

Introduction & Background

Literature Review: [[LINK](#)]

Desk Research

- We performed extensive desk research using Google Scholar to learn more about how young adults source information and the spread of misinformation, difficulties fact checking information, and how that contributes to health and wellness information consumed by young adults on social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels. Below we've highlighted a few of the research papers related to our overarching research question. [Click here to view more of the research papers.](#)
- We wanted to find a topic in a space that wasn't as heavily researched, leading to our extensive literature review which helped define our problem space.
- We considered diving into research around mental health, but after further discussion with our teaching team, advisor, and mentors, we realized we weren't properly equipped to conduct research around such a sensitive topic. We decided to pivot our research topic to the less sensitive space of health and wellness information.
 - Nearly two-thirds (65%) of adults in the United States use social media, and a significant percentage of young adults use TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram (Thackeray et al. 2013). Research has shown that young adults (ages 18-29) are more likely to use social media to some extent for health-related purposes (Thackeray et al. 2013). However, much of the information shared on social media is not evidence-based and can be harmful. For example, there have been instances of "influencers" promoting dangerous diets or playing the role of therapists (Tagle et al. 2022).
 - Moreover, young adults may lack the skills and knowledge to identify misinformation, especially when it's presented in an engaging and entertaining format. Research has shown that individuals are more likely to engage with news presented in an entertaining way, and more likely to share and remember it if the delivery was humorous (Yount, 2021). It's possible that users may inadvertently share health-related misinformation this way.
 - [Young People's Online Help-Seeking and Mental Health Difficulties: Systematic Narrative Review](#)
 - Credibility has been identified as an important concern when young people are seeking help online for mental health concerns ([Pretorius et al., 2019b](#)). This study found that a limited number of the influencers on both TikTok and Instagram have verified status on these platforms. However, this did not appear to impact the number of followers when comparing influencers who had verified status and those who did not. There is likely an inferred element of credibility as the public assumes

these individuals are in a position of authority because of their assumed education and licensed credentials.

- [Mental health professionals as influencers on TikTok and Instagram: What role do they play in mental health literacy and help-seeking?](#)
 - Followers often feel connected to influencers and often form a 'parasocial' relationship with them and many commercial brands often work with influencers to improve the authenticity and trustworthiness of a brand, making them a powerful and valuable resource ([Guo et al., 2020](#)). In addition, users can also promote their ideal ways to lose weight through trending topics on the platform, including fitness, diets, and fitness clothing. According to Dempster, A. [[19](#)], this rising trend has attracted the attention of people who are prone to eating disorders and body imaging disorders. Many people began to question their weight and appearance. Because their fitness habits, eating habits, and dressing habits did not match the images presented in these popular videos, they began to wonder if they were lazy, or lacked self control. These videos take advantage of others' anxiety about life and dissatisfaction with the present.
- [The unintentional spread of misinformation on 'TikTok': A paediatric urological perspective](#)
 - The evolution of TikTok has allowed the layperson to create content that can potentially reach millions of users worldwide. While this could potentially be used to the advantage of healthcare providers in the future via the production of reliable, easily accessible information, it may result in the spread of misinformation when placed into the wrong hands.
- [Twitter Birdwatch for misinformation](#)
- [TikTok and Misinformation: which factors contribute to the spread of misinformation](#)
 - The goal of this thesis is to understand TikTok's rise in popularity, attracting a considerable quantity of users to potentially spread misinformation to. Furthermore, the thesis will also be exploring the reasons why specific misinformation spreads, including an analysis from the perspective of narrative theory and memetics. Through the creation of echo chambers people on social media become especially vulnerable to manipulation, as not only do they allow themselves to ignore any external points of view but also, it has been proven that people feel negatively about trustworthy sources that support opposing views. Furthermore, when one is repeatedly exposed to a certain piece of information, it seems more factual regardless of whether it truly is, or isn't (Dupuis & Williams 2019). The users on TikTok tend to be part of a younger demographic, in fact, 67% of those on TikTok that are 18 to 30 years of age, use the platform every day (figure 2). Compared to other social media platforms, Youtube is the most popular with 95% of teens on it, with TikTok coming in second place.

- [Most Students Don't Know When News Is Fake. Stanford Study Finds](#)
 - A growing number of schools are teaching students to be savvy about choosing and believing various sources of information, a skill set educators label “media literacy”. A free Stanford social-studies curriculum which teaches students to judge the trustworthiness of historical sources has been downloaded 3.5 million times, says Sam Wineburg, a professor in Stanford University’s Graduate School of Education and the lead author of the study on teens.

Stakeholders

Our key stakeholders are young adults who are active social media users and consume health and wellness information on social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this research study is to:

- Explore the information-seeking behavior of young adults who are active users on social media platforms, from browsing to querying
- Understand which elements of information consumed on social media make it trustworthy to young adults. How do they establish trust in it? What are their goals and desires when consuming information on social media?
- Evaluate where young adults need assistance when consuming information on social media
- Identify opportunities to improve the experience of consuming information on social media

Key Research Question

How do young adults who use YouTube Shorts search and browse health and wellness information on this platform?

Sub-Research Questions

- Why do young adults continue consuming health and wellness information on YouTube Shorts?
 - What are the “[Uses and gratifications sought by YA YouTube Shorts consumers](#)” that are specific to consuming health and wellness information?

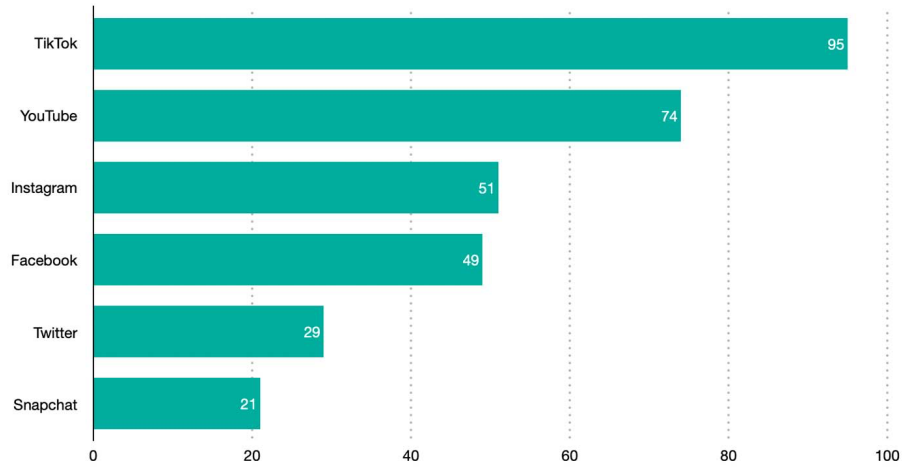
- What criteria (signifiers) do YAs rely on to determine the credibility of health and wellness information on YouTube Shorts?
 - What causes YAs to trust, or distrust health and wellness information?
- What are the outcomes of YAs applying health and wellness information from YouTube Shorts to their routines?
 - Is it harmful or beneficial? To what extent?

Participant Profile & Recruitment

Young Adults aged 18-26 years old

- [\[Screener\]](#)
- **EXCLUDE** respondents outside target age range (18-26)
- **INCLUDE**: Frequent users of YouTube Shorts
 - Criteria: "Frequent" users are those who use these apps for at least 9 hours per week
 - **EXCLUDE** usage of <8 hours per week
- **INCLUDE**: Frequent consumers of health and wellness information on YouTube Shorts defined by the [8 dimensions of wellness](#).
 - Criteria: More subjective, based on information gained from study. Should be above average in # of health content topics selected, and/or frequency of consuming health and wellness content
- **INCLUDE**: A variety of education levels in our study group
 - HS only, some college (not currently enrolled), enrolled in 4-year, enrolled in 2-year or community college, 2-year degree, 4-year degree
- **INCLUDE**: Willing to let us record during their session for note taking purposes
 - **EXCLUDE** if not willing
- Willing to share their phone screen with us for the contextual inquiry and mobile ethnography study
 - **EXCLUDE** if not willing

Average Daily Minutes Spent In-App During Q2 2022



Based on global usage of each app's Android version.

Source: Sensor Tower Consumer Intelligence



Recruitment Channels

Colleges Database

Seattle Area Colleges and Universities for Recruiting					
In the city of Seattle					
Name	Typ. Years	Enrollment	Location	Avg. Driving Time from UW (minutes)	Description
University of Washington	4	46,081	Seattle, U District	0	Public research university
Seattle Pacific University	4	3,894	Seattle, Queen Anne	17	Private Christian university
Seattle University	4	7,405	Seattle, First Hill	14	private Jesuit university
Seattle Central College	3	7,639	Seattle, Capitol Hill	15	Public community college
Cornish College of the Arts	4	650	Seattle, Downtown / Capitol Hill	13	Private arts college
City University of Seattle	4	4,500	Seattle, Downtown	25	Private nonprofit university
NEAR Seattle					
Highline College	2	16,000	Des Moines, WA	35	Public community college
University of Puget Sound	4	2,600	Tacoma, WA	63	Private liberal arts college
Bellevue College	2	5,775	Bellevue, WA	19	Public community college
UW Bothell	4	5,618	Bothell, WA	21	Public research university
UW Tacoma	4	4,552	Tacoma, WA	58	Public research university

- Posting to our social media networks to recruit friends and family
- Reaching out to MHCI+D cohort members
- Posting in the HCDE DRG (directed research group) slack channel
- Sending in a Discord Design Lab channel (an online ux design bootcamp program geared towards young adults pivoting to UX Design)

Methods

Secondary Research Methods

Mobile Autoethnography - {Session Guide}

- Before speaking with our participants the team will read comments, track engagement and interactions with health and wellness information, discover health and wellness creators in the space that are influential to a young adult demographic to identify content that seems to be trustworthy.
- [Method Reference](#)

Subject Matter Expert Interview - {Session Guide}

Participants:

- [Kate Starbird - Designing Online Platforms to Mitigate Opacity of \(Mis\)Information & Understanding TikTok User Behavioral Changes After Sudden Bursts of Increased Attention](#)
- [Stacey Cohen M.D. - Cancer Misinformation and Harmful Information on Facebook and Other Social Media](#)
- [Amanda Baughan - "I Don't Even Remember What I Read": How Design Influences Dissociation on Social Media](#)
- [Katherine Ann \(Kate\) Comtois, PhD, MPH - Decreasing engagement and transmission of suicide-related content on TikTok](#)

Rationale + which RQ this addresses for secondary research: To learn from people who have specialized or expert knowledge to contribute to our topic space. To learn from our users. All research questions.

[**Click Here for Study Objectives & Session Guides**](#)

Primary Research Methods

10-12 participants for the studies

Mobile Ethnography (Occurs before the Contextual Inquiry + Semi-structured interview)

- **Description**
 - This will be accomplished via email. The time it takes depends on the participant's availability
 - Participants share 5-10 videos from YouTube Shorts that have been the most influential to their health and wellness journey over the past three months
 - Participants share 3-5 of their most influential creators in the health and wellness space on YouTube Shorts
 - **Rationale:** To gain some background information on the health and wellness content the participant consumes before the study to help us get the most out of our one hour session with the participant. Learn which creators our participants find to be the most influential when consuming health and wellness information on social media.
 - **Which RQ this addresses:**
 - What criteria (signifiers) do YAs rely on to determine the credibility of health and wellness information on YouTube Shorts?
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Participant Remote Session (Multiple methods in a single session)

- Contextual Inquiry {[Session Guide](#)}
 - **Description**
 - 30 minutes
 - Zoom screen share of phone to view YouTube Shorts browsing behavior
 - Participant scroll their for you page for 5-10 minutes
 - Given a prompt to find health and wellness information participants show us where they would seek that information on the chosen social media platform
 - Participants take us through their saved history showing us various health and wellness information that has served as factual and influential information to their health and wellness journey
 - **Rationale:** This method involves observing participants' behavior while browsing YouTube Shorts and exploring where they seek health and wellness information on the platform. This method can provide an opportunity to explore participants' history, recommendations, and understand the information that they find to be factual and influential to their health and wellness journey.
 - **Which RQ this addresses:**
 - What are the "uses and gratifications sought by YA YouTube Shorts consumers" that are specific to consuming health and wellness information?
 - What causes YAs to trust, or distrust health and wellness information?
 - What criteria (signifiers) do YAs rely on to determine the credibility of health and wellness information on YouTube Shorts?

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- Semi-structured interviews {[Session Guide](#)}
 - **Description**
 - 30 minutes
 - Using probing questions deep dive into various learnings from the mobile ethnography and contextual inquiry sessions
 - Goal to probe to obtain a deeper and fuller understanding of the participants experiences and meaning they hold. The in-depth format allows the researcher to explore the factors that underpin participants' answers: values, experiences, circumstances, reasoning, feelings, opinions, and beliefs.
 - **Probe questions to explain:** What makes you say that? Why do you think you reacted like that? This might seem like an obvious question, but why? Just to make sure I've understood correctly, could you tell me exactly why you feel social media apps are the best way to learn about health and wellness information ?
 - **Probe questions to explore impacts, effects, and consequences:** How did you respond when? What effect did that have on you? What happened next?
 - **Probe questions to clarify:** In what way was it blank? Can you explain what you mean by it being a classic case? Did your feeling of X happen before using social media to source information or afterwards?
 - **Probe questions to surface underlying values, views, or experiences:** Why do you think it was important to you that there are X on social media apps? What made you feel so strongly about that?
 - **Probe questions to challenge inconsistencies:** Earlier you said using social media apps was a good way to learn about health and wellness information but then you described some things that didn't go so well. What are your thoughts overall on how well it went? You said at the beginning of the interview that you never experienced misinformation about health and wellness on social media platforms. Do you think the interaction you were just describing could have been caused by misinformation consumed?
 - **Rationale:** This method provides a rich source of qualitative data that can help answer complex research questions related to health and wellness information consumption on social media platforms.
 - **Which RQ this addresses:** We believe this method could potentially help answer all of our main sub research questions.
 - What are the outcomes of YAs applying health and wellness information from YouTube Shorts to their routines?

- Why do young adults continue consuming health and wellness information on YouTube Shorts?
 - What criteria (signifiers) do YAs rely on to determine the credibility of health and wellness information on YouTube Shorts?
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Study Objectives & Session Guides

Session: Subject Matter Expert Interview

Before the Session Checklist

- Confirm the schedule and location of the session with the SME
- Prepare an interview guide with open-ended questions related to information consumption on SFVC platforms
- Prepare the recording device (Zoom for remote, or iPhone with tripod for in-person) and check that it is working
- Prepare any necessary materials such as notepads, pens, or relevant articles

During the Session Checklist

- Introduce yourself and explain the purpose of the study
- Ask permission to record the session
 - If permission is granted, ensure that the recorder is working and begin recording
- Follow the interview guide and ask open-ended questions related to information consumption on SFVC platforms
- Encourage the participants to elaborate on their responses and ask follow-up questions if necessary
- Take notes on key points and observations
- Thank the participants for their time and participation

After the Session Checklist

- Save and label the recording with the participant's unique ID and session number
- Transcribe the recording and review the notes taken during the session
- Thank the participants for their time and participation

Interview Guide / Script

Intro

- *Build rapport*
- *Provide context*
- *Share the timeline*
- *Discuss recording and transcripts*

Questions / Tasks

- “I noticed you worked in XYZ for X years, can you talk a little more about that as it relates to the credibility of health and wellness information on social media?”
- “What important truth do very few people agree with you on, related to the credibility of information on social media?”
- “What are you most excited about in your industry that is not well known?”
- “What worries you the most right now in your line of work?”
- “If the industry trends around health misinformation not only continue but start accelerating, how do you think young adults would be affected?”

Conclusion

- “Is there anything I missed bringing up or that I should have asked you about that I did not?”
- “I’m also interested in learning from other perspectives in the industry—is there anyone that comes to mind you think would be good for us to speak with?”
- “If other questions come up down the road, would you be interested in speaking with us again later on in the project?”

Pre-Session: Mobile Ethnography

Email Template for Mobile Ethnography:

Dear [Participant name],

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our research study on young adults' consumption of health and wellness information on YouTube Shorts. We appreciate your time and contribution to this study.

As part of the study, we would like you to provide us with content before our scheduled Zoom call. Please respond by sharing links to 5-10 videos from YouTube Shorts that have been the most influential to your health and wellness journey over the past three months. Additionally, we would like you to share 3-5 links to your most influential creators in the health and wellness space on YouTube Shorts. This information will help us better understand your consumption of health and wellness information on social media and get the most out of our one hour session with you.

Thank you once again for your participation in our study. We are looking forward to learning about your experience with this platform.

Best regards,
Team Actual

Session: Contextual Inquiry

Before the Session Checklist

- Confirm the schedule and location of the session with the participants and ask that they bring their phone
- Prepare a consent form and have it signed by the participants
- Prepare an interview guide with open-ended questions related to health and YouTube Shorts usage
- Prepare the recording device (Zoom for remote, or iPhone with tripod for in-person) and check that it is working
- Prepare any necessary materials such as phone charger, notepads, pens, or relevant articles
- Prepare laptop and test Zoom screen sharing of iPhone

Contextual Inquiry Script / Optional Probing Questions

Section TBD

During the Session Checklist

- Introduce yourself and explain the purpose of the study
- Remind the participants of the consent form they signed and answer any questions they may have
- Ensure that the recorder is working and begin recording
- Follow the interview guide and ask open-ended questions related to health and YouTube Shorts usage
- Encourage the participants to elaborate on their responses and ask follow-up questions if necessary
- Take notes on key points and observations
- Thank the participants for their time and participation

Session: Semi-structured Interview

Interview Guide / Script

Introduction

- “Can you tell us how often you use YouTube Shorts?”
- “How do you typically consume health and wellness information? For example, do you actively seek out this type of content, or do you come across it while browsing?”

Questions / Tasks

Exploratory

- “Show me the last health and wellness video you saved (liked). How did you find the video?”

Initial Exposure to Health and Wellness Information

- “Can you describe a recent experience where you were exposed to health and wellness information on YouTube Shorts? How did you come across it?”
- “What motivated you to engage with the health and wellness content you came across?”
- “Have you ever shared health and wellness information with others on these platforms? If so, why?”

Information-Seeking Behavior

- “Can you describe a time when you actively searched for health and wellness information on YouTube Shorts? What were you looking for specifically?”

Benefits

- “What are some specific benefits you seek out from consuming health and wellness information on these platforms?”
- “How does consuming health and wellness information on these platforms make you feel?”

Applying Health and Wellness Information

- “Can you recall a specific instance where you applied health and wellness information you learned from YouTube Shorts to your own life? How did it go?”
- “What factors influenced your decision to apply this information?”

Trust and Distrust

- “How do you determine if health and wellness information you come across on these platforms is trustworthy?”
- “Have you ever encountered health and wellness information on these platforms that you felt was inaccurate or harmful? What was your reaction?”

Conclusion / After the Session checklist:

- Save and label the recording with the participant's unique ID and session number
- Transcribe the recording and review the notes taken during the session
- Thank the participants for their time and participation, and provide them with a copy of the consent form if requested.

Appendix 1: Mobile Auto Ethnography / Email Templates

[\[Link to Original File\]](#)

STUDY INVITATION

SUBJECT: UW HCID Study Invitation

Dear [participant name],

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our study on how young adults view health and wellness information on YouTube Shorts and TikTok!

Please use this Calendly page to schedule a 1-hour remote interview:

<https://calendly.com/d/ys4-st8-zpj/study-interview-remote>

A few days before our interview, we kindly ask that you: **share 3-5 links to videos and / or creators** 🧑 on YouTube Shorts or TikTok that have impacted your understanding of health and wellness. If you'd like some inspiration, please [see here](#) for different types of wellness. Please include **a sentence for each video explaining its significance** 📝. This will give context for our interview.

We may send occasional reminders to share the links, unless you opt out of reminders or have already sent them.

After the interview, you will receive a \$20 gift card as a token of our gratitude, and you'll be entered into a lottery for an additional cash gratuity.

Thank you for your time and participation!

Best regards,
Team Actual

HARD PUSH

SUBJECT: Important - Must be Completed Before Your Interview [day of week] -

Dear [participant name],

We hope this email finds you well. We wanted to remind you of your upcoming interview scheduled for [Saturday, May 6 **REPLACE**] at [12 PM PT **REPLACE**]. As previously mentioned, we need some more information from you in order to conduct our interview tomorrow.

If you can't complete these preparations at least 4 hours before the interview, please let us know and we will reschedule.

Please prepare for the interview by doing the following:

Send us 3-5 links to YouTube Shorts or TikTok videos 🧑 that have influenced your understanding of health and wellness. Please provide a **brief sentence describing why each video** was meaningful to you.

Please ensure that you have Zoom installed on your PHONE. 📱 If you are using a computer, please join the meeting with your phone, as we will ask you to share your phone screen at a specific point during the interview.

If you have already shared the links with us, thank you for your prompt response. If you haven't, kindly send them to us as soon as possible. If you require additional time, please let us know. We suggest sending the links at least a few hours before our discussion. For inspiration, please [see here](#) for different types of wellness.

Thank you for your participation, and we look forward to speaking with you soon!

Best regards,
Team Actual

LIGHT PUSH

SUBJECT: Reminder - Must be Completed Before Your Interview [day of week]

Dear [participant name],

We hope this email finds you well. We wanted to remind you of your upcoming interview scheduled for [**Thursday, May 4 at 3PM Pacific Time REPLACE**]. As we previously mentioned, we would appreciate it if you could **share 3-5 links to YouTube Shorts or TikTok videos** that have influenced your understanding of health and wellness. Please provide a **brief sentence describing why each video** was meaningful to you. This context will help guide our interview.

If you have already shared the links with us, thank you for your prompt response. If you haven't, kindly send them to us as soon as possible. If you require additional time, please let us know. We suggest sending the links at least a few hours before our discussion. For inspiration, please [see here](#) for different types of wellness.

Additionally, **please ensure that you have Zoom installed on your PHONE**. If you are using a computer, please join the meeting with your phone, as we will ask you to share your phone screen at a specific point during the interview.

Thank you for your participation, and we look forward to speaking with you soon!

Best regards,
Team Actual

CANCELLATION

Subject: Canceling interview

Dear [participant name],

We hope this message finds you well. We're writing to let you know we haven't received the links to the YouTube Shorts or TikTok videos and few sentences we requested from you. Unfortunately, as these are necessary for our interview, we will have to reschedule the interview for another time.

We understand that unforeseen circumstances may arise, and we would be happy to work with you to find a more suitable time for the interview. If you could please let us know when you will be able to provide the requested information, we can arrange a new interview date and time.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation. We look forward to speaking with you soon.

Best regards,
Team Actual