimes share things […] from where they live and their perspective and that's before news media even share anything.

As discussed, Instagram infographics can be a way to amplify marginalised voices, and along with this, it gives the opportunity for breaking news to spread rapidly from first-hand accounts before traditional media can post about it.

4.3.5 Provoking

Another reason for sharing Instagram infographics is because of an emotional reaction, whether that be in the participants themselves or the participants trying to provoke one in their followers. P2 describes the process of sharing:

> When I have an immediate reaction to a certain event or topic, and I happen to see a relevant infographic that might be of interest to people that I know, then I would reshare that.

The 'immediate' response they have to the infographic is a key factor in their sharing, which can be seen as an emotional outlet. In confluence with this, participants use their infographics to provoke a response in others, which P1 describes:

> I feel like the more times you see things, eventually you have to do some kind of action - you have to care eventually, right? […] Maybe people would feel peer pressured to join in and take action. And even if they were doing it 'cause they felt peer pressured, it's for a good cause.

P1 uses the idea of positive 'peer pressure' – by showing followers an issue and course of action through infographics, they hope to create enough momentum to push others to act outside of the platform and create change. This also suggests that even if the action

followers take is not done in the sincere hope of effecting change but because of pressure, the intention is not important if it the outcome is the same.

4.3.6 Validating

Validation is a motivator for sharing infographics, as Instagram is an insular space and participants use it to justify their opinions. P6 describes using infographics to 'back myself up with rather simple talking points, instead of feeling quite flustered if I'm ever challenged'. Infographics thus become a way to reinforce what they already believe and increase their knowledge on a subject for future discussions. Participants tend to follow accounts which they agree with, with most never having had their opinions challenged or changed by an infographic. This means that when they do see something they do not agree with, it is more surprising. P5 describes social media as an 'echo chamber', and then recounts a story of seeing an opinion they disagreed with on their feed:

> I used to follow this guy that I went to school with who would post really dodgy-looking infographics. From […] stupid ranty people […]. Like their opinion wasn't based on anything factual… […] But I unfollowed him because I couldn't stand arguing with him about the things that he posted that were just awful.

This demonstrates that P5 would challenge misinformation when found on their feed, but perhaps because Instagram is an insular space, seeing this man's posts on their stories was an anomaly for them. Although they attempted to challenge his views, they eventually unfollowed him to preserve the uniformity of opinion on their feed.

4.3.7 Simplifying

Participants share infographics to simplify complex concepts for themselves and others, particularly breaking news or new ideas. P2 describes using infographics for:

> Digestible […] highlights […] - if I'm commuting and I want to know what's been going on about a certain event for example, and I don't have the time to go through a very long article just yet.

It thus becomes a substitute for long-form news articles and a way to absorb and pass on key information about a topic quickly. It is also seen as an alternative for P5 when they feel 'overwhelmed' by news sites which contain huge swathes of information. Infographics are 'easy to read, quite nicely visual, easily shareable bits of information'. It can thus be a way to focus their consumption of news to topics which they are interested in and get a basic overview of the latest stories. P5 views it as a 'more entertaining format of consuming news', perhaps because infographics often contain images and illustrations. These accessible images are a means to pass on simplified explanations of issues to their followers.

4.3.8 Performing

Finally, participants acknowledge the aspect of performance on Instagram and how that factors into the infographics that they post. Posting becomes a way of performing solidarity with a cause for their followers and the people they follow, as P6 shows:

> Being on social media is about being perceived by other people, and people's perceptions are important. And so if the person that's sort of, got good politics

has posted something, if I repost that, they're just gonna see it. […] Am I only there to impress them? No, but it kind of feels like that sometimes.

Therefore, P6 uses it to communicate that they are in agreement, on the 'good' side. They suggest there is a social currency gained by expressing the 'right' viewpoint, which might positively affect current relationships with people they admire. They transparently acknowledge the performance inherent in Instagram; the choice of what users share is a reflection of what they value, a demonstration of 'good politics'. Additionally, this illustrates a certain social pressure to share, which P3 corroborates, describing a discussion with one of their friends who posts on Instagram a great deal: 'for her, because she posts things so regularly, she was like: 'well, if I don't post things about BLM, […] the silence is quite - is a clear message in itself.'' P3's friend's commitment to posting becomes a self-imposed burden to consistently demonstrate her awareness of different political issues, or risk being seen as in disagreement with or perhaps even prejudiced against a certain group because she has not posted about them.

5. Discussion

Participants' responses regarding their Instagram behaviour evidences three main themes: digital literacy on Instagram, perception, and the visual elements of the platform.

5.1 Digital literacy

Within the theme of digital literacy, participants show a strong awareness of traditional information literacy practices and recognise their importance. However, they also enact digital literacy practices specific to platforms such as Instagram. There is an emphasis on personal responsibility regarding digital literacy on the platform which fails to account for Instagram's affordances. Finally, they engage in critical information literacy in their choices of sharing for activist purposes.

Participants understand traditional information literacy practices and suggest they are important, but do not prioritise them when choosing what infographics to share. They value data and statistics as evidence of 'research' (P6) and see references as a reliable area users can 'follow up' (P5) on to find out more information. Indeed, participants in my study, while acknowledging references, revealed that they would not investigate them and would instead rely solely on their presence to prove an infographic was reliable and therefore that they should share it. Sources and statistics would traditionally be seen as evidence of a reliable source, but scholars regard these as unhelpful in an

online environment if taken at a 'surface' level (Addy, 2020, p.29) without 'lateral

reading' (Wineburg and McGrew, 2019) of other websites. My participants do not read

laterally; this could imply that they lack the necessary digital literacy skills, although

participants were aware that this surface-level reading of infographics was 'not a good

thing' (P3), which indicates that there may be some other pressure or influence which is

causing them to behave in this way.

Moreover, participants engage in other digital literacy practices specific to platforms like

Instagram which may be one reason they are less concerned with investigating sources.

They consider elements such as the number of likes on the post and whether the

account is verified when choosing what to share. This corroborates research by Addy

(2020, p.29) concluding that 'views and likes' are often taken as evidence of reliability.

However, once again, my study differs in that Addy argues that their participants are

unaware of digital literacy, whereas my participants understand that verified profiles and

high numbers of likes are not markers of authority but choose to use them when sharing

regardless. The conscious choice to consider metrics of popularity is seen by P1 as a

legitimate way to ensure reliability, as if the post has been seen by many others,

'someone' in 'the public wave' will have pointed out if the information is false. This may

be due to time pressures; it is far easier to scroll through comments on a post than to

check every single source. Participants also highlight trust of friends' accounts as a

factor influencing whether they share material from them, which may be linked to the

setting of Instagram as a social platform. Tarullo (2021, p.26) finds university students

favour reading news articles which circulate among close online networks, and my study

upholds this favouring of personal networks in the context of infographics. Finally,

participants' personal contexts and understandings enable them to contextualise a post and decide whether to share it. We could see this as a learnt behaviour in the 'community of practice' (Lloyd, 2010, p,170) afforded by Instagram. If participants must make quick decisions about what to share to ensure their sharing stays relevant and because they are using the platform for short bursts of activity, then relying on prior knowledge, trusted friends, and the community to share accurate information becomes a pragmatic use of the platform and the affordances it enables. This could be seen as a form of platform literacy.

Participants tend to blame their own 'attention span' or lack of time for their decision not to fully evaluate the material they share. Indeed, several scholars are critical of their participants' perceived lack of digital literacy (Wineburg and McGrew, 2019; Addy, 2020), with Rose-Wiles (2018, p.203) blaming an 'abdication of personal understanding, judgement, and responsibility' for this shortage of skill. However, this allows the platform creators to evade responsibility for their platform and fails to acknowledge the ways users already demonstrate platform literacy. If platforms such as Instagram become 'sponsors of literacy' (Bhatt and MacKenzie, 2019, p.304) and their affordances engender certain behaviours in their 'community of practice' (Lloyd, 2010, p.170) then they have a responsibility for the digital literacy practices learnt on their platforms. Indeed, if users are not engaging with vital methods of confirming reliability in infographics such as 'lateral reading' (Wineburg and McGrew, 2019, p.30), as my study shows, then the platform bears responsibility for this, since users 'consciously and unconsciously study platform algorithms to gain social attention and approval.' (Lim, 2021, p.4). In fact, one might even say that it is not a conscious choice to disengage,

since, for example, if leaving the platform to check other sources, Instagram does not

currently allow users to include more than one hyperlink per story and does not allow

hyperlinks at all in feed posts – neither in the captions nor the image itself. P4

comments on this difficulty of escaping the platform: Instagram makes it 'time-

consuming' to check sources. My study indicates that any scholars of digital literacy on

social media platforms must take this into account. While the literature does

acknowledge the power of the algorithm (Henderson, Shade and Mackinnon, 2020;

Fouquaert and Mechant, 2021; Boler and Davis, 2018), it still places responsibility on

the user to improve their digital literacy skills rather than recognising the ways they are

already digitally literate and engaging in critical literacy but are hampered by

Instagram's affordances.

The practices of participants also followed some theories of critical information literacy.

In prioritising marginalised perspectives when choosing what to share, they recognise

the power imbalances in traditional media and the importance of diverse perspectives

which is an essential component of critical information literacy (Critten, 2015, p.8).

Participants' preference for getting their news from social media due to its multiplicity of

viewpoints has been found in other studies (Clark and Marchi, 2017, p.64). In a similar

vein, P3 says that 'personal experience' retold, such as in infographic three, does not

always need a source to make it 'reliable' or 'valid'. Middaugh (2018, p.8) suggests

young people look for sources with this 'personal narrative' and this should be

encouraged in media literacy education because 'civic engagement' is not neutral,

which my research supports. This absence of neutrality is key to understandings of

critical information literacy, which sees authority as constructed and recognises the bias

of those who determine what we consider to be 'authoritative' sources (Cope, 2010, p.25). As such, Instagram infographics can be used a way to transgress traditional notions of authority.

5.2 Perception

Participants' understanding of how they will be perceived, and the difference between how they perceive their audience and the accounts that they follow are key themes which emerges from the research. The way participants construct and perform their image on the platform varies. Although participants indicate they share infographics for their audience, this 'interpersonal' influence is seen by Smith and Taylor (2017, p.158-159) to be mostly in the service of 'selfinterest [sic]'. By needing to share content which has a 'real' impact or call to action, within a sphere of activist friends who behave in a similar way, participants might in some ways be performing an activist identity. Equally, as P1 themself notes, action taken from peer pressure is still action; in the same way, performatively sharing infographics with a call to action is still sharing activist infographics, and studies propose that sharing of posts can be a conduit to further activism (Chon and Park, 2020, p.90; Amgott, 2018, p.331). Participants all say they have taken action off Instagram because of something they have seen on the platform and thus, regardless of their reasons for sharing, their infographics still have an impact.

Additionally, participants' sharing is a demonstration of their own values to their audience. Indeed, P6 explicitly says that 'social media is about perception' and that they

are conscious of how their infographics will be received. This way of validating their

opinions through sharing reaffirms their own identity; in the context of political activists,

Barassi (2018, p.143) sees this as constructing an 'identity narrative'. The sharing

further develops participants' own beliefs and understandings of topical issues. This

explains why P5 is happy to share an opinionated 'rant' to their story when they agree

with it but gets frustrated when someone they follow shares infographics from 'stupid

ranty' people which are not 'based on anything factual'. When they disagree, the post

does not confirm their existing beliefs so the fact that it is purely opinion becomes a

problem. This confirms existing literature that platforms can become 'balkanised' spaces

(MacKenzie and Bhatt, 2020, p.12).

However, this awareness of how they will be perceived can have negative impacts.

Participants note the social pressure to share on certain issues; one could see P3's

friend who feels obligated to share content to maintain their reputation as being 'trapped

by their own online identity, as observed by Brandtzaeg and Chaparro-Domínguez

(2020, p.171) in a study of young journalists' social media presence. Therefore, my

study indicates that while sharing can be conducive to developing one's own identity

and signalling one's values, it can also be restrictive and lead to self-policing of future

engagement on the platform. Indeed, participants' choice to share infographics on their

story as opposed to their feed could be a marker of this, as they indicated it allows them

to develop opinions without feeling beholden to past viewpoints.

Participants in my study assume the intentions and behaviours of their audience, whom

they imagine will ignore infographics if they do not find them immediately engaging.

However, research has shown that this 'imagined audience' is not always reflective of

the people who engage with their content (boyd, 2010, p.36; Litt, 2012, p.341), and so

audiences might not behave in the way that participants expect. There is also a stark

difference between participants' perception of their audience and their perception of the

people they follow, despite them assuming that both groups are mainly comprised of

their social circle. They could be highly critical of their followers while simultaneously

highly trusting of the judgement of those they follow, assuming they will share reliable

infographics. This tension might perhaps be explained by the audience of an infographic

presenting as an 'invisible audience' (boyd, 2010, p.35), whom they can imagine but not

be concretely sure of, despite potentially being made up of friends. The lack of certainty

regarding their audience thus leads them to be more sceptical of their level of

engagement. However, when choosing who to share from, they are aware of the

individual page from which the infographic originated, and so can engage in 'affinity

practices' which centre 'social relations' (Lankshear and Knobel, 2015, p.12). This

highlights a gap in the literature regarding the differences between perceptions of users'

audiences and the accounts they follow.

5.3 Visual aspects

In terms of the visual elements of infographics, the interviews demonstrate the ways the

visual is a form of communication, the importance of context to image interpretation and

the power of the visual. Participants use visual images as an alternative dialogue

between themselves and their friends; a further way to build community. This

communication is a central function of Instagram (Leaver, Highfield and Abidin, 2020,

p.9) and so in recognising this, participants understand an essential affordance. The increasingly 'conversational content' which Abidin (2021, p.697) finds amongst influencers and their following is reflected in comments from participants. As participants also felt their usage of Instagram changed during the pandemic, my study finds the influencers' shift, identified by Abidin (ibid.), mirrors the forms of visual communication enacted by general users.

Additionally, the visual functions as a reflection of 'cultural values' (Drucker, 2017, p.911). Although all participants favour infographic two, they like it for different reasons. P1 praises infographic two for its 'badly designed' appearance. This makes it seem 'more authentic', perhaps because it feels less calculated and contrasts more with the 'aesthetic' focus of Instagram. Other participants preferred the inclusion of photographs of the executives being criticised, or 'fewer words' and 'clear images'. This indicates the impact of infographics as 'enunciative instruments' (Drucker, 2017, p.911) which have a history (Drucker, 2014, p.19). When participants view these images, they bring with them their own interpretation of the meaning of different elements and thus different aspects of an image will be appealing. In general, infographics with more visual elements are more positively viewed by participants, with the presentation of information directly affecting how it is perceived. In some cases, the presentation is even more relevant than the message, as Shabani and Keshavarz (2022, p.427) find in their study of students' evaluation of reliability on social media. Clark and Marchi's (2017, p.14) study suggests 'young people share what feels important to them'. Since visual images can 'trigger our senses' and provoke 'emotional engagement' (Kennedy and Engebretsen, 2020, p.24), the visual content of images is vital to their virality and

circulation. Thus, my research indicates that in Instagram spaces, the quality of the written message is not enough on its own – the visual message being sent also factors into participants' decisions to post, although they may interpret it differently to their followers depending on their cultural context.

Additionally, participants are aware of the power of visual images, with some being reluctant to post sensitive or potentially triggering images because of their possible impact. Within a platform with potentially 'collapsed contexts' (boyd, 2010, p.35), where, as P2 states, their 'co-workers' might be viewing their content, users have to cater to their 'lowest common denominator' (Hogan, 2010, p.383) or the widest range of people. This might mean censoring much of the content one posts to avoid controversial infographics. However, participants want their followers to act after seeing posts and understand the power of an infographic to provoke an emotional reaction. Indeed, Middaugh (2018, p.49) finds that US high school students highlight 'emotional impact' as one reason why they share and the concept of 'emotionally driven sharing' is identified by Clark and Marchi (2017, p.199) in their book about young journalists' online media practices. Thus, participants must balance their understanding that a 'nicely visual' infographic (P5) is more likely to be shared and could push their followers to act with an understanding of their audience's sensibilities. These findings reinforce ideas of the centrality of emotion to visual images and the importance of social contexts to the choice of what infographics to share.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to discover the ways Instagram users interact with infographics on the platform, examining their digital literacy practices and the ways Instagram's visual and social affordances feed into activism. Using a snowball sampling method, I gathered a qualitative sample through a series of interviews in which I displayed infographic examples to gather participants' opinions and experiences. I found patterns in how, what and why they share infographics. The data allows me to answer my research questions as follows:

RQ1: What role does digital literacy play in infographic use on Instagram?

My study suggests digital literacy plays an important role in infographic usage. Participants recognise traditional information literacy practices although these may not be suitable to determine reliability on platforms such as Instagram. Additionally, they show a strong grasp of the specific digital literacy practices which Instagram affords.

RQ2: How do users perform digital literacy on Instagram?

  Users incorporate an understanding of Instagram's authority markers, their social networks and their personal context to determine reliability when sharing infographics. Their digital literacy is enacted through the affordances of Instagram, which both engenders and constrains their sharing. Their digital literacy practices also

accommodate an understanding of principles of critical literacy and potential for non-academic sources to provide reliable information.

RQ3: How do the social and visual affordances of Instagram affect infographic usage?

The social and visual affordances of Instagram are inextricably linked. Using visual images, users communicate with their followers and with the accounts from whom they reshare infographics. Visual imagery is interpreted by users in different ways depending on their personal context and is as important as the written message of the infographic to effectively convey meaning when they share. Users also share with an awareness of their audience, posting infographics which they will find engaging, while they are highly trusting of the accounts from whom they share.

RQ4: How do Instagram users navigate activism on the platform through the use of infographics?

My research suggests that users prioritise sharing infographics that have a tangible action point for followers to carry out off the platform. Although they avoid content which could be controversial, they still strive to share visually stimulating infographics which will provoke an emotional reaction in their audiences to gain people's attention and pressure them to act. They also try to use their accounts to amplify marginalised voices which traditional media neglect. The sharing of activist infographics both reaffirms their own identity and is perceived to improve their status among friends.

My research shows the value of visual literacy to information studies and the importance of considering the visual when thinking about digital literacy in platform studies. Few studies have considered digital literacy on Instagram, and none have examined digital literacy and Instagram infographics. It also highlights the agency of users and the value of interviewing them about digital literacy; they are often talked about and tested in studies of digital literacy on platforms but are rarely asked about how they understand their practices.

There are several areas highlighted by this study which would benefit from greater exploration. The area of visual imagery and digital literacy could be further explored, to examine what specific imagery is regarded as the most emotive. Additionally, a study of digital literacy on Instagram which used a different method, such as participants keeping a diary of what they share and when, would enable researchers to find out in what ways participants' interviews map on to their real-time behaviour. Finally, other social media platforms such as TikTok are highly visual and have also been accused of spreading misinformation (Spencer-Elliott, 2022), so it would be interesting to see if this study's findings about digital literacy apply on that platform.

Based on the findings of this study, when conducting research, I recommend that information professionals recognise the specific affordances of each platform, such as users' constraints when determining reliability. However, this does not undermine the value of users' digital activism and the potential for them to engage in critical literacy while using platforms. Information professionals should therefore design learning that

incorporates these platforms with a user-focused approach, accounting for the specific contexts of their students and the ways they engage online.

As a qualitative study, my research uses a small sample group in a specific age range, which is a limitation as they may not be reflective of the entire population. As such, a larger sample group which accounts for other factors such as gender, location, and age might encounter different findings.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions

Key: italics denote interviewer notes and are not questions.

Instagram introductory questions
- Are you between 20 and 25 years old?
- Do you use Instagram?
- How often do you use the platform?
  - Multiple times a day
  - Daily
  - Weekly
  - Monthly
  - Other – please clarify
- How do you use Instagram?
  - Post/share your own content
  - Repost content
  - View and engage e.g., like and comment on others' posts
  - Lurk without engaging
  - A mix of these options
- Do you use it for work, personal use, a mix of both, or another reason?
- Why do you use Instagram?
  - Have you ever used it as a news source?
    - If yes, when and why?
  - Have you ever found out new information from Instagram?
- What do you think the purpose of the platform is?
- Do you think Instagram is a good platform for sharing information?
  - Why or why not?

Infographic introductory questions
Briefly show three examples of infographics to clarify what they are:
  - *https://www.instagram.com/p/CZRUGqAvE_Q/ (hate zine, 2022);*
  - *https://www.instagram.com/p/CckcACKKv3H/ (NHS, 2022);*
  - *https://www.instagram.com/p/CejQA3QOwfc/ (LIVEKINDLY, 2022).*
- Do you follow any accounts that mainly post infographics?
  - Why or why not?
- Have you ever reposted and/or created an infographic?
  - How often do you repost and/or create infographics?
  - Do you remember the first time or the first few times you shared an infographic?
    - Why did you start?
  - Did COVID-19 impact your sharing behaviour or the types of infographics you share?
    - Why or why not?

- o Do you tend to share infographics to your Instagram feed, or to your Instagram story?
  - ▪ Why do you think this is?

Infographic examples
Show three examples:
- o *Example 1*
  - ▪ *https://www.instagram.com/p/CeTX8uoum4w/ (Slow Factory, 2022a).*
- o *Example 2*
  - ▪ *https://www.instagram.com/p/CN4iOMLlnR0/ (SOAS Detainee Support (SDS), 2021).*
- o *Example 3*
  - ▪ *https://www.instagram.com/p/CSoOXp2DSuT/ (Bergdorf, 2021).*

For each infographic, ask the following questions (clarify it is not a test of their memory or analytical skill):
- What do you think is the message of this infographic?
- What are your general thoughts about this infographic?
- Are you familiar with the account that posted the infographic?
- Does it seem reliable?
  - o Why or why not?
- Now, thinking about the three infographics as a whole:
  - o Would you share any of these three infographics?
    - ▪ Why or why not?
    - ▪ Which one(s) would you share?
  - o Do any of these three infographics seem more reliable than another?
    - ▪ Why or why not?

How content and source affect sharing
- What type of infographics do you share?
  - o Are there topics that you're more likely to share infographics about?
    - ▪ Why or why not?
- What motivates you to share an infographic?
  - o How do you decide what or when to share?
- Is there anything that would make you more or less likely to share an infographic?
  - o Would a certain type of author (e.g., group vs individual), the infographic coming from a certain account and your relationship to that account affect your sharing?
    - ▪ Why or why not?
  - o Would the style and/or image used in an infographic make you more or less likely to share it?
    - ▪ Why or why not?
- Is there anything you look for in an infographic that you would consider to be reliable?

Emotional responses to infographics
- Have you ever changed your mind or perspective about an issue after seeing an infographic?
    - o If yes, when and why?
    - o If yes, does this happen often?
- Have you ever changed your mind about sharing an infographic you have already posted?
- Have you ever deleted an infographic you have posted?
    - o Why or why not?
- Have you ever questioned an infographic you've seen or seen things that seem less reliable?
    - o If yes, when and why?
    - o If yes, does this happen often?

Moving beyond infographics
- How do you feel about infographics that include sources?
    - o Do you consider them to be less or more reliable?
    - o If an infographic has a source linked, do you try to find the source?
        - ▪ Why or why not?
- Have you ever taken action outside of Instagram because of something seen on the platform, e.g., donated money, attended a protest, or emailed your MP?
    - o If yes, when and why?
    - o If yes, does this happen often?

Social sharing
- Do you feel like others' (the people you follow) behaviour and/or sharing of infographics affects what you share? Why or why not?
    - o If a lot of your friends shared something, would it affect whether or not you shared it?

Appendix 2: Participant four transcript

I: Cool, OK. Yeah. So, we'll just start with some general stuff, questions around Instagram and your behaviour. So, the first one is just a general, kind of, generic question of - are you between the ages of 20 and 25 years old?

P4: I am.

I: And do you use Instagram?

P4: I do.

I: And how often do you use the platform? So, there's five options to this: multiple times a day, daily, weekly, monthly, or other, and you can clarify.

P4: Daily.

I: OK, cool. And how do you use Instagram? So do you - and you can - it's not necessarily one answer for this one. So, do you post or share your own content, do you repost other people's content, do you view and engage but not, kind of, post – like, just liking things or do you, kind of, just lurk without really engaging or liking anything?

P4: Yeah, so I post my own things, but not regularly. I mainly use the stories aspect of it, where I might post - if I'm doing something interesting, I'll share that. My Instagram is private, so I just have my friends on it, so I'm not publicly sharing anything. And I do engage with liking posts and I do repost certain things if I find them interesting or [think they] might be of interest to people I know.

I: OK. And do you use Instagram for work, for personal use, a mix of both, or another reason?

P4: Personal use.

I: OK, cool. And then, why do you use Instagram, would you say?

P4: I enjoy it. It's, it's a good way of being able to engage with multiple different things. So, I do follow some more political things or informative accounts. I also follow certain brands and my friends - it's a nice way to engage socially with friends and see what they're up to. And I also use it as a way to engage with my interests, so I follow a lot of hobby accounts – I knit and crochet, so I follow a lot of knitting accounts and artists as well, so I'm interested in art and drawing. So, I use it for those sorts of ways - reasons.

I: Great. And have you ever used it as a news source? And can you think of any examples, or?

P4: Yeah, actually, I think especially during the pandemic, because I found the news a bit overwhelming. So, I follow an account called @simplepolitics, and - I think, yeah, I think it's called @simplepolitics, and they'll break down the weekly news. So, I use that quite a lot – or [they'll break down] the daily news and they'll say what's going on each day and if I wanted to investigate something further, then I'll look that up as well. Yeah, I also follow BBC News as well, and I think another couple of accounts who talk through the weekly news? Less so now, but I used that more during the pandemic.

I: OK, great. And have you ever found out information you didn't know? So, any new information from Instagram?

P4: Yeah, definitely.

I: OK. And so, what do you think the purpose of Instagram is?

P4: That's a difficult question actually. I think it's been set out as a social media platform initially. So, I think it was kind of an off branch of Facebook and obviously it is owned by Facebook. But I think it's kind of become a combination of Twitter and Facebook in terms of that it does have a political aspect to it as well as sharing your own personal life. And it's also become an advertising platform as well and a platform for making money, and it's evolved into that as well. So obviously you have a lot of brands who use it to engage with consumers. And then you also have people who use Instagram as a source of income, sometimes a primary source of income. So, it's got quite a few different uses.

I: OK. And do you think that Instagram is a good platform for sharing information, and why or why not?

P4: I think it's a good platform for sharing very basic information because it's very easy to engage with a photo and see a couple - a little bit of text on the photo. But anything in depth, I don't think it's that good. Rather than giving you the basic overview of certain things. So obviously you do have the captions where you can put a lot of detail in, and I do follow a couple of accounts who do that. One's called @lalaletmeexplain and she will take images of things that - of sayings or phrases that people use, and then analyse them in quite a lot of detail from a feminist perspective. And I do use that. But in most cases I won't look more in depth in the captions. So, I think it's very good at exposing you to certain aspects or certain causes or certain things that are going on in the world. But anything in detail I don't think it's the best platform for that.

I: OK, sure. And then do you follow any infographics specific – like, accounts that only share infographics? Yeah, [you] don't necessarily need to think of specific examples, but is that something you kind of do?

P4: Yeah, I started during the Black Lives Matter – when the protests were happening about two years ago? I think there's one called @nowhitesaviors that I started following and they shared a lot of infographics.

I: Sure. And why do you follow those type of accounts that you do?

P4: I think as just - as a way to expose myself to different aspects of history and different aspects of social causes that I wouldn't necessarily have found out about otherwise. And then, the - my idea was that I would hopefully use that as a leaping off thing where I'd find out more information about those causes. And it's also an easy way to share and inform other people about things that are going on too.

I: Sure, OK. And then so, thinking a bit more about infographics, have you ever reposted or created an infographic?

P4: Yeah, I've reposted.

I: OK. And how often do you repost infographics?

P4: Not very often anymore. Maybe once in a while if I find one that I think is really interesting and would be valuable to share with people? Or it's something that people might not know about or will provide a different perspective to something that's going on at the moment that might be of interest to my friends who follow me.

I: OK. And so, you said 'anymore', so does that mean that you think your relationship with sharing them has changed and can you think of why that might be?

P4: Yeah. So, I think I mainly started sharing infographics during the Black Lives Matters protests and it kind of became a way of really pushing what was going on, and at the time it felt like I was helping people become aware of things and also expressing my outrage at things that were going on. But it kind of feels like a passive form of protest and it doesn't really feel like people actually necessarily read them? I might have a couple of people who I'm close friends with who have similar interests to me, who might look at them. But it doesn't really feel like I'm actually doing anything about [it] by sharing infographics. So rather than sharing infographics now, I'd usually share petitions where somebody could actually do something with that? If that makes sense.

I: Sure, OK. Yeah. So, a more specific form of infographic that has some kind of call to action or some kind of thing to do?

P4: Yeah. Rather than just an image that people may or may not read, but if there's something that people can actually do, like a petition, that's the sort of thing I'll share now.

I: OK. And do you remember the first time, or first few times you shared something? So, you kind of mentioned that about Black Lives Matter maybe with that one-

P4: Yeah.

I: And then, you kind of covered it a little bit - but did COVID-19 or the pandemic period kind of impact your sharing behaviour or what you were sharing?

P4: I think so. I think because we had - especially during the first lockdown, we had more time to engage with things or look at things, the way people did a lot of doom scrolling. And I think that really contributed to it as well because we couldn't go out and do things, or necessarily see people and chat about things. It was kind of an easy way to engage with all the things that were going on in the world other than the pandemic. So yeah, I think I definitely did use them more during 2020 than I do now.

I: Sure, and do you share generally share infographics to your Instagram feed, or to your Instagram Story? And why do you think that is?

P4: Yeah, just my story. I think in part because it feels a bit more instant, and then you can post a few in a row if there's something interesting. So, say if you've got an infographic that is on multiple pages and you can post one of each page and if you really want to show specific parts of it, you can do that on the Stories. And also because I personally engage with Stories more than I do with posts, a lot of the time. And that's also how I get exposed to infographics, is through other people's Stories. As well as

that, I think the impermanence of it is good as well because I know my opinions change and I know situations change quite rapidly so things can quickly become outdated. Not only just in terms of what's going on in the real world, but also in terms of my opinion. And as well as that, because I use my Instagram for personal use, I kind of keep - treat my own permanent posts as my own personal life scrapbook. So, I don't really post political things on there because I kind of use that as my own online scrapbook. So, I have different uses for stories and my posts. If that makes sense.

I: Yeah, sure. OK. So now I'm going to show you a couple of examples of infographics. I've realised I also should have, before asking about them at the beginning, showed you some examples so that we were on the same page about what they are. So, I'll just quickly show you my examples that I was meant to show you at the beginning and then I will show you the - yeah, the ones that we're gonna kind of look at it in a bit more detail. So, can you see that one now?

P4: I can.

I: Yeah. So, you don't need to read right through it, but this is the kind of thing I was that I meant by infographics. Yeah. So, yeah, just so you're kind of on a similar page and then I will just show you - my other ones. OK, so. Yeah. And then this one's just another example of what they look like, but again, not gonna look at this one in too much detail. And then yeah, we'll go to the first example that we're gonna talk about a little more. OK, so. What we'll do is, if you just want to have a read through - it's not a test of how much information you can retain or remember about them. It's kind of more to generally think about your, kind of, impressions of them in general rather than the information that's contained.

P4: Yeah.

I: So, if you wanna read through and just let me know when you want to move to the next slide and then once you, kind of, look through this graphic, then we'll talk a little bit about, about it. OK.

Brief interlude where sharing slides isn't functioning correctly

I: OK, cool. So can you see the screen? Yeah?

P4: Yeah.

I: Has that changed? OK, cool. Alright.

Pause while P4 reads infographic 1

I: Cool. OK, so. My first question is: what do you think is the message or purpose of this infographic?

P4: I think it's to make people aware of what's going on in the Atlanta Forest and ask for [inaudible]

I: Sorry, just repeat the last [bit] because you just cut out a little bit.

P4: [To] ask for support from people to help with what's going on with the Atlanta Forest.

I: Sure, OK. And what do you think about this infographic?

P4: I think it's got a lot of information. But I'm not sure how much people outside of the immediate vicinity of Atlanta would feel like this would affect them? So, I'm not sure how much people would engage with it. It's kind of, there's a lot of information, so I'm not sure if it would work more as an article. But then that is less shareable.

I: OK. And are you familiar with the account that posted this infographic?

P4: No, I'm not.

I: OK. And does it seem reliable? And why or why not?

P4: It seems reliable in that I don't have a reason to question it. But it doesn't really show that any of the information is verified and there's no link to any wider information about what's going on. So that would make me want to know more, and also question how much of the information included is 100% verifiable.

I: Sure, OK, cool. And then that is all the questions about that one. So, I'll move to the next one. Cool. Can you see that one? Cool. So, with this one, there's a few slides in the middle where it's talking about specific people, and they're all quite similar. So, once you've read through a couple, I'll just skip through because otherwise it's just a lot of information to read. But yeah, let me know when you want to move on.

Pause while P4 reads infographic 2

I: And then that's just the last one. Cool. OK. So yeah, my first question is: what do you think is the message or purpose of this infographic?

P4: That TUI has been profiting off of deportations and that they need - they're doing that to make money because people aren't going on holiday. But the people in charge are having quite large profits [added] to their salaries.

I: Sure OK. And what do you think about this infographic?

P4: I like it more than the last one in terms of style - I think they've made use of the images and the graphic design more than the previous one. I think that's a bit more impactful, and I think also including images of the people that they talk about is quite helpful as well because you have someone to associate with what they're saying. I also think the down turning face of the TUI symbol was also quite effective as well. I also like that they've included references and action points for people who are reading the infographic as well - if they do want to act on it.

I: OK. And does it seem reliable? Why or why not?

P4: More reliable than the last one because it includes references so you can cross-check if you want to - not that I think that many people would. And it also does include clear facts and figures to support what they're saying as well, so I think that makes it more reliable. Obviously, some of the language is sensationalised with these sorts of

more political infographics, and they're – they're going to be. So yeah, I think it's reasonably reliable.

I: Sure. OK. And then when you kind of said that you - that you think [not] many people will actually click on the references, why do you think that is? Or yeah, do you have any more thoughts about that?

P4: 'Cause I think people don't really use Instagram as a research tool? I think it's more [to] just be exposed to certain things and be made aware of certain things that are going on at a very basic level. And because people use it as - they use Instagram recreationally for the most part or people mainly use it on their breaks or when they just have a free 15/20 minutes, I don't think they really gonna use that as a jumping off point to read however many articles are there.

I: OK, sure. And so – we'll get into that later. Are you familiar with the account that posted this one?

P4: I'm not.

I: OK. And then there's one more, so I'll show you this one. If I can get [Microsoft] Teams to stop showing me the top bar.... One second… If I do this. And then that. OK. Right. Can you see that now?

P4: I can.

I: Cool. OK. Yeah. Again, let me know when you want me to move on.

Pause while P4 reads infographic 3

I: OK, cool. So, so what do you think is the message or the purpose of this infographic?

P4: I think it's to highlight [a] speech that has been made from indigenous people in South America. I think South America? About the West's treatment of the planet and how that is affecting everybody and destroying the climate and how they should respect the earth.

I: OK. And what do you think about this infographic?

P4: I think it's quite effective. The previous two had quite a lot of text on, which is really good for providing more information about what they were talking about. However, I think because this just had a quote, I think that's more effective for a platform like Instagram because the font's bigger, there's less for you to read, so you're more likely to read through it on Instagram. And because it's premised in emotive speech as well, I think that's more likely to engage people, or a wider group of people.

I: Sure. And are you familiar with the account that posted this infographic?

P4: Yes, I am.

I: OK. And does it seem reliable? Why or why not?

P4: I think it's reliable in that it's a quote, so you can source the quote. So it's not like the previous two where you'd have to verify that information because it is a quote and it's

somebody's opinion. Because unless the quote has been falsely transcribed, there's no reason for it to be unreliable.

I: Sure. OK. And thinking about all three of them - and I'm happy to click back through if you wanted to have another look at any of them, to kind of remember what they're all about - but would you share any of these three infographics? Why or why not? And then if you would do, which ones do you think you'd share?

P4: I think I'd most likely share the middle one because as I mentioned before, I try to share things where somebody can actively do something such as signing petitions or contacting your local MP about a certain thing. So that's the sort of thing I do share. I would possibly share the last one? That is the sort of thing that I would share a couple of years ago, before I rethought how I was using infographics on Instagram. Because that is emotive and that can, you know, provoke thought. And it's also a way of expressing your own frustrations and thoughts about what is going on in the world as well. So yeah, the last two, most likely.

I: OK. And do any of these three infographics seem more reliable than any of the others? And why or why not?

P4: I think the second and third one? The third one because I know the account is a public figure who's widely known, and because I know of her, I don't think it would be that likely for her to share something that wasn't verifiable. And as I mentioned, because it is just a quote, that in itself is reliable because you can look that up quite easily. I think the second one's reliable because it has references that you can look through and you can verify that information as well. I don't think the first one is unreliable, but it just doesn't have that verifiable information that the other two do.

I: OK, great. So, I'll stop sharing now. And then move on to asking you some different questions. OK, so. So, thinking more generally about infographics and what you share, so what type of infographics do you share? So, are there topics that you're more likely to share infographics about and why?

P4: I [inaudible] to share infographics about political movements that are happening at the time, such as - I've mentioned Black Lives Matter. As well as things that are going on currently, like current events. I often share petitions, so I think I've shared some Greenpeace petitions about climate action and then I've shared petitions about certain things that are going on in the UK. So, with certain legislation that's coming up at the moment. Or things like abortions with the situation in the US at the moment. I'm not sure if I've shared any but definitely signed some and meant to share them. So those are the sort of things that I would look into and consider sharing.

I: OK. So do you think then that the kind of the timeliness or the kind of relevance to current events has an effect, or yeah affects what you share or when you share?

P4: Yeah, I think in general, I think my sharing tends to be, a bit more reactionary to what's going on in the world? There are certain sort[s] of infographics that I would share because I think they're interesting points. So, I think – and also because I know my friends are interested in certain things. So, for example - I don't buy makeup that's tested on animals? But I follow an account called @crueltyfreekitty, and she - the

person who runs that – updates what sort of brands do and don't test on animals. So that's sort of [the] things that I would share kind of repeatedly. Because I know quite a lot of my friends do that as well and they appreciate being informed if possible. But the rest of the time, it's usually something more reactionary to current events.

I: OK. So yeah, kind of a similar question again, but what motivates you to share an infographic? Do you think that - you kind of touched on it, but do you think that you make conscious decisions to share or have kind of a rule? Or, yeah, consider how much you're sharing or how recently you've shared? Or do you think it's more kind of just - yeah like you said, kind of reactionary and based on what you're seeing and what's kind of-?

P4: Yeah, it's reactionary but also I try to make sure that I share something that - that's been something that I haven't seen much about? Or I've learned something from? Or if it's something that calls for action where people can actively do something, generally something quite easy like sign a petition because they can have a wider impact. And it's not asking that much from the people who are looking at the story. Because I think if they're actually asking for you to do a large amount of things, people just won't do them and they'll just click away on the Stories, because that's very easy to do. Yeah, so those are my general rules. I try not to flood my feed because I know people will just skip over it and if it's something that I think's really important, then I would like to be able to make my friends aware of it. So before, when the Black Lives Matter movement was at its height about two years ago, I would share quite a lot of things as a way of reacting and venting my frustration and anger about what was going on. But now, obviously I do still get frustrated and angry, but I want to be more careful about what I show, because if I'm just sharing lots of things, I know people will just skip past them because people get overwhelmed – or aren't interested as well.

I: Sure. OK, and is there anything that would make you more or less likely to share a graphic, if something came up on your feed that - yeah?

P4: I think it's got to be visually appealing. And - yeah, if I'm aware of the account then that would probably help. So, someone like Munroe, who I'm aware of as a public figure I would possibly share - be more likely to share? Or if it's by a verifiable organisation and as well, as I mentioned, something that has a call to action. Yeah, that sort of thing.

I: OK. Yeah, so I was gonna ask about whether a certain author would affect whether or not you shared and whether the style or image would affect whether or not you shared, but it sounds like, yeah, those are both things that you kind of said impact it. So, is there anything that you would look for in an infographic that would make you think 'this is definitely reliable' or 'this is definitely unreliable'?

P4: I think reliability - something like references or having a clear source from where it's come from, like the speech [infographic 3]… Unreliable if it's not that - if that sort of thing isn't there. And if there's a lot of sensationalised language without something to back [it] up. Yeah, I'd consider that less reliable as well as [if it's] from a source that I'm not - that isn't either verified or isn't a well-known organisation or person on Instagram, I'd possibly question that a bit more? Depending on what the infographic is about.

I: OK. And when you say sensationalised language, could you give an example of what you - what might be an example of that?

P4: Lots of adjectives, lots of conflatory language, like 'very', 'extremely', 'this is horrendous'. Which, you know - obviously it can be used 'cause things are horrendous but… Yeah, I think it's just from having written essays at uni where we're told not to do that when we're writing something. I think that kind of affects my perception of that.

I: OK, sure. So, thinking about, yeah, your... I'll just say the question. Have you ever changed your mind or perspective about an issue after seeing an infographic?

P4: I don't think directly because of an infographic. I think it helps [with] learning a lot about certain issues, and then I'll probably go away and consider what I've learned, what I've seen and then either form my own opinion or change the opinion that I've already had, which is what I've done in the past. But never directly because of an infographic specifically. I tend to use them more as basic exposure to different things that are going on.

I: Sure, OK, and have you ever changed your mind about sharing an infographic that you've posted?

P4: Yes, I think so? I think I've went to share things and I've taken them down or changed my mind about sharing them, because - either because I'm feeding into my own frustration and it's not really gonna be helpful for me to share, and I just probably need to just sit and calm down. Or because I decided that the issue might be too sensitive, either in terms of subject, where it's got a lot of different opinions and I'm not personally clear on my own opinion at that point, or because it's got sensitive content, because I know I can find - if I see certain content that I'm not prepared to see, I can find it quite distressing. So, in turn, I don't really want to share that on somebody's social media where they might just be using that to relax and also exposing them to that without them knowing that that's gonna come up.

I: OK, sure. And then have you ever - well, it's kind of similar, but so - have you ever deleted a graphic that you've posted?

P4: Yeah, I think the main one I did was, if you remember, was it blackout Tuesday or something? Where people - it's not so much the same as an infographic, but where everybody put that black square [up] on [Instagram]. I ended deleting that because I realised – I thought about it more and I found it a very passive form of action. Yeah, because I'm also sharing the graphics to stories I often don't need to because they [only] stay up for 24 hours.

I: OK. And have you ever questioned a graphic which you've seen someone else share or seen things that don't seem all that reliable? And yeah, can you think of any examples or anything that yeah, you've seen?

P4: Definitely. I can't think of any specific examples at the moment. But I think it's mainly when people share things about a topic [which] I actually know quite a lot about for whatever reason, whether I've researched it, or I'd studied it before and then they share something, and I know it's incorrect. I think there was a trend the other year where

people were sharing black and white photos and it was – I can't remember what it was specifically about… It was about domestic violence I think, in the Middle East and Turkey. And I saw somebody share a black and white photo with her and her friend. And this isn't an infographic, it's more of a trend. But then I messaged her saying: 'actually do [you] know that this is about domestic violence, rather than you sharing a photo with you and your friend' and that's - yeah. But yeah, anyway [inaudible].

I: And what was the response from your friend to that? Not to reveal identifying information - yeah.

P4: No, no, it was like: 'oh, I didn't know', but then she still left it up.

I: OK, sure. And would you say that that happens fairly often, seeing things that don't seem super reliable, or?

P4: From certain specific people, yes. Overall, not really because I think most of my friends are quite politically engaged and aware of what's going on. But I do have a few friends or a few people that I know who just aren't and I'm more likely to see that from them.

I: OK. So yeah, do you think that there's a relationship then with - yeah, their political engagement and kind of, what they would consider - how they would consider reliability, or? Yeah.

P4: Probably? Possibly? I think if you're more politically engaged and more critical of what's going on, then, yes, but also not always because it's quite a time-consuming thing to consider reliability all the time? And especially if you're using it as a way to vent out your anger by sharing what's going on. Then you're possibly not gonna be as concerned with reliability all of the time.

I: Sure, OK. So, thinking about sources, what - how do you feel about infographics that include sources? Do you think they're more or less reliable?

P4: I'd say more reliable, because it makes it clear where they're getting the information from.

I: OK. And if an infographic has a source linked, do you personally try and find the source? And why or why not?

P4: Generally, no, unless it's something that I really want to learn more about. Partly because if it's just on an infographic, I can't just click on the source, I would have to go and type in the full website, which can be quite time-consuming if I'm just looking at Instagram on a break which is what I usually do. So yeah, generally no. I have in the past, but mostly no, I'd say.

I: Sure, OK. And would you - Yeah. OK. Would something having a source itself make it feel more reliable? Or would you also take a look at the source and what it actually - not necessarily click out of Instagram, but seeing a certain website name, would that - do you think that would affect [what you would] consider to be reliable either, or does the kind of act of having a source feel - make it reputable?

P4: Yeah, I think the act of having a source does feel like that. It probably shouldn't, but it does. Things do feel more reliable if I do know the website or the source that it [is] linked [to]. Like if it's linked to a reputable news source, then yeah, but if it's linked to the Daily Mail, then I would be like: 'hmm, this might not be that reliable'.

I: And then have you ever taken action outside of Instagram because of something you've seen on the platform? So, why or why not? So, for example, donated something, attended a protest, signed a petition, emailed your MP?

P4: Yeah, I've definitely emailed my MP a few times because of things I found on Instagram. I think I've - there was a piece of legislation in the UK about plastics that the government, wasn't doing anything about, so I found that through Greenpeace and then I emailed my MP. And I think for some other reasons as well. I generally don't donate for things from Instagram, but I've definitely signed many petitions because of infographics.

I: And how often would you say that you take action off of the platform because of something you've seen on it?

P4: Not particularly often. It depends on what's going on at the time, and if there is anything that I can do that would actually help. So, yeah, not hugely often, but it just depends on what's going on [and] what comes up.

I: Sure, OK. And then this is the final question. So, thinking about social sharing. Do you feel like others' behaviour - so the people that you follow - how they share infographics, or what they do, affects what you share?

P4: Yeah, I think so because the infographics that I share I'm mainly exposed to through what my friends share, and if there's something interesting or something that I think is important, then I'll possibly reshare that as well. So, I think it does affect it quite a lot.

I: OK. Yeah. So, if loads of your friends shared a certain graphic, would that affect whether or not you shared it?

P4: If it was something that I thought was interesting, then yes. But if I saw lots of people sharing it, I'd probably be less likely to share it because I would assume that people would have already seen it.

I: OK, sure.

P4: Yeah, it depends on what it is.

I: Yeah. OK, great. OK, that is all my questions. So, I will stop the recording.

Appendix 3: Transcript coding sample

Round 1 coding ✓
Round 2 coding ✓

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Participant 2 Transcript

Recording now...

P2: I think it's being recorded – I think I see like a red dot.

Oh yeah, there we go. Yeah. Cool. OK, great. OK. Oh my God, how have I already lost the questions. OK, right. Yeah. So we'll start with some kind of general starter questions.

So do you use Instagram?

P2: Yes.

And how often do you use the platform? And there's kind of five different answers you could give for this so: multiple times a day, daily, weekly, monthly or other amount.

P2: I'd go with multiple times a day.

OK. And how do you use Instagram? Do you kind of post or share your own content, Do you repost, do you kind of just view and engage with other people's posts but not post yourself or do you lurk without engaging or some other mix?

P2: I guess like both, like, engage with other people's content and just kind of like viewing what people post because I don't post very often, but I also do like post things myself.

OK. And do you use it for work or personal use, a mix of both of those, or any other reason?

P2: I'd say mostly personal use.

OK, cool. And why do you use Instagram?

P2: I think it's like a mix of like entertainment, keeping up with friends and also like sometimes there's like. Like news related things, so it's like also slightly educational purposes as well.

OK. So yeah, my next question is, have you ever used it as a news source and can you think of any times like when or why?

entertainment
news alternative
social sharing
insta wide (purposes.

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P2: No - OK, yeah, I can see it now.

So you don't need to like read through it, it's just to give you an example of what it might look like. And then I'll show you a couple of others. So this one as well.

P2: Yeah.

And then. This one it won't let me show you. So we'll move on. But yeah, that's just an example of two of the ones that, yeah, to give an example of what it should look like. So I'll stop sharing now and carry on with some more questions.

P2: Yep.

OK. And so, just to come back quickly to your previous question about like sharing information on Instagram, so you mentioned the idea of an echo chamber. So do you think it shows information in a certain way, or like there's a way that it - that Instagram kind of, like shows news or shares news with you?

P2: I think like the echo chamber was more about exploring new pages or like users that would share similar news to what you already, kind of, look at on a regular basis, just 'cause it like tracks your data and stuff like that. But then I think a lot of the times it's quite accessible for people because like stories are quite popular, like, to share information. So even if you don't click into specific posts you can see - like a lot of people share information by reposting on their stories, so you can actually access like - without directly going to that person, the original creator's account, you can still access that information through like other channels like your friends or like news outlets and things like that.

OK, sure. So yeah, moving onto infographics. So what would you say is the purpose of infographics on Instagram?

P2: OK. I think most of the time it kind of curates, like, summaries of like certain events that have been taking place and it curates like a more concise form of, like, for example like a news article, it kind of like shows you highlights of, and it, it's like more digestible for people. But also it's helpful for like campaigns and things like that, and, and sometimes, like, referring to your NHS example as well, it has like, kind of like tips for people to follow for like I don't know like lifestyle and like things like that, so - I think it's like a mix of showing concise information, like summaries, but also like useful for campaigns, whether it's like political or like cultural.

algorithm
accessibility
user behaviour
ways into travel
social sharing

simplifying concept
'digestible'
political impact
raising awareness

Appendix 4: Map of codes and potential categories