



# **“She can do it. So, I can do it”: The Motivations Behind Watching StudyTube**


Suzannah Gilbert

MSc Education (Higher Education), 2024

# DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE AS AUTHOR OF THE DISSERTATION



1. I understand that I am the owner of this dissertation and that the copyright rests with me unless I specifically transfer it to another person.
2. I allow the Department to deposit on my behalf a copy of this dissertation in the Oxford University Research Archive ('ORA') where it shall be freely available online for use in accordance with ORA's Terms and Conditions of Use [[https://ora.ox.ac.uk/terms\\_of\\_use](https://ora.ox.ac.uk/terms_of_use)].
3. I understand that this dissertation should not contain material that can be used to personally identify individuals or specific groups of individuals (unless permission has been obtained from the individuals) and that such material should be removed before this dissertation is deposited in ORA.
4. I agree to be bound by the terms of the ORA Grant of Non-exclusive Licence [[https://ora.ox.ac.uk/deposit\\_agreements](https://ora.ox.ac.uk/deposit_agreements)] and I warrant that to the best of my knowledge, making my thesis available on the internet will not infringe copyright or any other rights of any other person or party, nor contain defamatory material.
5. I agree that my dissertation shall be available for download in ORA in accordance with paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 above.

Signed [an electronic signature is sufficient]:	
Date:	7/08/2024

## Abstract

StudyTubers are students who produce videos on social media to share their experiences at university. StudyTube is a growing phenomenon on social media. However, there is limited literature exploring StudyTube and even less literature on why people watch it. Thus, this dissertation addresses the gap in the literature, exploring the motivations behind watching StudyTube. Using a qualitative research method, the data from 21 interviews was thematically analysed, producing the themes of *motivation*, *relatability*, and *advice*. A questionnaire was distributed to collect the participants' demographics and characteristics. The findings show participants watch StudyTube: (a) to motivate themselves, (b) because they relate to the StudyTubers, and (c) to obtain information. These findings are important because StudyTube can be used by students to motivate themselves to study or apply to prestigious universities. Moreover, StudyTubers can help participants feel less alone when studying virtually with them. Additionally, prospective university students can use StudyTube to learn information about universities, including the application process.

## Acknowledgements

I extend my heartfelt thanks to my dissertation supervisor, Dr James Robson, for his invaluable guidance, expertise, and knowledge. I also wish to thank Professor Simon Marginson, Dr Xin Xu, and Yushan Xie for sharing their knowledge and research insights. Additionally, I am grateful to Professor Vikki Boliver for inspiring me to pursue a master's degree in higher education.

I am immensely grateful to my family for their support. Their exceptional work ethic, perspectives on life, and achievements have been a constant source of inspiration, motivating me to pursue my academic goals. Special thanks to my father, Jonathan Gilbert, for his enthusiastic confidence in me and funding the master's course. To my mother, Julieanne Honeysett, your wisdom, especially the advice from your own dissertation supervisor—"It's not a mountain; it's molehills that form the mountain"—has been a constant source of motivation. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my grandfather, Dr John Etherton, and my sister, Alisha Gilbert, whose inspiring examples in academia have been the primary motivation for me to pursue my academic goals. I am also deeply grateful to Mary Anne Etherton, John Gilbert, Barbara Gilbert, Steve Honeysett, and my partner, James Baxter Groves for their continuous encouragement, moral support and insights.

I would also like to thank the friends I have made this year for their support during my dissertation. Experiencing Oxford with them has significantly contributed to my self-formation, as Professor Marginson might say.

I am also grateful to the StudyTuber, colloquially known as Ruby Granger, for her assistance in recruiting participants. Lastly, I would especially like to thank the participants for generously taking the time to be interviewed for this study.

## **Abbreviations**

**HEI** Higher Education Institutions

**HE** Higher Education

**P** Participant

## Contents

Review of the Literature.....	11
Bloggers, Vloggers and Online Educators.....	11
Why People Read Blogs.....	12
Why People Watch Vloggers.....	13
Why Students Watch Online Educators' Content .....	13
StudyTubers.....	15
The Impact of Creating Content on StudyTubers.....	15
The Reasons Why StudyTubers Provide Content.....	16
The Viewers of StudyTube Content.....	18
The Viewers' Characteristics and Demographics.....	18
Why People Watch StudyTube Content .....	19
The Impact of StudyTube Content on Viewers .....	21
Summary of the Literature Review .....	22
Problem Statement.....	23
Methodology .....	24
The General Perspective .....	24
Research Context.....	25
Instruments .....	25
Semi-structured Interviews.....	25
Questionnaire .....	27
Positionality.....	28
Ethics .....	28
Quality of Research .....	29
Research Design Procedures.....	30
Overview of the Participants.....	33
Data Analysis .....	36
Summary.....	39
Findings.....	40
Motivational.....	40
Aesthetics .....	40
Companionship .....	45
Relatability.....	50
Same Interest in Academia.....	50
Transparency of Realistic Studying.....	54
Advice.....	62
Study Advice .....	62
Prestigious Universities and Their Admissions Process .....	67

New Technology.....	68
Conclusion of the Findings .....	70
Discussion .....	71
Motivation .....	71
Relatability.....	74
Advice.....	76
Limitations.....	79
Recommendations for Practice .....	80
Recommendations for Further Research.....	81
Conclusion .....	82
References .....	83
Appendix A: Questionnaire.....	93
Appendix B: CUREC Form .....	97
Appendix C: Letter of CUREC Approval .....	104
Appendix D: Recruitment Poster .....	105
Appendix E: Interview Questions .....	106
Appendix F: First Thematic Map .....	108
Appendix G: Second Thematic Map .....	109
Appendix H: Participant Information Sheet for Interview .....	110
Appendix I: Participant Information Sheet for Questionnaire.....	113

### **List of Figures**

<b>Figure 1.</b> Study with Me YouTube Video.....	21
<b>Figure 2.</b> Thematic Map of Themes and Subthemes.....	38

### **List of Tables**

<b>Table 1.</b> Participant (P) Demographics .....	34
<b>Table 2.</b> Participants' Social Class, First-generation Status and School Type.....	35

This dissertation explores the motivations behind watching StudyTube. This introductory chapter presents the definition of ‘StudyTuber’, the study’s background, the problem statement and an overview of the methodology.

StudyTube is an expanding phenomenon on social media platforms. StudyTubers, a “portmanteau of study and YouTube” (Hirst, 2022, p. 1,096), is a colloquial term for students studying at a higher education institution (HEI), specifically a university, who create “niche” (Hirst, 2022, p. 1096) video content on social media platforms showcasing their experiences in HE (Garrido & Arias, 2023; Hirst, 2022; Izquierdo-Iranzo & Gallardo-Echenique, 2020). StudyTubers post study-related content such as aesthetic notetaking, the processes of studying (Abed, 2022), going to the library or lectures, study advice (Izquierdo-Iranzo & Gallardo-Echenique, 2020), academic resources (Taddeo, 2023), “Study with Me” vlogs<sup>1</sup> (Lee et al., 2021, p. 1), items that prospective university students should buy, the campus, how they decorated their room, their social life, university inductions, or graduation (Hirst, 2022).

There is limited literature exploring StudyTube and even less literature on why people watch StudyTube. Thus, this dissertation addresses the gap in the literature by exploring the motivations behind watching StudyTube using a qualitative research method. Moreover, the study undertakes an “interpretivism research philosophy” (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020, p. 42). Twenty-one participants were recruited, predominantly through a poster calling for participants shared by a

---

<sup>1</sup> ‘Study with Me’ content is videos or live streams of the StudyTuber studying (Hassan, 2023; Hirst, 2022). Viewers often use these videos to study virtually with the StudyTuber.

StudyTuber on social media. The criteria for participants were that they regularly watched StudyTube. The study conducted a thematic data analysis of 21 interviews and distributed a questionnaire to gather data on the participants' demographics and characteristics.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of the Literature**

Despite the global popularity of StudyTubers among students (Bacescu, 2017), there is a lack of research examining this area (Abed, 2022; Swanepoel & Bruwer, 2020; Taddeo, 2023). There are similarities between bloggers, vloggers, online educators for students and StudyTubers. Therefore, this chapter discusses literature on bloggers, vloggers, and online educators. However, literature on why people read student blogs could not be found on Google Scholar and Search Oxford Libraries Online (SOLO). Moreover, student vloggers fall under the category of StudyTubers (Hirst, 2022). Thus, the literature reviewed is on bloggers and vloggers in general, rather than student bloggers and vloggers. After analysing the literature on why people engage with content by bloggers, vloggers and online educators, the chapter discusses the literature surrounding StudyTubers. Lastly, the chapter discusses the literature on the viewers of StudyTube.

### **Bloggers, Vloggers and Online Educators**

Blogging is where individuals write blogs online; written content comprising their thoughts about various topics (Bacescu, 2017; Blood, 2000; Hassan, 2023; Farmer et al., 2008). Vloggers are like bloggers, except they vlog, which is “a video blog: a record of your thoughts, opinions, or experiences that you film and publish on the internet” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024). There is a notable overlap between vloggers and StudyTubers because StudyTubers are vloggers who vlog about university-related content (Hirst, 2022). Moreover, although StudyTubers do not necessarily teach viewers about a specific discipline, like online educators (Izquierdo-

Iranzo & Gallardo-Echenique, 2020), they are similar to online educators because StudyTubers often give practical advice and teach viewers how to study effectively (Hirst, 2022). Moreover, StudyTubers might be likened to Bloggers because they create content on Instagram, often uploaded alongside written captions. However, StudyTube predominantly encompasses vlogs on YouTube.

### ***Why People Read Blogs***

In a quantitative study by Jung et al. (2012, p. 1627) it was found that the reasons people read blogs on a South Korean social media platform were “impression management” and “voyeuristic surveillance”. People engage in “voyeuristic surveillance” to glimpse into the lives of others who anonymously post online (Jung et al., 2012, p. 1627). Moreover, people undertook “impression management” by curating their content to control how others perceived them (Jung et al., 2012, p. 1627). Moreover, “social support” obtained from viewing and creating blogs was positively associated with a “sense of belonging and psychological wellbeing” and a negative association with “loneliness” (Jung et al., 2012, p. 1632). Furthermore, “voyeuristic surveillance” and “impression management” (Jung et al., 2012, p. 1632) are both positively associated with “social comparison”. “Social comparison” is where one desires to compare oneself against others (Festinger, 1954, p. 117). The reasons for reading blogs are “impression management”, and “voyeuristic surveillance” which facilitate this comparison of oneself with others online (Jung et al., 2012, p. 1632). It remains to be seen whether reading blogs to compare oneself to others, validating one’s identity and obtaining social support also applies to StudyTube.

### ***Why People Watch Vloggers***

A study by Bilginer and Otay (2022) found that the reasons people view social media influencers<sup>2</sup> who vlog differed depending on demographics. Those older than 25 were most likely to follow a particular social media influencer because they provided practical knowledge and news about the latest goods to buy, comprising 21.7% of participants. Moreover, the reasons differed regarding the individual's level of education. Those who obtained a bachelor's degree were likelier than those with less education to follow social media influencers for practical knowledge. Those without a bachelor's degree were likelier to follow social media influencers because they were physically attractive. The evidence indicates that some people engage with social media influencers to learn practical knowledge and about new technology and goods to buy. These findings are insightful in understanding why people might watch content by social media influencers. The question arises whether people watch StudyTubers for the same reasons.

### ***Why Students Watch Online Educators' Content***

Online educators differ from vloggers and bloggers as they create educational videos online that teach viewers content such as specific subject disciplines (Edwards et al., 2011). An example is Salman Khan, known online as Khan Academy, a popular online educator providing educational content (Thompson, 2011). Salman

---

<sup>2</sup> Social media influencers post various content, including vlogs, on social media platforms (Khamis et al., 2017). They have a significant following and thus are considered to influence people on social media (Abidin, 2018). Social media influencers post about a range of topics, and StudyTubers are one of the many types of social media influencers.

Khan uses YouTube videos to informally support students' education by teaching academic subjects.

Some researchers have examined why people view educational content on social media platforms such as YouTube or Instagram for learning purposes (Baisden & Pope, 2020; Hassan, 2023; Jung & Lee, 2015; Obeso et al., 2023; Snelson, 2011). In a qualitative study by Taddeo (2023), viewers' perceptions of learning on Instagram from online educators who posted content on various topics were examined. Eighty-two per cent of the social media content that all the participants engaged with was considered educational content. This educational content included skills to support one's emotional progression and ability to help oneself or others; coaching fundamental skills and resourceful tips; advocacy for political change; and the education of specific academic disciplines, which made up 40%, 14%, 38% and eight per cent of educational themes watched by participants, respectively. The study found that the viewers utilised knowledge from online educators to improve their emotional capabilities, learn interpersonal skills, and were inspired to continue pursuing their goals despite potential failure. It was found that students could learn educational content about subject disciplines from online educators. Overall, viewers felt they could learn informally from online educators on Instagram. Thus, online educators who provide educational content serve as "informal educators" (Taddeo, 2023, p. 147). This finding suggests that viewers obtain knowledge from online educators from a broad spectrum of topics.

Furthermore, Hassan (2023) reported that viewers of content by online educators viewed the content as beneficial. Similarly, Bacescu (2017) found that 83% of participants who watched YouTube engaged with it for educational purposes, and

most viewers also engaged with YouTube content for entertainment. Similarly, Swanepoel and Bruwer (2020) argue that HEIs can utilise Instagram to support students' academic learning outside the classroom for their specific university modules. Given all that has been discussed, the evidence indicates that students view content provided by online educators to learn and for entertainment.

## **StudyTubers**

### ***The Impact of Creating Content on StudyTubers***

Few authors have examined the impact of producing study content on the StudyTubers themselves (Brown et al., 2016). A quantitative study by Lussier et al. (2023) found that students who were instructed to act as if they were StudyTubers by taking photos of their study areas, experienced increased motivation, enjoyed studying more and were more likely to achieve their academic goals than in comparison to the control group. The visualisation element of the study space photo supported their motivation and gratification of studying. However, there were no differences between the control and the treatment group regarding their enjoyment level and motivation after finishing the assignment. The authors argue that taking a photo of study spaces only impacts the students' enjoyment and motivation before starting the assignment, and this is not maintained once the assignment is finished. However, these findings cannot be generalised to the population of StudyTubers because the participants did not post the images on social media and were not allowed to take photos of themselves - which StudyTubers sometimes do. The findings might have differed if the researchers had implemented these measures. Furthermore, the

images did not represent the stereotypical StudyTube content by StudyTubers because they were not aesthetic and were images of untidy and dull study spaces.

### ***The Reasons Why StudyTubers Provide Content***

Few researchers have examined why StudyTubers post content. In a research study by Snelson (2015), it was found that StudyTubers vlogged their academic lives because other students in their cohort vlogged, they were bored and enjoyed vlogging, they wanted to become more confident and improve their ability to communicate, they wanted to contribute knowledge or they relate to other students who watched their content. Furthermore, StudyTubers are also social media influencers (Abidin, 2018) and can get paid for the content created because they can influence the followers to buy products and services (Izquierdo-Iranzo & Gallardo-Echenique, 2020; Jayadeva, 2024; Khamis et al., 2017; Taddeo, 2023; Wang & Picone, 2023). Moreover, they can get paid through YouTube advertisements which run before, during or after the video (Soha & McDowell, 2016). Thus, one incentive for StudyTubers to create content might be for monetary purposes. Overall, the evidence suggests that some of the reasons StudyTubers may choose to vlog are for personal gain.

On the other hand, the StudyTubers may post for altruistic reasons. Bacescu (2017) found that the vlogger's opinions can be shared globally. Thus, if a StudyTuber wants to share their opinion on studying and academia internationally, posting content on social media would facilitate this. Therefore, for StudyTubers who study abroad, their reasoning for posting study content was to support and encourage those to study at HE abroad (Jayadeva, 2024). Moreover, StudyTubers on Instagram

post aesthetic academic notetaking and processes to transform viewers' perceptions of studying from difficult and boring to exciting (Abed, 2022). This evidence implies that StudyTubers post content to inspire and motivate students to study.

A study by Hirst (2022) found that StudyTubers aim to widen participation in HE for disadvantaged<sup>3</sup> students by normalising student life at prestigious universities<sup>4</sup> and acting as mentors who aim to inspire and provide information about HE.

Disadvantaged students tend not to have the social capital or sufficient advice and resources from their schools that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds<sup>5</sup> have (Hoxby & Avery, 2013; Reid & Moore, 2008; Rivera, 2016; O'Sullivan et al., 2018). Thus, Hirst theorised that disadvantaged students reap the benefits of gaining insights from StudyTubers more than students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds who already have social capital. However, this assumption by Hirst is based on why StudyTubers post content; the viewers' perspectives were not researched. Although the evidence shows that widening participation in HE is one of the reasons that StudyTubers provide content, research is needed to understand the viewers' perspectives and explore whether obtaining important information about HE is why they choose to watch StudyTube.

---

<sup>3</sup>'Disadvantaged' students refer to those who do not traditionally access HE and are underrepresented in prestigious universities (Boliver, 2013). These students tend to be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, have attended "state schools" funded by the government, are of "black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin" (Boliver, 2013, p. 345), "disabled students" and "care experienced students" (Hirst, 2022, p. 1095).

<sup>4</sup> In this dissertation, 'prestigious universities' refer to the 24 Russell Group Universities in the UK, particularly Oxford and Cambridge University, colloquially termed Oxbridge (Oxford Reference, 2024; Russell Group, 2024) and Ivy League colleges in the United States. It also refers to the top 100 globally ranked universities in the Times Higher Education (2024) rankings.

<sup>5</sup> Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds traditionally attend private schools and prestigious universities (Boliver, 2013).

## **The Viewers of StudyTube Content**

### ***The Viewers' Characteristics and Demographics***

Hirst (2022) addressed the demographics of those who engage with StudyTubers, finding that viewers were mostly between 13 and 24 years old and approximately twice as likely to be female. Similarly, Arango-Montoya and Gallardo-Echenique (2021) studied viewers of a StudyTuber in Peru, which were all students within the age range of 18 to 24. Likewise, the demographics of followers of a StudyTuber in a study by Quinio (2021, p. 1) are also between “18 and 24” years old. Overall, the evidence shows that the viewers of StudyTube are of a similar age to the StudyTubers.

A quantitative study (N=384) by Kim and Ryoo (2023) explored the learning characteristics of the viewers of ‘Study with Me’ videos, one of the types of StudyTube content. ‘Study with Me’ videos first became popular in South Korea and popularised internationally. Approximately 80% of the participants were female, and 20% were male. Approximately 40% were aged 20 to 24, 40% were 25 to 29 and 14% were 30 or above. The participants were categorised into three “motivational orientations” of learning: “goal-oriented, learner-oriented, and activity-oriented” (Kim and Ryoo, 2023, p. 98050). Most participants (64%) were “goal-oriented”, where one is motivated to learn and study to accomplish a particular goal, such as passing examinations (Kim and Ryoo, 2023, p. 98050). Twenty percent of participants were “learner-oriented”, where learning is the intrinsic goal because they enjoy the learning process (Kim and Ryoo, 2023, p. 98051). Lastly, 16% of participants were “activity-oriented” learners, where one learns to form strong connections with others, platonically or romantically (Kim and Ryoo, 2023, p.

98051). Kim and Ryoo call for further research to explore why viewers of ‘Study with Me’ videos choose to watch them.

### ***Why People Watch StudyTube Content***

There are few studies on StudyTube content and fewer studies on why people watch this type of content. In a qualitative study by Arango-Montoya & Gallardo-Echenique (2021) examining the viewers' perspectives of one StudyTuber, the viewers expressed that to watch StudyTube content they require limited adverts, content to be posted regularly, and an online community. However, the study by Arango-Montoya & Gallardo-Echenique (2021) only looked at the viewers who watched one Peruvian StudyTuber. It is worth exploring whether a sense of community is why people watch StudyTube in contexts other than Peru.

Furthermore, one study by Lee et al. (2021) explored why people watch the increasingly popular ‘Study with Me’ videos. These videos generally do not include talking, which allows viewers to study virtually with the StudyTuber. Figure 1 is a typical still image of a ‘Study with Me’ video, with a timer, academic work and electronics, such as a laptop. The academic discipline-specific content is not explicitly shown, as the video focuses on studying virtually with the StudyTuber (Lee et al., 2021, p. 2). It was found that one of the key reasons people viewed this study content was to have a satisfying “virtual study space”, where they can “self-regulate” their “learning” (Lee et al., 2021, p. 2). This online study environment, where the StudyTubers are assumed to be studying difficult academic content for a long period creates a “social ambience” for the viewer (Lee et al., 2021, p. 7). The online study environment motivates the viewer to focus and study for long periods. The online

study environment provides the viewers with a “sense of togetherness”, which leads to feelings of being supported emotionally (Lee et al., 2021, p. 2). The need for “emotional support” is often because the participants felt “lonely” when they were not able to study with someone else, which occurred either because of the isolation associated with COVID-19, studying at times no one else studied, or being an international “exchange student” (Lee et al., 2021, p. 8). Moreover, although a “sense of togetherness” can be obtained by studying with friends in real life, the participants felt distracted because they would end up talking to their friends (Lee et al., 2021, p. 7). People were drawn to this online study environment because they had limitations with creating their own satisfactory study space offline, either due to COVID restrictions, the monetary costs of going to study places such as a café, or the inability to find other “highly motivated” individuals to study with because of their limited “social capital” (Lee et al., 2021, p. 7). Given the difficulties of creating one’s ideal offline study space, the ‘Study with Me’ videos provide the viewers with the ability to create a desired study space with their preferred “ambience” (Lee et al., 2021, p. 7). As discussed earlier, ‘Study with Me’ videos are just one type of content that StudyTubers provide. Thus, research is needed to understand why people watch the various content by StudyTubers.

The figure originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright.  
The figure was sourced at Lee, Y., Chung, J. J. Y., Song, J. Y., Chang, M., & Kim, J. (2021). Personalizing Ambience and Illusionary Presence: How People Use “Study with Me” Videos to Create Effective Studying Environments. *Proceedings of the 2021. CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3411764.3445222>

### ***The Impact of StudyTube Content on Viewers***

There is limited literature on the impact of StudyTube content on the viewers. One study by Jayadeva (2024) examined StudyTubers who posted content on YouTube showcasing their experiences and insights into their year abroad studying in Germany and the impact this had on the viewers, who were also students. The videos encompassed the day-to-day experiences of the StudyTubers, trips around Germany, the university campus and accommodation, tips for viewers on how to study abroad

in Germany, and insights into the German HE system and graduate labour market. Through interviews with students who had migrated to Germany, participants confirmed that they had chosen to study in Germany because of the StudyTube content. The findings suggested that some of the viewers were influenced by the StudyTuber and obtained the necessary “social and cultural capital” to successfully migrate from their home country, India, to study abroad in Germany (Jayadeva, 2024, p. 1). Overall, it seems clear that in a study-abroad context, viewers can be inspired by StudyTubers and obtain important social capital for a successful migration to another country. Without access to the study content and insights, the viewers might not have known how to migrate successfully.

### **Summary of the Literature Review**

This literature review has discussed why people read blogs and watch vloggers and online educators. The main reasons people engaged with this content were for “voyeuristic surveillance”, “impression management”, “social comparison”, “social support” (Jung et al., 2012, p. 1632), practical knowledge, learning about the latest goods, (Bilginer & Otay, 2022), entertainment (Bacescu, 2017), and learning about subject disciplines (Taddeo, 2023). The question arose whether these reasons for engaging with this content also apply to watching StudyTube content. Moreover, it was found that viewers of ‘Study with Me’ videos were motivated to study. Some of the reason why viewers watch ‘Study with Me’ videos is to create their ideal study environment free from distractions which self-regulates their learning, and for virtual companionship with hardworking students and a feeling of a community whilst studying (Lee et al., 2021). However, this is just one type of StudyTube content. It is

worth exploring whether these reasons apply to watching all StudyTube content. Moreover, the literature review discussed the reasons why StudyTubers post content; for enjoyment (Snelson, 2015), monetary purposes (Izquierdo-Iranzo & Gallardo-Echenique, 2020), and to widen participation in HE (Hirst, 2022) or inspire and give students the knowledge to study abroad (Jayadeva, 2024).

### **Problem Statement**

StudyTube is a growing phenomenon on social media platforms. However, there is limited literature on StudyTube. Furthermore, there is even less literature explaining why people watch StudyTube. This dissertation aims to address the gap in the literature by researching the motivations behind watching StudyTubers. Thus, the research question is: Why do people watch StudyTube content?

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The methodology chapter discusses the study's research paradigm. It first discusses the general perspective of the study, the qualitative approach and theoretical underpinnings. It then goes on to briefly explain the context of the study, explaining who the participants and StudyTubers are and when the study was undertaken. Then it describes the instruments used: interviews, a questionnaire, and my interpretation and positionality. Next, it describes the research design procedures, which include ethical approval, how participants were recruited, obtaining consent from the participants, the interview, and the structure and results of the questionnaire. Lastly, the chapter explains how the data was analysed using Braun & Clarke's (2006) six stages.

#### **The General Perspective**

Given the research question and research philosophy, a qualitative approach is the optimal method to gain thorough and rich data from the participants (Gill et al., 2008; Saunders et al., 2003). A quantitative approach would not have supported a comprehensive and rich understanding of why people watch StudyTubers (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). One of the theoretical underpinnings of this dissertation is Bourdieu's (2010) social capital theory, which supports the analysis of why people watch StudyTubers.

I approached this dissertation with an "interpretivism research philosophy" (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020, p. 42). Moreover, the ontological stance on reality in this study is that it is "socially constructed", can differ between participants, (Saunders et al., 2003, p. 119) and is "subjective" (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020, p. 42). Furthermore,

the epistemological stance is that “meanings and social phenomena” are “subjective” (Saunders et al., 2003, p. 119). Additionally, I value social justice, inclusivity, and equity in HE. This axiological perspective is intertwined with and affects the research; the “research is value bound” and thus, the findings of this study are also “subjective” (Saunders et al., 2003).

## **Research Context**

The dissertation aims to obtain a comprehensive and rich understanding of why people watch StudyTube content. The StudyTubers discussed by the participants are various popular StudyTubers from around the world who study at prestigious universities. The participants are predominantly students from various countries and universities, who watch the StudyTube content. The interviews of these participants were conducted predominantly online between the 17<sup>th</sup> of May and the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2024.

## **Instruments**

### ***Semi-structured Interviews***

One of the instruments used in this qualitative study is semi-structured, individual “in-depth interviews” with participants who watch StudyTube to understand why they watch it (Rosenthal, 2016, p. 510). Semi-structured interviews are used because some degree of structure is necessary to obtain a comprehensive understanding of why people watch StudyTubers. Additionally, the semi-structured aspect of the interview allowed me to deviate from the initial set of interview questions (See Appendix E) and probe the participants’ interesting points. This

“probing” allowed the participant to clarify their perspectives, and to explore interesting and “sensitive” topics (Barriball & While, 1994, p. 331). Additionally, “probing” is an opportunity to interact in-depth with the participant, which builds rapport. Building rapport reduces the possibility of participants answering in a “socially desirable” way and establishes “trust”, which facilitates honest and rich accounts from the participants (Barriball & While, 1994; Prior, 2018; Weller, 2017, p. 614). Thus, exploring interesting and unexpected participants’ insights was essential to obtain rich data (Barriball & While, 1994, p. 329). Rapport was also gained with the participants when similarities between us were discovered (Dianiska et al., 2021). Three participants attended the same undergraduate university as I did, the University of Durham, and one of them studied the same subject, economics. Furthermore, five participants are also Oxford University students or alumni.

Nineteen of the participants were interviewed on Microsoft Teams. This online aspect of the semi-structured interviews was beneficial because most of the participants were not based in the researchers’ location, Oxford, and were located across the world (See Table 1). Thus, this is a cost-effective and time-efficient method to interview participants (Rosenthal, 2016; Weller, 2017). Furthermore, two participants were interviewed in person, in a private room at an Oxford University college.

Additionally, most questions were open rather than closed to ensure the participants’ answers were in-depth. “Leading” questions were avoided, and neutrality was maintained to avoid suggesting to the participants a particular answer (Gill et al., 2008, p. 293). These “open-ended and neutral” questions allowed for a breadth of comprehensive data to be obtained because participants shared their

perspectives, “opinions, feelings, and knowledge” in detail (Hollstein, 2014; Rosenthal, 2016, pp. 510-512).

### *Questionnaire*

The second instrument used in this research is a questionnaire to obtain demographical and background data on the 21 participants. The data from the questionnaire provides contextual information on the participants’ demographics and background and was used to discuss the findings (Rosenthal, 2016). One disadvantage of the questionnaire is some data is missing as some participants preferred not to answer some questions.

Similarly to research by Boliver (2013), question 11 in the questionnaire, ‘What type of job did your highest-paid parent have?’ aimed to understand the participants’ social class, with the participants’ parents’ occupation used as a proxy (Appendix A). Although social class can be measured in other ways, such as the educational status of the participants’ parents (Diemer et al., 2013), most participants were students. Thus, measuring the parents’ occupational prestige was a more useful indicator of social class. Moreover, questionnaires aiming to measure participants’ social class can encompass social, economic, and cultural capital, as demonstrated by the BBC’s “Great British class calculator” (BBC, 2011). However, I did not want the participants to avoid answering or become disinterested in answering a long questionnaire, which could affect the “quality, reliability, and response rates” of the questionnaire answers (Sharma, 2022). Thus, the participants’ parents’ occupation remained as a proxy for social class.

### ***Positionality***

As this is a qualitative study, the final instrument used in this study is my interpreting ability (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). My positionality guides and influences the analysis (Holmes, 2020). As a former viewer of StudyTube content and as a student, I fit the same criteria required of the participants, and thus, am an “insider” to the community of people who watch StudyTube (Holmes, 2020, p. 5). This insider position can encourage rich and authentic answers from the participant, as well as an understanding of the colloquial terms used by this group. However, my position leads to some degree of bias in the research. On the other hand, the participants’ demographics and backgrounds vary (See Table 1) and thus, differ from mine. Thus, I can also be considered an “outsider”, where the advantages and disadvantages of this position are the reverse of the “insider” position (Holmes, 2020, p. 5).

### **Ethics**

It was necessary to get permission to undertake the research and obtain approval from the Education Research Ethics Committee before contacting participants and conducting interviews. Thus, a detailed account of the research plan was included in The Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) 1B form and submitted to the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2024. The CUREC form (Appendix B) was approved on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2024 (Appendix C). The study followed CUREC’s best practice guidance documents (University of Oxford, 2024a).

Moreover, the universities and academic subjects were coded to reduce the possibility of “deductive disclosure”, where a reader may deduct a participant’s identity based on their characteristics (Braun et al., 2021; Kaiser, 2009, p. 1632). The subject studied by the participants was coded into discipline areas using the University of Oxford’s (2024b) and Collins and Stone’s (2014) categorisation of subjects. Universities were coded into either Russell Group, Oxbridge or university ranking in the country or region and rounding up to the nearest five ranking if listed in the Times Higher Education rankings (2024). It is important for the participants not to be identifiable because it was explained in the information sheet and emphasised in the interview that they would not be identifiable (Wiles et al., 2012). A breach of trust between the researcher and participants by revealing their identities in the study would be unethical (Kaiser, 2009). Moreover, the most important reason for anonymising the participants was to “safeguard” them and reduce the possibility of “harm” to them (Wiles et al., 2012, pp. 41-46). Additionally, no participants requested to be identifiable, and a few participants emphasised that they did not want to be identifiable, with two participants remaining off-camera in the interview.

### **Quality of Research**

This dissertation aimed to follow Tracy’s (2010) criteria for high-quality qualitative research. The discussed ethical considerations and approval from the CUREC contribute to achieving high-quality research, according to Tracy’s (2010) criteria. Secondly, since StudyTube is an under-researched growing phenomenon, the research topic is “worthy” (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). Moreover, since the study meticulously followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guide to analysing the rich data

collected, the study has rigour. Additionally, the study is considered to have “sincerity” (Tracy, 2010, p. 840), as I aim to be self-reflexive and transparent, as discussed in the positionality and limitations section, respectively. The study is credible since the findings section presents a sufficient and “thick description” of the data (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). Moreover, with rich data presented, the study aimed for the findings to be engaging and transferable to other contexts, and for the reader to resonate with the findings. Additionally, the study seeks to make a “significant contribution” with practical implications for educational practice and calls for further research, as discussed in the discussion chapter (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). Lastly, the study achieved “meaningful coherence”; it answered the research question and used an appropriate research method given the study’s aims (Tracy, 2010, p. 840).

### **Research Design Procedures**

The predominant sampling method used was convenience sampling because it is a simple and “efficient” way to recruit participants (Gill, 2020). A call for participants who fit the criteria was initiated in May 2024 by sharing a poster (Appendix D) on WhatsApp groups used by some Oxford University colleges and Department of Education members, which led to recruiting two participants. The criteria for participants to participate in the study were that they had to be 18 years old or over, and currently or used to watch StudyTubers regularly. The poster was also shared with a Durham University student Facebook group ‘Overheard at Durham Uni’, with 26,000 members, which led to recruiting two participants. Moreover, an email was sent to Ruby Granger, a popular StudyTuber studying at Oxford University, to ask if she would support the recruitment of participants. The

StudyTuber shared the poster to her Instagram story, which was visible for 24 hours, where 217,000 people who follow her may have seen it. This resulted in the recruitment of 16 participants. Snowball sampling was attempted because it is a useful and time-saving way to recruit further participants (Gill, 2020). This resulted in recruiting one participant.

The convenience sampling method does not always lead to recruiting participants who can provide the most useful information (Gill, 2020). Thus, to ensure that participants who volunteered were suitable for the study, they were asked which StudyTubers they engaged with to confirm that they regularly watched content by StudyTubers rather than online educators or other vloggers. Confirming they watched StudyTubers and ensuring there was no misunderstanding of what was meant by StudyTuber ensured that the most suitable participants were recruited who could provide optimal information and perspectives on why they watch StudyTubers.

Thirty-two people expressed interest in participating and 21 participants were interviewed. All 21 participants read participant information sheets (See Appendix H & I), which described the aims of the study, why it was being conducted, potential disadvantages and benefits, what would happen to their data, contact details of the researcher and supervisor, and that their participation is voluntary. The participants then confirmed they were 18 years or above, and signed consent forms with their initials, confirming they read the participation sheet and agree to take part and be audio recorded.

A pilot interview was undertaken with an acquaintance to ensure the questions were logical and open-ended. At the beginning of each interview, brief introductions were made between the participant and researcher, and the participants were

reminded that the discussion was being recorded, and deleted after the automated transcript was corrected and that their data remains anonymous in the dissertation. The participants were asked 35 questions based on the literature review and research question (Appendix E). The researcher took few notes, as this is often disruptive, and Microsoft Teams automatically transcribed the audio (Rosenthal, 2016).

The saturation of data was used to determine the sample size of the participants to be interviewed (Gill, 2020). The saturation of data in this dissertation was reached when there was sufficient data for the study; additional information would not be found by conducting more interviews because the quality of data was detailed and comprehensive (Morse, 1995). Interviewing until data saturation is reached is essential to ensure exceptional and valid qualitative findings (Morse, 1995). The data saturation was reached at 21 interviews, providing rich and detailed data. The average interview time was 48 minutes, the minimum was 22 minutes, and the maximum was 80 minutes.

After completing the 21 interviews, the participants were asked to complete a 13-question questionnaire to obtain data on their demographics, occupation, school type, and social class (Appendix A). The questionnaire was created using Microsoft Forms and a link to the questionnaire was emailed to the 21 participants. Collecting this data was important to understand their background and contextually understand the findings and discussion. A pilot questionnaire was undertaken to ensure the questions were logical and would be understood by participants. The questionnaire results are illustrated in Tables 1 and 2. To understand the participants' social class, the questionnaire asked what the participants' highest-paid parent did for work. Eight different social classes were drawn from the Office for National Statistics (ONS)

(2011) for the questionnaire. Examples of specific occupations for each class category were drawn from the ONS (2011) and the Institute for Social and Economic Research (2006). The categories of race for the participants to answer were drawn from the ONS (2021).

### **Overview of the Participants**

Tables 1 and 2 present the demographics and background of the participants collected from the questionnaire. Most participants are women and current students. The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 45. Participants were from all over the world, with different ethnicities, social classes, universities, and studying various subjects. The various backgrounds and characteristics were helpful to gain a range of perspectives in the interviews.

**Table 1***Participant Demographics*

P	Gender	Age	Ethnic group	Country they are from	Occupation	Education Status	University/ universities	Subject
P1	Woman	21	Chinese	Hong Kong	Student	Bachelor's	Russell Group	Medical Sciences
P2	Woman	45	White	England	Student and working	Master's	Top 15 in Australia and Russell Group	Medical Sciences
P3	Woman	23	African	UK	Student and part-time work	Master's	Oxbridge	Social Sciences
P4	Woman	21	Asian	Philippines	Student	Bachelor's	Russell Group	Social Sciences
P5	Woman	45	White	USA	Full-time work	Bachelor's	Top 500 in the US	Humanities
P6		26	Indian	Australian citizen, of Gujarat origin	Unemployed	High School	Top 5 university in Australia	Social Science and Humanities
P7	Woman	24	Chinese	China	Student	Master's	Oxbridge	Social Sciences
P8	Man	19	White	UK	Student	Bachelor's	Russell Group	Social Sciences
P9	Woman	22	White and Asian	India	Student	Master's	University in India*	Social Sciences
P10	Woman	25	Chinese	China	Student and part-time work	Master's	Oxbridge	Social Sciences
P11		22	Indian	India	Student	Master's	Top 250 in Asia	Humanities
P12	Woman	29		Peru	Unemployed	Bachelor's	Top 125 in Latin America	Humanities
P13	Non-binary	23	White	England	Student	Master's	Russell Group and Oxbridge	Social Sciences
P14	Woman	21	Indian	India	Student	Bachelor's	University in India*	Humanities
P15	Woman	27	Hungarian, Irish, English	Hungary	Student and part-time work	Master's	Top 6 in Hungary	Social Sciences and Humanities
P16	Woman	21	Asian	Indonesia	Student	Bachelor's	University in Indonesia*	Humanities
P17	Woman	33	White	Austria	Student and full-time work	PhD	Top 30 in the UK, Top 95 in the UK, University in Sweden*, and University in Sweden*	Social Sciences; Humanities; Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences
P18	Man	25	Asian	Canada	Student	Master's	Top 5 in Canada, Oxbridge	Humanities
P19	Woman	23	Chinese	China	Student	Master's	Russell Group	Humanities
P20	Woman	30	White	England	Full-time work	Bachelor's	Top 65 University in the UK	Humanities
P21	Woman	27	White	Serbia	Student	MD	Top 5 in Serbia	Medical Sciences

*Note.* This table illustrates the participants' (P) demographics and background. The blank cells refer to where participants preferred not to answer.

\*No ranking was available for these universities in the Times Higher Education ranking because they do “not fulfil the inclusion criteria for the rankings, or” do “not score highly enough to be included” (Times Higher Education, 2023).

**Table 2***Participants' Social Class, First-generation Status and School Type*

<b>P</b>	<b>Social Class</b>	<b>First-generation Student</b>	<b>School Type at 16</b>
P1	2	No	Private
P2	2	Yes	State School
P3		Yes	State School
P4	1	No	International School
P5	4	No	State School
P6	1	No	Private School
P7	1	No	State School
P8	1	No	State School
P9	2	No	Private School
P10			
P11			
P12	4	Yes	State School
P13		No	Private School
P14			Private School
P15	3	Yes	State School
P16			Private School
P17	2	Yes	State School
P18	1	No	Private School
P19	2	No	State School
P20	5	Yes	State School
P21	1	No	State School

*Note.* This table illustrates the participants' social class, first-generation status and school type attended at 16 years old. Social class corresponds to 'Large employers, higher grade professional, administrative and managerial occupations' = 1, 'Lower grade professional, administrative and managerial occupations: higher grade technician and supervisory occupations' = 2, 'Intermediate occupations' = 3, 'Small employers and self-employed in non-professional occupations' = 4, 'Lower supervisory and lower technical occupations' = 5, 'Semi-routine occupations' = 6, 'Routine Occupations' = 7, 'Never worked or long-term unemployed' = 8. 'First-generation' is where the participants' parents did not attend university, where 'yes' means the participant is a first-generation student and 'no' means one or more of their parents attended university. The blank cells refer to where participants preferred not to answer.

## Data Analysis

To analyse the data, the study undertook a thematic data analysis approach, which establishes themes in the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). More specifically, this study followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages to analyse thematic data. Thematic data analysis was the most suitable analysis for this study because it is a valuable way to analyse the qualitative data from the interviews and provides a "rich" and intricate understanding of the participants' perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Furthermore, thematic data analysis can be undertaken in conjunction with a variety of epistemological perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006), including interpretivism, the epistemological perspective of this study (Xu & Zammit, 2020).

The transcripts are texts of everything the participant and interviewer said in the interviews, which are automatically generated by Microsoft Teams. These 21 transcripts are data items. The first stage of Braun and Clarke's (2006, p. 87) analysis is to "familiarise" oneself with the data. This stage of analysis was undertaken by reading all the data items multiple times. The second stage is the "initial" coding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). As each data item was read through multiple times (stage one), any "interesting" parts of the data were extracted from the data item and coded into Excel (stage two), as data extracts (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3353). The analysis stages are non-linear, and thus, stages one and two were undertaken cyclically throughout the analysis. In Excel, the participants' assigned numbers<sup>6</sup> were listed vertically in the first column, codes were recorded horizontally in the top row, and data extracts were placed accordingly.

---

<sup>6</sup> The participants were assigned numbers in the chronological order of when they were interviewed.

Before coding the data extracts into Excel, the data extracts were checked and corrected for nuances, and to ensure the text was a “verbatim account” of what the participant said, including correct punctuation by playing the video recording of the interview (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). Interesting thoughts that occurred when reading the data extracts or necessary context were noted underneath the relevant data extracts. The sample size of 21 participants is not as extensive as some large-scale qualitative research projects; thus, it was not necessary to code the data using software such as NVivo (Rosenthal, 2016). Moreover, organising the data manually was beneficial because reading the transcripts multiple times is a key part of this analysis stage.

The third stage was to seek themes in the coded data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis took a bottom-up approach; themes were developed inductively, meaning they were developed from patterns in the data, rather than from theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). Codes were organised into broad themes in a thematic map (Appendix F).

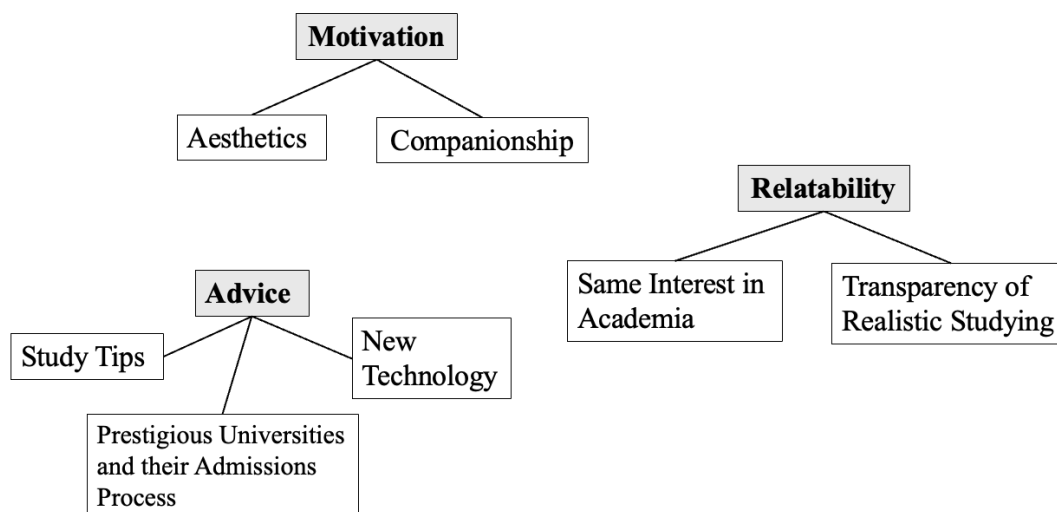
After the initial organisation of codes into broad themes, stage four was undertaken by refining and “reviewing the themes” and subthemes in the thematic map (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). The themes in the first thematic map were reviewed by verifying them with the “coded data extracts” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). This verification of themes was undertaken by reading the data extracts to confirm if there is a consistent and meaningful pattern. A pattern was identified if it had occurred across many participants or frequently within one data item. With the themes that did not have a consistent and meaningful pattern, the data extracts in this theme were either moved to more suitable themes or removed entirely. The themes

that were confirmed to have a meaningful pattern were reviewed and verified to see if they “work” with the “entire data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 79-91). The themes *entertainment* and *miscellaneous* were removed after considering the data extracts and data set because there was insufficient data. Furthermore, the themes *companionship* and *aesthetics* merged into the theme *motivation*. At the end of this stage, distinctive themes were formed, that corresponded with the data extracts and data set, and a second thematic map was created (Appendix G).

After the second thematic map was created, the themes were refined and defined, which is detailed in the discussion chapter. Furthermore, these themes were given distinct and succinct names. A final concise thematic map was created, as illustrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Thematic Map of Themes and Subthemes*



*Note.* The final thematic map of the themes and subthemes. Developed inductively from the data, using Braun & Clarke’s (2006) guide for thematic analysis.

The final stage of the thematic analysis is writing up the findings and illustrating the complex account of the themes, in a “concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting” way (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). The analysed data is presented in the findings chapter by reporting some of the data extracts, which are vivid (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and sum up the richness of the data alongside “narrative text” which describes, interprets (Joyner et al., 2013, p. 218) and tells a “story” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). These data extracts are essential to include in the presentation of the findings because the reader can gain an understanding of the interpretation of the data (Rosenthal, 2016, p. 514). This was the optimal way to present the data because the findings were qualitative and comprehensive.

## **Summary**

The methodological chapter discussed how the study takes an interpretive approach and uses a qualitative method. It also explained the context of the study, the instruments used, the reliability and validity of the instruments. Lastly, it discussed the data analysis procedures, which produced the three main themes: *motivation*, *relatability*, and *advice*.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

As discussed in previous chapters, this study analyses the motivations behind watching StudyTube. This chapter presents the results of the thematic data analysis. The chapter is organised in terms of the three themes, and the corresponding subthemes as illustrated in Figure 2 in Chapter Three. This chapter analyses the theme of *motivation* and the subthemes of *aesthetics* and *companionship*. It then analyses the theme *relatability* and the subthemes *same interest in studying* and *transparency of realistic studying*. Lastly, the chapter analyses the theme *advice* and the subthemes *study tips*, *prestigious universities and their admission process* and *new technology*.

#### Motivational

##### *Aesthetics*

Most participants (P2, P6, P9, P10, P11, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P19, P20, P21) reported that they enjoy watching StudyTubers because the content is, as P2 and P15 described, “aesthetically pleasing”. P11 admired how the StudyTubers curate academic aesthetics: “I also like Ruby's aesthetics and how she used to have a beautiful room, beautiful bookshelf”. P10 and P15 felt that StudyTube is popular among viewers because of the “aesthetic” content. P19 explained how she can select a StudyTube video of her preferred aesthetic, which “drag[s]” her away from her “current” study space and makes her feel like she is studying in this aesthetic study space:

They have really cool interior in their in their house... a lot of books or like plants...that's kind of my ideal study environment. So, by watching them, I

kind of feel like I'm at this ideal environment... they're at different places in the, around the world... I can choose whichever places that I really like... [one StudyTuber] has different scenes like the raining days or like snowy days... I just really like the aesthetics there.

Some participants (P2, P9, P10, P11, P15, P17, P20, P21) were influenced by the StudyTubers' aesthetic content and implemented aesthetics into their study spaces. P20 reported how they turned their study space, an "absolute dumping ground", into an aesthetic study space, which made them "feel like a little sort of, Hogwarts student". P17 shared how the StudyTubers have influenced her to create an aesthetic and "sacred space" to study:

I have gotten these cutesy [laughs] accessories because... I like the aesthetics content as well. So I made sure that my desk is now much more or much prettier than it was before. I'm lighting a candle like Ruby does every time... previously I was sitting at a white desk... and now it's like proper set up with pens, notebooks and a candle and tea, I always drink tea as well now.

Whilst some participants were able to implement aesthetics into their study spaces, other participants (P9, P11) noted some barriers. P9 disclosed that the specific stationery that StudyTubers use to make their study spaces aesthetic is "too costly" for them, and instead, bought cheaper stationery from other companies. Similarly, P11 discussed struggling to implement aesthetics into their own study space, because they did not have their own bedroom:

[The StudyTuber] has a beautiful bookshelf where she can put her books... So it was quite aesthetic for me... Then, after watching her, I also made my own

bookshelf, but I kept it in the living room. But now I have my own personal room, and that's where I have kept it.

By implementing aesthetics into their study spaces, participants value the “performative” (P20) aspect of studying. P17 bought a “new calculator” in a “specific pink” for her aesthetic study space, “even though” she does not “need to calculate as much”, explaining that “it’s just to make it look very studious rather than actually using it too much”. Similarly, P20 acknowledged that the implementation of aesthetics is “performative”, but explains that it is “worth it”:

It has made me enjoy kind of aesthetics just for the sake of it. So doing things that is almost like performative, but just to feel nice. So maybe like taking my book out to a cafe. It feels very romantic... I'm gonna be very aware that I'm doing it in this very performative way, but it still feels kind of like joyous.

Similarly, some participants (P11, P20, P21) expressed that they love the “dark academia”<sup>7</sup> aesthetic. P11 and P20 noted implementing this aesthetic into their fashion style. After watching StudyTube, P11 began to “love dark academia”, and embraced a “dark academia” aesthetic “both academically and in the fashion sense” by buying “dark academia outfits” and “going to libraries as often” as possible. P11 explained why they adopted a “dark academia” aesthetic: “[it gives] me happiness, like it gives you a little bit of control that you have on your own life, you have on your own clothing choices”.

---

<sup>7</sup> “Dark academia is a fandom-created genre that structurally draws on campus novels and thriller murder mysteries and extrapolates its aesthetic affects from the Gothic” (Nguyen, 2022, p. 56). The aesthetic of dark academia is “bookish; university-based; Eurocentric; and dandyish” (Murray, 2023, p. 349).

However, beyond the performative aspect of study and the romanticisation of academia, some participants (P2, P10, P11, P15, P17, P20, P21) implemented an aesthetic study space because they feel it motivates them to study. As P2 detailed, the implementation of an aesthetic study space motivates them and their wife to study:

One of the biggest things, and it was a helpful, um, and a lot of them [the StudyTubers] do this, is making a space to study that is conducive with studying, that will attract you to study, that you won't find it a chore. And I've even passed this on to my wife who is studying and she said, 'oh, you can't motivate me to study'. And it's actually, I have this running joke now because I did.

Likewise, P17 explained why implementing an “aesthetical setup” motivates her to study:

It makes it [studying] more enjoyable. I study longer as well. And I also then, the revision part gets easier... previously I did not revise before sending in my essays for example, but now I sit and I read it again and I rework it and so forth.

Similarly, P20 explained why their aesthetic study space makes them “more motivated to sit down” and focus whilst studying: “having a space that looks like I am somebody that focuses. I could almost like cosplay [pretend] that I am, and it helps make me sort of believe it”. Similarly, P10 explained that although making her “desk prettier”, with “candles” and “pretty folders” is “a bit childish”, it is “mood-lifting”: “It’s just make you feel great, make you feel like I’m taking care of myself”, which is “really helpful” when revising. Likewise, P21 disagreed with those who “tend to think that aesthetics are superficial” and explained aesthetics “motivate us” and “in a

way they are kind of [an] extension of us or at least what we aim to be or how we want to live our lives”.

Several participants (P9, P11, P15, P16) discussed that they love watching StudyTubers because they show the aesthetic architecture, with “beautiful” (P15) buildings of old universities. Moreover, participants (P11, P15) enjoy watching content with aesthetic architecture because it motivates them to study at prestigious universities. P11 explained: “I love the architecture of those universities, so it also gives me a little bit motivation to like, study hard, study better, I can get good grades so maybe one day I will study in big universities like that”. Furthermore, P15, felt StudyTube motivates her to apply to Oxbridge, and, as a teacher, recommends her students watch StudyTube: “I sort of recommend them to watch it [StudyTube] because of romanticising the whole thing and maybe they can stay motivated [to apply to Oxbridge] if they see that, oh, I’m going to be in this beautiful place”.

Conversely to participants suggesting the aesthetics of StudyTube motivate them, some participants (P3, P5, P7, P13) do not find it motivating and are unproductive. P13 deduced that the StudyTubers’ aesthetic content has a “methodicalness to it”, where the StudyTubers will “light a candle”, do their “work”, and then “go to a bookshop”. These aesthetic steps before studying are “a little bit funny” because it is “not productive”, as P13 described:

That's a form of procrastination for me, is like lighting the candle and getting myself all situated, cleaning my room and all of that type of thing going to a cafe it's all quite distracting for me, so I prefer to just sit down and work... it seems a little bit anti-productive... when someone's taking really nice notes, like that you can see pages of notes, but is that really helpful?

Similarly, P5 disapproved of the aesthetics of studying: “I’ve seen StudyYouTubers that take a lot of time in like [scoffs], making their Notion [notetaking app] pretty or like making this fancy journal and I'm like that's an art project, and that, to me is separate”. This is confirmed by P3 who used to make her notes aesthetic:

When I was doing my GCSEs... I was being a little bit wasteful with my time, believing that I needed to stay and, just, like, perfect my notes and make them look prettier.

Overall, the data shows that the aesthetics of StudyTube, and the implementation of aesthetics into participants’ lives are a performative act of studying and romanticisation of academia. This performative act of studying leads to some participants finding the aesthetics a pointless endeavour. However, many participants explain that the aesthetics of studying, even if performative, still motivates them to study.

### *Companionship*

Many participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P10, P11, P14, P15, P16, P17, P19, P20, P21) are drawn to watching StudyTube because of the companionship they gain from it. Some of the participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P10, P14, P15, P16, P17, P20) talk about the StudyTubers as if they are a “virtual friend” (P4) they know well. P2 explained: “You really get to know people and you get to know their family. You get to know what they do when they're going to a university”. Similarly, P14 described her favourite StudyTuber:

I feel like she's a friend to me, so that helps me going...Ruby’s videos are like, her whole channel is, has this, like very homely vibe where her mother is

sometimes in the videos. The dog is sometimes in the videos, her friends are, and it's like I'm hanging out with my friends...But there's certain things make me feel very, you know, acquainted with her as a person...Ruby is a very sweet girl and she, you know, talks like she's a, you know, big sister to me. I have none. But it's actually [like] I have one. And Jack, as well, he's like a very fun guy and it's like, I would love to hang out with him one day and like, go book shopping...it's like they're my friends.

Likewise, P17 also views StudyTubers as if they are her siblings: “I remember being so happy when Ruby finally got into Oxford in her master’s degree. I just felt so proud of her, almost like a sister”.

On the one hand, P5 worries about the “parasocial relationship” some people may have with StudyTubers:

I tend to worry a lot about Youtubers...there are people out there that really are not aware of that parasocial relationship and they really see them as friends. I don't really see it that way... I hope they're [the StudyTubers] safe when they go home.

However, P4 and P20 clarify that whilst they view the StudyTubers almost like friends, it is not in a “parasocial way” (P20), as P20 explained:

It's kind of like, they're like a friend...not really in a parasocial way... but it still kind of feels like somebody I know... this kind of idea of this person that we see feels familiar and feels like an element of friendship... the boundary is definitely knowing that they aren't your friend.

However, P3 and P10 described the relationship they have with StudyTubers as “parasocial”. P3 explained why viewing the StudyTubers in a parasocial way helps

her: “Parasocial relationships, they exist for a reason. We're very sociable beings. And when you're denied that you kind of look to anything... to relieve you or soothe you in some way when you're feeling that low”.

Many participants (P1, P3, P5, P11, P14, P16, P19, P20, P21) watch StudyTubers for companionship, often whilst they are studying to make them feel less alone. This can include studying virtually with the StudyTubers by watching ‘Study with Me’ videos. P4 explained that “during exam season, I would watch them [the StudyTubers] more often because I also like having like, accompaniment while I'm revising”. P5, who works full-time and is not a student, has been “working from home since 2020” and explained that the “Study streams...work well when I just need sort of you know, I need somebody there”. P20 started watching StudyTube content during the COVID-19 lockdown because she was lonely and gained “camaraderie” from the “company” of StudyTubers: “So I was in lockdown, living on my own. So for 3-4 months, I was completely isolated and it [StudyTube] made me feel less alone”. Similarly, P3 reported that StudyTubers make her feel less lonely: “As sad as it sounds, it [StudyTube] almost feels like companionship... when I was at uni and I, I had moments where I felt quite lonely”. P3 elaborated that having the StudyTube “video on in the background” during “really long nights” of “studying” is “relieving”. P3 elaborated that the benefit of “companionship” gained from StudyTube “offset[s]” the negative aspects of StudyTube which promote toxic productivity.

The companionship obtained from watching StudyTubers motivates the participants (P1, P3, P4, P11, P14, P16, P17, P19, P20) to study. P20’s main reason for watching StudyTube content is to “feel motivated” to study by “body doubling” with the StudyTubers, where P20 virtually studies with a StudyTuber. P20 explained

why this “solidarity in solo working” with the StudyTubers is motivational: “There's this shared understanding... of really cracking on with work... it is motivating to see somebody do something that you're doing”. P11 explained that during a “low point”, they watch the “Study with Me” videos because it gives them “motivational inspiration”. Participants (P14, P17, P21) expressed that the companionship of StudyTubers is motivational because they function as “accountability” (P21). P14 explained how StudyTubers motivate them and provide accountability to achieve her goals:

The main reason I watch StudyTubers is essentially to get motivated... working with them gives me this feeling like I'm working with somebody and we have a goal, both different goals, but we have a goal to achieve and it just helps me be accountable to myself.

Similarly, P17 explained that a sense of community gained from StudyTube is the only thing that motivates them to study:

[Whenever I] have a big motivational drop... I always put on one of the StudyTube videos and then I feel like, okay, she's studying and she's encouraging everyone to do well... then I get motivated. Without them, I have tried everything from uplifting music to running outside. It's only the StudyTube videos that makes me feel like, okay, I'm part of a community, I have to study. They almost like, weirdly enough, almost as if they are relying on me as well to be a part of and do well in my studies.

P11 and P20 reported that studying with StudyTubers is better than studying with friends in a library because otherwise, they will chat too much with their friends, as P11 explained: “It's not easy to get a study partner, study companion for you who will

sit there quietly and study themselves... so it's it's quite it's quite helpful that you get a virtual companion for studying". Similarly, P14 could not find a study companion in real life: "I like working with study buddies, but there's no potential study buddy".

However, P20 explained how StudyTube is only motivational when they are already feeling good: "If I'm good, [StudyTube is] very impactful. Making me feel like I am just like them and I've got everything sorted. When I'm not good. Not at all". Similarly, P19 explained that the 'Study with Me' videos are not intrinsically motivational, and they will only watch the videos if they are already feeling motivated to study: "When I really wanted to study, I will watch them and when I don't want to study at all, even if I click into that video, I wouldn't be able to finish that". Likewise, P21, explained that watching StudyTubers does not give her "a sudden urge of motivation", but "it perhaps makes those days I don't feel motivated slightly easier to go through" and "easier to bear".

Although a sense of companionship and motivation is gained from the StudyTubers for some participants, the 'Study with Me' videos can be distracting while studying for other participants (P1, P6, P17, P18). P1 and P17 explained that they will watch StudyTubers "before" studying to motivate them and not during because it is distracting. P1 explained that although StudyTubers are "like a companion as well for me. And the motivator to start studying", it is "easier to work... fully on my own... so I don't really watch them [the 'Study with Me' videos]. They are quite a distraction". Similarly, P6 explained that the "Study with Me" videos make them "super uncomfortable".

In summary, the evidence shows that participants watch StudyTube because they gain a sense of companionship and friendship from the StudyTubers. This

companionship motivates participants to study, particularly through ‘Study with Me’ videos. However, some participants find the ‘Study with Me’ videos distracting while studying.

## **Relatability**

### ***Same Interest in Academia***

Most of the participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P20, P21) watch StudyTubers because they relate to them in some way. For P3 and P4, relatability is the “main reason” (P4) for watching StudyTubers. P4 explained why StudyTubers are relatable: “I am in uni and these people are also in university so our lives are quite similar in terms of like what we go through in a day”. P10 described this as “resonance” with StudyTubers, and highlighted, “I watch Youtubers now who resonate the most with me”.

Some of the participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P9, P12, P14, P21) relate to the StudyTubers because the StudyTubers are studying a subject at university they are interested in. P1 disclosed “I wanted to do medicine. So I kind of watch a lot of like Ali Abdaal's videos”. P14 explained that she only watches StudyTubers who are literature students because they “seek a sense of, you know, “familiarity”: “I feel more comfortable with the, you know, people of the literature world”.

Moreover, some participants (P1, P3, P10, P13, P18) related to StudyTubers because they were at the same prestigious universities as them. P1 expressed: “I'd say my favourite is Ruby Granger because she's still relatable, like she went to Exeter [University] too”. P18 explained that he solely watches StudyTubers at the same

university: “I would never watch... somebody who just like, goes to school in, like, Columbia. It's like, I don't know, I don't have any relationship with Columbia”.

Many participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P9, P10, P14, P16, P17, P18, P21) expressed that they prefer to watch StudyTubers who produce content on studying and academia, rather than StudyTubers who have transitioned to posting about other topics, such as travelling, fashion, or technology, and thus cannot relate to them. P3 detailed this lack of relatability: “Someone like Unjaded Jade who's quite into like travelling... her style of life is just a little bit more different from mine, so it doesn't feel like I'm relating to her”. P18 explained, “[the StudyTuber is] not that PhD student anymore. So, like, I don't really relate”. Participants (P3, P4, P17, P21) noted that they stopped watching StudyTubers that lost their relatability by diverging from academia, as P17 explained: “When Paige Yallop went into her consulting job, that's when I stopped watching all of her videos because it kind of took away from the study feeling”. P3 and P4 noted that they will not watch StudyTube once they graduate, because it will no longer be relatable. P4 explained that once they “leave university”, they will “probably” watch “a day in the life like as a corporate banker or something because like that's more relatable”. Similarly, P17 noted they will stop watching if the StudyTubers graduate before them: “Ruby Granger is going to graduate soon... I [will] have to find a new StudyTuber”.

Whilst some participants (P5, P9, P18, P19) are not interested in the lives of the StudyTubers outside of academia, as P5 explained, she “only want[s] to see 10 seconds of their life”, many participants (P3, P4, P8, P10, P11, P13, P14, P17, P21) have become interested in the StudyTubers' lives. Thus, P8 does not mind that UnJaded Jade has transitioned away from posting about academia:

Unjaded Jade doesn't make that kind of [how to revise] content very often. She more makes more personal videos, so I think that I I still watch her because of that. Because you know you you gain interest in her life and her experience of university was interesting as well.

Similarly, some participants (P2, P3, P4, P7, P11, P17, P18) enjoy watching the StudyTubers vlog about their extra-curricular activities and topics outside of academia because they can relate to other aspects of the StudyTubers' lives. P2 explained how she relates to the StudyTubers' extra-curricular activity: "She [The StudyTuber] does horse riding, and I love horses. So I love watching her horse riding". P4 relates to the demographics and "international student" status of the StudyTubers she watches:

[I mostly watch] international students, female international students and like of Asian descent... so that's like the main reason I consume their content because they're very relatable to me.

Likewise, P12 discussed how she relates to Vee Kativhu because Vee and Vee's friend Malala Yousafzai who features in Vee's videos have a "similar story" and background to P12 and an interest in "education" advocacy:

Vee Kativhu who is working... in the education sector and at UNO [United Nations Office], I think. She's Malala's [Yousafzai] friend too. So for me, that was interesting too, because as a first generation women who is studying you feel like Malala, because Malala's story is that her father was an educator, was a teacher and watch that the girls couldn't study. And in my case... we

couldn't have even afford the books. And [Malala's story] that's a similar story for me... that's why I... started following Vee Kativhu... I feel that she was talking for me.

Similarly, P3 explained how watching another Oxbridge StudyTuber who has a “similar background” made her feel “more confident” doing an Oxbridge interview:

I used to watch Ibz Mo a lot... he definitely made me feel quite confident about doing like my [Oxbridge] interview because he's someone who came from a really similar background to me and then he went to Cambridge so he would do all these blogs where he made Cambridge seem like this, not as intimidating as it feels when you've never had an experience with it.

P3 expressed that the relatability of one StudyTuber “humanised the legal world”:

[The StudyTuber] felt kind of relatable and just very human. And in a way that probably humanised the legal world a little bit for me because before that, it felt very kind of just typically Oxbridge, and obviously that's not a slight because you know, I'm Oxbridge now too, but they felt just very kind of Oxbridge, white, male kind of thing.

Many participants (P2, P3, P4, P7, P10, P11, P13, P15, P20) resonate with StudyTubers who promote a study-life balance. P4 enjoys watching the StudyTubers post content outside of academia because it influences her to partake in activities outside of studying:

They show like... like having their friend group like eating out, going to the gym and trying out new classes like exercise classes... it kind of shows that being in university, you're not just studying, but you're also doing other things

which I think is very healthy. And also it reminds me that, oh, I should be doing these types of things.

Overall, the data shows that participants watch StudyTube because they relate to the StudyTubers' interest in academia. Some participants are disinterested when StudyTubers diverge from this academic content and will stop watching it. However, if there is some degree of relatability outside of academia, such as the StudyTubers' demographic, background or interests that the participant can relate to then the participants will still watch it.

### ***Transparency of Realistic Studying***

Many participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P10, P13, P14, P15, P17, P20) watch StudyTube because they feel the StudyTubers show the struggles of studying at university, which is relatable. P2 described how these “high-achieving” StudyTubers show “the raw awfulness of life”:

Ruby Granger's my favourite... when she doesn't get a good grade, she's devastated... I think some study vloggers that I do watch filter what they show, whereas she shows everything and it's quite real and down to Earth. I find that a more honest, transparent, realistic portrayal of what it's like studying.

P1 and P3 mentioned the relatability of Vee Kativhu's videos of her “cramming [an] essay in four hours” (P1), as, P3 explained:

I totally related to her doing those like, last-minute essays...I find it a lot more relatable than people who are doing their essays over like, weeks and weeks,

maybe like someone like Emmie. That's aspirational, whereas with Vee that's relatable.

Participants (P3, P10, P20) noted how relating to the struggles of the StudyTubers provides a sense of solidarity in their academic struggles, which is “emotionally...helpful” (P10) and “strangely comforting” (P3). P20 explained that the “demystifying” of “struggles in academia” and “independent work” makes her “feel less alone”. Likewise, P3 explained: “Subconsciously some part of me is soothed, knowing that this person who is getting the grades that I want is also having a tough time getting them”.

Despite participants being reassured by the relatability of the struggles of StudyTubers, P2 explained how it is “disappointing” to see one StudyTuber struggle too much academically: “One of the girls that goes to Harvard started off vlogging the campus... and then she started to actually not do so well at uni and it actually was quite disappointing to see”. Participants (P2, P10, P14) mentioned that they enjoy seeing the participants overcome these struggles. P2 detailed how she “love[s] seeing” StudyTubers overcome their struggles:

Unfortunately, she [the StudyTuber] didn't get the grade she was expecting, and it was lower... she really was incredibly upset. But then she managed to pick herself up, dust herself off, and kept going... [and] initially she was rejected by Oxford. But now she's doing her master's at Oxford. So that was really nice.

P10 and P14 mentioned that seeing the StudyTubers overcome their struggles gives them the “confidence” and “resilience” (P10) to overcome their academic struggles, as P10 explained:

Ibz' content, just kind of how he feel. Get out, do again, try again. Like that kind of resilience make me feel like if someone else can do it, I can also do it... So make me feel confident to come to apply for Oxbridge again.

Likewise, P14 explained how the StudyTubers gave her resilience: "I was so stressed and I was like, I'm gonna fail the next exam... and I was like... she [the StudyTuber] can do it, so I can do it as well".

However, some participants (P18, P19, P20) discussed how they feel the StudyTuber's content is inauthentic and "unrealistic" (P19). P18 remarked that the StudyTubers are only pretending to struggle to make the viewers of StudyTube feel like they relate, which has become "accidentally entertaining": "They manage to like in order to be relatable to, like, somehow make it seem as if, like, they struggle really massively so like that's sort of funny". Likewise, P19 is "sceptical about the videos" and finds them unhelpful, because, after attempting to be a StudyTuber herself, she finds "it [is] kinda unrealistic". Similarly, P18 explained that the study content is inauthentic:

"Sometimes I'll be in a cafe and I'll see somebody [a StudyTuber] do the same motion of like opening and closing a diary in front of a camera like 30 times until they get it right... it's just so crazy to watch".

P20 acknowledged that although the content is sometimes "unrealistic", which they cannot relate to, it is still "really nice":

It's really nice, even if sometimes it feels like almost unrealistic. So Ruby Granger reads when she brushes her teeth... That's not something that I personally can do. But it's just like it's sweet. It's nice. It sort of reminds me of, like, I'm watching a bit of a storybook character.

Despite many participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P20, P21) feeling like they relate to the StudyTubers in some ways, participants (P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P11, P13, P17) also feel that the StudyTubers are high-achieving, successful and “disciplined” (P1) students at prestigious universities, like “Oxford and Cambridge and Harvard” (P2), who have “16-hour study days” (P3). P2 explained how the StudyTubers are “getting top-level grades 'cause they are very, very good students. P2, P5, and P7 seek out these “very very very high achieving” (P2) students. P5 explained the type of StudyTuber she wants to watch: “I’m looking for an older student who really has it down... I'm looking for, like graduate level and probably a fairly, you know, like high-ranking school”.

Many participants (P1, P2, P3, P13, P15, P17) cannot relate to this aspect of high-achieving StudyTubers at prestigious universities who depict working long hours. P17 discussed the conflict between relating to these high-achieving students because they are students, and simultaneously not being able to relate because the StudyTubers are at “elite” universities that are like “Hogwarts”:

It was relatable because I was a student. But at the same time, it was kind of this ideal life... Um, yeah, just that it just doesn't seem [real]. It's [Oxford University is] a bit like Hogwarts, isn't it [laughs]?

Similarly, P1 conveyed how she does not relate to these StudyTubers:

I feel like some of them, they they're not really relatable... sometimes it's just too positive and you don't feel they are human. Or, Ali Abdaal, sometimes I feel like he's a machine instead of actually being a person. It's a bit unrelatable sometimes...like very, very disciplined and they just really like, 9:05 wake up, brush your teeth or like, really positive about life.

Therefore, P1 disclosed that she will “usually skip the [unrelatable] part”.

Some participants (P7, P13, P20) noted that watching StudyTubers can make them feel “inadequate” (P13) and “behind” (P20) academically. P7 explained why StudyTubers are “not a positive influence” and make her feel “worse” because she compares herself with them:

Subconsciously, I tend to compare myself with the study vlogger to see, like, oh, she can do this, but I cannot... yeah, so these kind of differences makes me feel more anxious. Makes me feel like I'm incapable of doing this.

Similarly, P20, noted that when they are feeling “negative”, watching StudyTube is “negative”:

[It] can be negative for me when I'm feeling negative because it makes me feel like I'm like so far behind... I always feel like I'm a million steps behind everybody else, just trying to catch up. And so watching somebody who seems like they have it all together in those times isn't very useful because I'm already beating myself up so it, I don't want to add to it... I could barely watch it while I was doing my master's because I felt so bad about myself.

Similarly, P2 is self-aware of the negative feelings that arise when she does not get the grade she wants and reminds herself not to compare herself to the StudyTubers:

I've got to check myself when I get a bit, you know, upset about a grade and not letting grades define me. That's a big thing and also they are very, very smart, intelligent people, and I know I'm very smart, intelligent person, but I just think, oh, they're on another plane... So I have to remind myself that I'm not [laughs] doing my master's at Oxford in English literature. I'm doing my

masters in [subject omitted] in Australia, and it's getting me where I need to be.

Likewise, P13 “stopped watching” StudyTubers because it “stressed” them out and led to them comparing themselves with the StudyTubers:

When I'm stressed, it can really add the pressure, and I think I struggle not to compare myself sometimes when I'm stressed... I actually stopped watching them quite recently... I think seeing someone work so hard... and seem to be very put together and kind of doing all of these really nice things, while I was kind of struggling with writer's block and... not feeling like I was doing all the things in Oxford that I'm I might have wanted to do.

P13 no longer allows StudyTubers to negatively affect them by not watching them and explained they have gained a “sense of self” and “recognition that I don't have to be like them... there are other ways of being a student”.

Similarly, participants (P3, P15, P21) described the work ethic of some StudyTubers as “toxic productivity” (P15, P21). P3 elaborated on how the toxic productivity of StudyTube can lead to young students erroneously feeling insufficient in their work ethic:

When they're [the StudyTubers are] a little bit like over the top like like I said with the like 16 hour study days... that's obviously not really helpful because it's just not healthy for your mind to do that. You absolutely need rest. And it's clearly not sustainable. And definitely when you're young, very young, like 15, 16, that can get into your head and make you feel like you're not doing enough hours. But I don't think study has anything to do with hours is everything to do with output and productive output.

Given this lack of relatability to the high-achieving and disciplined StudyTubers, many participants (P1, P2, P3, P15) expressed that they would prefer StudyTubers to be more realistic and share their struggles more, to make them more relatable. P15 explained: “It would be nice if, like StudyTubers...would actually open up about the struggles... so it would be more credible, authentic and also may be more people can relate to them”. P3 articulated why “Oxbridge” StudyTubers from a “background where nobody in” their “family went to university”, did not attend a “private school” and do not have a “White British background” may not be open about their struggles:

They [the StudyTubers] probably feel a pressure to represent Oxbridge in a way that other Youtubers might not, because they know that there are young erm young people watching who have a lot of high aspirations but not a great deal of means to get there. And they know that they can't just say like I'm having a shit day today because that might make some kid think, oh God, I'm going to get to Oxford and it's going to make me feel bad every day... So I think they [the StudyTubers] probably end up having to be really fake happy [sighs] in front of camera all the time and put on a facade of joy.

However, P3 explained that StudyTubers should be “a lot more transparent and honest”, which would be “good for other people’s mental health... especially for young people”. P3 wants the StudyTubers to show their “true experiences” at Oxbridge and simultaneously “don't scare young kids like you off [by showing a bad experience]”. P3 acknowledged the contradiction, “I'm kind of asking them to do the impossible”.

Whilst the lack of relatability to the high-achieving StudyTubers makes some participants feel inadequate, some participants (P11, P17, P18) are not negatively affected in this way. P17 finds the “unattainable” and “inaccessible” aspect of the StudyTubers, “very attractive” because, as P17 explained, “the appeal was that it was outside of my own life”. Similarly, the high-achieving aspect of the StudyTubers does not make P11 feel inadequate. P11 does not think the long working hours depicted by StudyTubers are negative; instead, it has “inspired” her to “study more”. P11 explained, that the hard-working StudyTubers are “not forcing upon you like, you should study for 14 hours a day... [The StudyTubers] don't study for 14 hours a day. It's once in a blue moon”. Likewise, rather than feeling inadequate to the high-achieving StudyTubers, P18 explained that the StudyTubers are narcissistic and what they post is “really silly and like...it's funny”. P18 expressed:

A lot of what she [The StudyTuber] makes is kind of ridiculous... there's a degree of self-absorption... of just like, you know, like how incredible is it that like, I go to this great school and, like, and I'm amazing... a lot of what she makes is just really cringe. So like it's something that I can share with my friends and kind of be like, look at how cringe this person I go to school with is... it's basically bullying, like, we just kind of, like, hang out in messenger group chats and just like, bully these people ... There is an aspect to the like you know like look at me like, party in the place where they film Saltburn that just like makes me think that people are awful and like I like seeing that be proven in like a very kind of public display of attention seeking.

Overall, the evidence shows that participants watch StudyTube because they relate to StudyTubers who reveal the academic struggles they face. However, some

StudyTubers do not share their academic struggles and are at prestigious universities working for long hours which are deemed unrealistic by participants. Therefore, some participants cannot relate to this high-achieving aspect of StudyTubers, which makes some participants feel inadequate. Thus, participants would prefer StudyTubers to be more relatable by sharing more about their academic struggles. On the other hand, some participants are not negatively affected by this and either look up to the high-achieving aspect of the StudyTubers or are entertained by the idea that StudyTubers might be pretending to struggle to be relatable.

## **Advice**

### ***Study Advice***

Numerous participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P9, P10, P11, P12, P16, P20, P21) watch StudyTube to obtain study advice. Several participants (P1, P3, P4, P8) noted that the study advice from StudyTubers is the “most helpful” (P4) StudyTube content that they watch or used to watch, as P4 expressed: “a lot of study vloggers are really, really helpful in terms of like study tips”. P1 disclosed that obtaining study tips from StudyTubers is the most helpful type of StudyTube content as it “changed” her “life”. Whilst P14 is not “seeking out information” for her “studies”, she has gained study advice “they do give out tips... I think those are very useful”. Participants (P1, P2, P4, P5) deem this “incredibly good advice” (P2) to be reliable and credible because the StudyTubers have proved themselves academically with top grades and study at prestigious universities. P4 explained how she discerns “whether their advice is credible”: “She showed like, okay, I got a 78% on this and... they go to really good universities like Durham, like UCL, Oxford... if they're excelling in those

universities, I should be able to apply those advice and I should be seeing the same results”. Other participants (P8, P9, P11) explained that the advice is credible because they have implemented the advice themselves and it has successfully worked, as P9 explained: “I believe whatever she's telling because when I myself try to use something that she's telling, and if it is helping me out, then I think that source of that content is good”.

Participants (P1, P4, P8) expressed that the study advice has been helpful to prepare for exams. P1 explained that she implemented “Ali Abdaal’s space repetition and active recall”. P4 noted, “There were some study bloggers who... linked where the [examination] past papers were... and that's what I used”. P8 explained:

The revision techniques that I learned from her videos gave me quite a lot of confidence going into my GCSE's, but my A levels more so. They became certain things like, you know, blurting and making like, good, good flash cards and stuff like that became the framework for my preparation for A levels.

A few participants (P3, P4, P9, P10) noted that advice from StudyTubers on how to write essays is particularly helpful. P10 explained: “I have to say shamelessly how to get a first video was really helpful... she was able to give some really practical advice on how to structure and critically analyse your essays and literature”.

Many participants (P2, P3, P5, P10, P16) shared that the StudyTube advice helped them become more organised. P2 detailed that she is now more organised from watching StudyTubers:

I was really disorganised doing assignments at the last minute and I found watching people who were organised... it made me think hey, I can be

organised... it has actually helped my study. I'm really excited about studying now and I'm really enjoying it and not finding it a burden anymore.

Similarly, P3 now organises her time in a way that is better for her: “[StudyTubers] would just kind of work with their natural energy flow. And I started to kind of emulate that a lot as well working in, you know, bursts where it just kind of matched my natural energy focus time”. Some participants (P9, P10, P11, P17, P20) noted that they started journaling from the advice of StudyTubers, as P11 explained “I've started journaling after watching StudyTubers”.

A few participants (P2, P9, P21) noted that the StudyTubers' advice taught them to love studying. P9 conveyed this: “That is the main thing that a student should learn that that the students should know how to love his or her own study things, be it be English or something else”. P10 noted how StudyTubers have changed her “attitude towards the act of studying” and values the importance of taking “a regular break”. Similarly, P21 expressed that StudyTubers have “recently” promoted “feel good productivity... like paying more attention to mental health whilst studying, realising that it makes sense only if you get to enjoy it”.

One-third of participants (P1, P4, P8, P9, P10, P14, P21) expressed that the study advice from StudyTubers increased their grades and helped them excel academically. P1 disclosed: “I jumped like three A level grades in three months. So I mean, I found that really helpful... that just kind of really transformed my whole A level career”.

Participants (P3, P4, P5, P14) also expressed that the study advice from StudyTubers is more helpful than the study advice they can get from their educational institutions. P5 explained, “if somebody is dealing with a mental illness...the idea of

walking to an office and asking somebody for help might be like, you know, just just unthinkable at that point". P5 elaborated on why StudyTube advice is helpful:

There is potentially a lack of support out there that people are finding within study YouTube... a student... has to have the confidence and the knowledge and the willingness to search out for assistance in person... the other thing is also not all institutions have enough resources to help all these students.

P10 confirmed P5's assumption: "The teaching quality at my high school was so poor that I did rely a lot of YouTube videos for study and revision". Likewise, P4 explained: "[StudyTubers] told me a lot more than what my lecturers would have told me because it's coming from a student's perspective... so it it really like positively impacted my life".

However, some participants (P3, P8, P3, P15, P17, P18) do not watch StudyTube for study advice. P15 already has sufficient study techniques, and expressed, "I have a quite good like study technique... so I didn't quite implement [the advice]". P15 explained this is because she "had a course in university when we were sort of made to try all these different study techniques and like which one works the best for us". Similarly, P18 noted, "Every university library website can like tell you what a lot of these [study] tactics are". Although P3 and P8 used to watch StudyTubers to obtain study advice during their GCSEs or A levels, they no longer need advice as they have established what works best for their studying from StudyTube videos. As P3 explained, although the study advice from StudyTubers, "definitely helped me when I was a lot younger", they no longer need it: "I don't really care for, like, study advice anymore, because again, I've really found what works for me and I find it repetitive and a little bit childish". Similarly, P10 noted that

the type of advice they look for changes over time: “At A level, revision tips is definitely a big thing. Later on, [it] is more about uni application... and then product enhancing productivity at uni”. Similarly, P13 and P17 noted that they do not watch StudyTube for study advice. P13 disclosed that they “probably wouldn't take their [StudyTubers’] advice... I know myself quite well as a student now in order to be like oh, that's not going to work for me”. Likewise, P18 expressed that he does not watch StudyTube to implement the study advice himself:

It gets repetitive... I really don't think that... there's more than like a handful of genuinely good tips you can offer... and then you're like getting, like getting into people who are, like, trialling, like the 15th iteration of the Pomodoro technique, and then it just starts to lose all sense.

However, P18 enjoys seeing the StudyTubers give study advice because it is funny, rather than helpful: “I just love watching that because... I think the kind of like, generational obsession there is with productivity is itself really funny”. P18 explained:

[One StudyTuber] was explaining that like she went to like a coffee shop and she had like a to-do list on her computer. And then she also had a to do list in her notebook... and then she'll, like, sit down in the cafe and, like, take information from both of these sources and then write it in like the second moleskin. And like, stuff that I just, I'm like, you gotta be kidding me, 'cause, like she's spending like 45 minutes, just like organising her organisation.

In summary, the evidence here shows that many participants watch StudyTube to obtain study advice, which has supported their academic work and increased their grades. Participants explained it is helpful to get advice from StudyTube because it is

better than advice from their education institutions. However, some participants do not watch StudyTube for advice, either because they have already obtained the advice they need from StudyTube or because their education institutions provided them with study advice.

### ***Prestigious Universities and Their Admissions Process***

One-third of participants (P1, P3, P4, P10, P15, P16, P17) mentioned that they watched StudyTube because they wanted to obtain practical information about applying to prestigious universities and understand what life is like at that university. P4 explained, “a lot of study vloggers are really, really helpful... for people to choose their universities”. P10 disclosed that StudyTubers were helpful to prepare for the “written exam” required during their Oxbridge “interview”: “I didn't know what am I expecting and that's when I start to watch quite a lot of StudyTubers’ videos to learn more about this admission exam prep”. P4 used StudyTube to decide to study in the UK because she found out from StudyTube that the university she wanted to go to in the UK was more diverse than universities in the US: “From seeing in the UK, there's like, from the vlogs I've seen, like during that time there was a bit more diversity of people”. P15, a prospective Oxbridge applicant, explained how StudyTube is a “much better” source of information about Oxford University than websites, which are not “like, very useful”:

There was a Q and A [question and answer], I think on Ruby's page about like the uni life and also like the whole application process like how was it for her, how she lived there and it was just gave me a bit of a more insight to the application because obviously there are many like pages on the Internet and

information circulating but it was just much better to hear it from someone who actually tried it and got admitted there.

Likewise, P17 explained that StudyTubers at “Oxbridge” provide “insider information”. This is supported by P16, who explained that she learnt information about “scholarship[s] for students” at Oxbridge from StudyTubers. P11, who hopes to one day study at a prestigious university like Oxbridge, watches StudyTube content because they can see “detailed videos or photos of like libraries, inside of libraries, or maybe the market of Oxford and dorm rooms of Oxford”, which are more “in-depth” than a “search on Google”.

Together, the evidence shows that participants watch StudyTube to obtain insider information from StudyTubers at prestigious universities to support their applications to prestigious universities.

### ***New Technology***

Numerous participants (P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P10, P15, P18) mentioned they watch StudyTubers to learn about new technology that might help them. P5, who is no longer a student, and works full-time, explained that she watches StudyTubers to learn about new technologies:

StudyTubers has really introduced me to different technologies that I wouldn't have been aware of otherwise, so that's been educational...it makes me look really good to my boss because I'm like, OK, well, I have things done two days before they're due... so it's just been helpful and on a lot of aspects work and personal.

P5 explained that:

“Studying [videos] brings up newer ways of organisation. People my age, people who I work with... a lot of them don't know what some of these technologies are”.

P5 expressed “whatever I have learned [from StudyTube] ends up getting passed on to those to my co-workers”. Likewise, P10 detailed how StudyTube content is helpful to learn about apps which support “productivity”:

Abdaal’s content is very professional but actually helpful for productivity. Like I watch his content and download this app, Nobility for notetaking, which is really helpful and I still use it now.

P10 and P15 bought iPads after watching a StudyTube video, as P10 explained, “I also got my iPad from Ali's video. So, so, Ali did a video on iPads versus Remarkable... and he concluded that iPad is more helpful after kind of comparing all the pros and cons”. P15 explained that learning about the apps is helpful for their academic work: “I use quite a lot of useful apps and things like that that they recommended that I also find very helpful in my studying”. However, P18 explained that he does not need the advice about technology: “Now I have like a much more solid taste in technology. And I don't need these reviews as much”.

Overall, this evidence demonstrates that many participants, in both a workplace and academic context, watch StudyTube to get advice about technology, how to use the technology and which technology to buy.

## **Conclusion of the Findings**

The findings presented in this chapter clearly illustrate that participants predominantly watch StudyTubers for motivation, to relate to StudyTubers, and for advice. A detailed discussion of these results is presented in Chapter Five.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

I now wish to refer to my opening remarks in the abstract on page three, as follows. This qualitative study aimed to understand the motivations behind watching StudyTube. The findings show that participants watch StudyTube: (a) to motivate themselves, (b) because they relate to the StudyTubers, and (c) to obtain information. This chapter interprets these findings and discusses the findings in relation to current research. Then it discusses the limitations of the study. It then discusses considerations and recommendations for education practice and further research.

#### **Motivation**

Many participants watch StudyTube for motivation. This motivation is obtained through companionship and aesthetics. Participants watch StudyTubers to obtain companionship to motivate them to study. Participants also watch the aesthetic StudyTube content to motivate them to study. Taking inspiration from the aesthetic StudyTube content, participants implement aesthetics into their own lives, which motivates them to study. Moreover, some participants watch the aesthetic content to motivate them to apply to prestigious universities.

Jung et al. (2012, P. 1632) found reading blogs is positively associated with a “sense of belonging and psychological wellbeing” and negatively associated with “loneliness”. The dissertation’s findings expand on Jung et al.’s findings because participants watched StudyTube for companionship; to feel less alone and gain a sense of community through StudyTube. Moreover, the dissertation’s findings confirm Lee et al.’s (2021, P. 2-7) findings that viewers are drawn to ‘Study with Me’

videos because they are lonely and the videos provide motivation to study for long periods because of the “social ambience” and “sense of togetherness”, which supports them emotionally. The dissertation’s findings also confirm Lee et al.’s (2021) findings that viewers of ‘Study with Me’ videos were lonely because they could not find someone to study with, which for some was because of the COVID-19 lockdown. This reason for loneliness and seeking out companionship from StudyTube aligns with why participants in this dissertation are drawn to StudyTube. This finding also expands evidence by Arango-Montoya and Gallardo-Echenique (2021) that viewers are drawn to watching StudyTubers to feel like they are part of a community because this reason applies to contexts other than Peru. The finding also expands on findings by Keren et al. (2020) that suggest medical students studying with others can motivate some students to study whilst distracting others because the dissertation’s findings show that the findings are the same in an online context, where people study online. The dissertation’s findings also expand on Lee et al.’s (2021, p. 2) findings because although Lee et al. found that viewers were drawn to ‘Study with Me’ videos because they could create a desired “virtual study space”, the dissertation’s findings specify that participants are attracted to the aesthetic study spaces in the ‘Study with Me’ videos. Similarly, the dissertation’s findings expand Lussier et al.’s (2023) finding that taking a photo of their study space motivated them to study because the dissertation’s findings clarify that this study space must be aesthetic to be motivating. Moreover, the findings expand on Abed’s (2022) findings that StudyTubers post aesthetic content to motivate viewers because the dissertation’s findings show the viewer’s perspective and find that motivation is one of the reasons why people watch

StudyTube. The findings suggest that StudyTubers are successful with their intentions of motivating viewers with aesthetic content.

Furthermore, the dissertation's findings expand on Kim and Ryoo's (2023, p. 98051) finding that some participants are "activity-oriented" learners, where they learn to form connections with others. The dissertation's findings expand on Kim and Ryoo because it shows that participants enjoy studying virtually with StudyTubers and feel they have developed a parasocial relationship.

The dissertation's findings that participants have developed a parasocial relationship with StudyTubers can be understood by drawing upon Horton and Wohl's (1956) parasocial interaction (PSI) theory. Horton and Wohl explain that the person being watched by an audience addresses the audience as if they are talking privately with a friend. The viewers can only observe, and yet feel like they are part of this interaction. This unilateral interaction is coined by Horton and Wohl as a PSI. The illusion of intimacy felt by the viewer can be developed further if the performer looks directly into the camera. It is anticipated that the viewers will buy into this PSI; the viewers will be loyal to the performer and want the performer to accomplish their goals. Furthermore, the PSI is particularly appealing to those who lack social interaction or are lonely, as it alleviates feelings of loneliness. The dissertation's findings validate the PSI theory, as it demonstrates a PSI between StudyTubers and viewers. Participants explained that the StudyTubers create vlogs, often by looking directly into the camera and talking to the viewers as if they are talking to a friend in private. Moreover, by regularly watching StudyTubers, the viewers feel like they have formed an intimate friendship with the StudyTubers and are emotionally invested in the persona of the StudyTubers. The viewers want StudyTubers to achieve

their academic goals and feel proud of them if they have been accepted into their dream university. Participants mentioned that the PSI is appealing to them because they were lonely and lacked social interaction, with some participants attributing this to the lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This further validates the aspect of PSI theory which suggests that PSI is particularly appealing to those who lack social interaction.

### **Relatability**

Some participants related with StudyTubers because the StudyTubers were from similar backgrounds to them. For one participant, this relatability normalised the Oxbridge experience and made them more confident studying at Oxbridge. This confirms Hirst's (2022) findings, which suggested that StudyTube can be used to normalise prestigious universities, thereby widening participation in HE.

One finding shows that participants relate to the academic struggles of the StudyTubers. This relatability of facing academic challenges, allows participants to validate their feelings of struggling academically by watching StudyTubers. Conversely, another finding shows that some participants compare themselves to the high-achieving StudyTubers, which makes them feel inadequate. Some StudyTubers do not show academic struggles and instead, work long study days at prestigious universities. This comparison between StudyTubers and themselves can make some participants feel inadequate. These two findings show that participants watch StudyTube to compare themselves to StudyTubers which either validates their academic struggles or makes them feel inadequate to the high-achieving StudyTubers. These findings extend Jung et al.'s (2012, P. 1632) finding that reading blogs is

associated with “social comparison”, where one compares themselves to the bloggers because this dissertation found the same result for why people watch StudyTubers. Furthermore, these findings extend the conclusions of Jung et al. (2012, P. 1627) that reading blogs is associated with “voyeuristic surveillance”, to get a glimpse into the lives of those who post online to compare themselves with the StudyTubers. This is because the findings show that participants watch StudyTubers to get a glimpse into the lives of StudyTubers to see how well they are doing academically to compare themselves.

Furthermore, the findings that show participants compare themselves to StudyTubers confirm Festinger’s (1954) social comparison theory. Festinger (1954) theorises that an individual compares themselves to others who have similarities to assess their own capabilities. The participants compare themselves to the high-achieving StudyTubers to identify resemblances between them, including academic struggles, studying the same subject, being from a similar background, being a university student or interest in academia. Identifying these similarities reassures the participants and makes them feel better about themselves. This finding confirms evidence by Collins (2000, cited by Suls et al., 2002, p. 161) that individuals will compare themselves upwardly with those who are perceived to be of higher social standing and will identify similarities between them, to feel more optimistic about themselves. This finding confirms Collin’s evidence because StudyTubers are assumed to be more conventionally successful in academia than the viewers. StudyTubers are deemed to be top students with seemingly long study days and achieve high grades at prestigious universities. Thus, this “upward” comparison

makes the participants feel better about themselves because they feel “they are among the better” students (Collins, 2000, cited by Suls et al., 2002, p. 161).

However, whilst the participants compare themselves to the StudyTubers and find themselves relating to the StudyTubers by identifying similarities, participants cannot relate to certain aspects of the academically high-achieving StudyTubers who undertake particularly long study days at prestigious universities and are conventionally academically successful. Thus, some participants feel inadequate when comparing themselves to StudyTubers. This finding is particularly evident for participants already feeling negative about themselves. Thus, this finding expands on evidence by Collins (2000, cited by Suls et al., 2002, p. 161), as it suggests that “upward” social comparison can also make individuals feel inadequate, as they identify differences between the StudyTubers and themselves.

Furthermore, the dissertation’s findings that participants watch StudyTubers because they relate to StudyTubers confirms Atiq et al.’s (2022) evidence that viewers are more likely to engage with social media influencers on Instagram who they relate to, which encourages trust. Similarly, Lewis’s (2018) study suggests social media influencers aim to develop trust with viewers by being relatable and authentic. The dissertation’s findings expand on Lewis’s findings because it shows participants enjoy watching StudyTubers for their authenticity of academic struggles.

### **Advice**

Further findings of the dissertation found that seven participants used StudyTube to obtain information about how to apply to prestigious universities. Drawing upon Bourdieu (2010), obtaining information about the university admissions

process from StudyTubers is a way for viewers to gain social capital. Four of these seven participants graduated from or currently attend prestigious universities. Thus, it might be argued they successfully used StudyTube to navigate the admissions process of prestigious universities. One of these four participants is a first-generation student who attended a state school. Thus, confirming Hirst's (2022) suggestions that disadvantaged students can obtain social capital from StudyTube to navigate the university admissions process. However, two of these four participants declared they were not first-generation students and did not attend a state school, one is of the highest social class, and the other is just below the highest. Thus, the findings expand on Hirst's evidence because they show students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds use StudyTube to support their applications to prestigious universities.

The other three of these seven participants currently attend or have attended non-prestigious universities. One of the three participants is from the social class one below the highest social class; one participant is one social class below that, and one participant preferred not to answer. Although two of these participants who answered are not from a low social class, they attended a state school and are both first-generation students, and thus are students with a degree of disadvantage (Boliver, 2013). Drawing upon Bourdieu's (2010) economic and cultural capital theory, even if these participants obtain a degree of social capital to navigate the admissions process, they may not have the economic capital, to afford to pay the fees of these prestigious universities. Moreover, Rivera (2016) suggested disadvantaged students lack the economic and cultural capital to create outstanding applications for prestigious universities with prestigious extracurricular accomplishments. Festinger (1954) theorises that although individuals desire to improve their capabilities, constraints

may prevent them. Thus, drawing upon Festinger's and Bourdieu's theory and evidence by Rivera (2016) it may be suggested that even if disadvantaged students have obtained a degree of social capital from StudyTubers, they likely have insufficient cultural, economic, and social capital which prevents them from studying at a prestigious university.

The findings also suggest that participants deem the information from StudyTubers credible because the StudyTubers are high-achieving students at prestigious universities. This finding confirms Bilginer and Otay's (2022) finding that people watch social media influencers to obtain practical knowledge which they find credible because they deem the influencers trustworthy. Moreover, these findings expand on Bilginer and Otay's (2022) findings because the findings of this dissertation detail the type of information participants look to obtain from StudyTubers: study advice, new technology, and information about prestigious universities and their admissions process.

In the same vein, these findings also expand on Taddeo's (2023) and Bacescu's (2017) finding that people watch online educators to learn about academic disciplines. Although the findings of this dissertation show that people watch StudyTubers to learn information, which is not about an academic discipline, the participants want to learn information.

The dissertation's finding that shows that participants watch StudyTube to obtain study advice to support their preparation for exams, confirms Kim and Ryoo's (2023, p. 98050) finding that some learners can be "goal-oriented". These learners are motivated to study to accomplish a goal such as passing examinations. The

dissertation's findings explain that goal-oriented learners can use StudyTube to support their learning by obtaining study advice.

The finding that one participant watches StudyTube to laugh at the StudyTubers expands on Bacescu's (2017) finding that people watch YouTube for entertainment purposes because this participant enjoys ridiculing the StudyTubers in group chats with their friends. Moreover, Walther's (2022, p. 1) evidence suggests people hate social media influencers online to obtain endorsement from others who also hate the influencer, entrenching their opinions about the StudyTubers. Those who hate social media influencers do not hate them to offend or anger the influencers, but for "friendship and social support" with those who also hate them (Walther, 2022, p. 1). This finding of the dissertation confirms and can be explained by Walther's finding because the participant is drawn to hating on others to share it with friends in private group chats and did not state that they express hate in the StudyTuber's comment section.

### **Limitations**

There were limitations to the research that potentially affected the dissertation's validity. During the data collection stage, some participants had poor Wi-Fi connections during the interviews. Thus, although an understanding was gained from most of what was said, some data was omitted where the internet cut out. Where possible, the researcher requested the participants to repeat themselves, which may have been distracting for them (Rosenthal, 2016).

Furthermore, due to one interested participant's inability to fluently speak English, it was proposed that they could answer the interview questions over email.

Given the difficulty of communication, this method for one participant was deemed to be a useful and convenient method (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). However, the potential participant never responded to the email and they did not participate.

One participant (P12) asked for information over email from the researcher about the application process for Oxford University, because they want to apply to prestigious universities. Given this, it may have been possible that this participant answered the interview questions in a “socially desirable” way, despite establishing rapport, particularly, as they sought information about the Oxford application process (Bergen & Labonté, 2020, p. 786).

Furthermore, given my positionality, some degree of “bias” and “subjectivity” is inevitable in the research and analysis (Holmes, 2020, p. 4). However, I aimed for reflexivity to reduce bias as far as attainable.

Lastly, some relevant research on StudyTubers could not be critically examined in the literature review because it was published in languages other than English (See Choi & Lee 2022; Zeferino, et al., 2022; Romanenko & Makareva, 2023).

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Given that participants were drawn to StudyTube for advice about universities, which they felt was superior to information found on university websites and Google, the dissertation emphasises a need for more support from education institutions for students who are looking for advice on both how to study and how to apply to prestigious universities. It is recommended that HE institutions make use of and collaborate with StudyTubers or similar online student ambassadors. The use of student ambassadors of the university would allow prospective applicants a detailed

insight into the application process, and what it is like to live on campus at the university. This could also normalise prestigious universities like Oxbridge for disadvantaged students. Additionally, resources on how to study need to be more accessible in educational institutions.

Moreover, although participants use StudyTube to gain advice about studying and applying to prestigious universities, it is not a sufficient tool on its own to obtain access to prestigious universities. Boliver (2013) and Rivera (2016) argue that sufficient economic, cultural and social capital is often required to access these universities. Thus, it is recommended that universities and widening participation initiatives provide students with an acquisition of social, cultural, and economic capital. Regarding economic capital, this could include university scholarships for disadvantaged students.

Furthermore, the dissertation draws attention to people's need for companionship where they may be socially isolated from working alone. One suggestion is for universities and workplaces to implement systems that facilitate and encourage individuals experiencing isolation to study or work with others.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The findings show that some participants expressed that StudyTube had a positive impact on their grades and educational outcomes. However, further research is needed to quantify the educational outcomes for students who regularly watch StudyTube. This research is needed because whilst some participants have attributed their academic success to watching StudyTubers, the participants are already academically motivated students who desire top grades. Understanding whether there

is a causal impact of watching StudyTube on academic outcomes could have implications for educational policy. Thus, it is necessary to understand whether watching StudyTubers is associated with or leads to higher grades.

## **Conclusion**

StudyTube has been expanding in popularity on social media. However, little is researched about StudyTube, and even less is known about the motivations behind watching it. This dissertation has explored the motivations behind why people choose to watch StudyTube. The findings show that participants watch StudyTube to motivate themselves. This motivation is driven by the pursuit of aesthetics and companionship. Secondly, participants watch StudyTube because they relate to the StudyTubers' interest in academia and facing academic struggles. Lastly, participants also watch StudyTube to obtain advice. The advice includes study tips, new technology, and the application process of prestigious universities.

## References

- Abed, M. (2022). *I'm #studygramming! A Netnographic Exploration of Study-Oriented Social Media Content Creation Practices*. [Doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia] University of East Anglia.
- Abidin, C. (2018). *Internet celebrity: Understanding fame online*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Alharahsheh, H. H., & Pius, A. (2020). A review of key paradigms: Positivism VS interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 39-43.
- Arango-Montoya, S., & Gallardo-Echenique, E. (2021). *XVI Latin American Conference on Learning Technologies (LACLO): Studygrammers: Learning Influencers as a Source of Credibility, Arequipa, Peru, October 19-21*. IEEE
- Atiq, M., Abid, G., Anwar, A., & Ijaz, M. F. (2022). Influencer Marketing on Instagram: A Sequential Mediation Model of Storytelling Content and Audience Engagement via Relatability and Trust. *Information (Basel)*, 13(7), 345-. <https://doi.org/10.3390/info13070345>
- Aydin, S. (2014). The use of blogs in learning English as a foreign language. *Online Submission*, 4(1), 244-259.
- Bacescu, M. C. (2017). Blogging, Vlogging – From Entertainment to Education. *eLearning and Software for Education*, 13(1), 369–376.
- Barriball, K. L., & While, A. (1994). Collecting data using a semi-structured interview: a discussion paper. *Journal of Advanced Nursing-Institutional Subscription*, 19(2), 328-335.
- Baisden, P., & Pope, M. (2020). StudyGram: Meeting students where they are. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 59(6), 358.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20200520-13>
- BBC. (2011). *The Great British class calculator*.  
[https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/2013/newsspec\\_5093/index.stm](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/2013/newsspec_5093/index.stm)
- Bergen, N., & Labonté, R. (2020). “Everything is perfect, and we have no problems”: detecting and limiting social desirability bias in qualitative research. *Qualitative health research*, 30(5), 783-792.

- Bilginer, S. & Otay F. O. (2022). How are Instagram Influencers Perceived by Different Generations? *International Journal of Arts and Social Studies*, 5(8), 101-123.
- Blood, R. (2000). *Weblogs: A history and perspective*. Rebecca's Pocket.  
[http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog\\_history.html](http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html)
- Boliver, V. (2013). How fair is access to more prestigious UK universities? *The British journal of sociology*, 64(2), 344-364.
- Bowden, C., & Galindo-Gonzalez, S. (2015). Interviewing when you're not face-to-face: The use of email interviews in a phenomenological study. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 10, 79.
- Bourdieu, P. (2010). *Distinction a social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Boulton, E., Davey, L., & McEvoy, C. (2021). The online survey as a qualitative research tool. *International journal of social research methodology*, 24(6), 641-654.
- Brown, C., Czerniewicz, L., & Noakes, T. (2016). Online content creation: looking at students' social media practices through a Connected Learning lens. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 41(1), 140–159.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2015.1107097>
- Cambridge Dictionary (2024). *Vlog*. Cambridge Dictionary.  
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vlog>
- Choi, W., & Lee, M. H. (2022). Let's Study Together: Designing "Study-With-Me" System with the Concept of Social Translucence. *Archives of Design Research*, 35(4), 325–341. <https://doi.org/10.15187/adr.2022.11.35.4.325>
- Chu, S. K., Chan, C. K., & Tiwari, A. F. (2012). Using blogs to support learning during internship. *Computers & Education*, 58(3), 989-1000.

- Collins, E. & Stone, G. (2014). Understanding Patterns of Library Use Among Undergraduate Students from Different Disciplines. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 9(3). <https://doi.org/10.18438/B8930K>
- Dianiska, R. E., Swanner, J. K., Brimbal, L., & Meissner, C. A. (2021). Using Disclosure, Common Ground, and Verification to Build Rapport and Elicit Information. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 27(3), 341–353. <https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000313>
- Diemer, M. A., Mistry, R. S., Wadsworth, M. E., López, I., & Reimers, F. (2013). Best practices in conceptualizing and measuring social class in psychological research. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 13(1), 77-113.
- Edwards, M., Perry, B., & Janzen, K. (2011). The making of an exemplary online educator. *Distance Education*, 32(1), 101-118.
- Farmer, B., Yue, A., & Brooks, C. (2008). Using blogging for higher order learning in large cohort university teaching: A case study. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 24(2).
- Febrianti, Y., Herawati, M., & Hanifah, S. (2022). Effect of using TikTok as learning media on academic achievement of pharmacy students. *AIP Conference Proceedings*, 2645(1). <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0113787>
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human relations*, 7(2), 117-140.
- Garrido, A. E. P., & Arias, E. B. (2023). The phenomenon of online study rooms in the days of COVID-19. *2023 IEEE World Engineering Education Conference (EDUNINE)*, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1109/EDUNINE57531.2023.10102815>
- Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal*, 204(6), 291–295. <https://doi.org/10.1038/bdj.2008.192>
- Gill, S. L. (2020). Qualitative sampling methods. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 36(4), 579-581.
- Harju, V., Pehkonen, L., & Niemi, H. (2016). Serious but fun, self-directed yet social: blogging as a form of lifelong learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 35(1), 2-17.

- Hassan, R. H. (2023). Educational Vlogs: A Systematic Review. *SAGE Open*, 13(1), 215824402311524-. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231152403>
- Hirst, L. (2022). Demystifying Oxbridge: a qualitative video analysis of information sharing strategies by student vloggers for prospective applicants. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 43(7), 1094–1115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2022.2092448>
- Hollstein, B. (2014). Qualitative Approaches. In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Network Analysis* (pp. 404–416). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446294413.n27>
- Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher Positionality--A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research--A New Researcher Guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4), 1-10.
- Horton, D., & Wohl, R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *psychiatry*, 19(3), 215-229.
- Hoxby, C., & Avery, C. (2013). The missing "one-offs": The hidden supply of high-achieving, low-income students. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, , 1-65. <https://doi.org/10.1353/eca.2013.0000>
- İnceçay, G., & Genç, E. (2014). University Level EFL Students' Self Blogging to Enhance Writing Efficacy. *Procedia, Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116, 2640–2644. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.627>
- Institute for Social and Economic Research. (2006). *Detailed Category Descriptions and Operational Issues*. Institute for Social and Economic Research. University of Essex. <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/archives/esec/user-guide/conceptual-basis/detailed-category-descriptions-and-operational-issues>.
- Izquierdo-Iranzo, P., & Gallardo-Echenique, E. (2020). Studygrammers: Learning influencers. *Comunicar (Huelva, Spain)*, 28(62), 115–125. <https://doi.org/10.3916/C62-2020-10>
- Jayadeva, S. (2024). “Study-abroad influencers” and insider knowledge: how new forms of study-abroad expertise on social media mediate student mobility from India to Germany. *Mobilities*, 19(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2023.2220944>

- Joyner, R. L., Rouse, W. A., & Glatthorn, A. A. (2013). *Writing the winning thesis or dissertation: a step-by-step guide*. (4th ed.). Corwin Press.
- Jung, I., & Lee, Y. (2015). YouTube acceptance by university educators and students: A cross-cultural perspective. *Innovations in education and teaching international*, 52(3), 243-253.
- Jung, Y., Song, H., & Vorderer, P. (2012). Why do people post and read personal messages in public? The motivation of using personal blogs and its effects on users' loneliness, belonging, and well-being. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(5), 1626-1633.
- Kaiser, K. (2009). Protecting respondent confidentiality in qualitative research. *Qualitative health research*, 19(11), 1632-1641.
- Kerawalla, L., Minocha, S., Conole, G., Kirkup, G., Schencks, M., & Sclater, N. (2007). Exploring students' understanding of how blogs and blogging can support distance learning in Higher Education. In *Beyond Control: Learning Technology for the Social Network Generation. Research Proceedings of the 14th Association for Learning Technology Conference*. Nottingham.
- Keren, D., Lockyer, J., Kelly, M., Chick, N., & Ellaway, R. H. (2020). In Our Own Time: Medical Students' Informal Social Studying and Learning. *Teaching and Learning in Medicine*, 32(4), 353–361.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10401334.2020.1733579>
- Kilic, E., & Gökdas, I. (2014). Learning through Blogging: Use of Blogs to Enhance the Perceived Learning of Pre-Service ICT Teachers. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 14(3), 1169-1177.
- Kim, D., & Ryoo, D. (2023). Learning Techniques Using Study with Me: Focus on Motivational Orientations, Learning Competency, and Digital Literacy. *IEEE Access*, 11, 98050–98058. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2023.3312555>
- Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2017). Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity studies*, 8(2), 191-208.
- Lee, Y., Chung, J. J. Y., Song, J. Y., Chang, M., & Kim, J. (2021). Personalizing Ambience and Illusionary Presence: How People Use "Study with Me" Videos to Create Effective Studying Environments. *Proceedings of the 2021*

- CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1–13.  
<https://doi.org/10.1145/3411764.3445222>
- Lewis, R. (2018). *Alternative influence: Broadcasting the reactionary right on YouTube*. Data & Society’s Media Manipulation research initiative.  
<https://edgeryders.eu/uploads/default/original/2X/6/6c1bff49d3731a13f3208b56e10e694fce85d1c6.pdf>
- Lussier, C. M., Ditta, A. S., & Speer, A. C. (2023). The Potential Power of “Studygram”: Concrete Visual Representations May Increase Student Motivation, Engagement, and Enjoyment of Routine Course Assignments. *Psychology in the Schools*, 60(12), 4841–4856.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22936>
- Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *All Ireland journal of higher education*, 9(3).
- Morse, J. M. (1995). The significance of saturation. *Qualitative health research*, 5(2), 147-149.
- Muhonen, A., & Kujanen, R. (2018). Vlogging in Toronto: Learning Finnish through Collaborative Encounters. In *Research-publishing.net*. Research-publishing.
- Murray, S. (2023). Dark Academia: Bookishness, Readerly Self-fashioning and the Digital Afterlife of Donna Tartt’s *The Secret History*. *English Studies*, 104(2), 347–364. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838X.2023.2170596>
- Nguyen, M. (2022). Nostalgia in Dark Academia. *East-West Cultural Passage*, 22(1), 54–72. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ewcp-2022-0003>
- Obeso, M., Pérez-Pérez, M., García-Piqueres, G., & Serrano-Bedia, A. M. (2023). Enhancing students’ learning outcomes through smartphones: A case study of using instagram in higher management education. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 21(3), 100885.
- Office for National Statistics. (2011). *Health Gaps by Socio-economic Position of Occupations in England, Wales, English Regions and Local Authorities, 2011*. Office for National Statistics.  
<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20150905003727/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census-analysis/health-gaps-by-socio->

economic-position-of-occupations-in-england--wales--english-regions-and-local-authorities--2011/rpt-health-gaps-2011.html

- Office for National Statistics. (2021). *Ethnic group, national identity and religion*. Office for National Statistics.  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringquality/ethnicgroupnationalidentityandreligion>
- Oravec, J. A. (2003). Blending by blogging: Weblogs in blended learning initiatives. *Journal of educational media*, 28(2-3), 225-233.
- O’Sullivan, K., Robson, J., & Winters, N. (2019). ‘I feel like I have a disadvantage’: how socio-economically disadvantaged students make the decision to study at a prestigious university. *Studies in higher education*, 44(9), 1676-1690.
- Oxford Reference. (2024). *Oxbridge*.  
<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100258970?d=%2F10.1093%2Foi%2Fauthority.20110803100258970&p=emailA0QN17a.8hsXs>
- Quinio, A. (2021). ‘Lawfluencers’ open up the Magic Circle for new recruits. *Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com/content/94f50e66-7c6b-48d3-a277-4d4fa7f00662>
- Park, Y., Heo, G. M., & Lee, R. (2011). Blogging for informal learning: Analyzing bloggers' perceptions using learning perspective. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 14(2), 149-160.
- Prior, M. T. (2018). Accomplishing “rapport” in qualitative research interviews: Empathic moments in interaction. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 9(4), 487-511.
- Reeves, T., Caglayan, E., & Torr, R. (2017). Don’t shoot! understanding students’ experiences of video-based learning and assessment in the arts. *Video Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 2(1), 1-13.
- Reid, M. J., & Moore, J. L. (2008). College Readiness and Academic Preparation for Postsecondary Education: Oral Histories of First-Generation Urban College Students. *Urban Education (Beverly Hills, Calif.)*, 43(2), 240–261.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085907312346>

- Reinhardt, J. (2019). Social media in second and foreign language teaching and learning: Blogs, wikis, and social networking. *Language Teaching*, 52(1), 1-39.
- Rivera, L. A. (2016). *Pedigree: How elite students get elite jobs*. Princeton University Press.
- Romanenko, K. R., & Makareva, A. Y. (2023). Studytube: Educational Bloggers in the Higher Education Ecosystem. *Vysšee Obrazovanie v Rossii (Print)*, 32(4), 156–168. <https://doi.org/10.31992/0869-3617-2023-32-4-156-168>
- Rosenthal, M. (2016). Qualitative research methods: Why, when, and how to conduct interviews and focus groups in pharmacy research. *Currents in pharmacy teaching and learning*, 8(4), 509-516.
- Russell Group. (2024). *Our universities*. Russell Group. <https://russellgroup.ac.uk/about/our-universities/>
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2003). Research methods for business students. *Pearson education*.
- Sharma, H. (2022). How short or long should be a questionnaire for any research? Researchers dilemma in deciding the appropriate questionnaire length. *Saudi Journal of Anaesthesia*, 16(1), 65–68. [https://doi.org/10.4103/sja.sja\\_163\\_21](https://doi.org/10.4103/sja.sja_163_21)
- Sidek, E. A. R., & Yunus, M. M. (2012). Students' experiences on using blog as learning journals. *Procedia-social and behavioral sciences*, 67, 135-143.
- Snelson, C. (2011). YouTube across the disciplines: A review of the literature. *MERLOT Journal of Online learning and teaching*. 7(1), 159-169.
- Snelson, C. (2015). Vlogging about school on YouTube: An exploratory study. *New Media & Society*, 17(3), 321-339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146144481350427>
- Soha, M., & McDowell, Z. J. (2016). Monetizing a meme: YouTube, content ID, and the Harlem Shake. *Social Media+ Society*, 2(1), 2056305115623801
- Song, H. S., & Chan, Y. M. (2008). Educational blogging: A Malaysian university students' perception and experience. *Ascilite Melbourne 2008: Hello! Where are you in the landscape of educational technology? Deakin University, Nov 30–Dec 3*. National Library of Australia.

- Suls, J., Martin, R., & Wheeler, L. (2002). Social comparison: Why, with whom, and with what effect?. *Current directions in psychological science*, 11(5), 159-163.
- Sun, Y. C., & Chang, Y. J. (2012). Blogging to learn: Becoming EFL academic writers through collaborative dialogues. *Language Learning & Technology*, 16(1), 43–61.
- Swanepoel, G. P., & Bruwer, A. (2020). Educating the always-on generation in an Instant(gram) #blendedlearning. *Perspectives in Education*, 38(1), 16–29. <https://doi.org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v38i1.2>
- Taddeo, G. (2023). Life Long/Insta-Learning: the Use of Influencers as Informal Educators. *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 15(2), 147–167. <https://doi.org/10.14658/PUPJ-IJSE-2023-2-8>
- Times Higher Education. (2023). *How to use the World University Rankings: frequently asked questions*. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/news/how-use-rankings-frequently-asked-questions>
- Times Higher Education. (2024). *World University Rankings 2024*. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2024/world-ranking#>
- Thompson, C. (2011). How Khan Academy is changing the rules of education. *Wired magazine*, 126, 1-5.
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.
- University of Oxford. (2024a). *Best practice guidance*. <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/resources/bpg>
- University of Oxford. (2024b). *Divisions*. <https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/divisions>
- Walther, J. B. (2022). Social media and online hate. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 45, 101298-. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.12.010>

- Wang, X., & Picone, I. (2023). Mobilized, negotiated and balanced: Chinese school vloggers' platform engagements and layered identity construction on Bilibili. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 26(10), 1356-1372.
- Weller, S. (2017). Using internet video calls in qualitative (longitudinal) interviews: Some implications for rapport. *International journal of social research methodology*, 20(6), 613-625.
- Wiles, R., Coffey, A., Robinson, J., & Heath, S. (2012). Anonymisation and visual images: issues of respect, 'voice' and protection. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 15(1), 41-53.
- Xu, W., & Zammit, K. (2020). Applying Thematic Analysis to Education: A Hybrid Approach to Interpreting Data in Practitioner Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 160940692091881-.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920918810>
- Zeferino, A. F. S, Silva, C. D. & Atalvanio D. S. J. (2022). Instagram's influence on chemistry education in the COVID-19 pandemic period. *Diversitas Journal*, 7(1).

## Appendix A: Questionnaire

# Demographics of participants for Oxford University study

This survey should take about **1-3 minutes**. The data used will **not be identifiable**.

Thank you for participating.

\* Required

1. I am 18 years or over, have read the participation information sheet, and agree to take part in this survey.

\*

Yes

2. What is your name?

*This information is needed only to identify who still needs to complete the form and to link the survey data with the interview data. All information will remain anonymous. You may use your initials if you prefer.*

\*

Enter your answer

3. What is your age?

\*

Enter your answer

4. What is your gender?

\*

Woman

Man

Non-binary

Transgender

I prefer not to say

Other

5. Which country are you from?

\*

Enter your answer

6. What is your current educational or occupational status?

\*

Currently studying for a bachelor's degree

Currently studying for a master's degree

Currently studying for a PhD degree

Full-time working

Part-time working

None

I prefer not to say

Other

7. What level of education have you obtained or currently doing?

\*

Primary School

High School

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Doctoral degree (Ph.D.)

I prefer not to say

Other

8. If applicable, which university(s) did you attend or are currently attending?

\*

Enter your answer

9. If applicable what did you study and/or currently studying at university?

\*

Enter your answer

10. Have either of your parents attended university? \*

Yes

No

I don't know

I prefer not to say

Other

11. What type of job did your highest-paid parent have?

\*

**Large employers, higher grade professional, administrative and managerial occupations.**

Examples: lawyers, architects, medical doctors, chief executives, economists, scientists, higher education teaching professionals, professional engineers, senior level in civil service, higher grade managers, professional self-employed (self-employed in professional jobs similar to those listed here), business owner with at least 10 employees.

**Lower grade professional, administrative and managerial occupations: higher grade technician and supervisory occupations.** Examples: teachers, social workers, nurses, journalists, aircraft pilot, retail managers, production and operation managers, manager in a small company with less than 10 employees, computing technicians, physical and engineering science technicians and civil engineering technicians.

**Intermediate occupations.** Examples: armed forces up to sergeant, paramedics, police up to sergeant, bank staff, clerical occupation (office clerks), administrative assistant, administrative associate professionals, government social benefits officials.

**Small employers and self-employed in non-professional occupations.** Business owner with less than 10 employees or non-professional self-employed. Examples: farmers, shopkeepers, taxi drivers, driving instructors, window cleaners.

**Lower supervisory and lower technical occupations.** Examples: lower supervisors, plumbers, electricians, mechanics, chefs, train drivers, telegraph and telephone line installers.

**Semi-routine.** Examples: traffic wardens, receptionists, shelf stackers, care workers, telephone salesperson.

**Routine Occupations.** Examples: bar staff, cleaners, labourers, bus drivers, lorry drivers.

**Never worked or long-term unemployed**

**I prefer not to say**

Other

12. Which school did you attend at the age of 16?

\*

State school (funded by the government)

Private school

I prefer not to say

Other

13. What is your ethnic group?

\*

**White:** English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British

**White:** Irish

**White:** Gypsy or Irish Traveller

**White:** Any other White background, please describe

**Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups:** White and Black Caribbean

**Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups:** White and Black African

**Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups:** White and Asian

**Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups:** Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe

**Asian/Asian British:** Indian

**Asian/Asian British:** Pakistani

**Asian/Asian British:** Bangladeshi

**Asian/Asian British:** Chinese

**Asian/Asian British:** Any other Asian background, please describe

**Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British:** African

**Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British:** Caribbean

**Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British:** Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe

**Other ethnic group:** Arab

**Any other ethnic group, please describe**

**I prefer not to say**

Other

## Appendix B: CUREC Form

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC)  
 CUREC 1B Application form for research projects in the  
 social sciences and humanities with low-risk ethical issues

The University of Oxford places a high value on the knowledge, expertise, and integrity of its members and their ability to conduct research to high standards of scholarship and ethics. The research ethics review process has been established to ensure that research involving human participants is conducted in a way that respects the dignity, rights, and welfare of participants, and minimises risk to participants, researchers, third parties, and to the University itself. It is assumed that all members of the University will take their responsibilities and obligations seriously, and will ensure that their research involving human participants is conducted according to established principles and good practice in their field and in accordance, where appropriate, with legal requirements.

SECTION A: Researchers		
Name of researcher or student		
Department or Institute	Department for Education	
Degree programme, if student research	MSc	
Copy and paste the following four rows as necessary to complete for each additional researcher who will be involved in this study, including student(s).		
Name of <u>Principal Investigator (PI)</u> (if different from the answer to A1), student's supervisor or other researchers	James Robson	
Department or Institute	Department for Education	
Role in research	Dissertation supervisor	
The <u>introductory core research integrity course</u> is compulsory for all University of Oxford research students (either on graduate taught courses or taking research degrees). There is also a <u>refresher course</u> which may be more suitable for experienced University of Oxford researchers. Please confirm that all staff and research students have undertaken either the core or the refresher course, or that undergraduates have received suitable training.	<b>Yes</b>	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SECTION B: Filter questions		
This section determines whether this CUREC 1B form is suitable for the research project.		
<b>Please indicate with an 'X'.</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Does the research involve the <u>deception</u> of participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are the research participants <u>vulnerable</u> in the context of the research, or classed as <u>people whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question</u> ? For example,	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Participants younger than 16; Participants aged 16 – 18 (refer to <u>competent youths</u> for guidance); <u>adults at risk</u> ; Note the University’s <u>Safeguarding Guidance and Code of Practice</u> and its implications for researchers involving young people or adults at risk.		
By taking part in the research, will participants be at risk of criminal prosecution or significant harm?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does your research raise issues relevant to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act ( <u>the Prevent Duty</u> ), which seeks to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism? <u>Best Practice Guidance 07 on the Prevent Duty</u> provides further guidance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the research involve topics that could be considered <u>sensitive</u> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are there any risks to the <u>safety</u> and <u>wellbeing</u> of the researchers or others involved in the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will participants be taking part in the research without their knowledge and <u>informed consent</u> (e.g. <u>covert observation</u> )?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is this international or collaborative research where there may be issues of <u>local practice and political sensitivities</u> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are there any potential <u>conflicts of interest</u> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is permission from a <u>gatekeeper</u> required for access to the participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are the researchers in a position of authority over participants, e.g. as employers, lecturers, teachers or family members?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will the research involve <u>third parties</u> collecting data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is there scope for incidental findings, e.g. concerns for the safety or wellbeing of participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the Principal Investigator based in a Department other than AMES, Computer Science, Education, SoGE, ODID, LPP, Music and Sociology?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If you answered ‘No’ to all the questions above, continue to <b>Section C</b> . If you answered ‘Yes’ to <b>any</b> of the questions above, please submit a <u>CUREC 1A</u> or <u>CUREC 2</u> form <b>instead of this form</b> .		

SECTION C: The research project	
1. Title of the research project	
<b>Exploring Perspectives: Why People Engage with StudyTube Content in Higher Education.</b>	
2. Anticipated start date of the aspect of the research project involving human participants and/ or personal data (dd/mm/yy).	<b>As soon as ethics approval is obtained</b>
3. Anticipated research end date (dd/mm/yy).	<b>31/07/2024</b>

4. External organisation funding the research and grant reference (if applicable)
None
5. Provide a brief lay summary of the aims and objectives of the research. (max 300 words)
<p><b>Provide a brief lay summary of the aims and objectives of the research.</b></p> <p>To understand students' perspectives  Aim: to understand why people watch StudyTubers.  Objectives: by interviewing the people who watch StudyTubers, using semi-structured interviews.</p>
6. Provide a brief lay summary of the research design and methods. What will research participants be asked to do? What data will be collected? (max 300 words)
<p>Research question</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why do students engage with the online content provided by StudyTubers?</li> </ol> <p>Sub question:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. How do students perceive the impact of StudyTubers on their academic lives?</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research design will be a qualitative study.</li> <li>• Data will be gathered using semi-structured interviews from students who have frequently watched StudyTubers.</li> <li>• Participant's demographics and characteristics will also be collected after the interviews using Microsoft Forms</li> </ul> <p>Methodology</p> <p>Data collected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants' name</li> <li>• Contact details</li> <li>• Audio recordings if in person and video recordings if online interview</li> <li>• Transcripts (from recordings)</li> <li>• Participant demographics and characteristics</li> </ul> <p>The interview will take place in an Oxford University bookable room, online or in a location that the participant prefers.</p> <p>*StudyTubers blog their university life.</p>
7. List any <u>professional guidelines</u> that will be followed.

British Educational Research Association: Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research			
8. List the location(s) where the research will be conducted, including any other countries. Clarify which parts of the research will be conducted in-person and which will take place remotely, e.g. <u>online</u> .			
Oxford and online.			
9. If your department requires a fieldwork risk assessment, please confirm that a risk assessment will be undertaken and authorised by your Department before the fieldwork is undertaken. Refer to guidance available from your Department, the <u>Safety Office</u> , the <u>Social Sciences Division</u> , and the <u>Humanities Division</u> , and on <u>travel for University business</u> . If you are travelling overseas, you are advised to take out <u>University travel insurance</u> .	<b>Yes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<b>Not required</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
10. Indicate which <u>CUREC Best Practice Guidance</u> are relevant and which have been used to develop your research.	<b>Please indicated with an 'X'.</b>	<b>Relevant?</b>	<b>Used?</b>
	<u>BPG 01 Researcher safety</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>BPG 02 Ethnographic and other types of qualitative research</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>BPG 03 Elite and expert interviewing</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>BPG 04 Competent youths</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>BPG 05 Payments and incentives in research</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>BPG 06 Internet-mediated research</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>BPG 07 Prevent Duty</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>BPG 08 Psychological distress</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>BPG 09 Data collection, protection and management</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>BPG 10 Conducting research interviews</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<u>BPG 12 Mobile app design</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>BPG 14 Research in archives</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>BPG 15 Ethics review of research with human tissue</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>BPG 16 Social science research conducted outside the UK</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**SECTION D: Research participants – recruitment and informed consent**

Number of participants | 15-20

How will potential participants be identified and approached?

<p>Participants who watch StudyTubers will be identified through convenience sampling and snowball sampling.</p> <p>They will be approached in person in my college and department, by email, in WhatsApp college group chats, on the Facebook group ‘Oxford University Postgraduates’ and by messaging people who follow and interact with StudyTubers on social media.</p> <p>They will also be asked if they are interested in participating by the StudyTubers themselves on social media through an Instagram story.</p>
<p>Explain how <u>informed consent</u> will be obtained from the participants and how this will be recorded. Make sure participants are aware of any limits to withdrawing their data, e.g. once the data has been anonymised or published.</p> <p><b>NB: For ethics applications using the CUREC 1B form, the information provided to participants and the consent form must be based on the <u>University templates</u>.</b></p>
<p>Informed consent will be explained at the beginning of the interview and participants will be given an information sheet to sign which explains how their data will be used.</p>
<p>Please submit copies of all participant-facing materials for review. E.g.:</p> <p>Recruitment material (e.g. emails, posters)</p> <p>Information for participants to read (or hear) before they agree to take part (e.g. written information or, if applicable, an outline oral information script).</p> <p>A document to record informed consent.</p>

SECTION E: Research data	
<p>Management of personal data, either directly or via a third party, must comply with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, as set out in the <u>University’s Guidance on Data Protection and Research</u>.</p> <p>In answering the questions below, please also consider the points raised in the <u>Data Protection Checklist</u> and <u>Data Protection Screening Assessment</u> and whether, for higher-risk data processing, a separate <u>Data Protection Impact Assessment</u> may also be required for the research. Advice on research data management and security is available from <u>Research Data Oxford</u> and your local IT department. Advice on data protection is available from the <u>Information Compliance team</u>.</p>	
<p>Confirm that, during the project, research data will be stored according to <u>University guidelines</u>; i.e. on University servers or Nexus365 One Drive if possible, or on encrypted personal devices.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Participants must understand what information will be collected from them, how the data will be used, who will have access to the data and how identifiable they will be from the data and from the research outputs. Confirm that you will obtain participants’ informed consent for the use of their data.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Confirm that the research data will be stored according to <u>University guidelines</u> for at least 3 years after first publication or public release and that <u>any additional research funder policies</u> will be adhered to.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
	<p><b>Please indicated with an ‘X’.</b></p>
	<p><b>Yes</b>   <b>No</b></p>

Please complete this section if your research involves the use of secondary (i.e. previously collected) personal data.	Are data access agreements in place for access to and use of this secondary data? (If so, please attach these.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Did the individuals agree that their data could be used for research purposes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Could anyone (including members of the research team) link the data back to an individual or individuals? If this is a possibility, please explain how the associated ethical issues will be addressed:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### SECTION F: Endorsements and ethics approval (student projects only)

Please ensure this form is endorsed by  
the student  
the student's supervisor (who is also Principal Investigator)  
the Head of Department (or nominee)  
Endorsement may be provided by email or by signing the form.  
The PI is responsible for ensuring a copy of the endorsed form is kept.

#### Student signature/ endorsement

I confirm that the answers above accurately describe the research as presently designed, and that I will submit a revised version of this form should changes become necessary.

Name of student	
Student's signature	
Date	26/02/2024

#### Ethics review by the Principal Investigator/ student supervisor

I understand my responsibilities as the student's supervisor and Principal Investigator as outlined on this form and in the CUREC glossary and guidance.

I understand that I must ensure that all researchers are suitably qualified and trained to conduct the research described, or are appropriately supervised until deemed qualified/ trained.

I will ensure that personal data collected from participants will be held in accordance with the requirements of the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act and that the data collected is only used for the research for which approval has been given.

I have reviewed the above application on behalf of the Social Sciences and Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee (SSH IDREC) in accordance with the University's Research Ethics Policy. I confirm that the research is suitable for review under the CUREC 1B process, that the ethical issues have been identified and that suitable measures have been put in place to address the ethical issues. I agree to notify the DREC if the Principal Investigator changes. I agree to notify the DREC in writing immediately of any proposed changes to the research that would require review by the DREC.

Name of Principal Investigator	James Robson
--------------------------------	--------------

Principal Investigator's signature	
Date	3/3/2024
If changes to the research result in the research no longer meeting the criteria for review under the CUREC 1B process, a separate CUREC 1A or CUREC 2 application will need to be submitted to the DREC or IDREC.	
Approved applications must be emailed to the relevant DREC or SSH IDREC so that there is a record of the approval. The ethics reference will be provided at this point.	
Ethics reference:	C1B-24HT-Educ-014

## Appendix C: Letter of CUREC Approval

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your CUREC 1B application entitled '*Exploring Student Perspectives: Understanding why students engage with StudyTube content*'. The application was reviewed and approved by Dr James Robson, your supervisor. No further approval from the Education DREC is required for applications reviewed under the CUREC 1B process. As such, the project will not receive a formal letter of ethical approval from the SSH IDREC.

The ethics reference for your application is C1B-24HT-Educ-014. Please add this reference to your CUREC 1B form and include it on documents for the research participants such as the participant information sheet.

Please note that this is contingent on the research project adhering to the criteria set out in the CUREC 1B guidance. Please ensure, therefore, that you comply with the conditions of this process and, should anything change in the course of the project, you should discuss this with your supervisor to determine whether this requires further review and approval by the Education DREC.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

All the best for your research – we hope it goes well.

Irina

## Appendix D: Recruitment Poster



# Call for participants in University of Oxford Study!

Do you watch study  
content by StudyTubers /  
study influencers?

### Research Aim

To understand why students watch StudyTubers.

### Selection Criteria

People who have watched content by StudyTubers\* regularly.

### Participant Process

Share your experiences and reasons for watching study content in a 45 min - 1 hour discussion.

### Why Participate?

Your insights are valued and you will contribute to research in higher education.

If interested, please message me!

\*StudyTubers create content on social media related to studying, exam preparation, school and university.

Examples of StudyTubers include Vee Kativhu, UnJadedJade, Ruby Granger, Jack Edwards, Eve Benett, Eve Cornwell, Holly Gabrielle, etc.

## Appendix E: Interview Questions

Notes:

Thank you for participating.

To clarify, anything you say will not be attributed to your name, as all the data will be anonymous.

Some questions will be similar.

1. Are you a student?
2. Which term do you use for Study Vloggers/StudyTubers?
3. Please describe what a StudyTuber is and what types of content they post.
4. On which social media platforms do they post?
5. How frequently do you watch StudyTube videos, and what motivates this time allocation?
6. How long do you spend watching it?
7. Do you watch it at a faster speed, like 2x speed?
8. What are the main reasons you watch StudyTubers?
9. Which StudyTubers do you watch?
10. Of these, which StudyTubers are your favourite and why?
11. What kinds of StudyTube content do you watch, and which content do you watch the most?
12. How did you first discover StudyTube content?
13. What initially attracted you to watching StudyTube content?
14. Has that changed over time?
15. Has StudyTube content impacted your life in any way?
16. What information or content do the StudyTubers post that is most helpful or appealing to you, if at all?
17. Have you taken any of the StudyTuber's advice and implemented it into your own life? If so, please explain.
18. What information or content do the StudyTubers post that is least helpful or appealing to you, if at all?

19. How do you perceive the credibility and reliability of information provided by StudyTubers?
20. Have you ever encountered any challenges associated with watching StudyTube content? If so, what were they?
21. Are there any negatives to watching StudyTubers?
22. How do you think people perceive viewers of StudyTubers?
23. In your opinion, what factors contribute to the popularity of StudyTube content among viewers?
24. What do you think of the StudyTubers themselves?
25. What have you gained from watching StudyTubers?
26. Can you describe a memorable Study video that had a significant impact on you?
27. Do you communicate with other viewers of StudyTube, and if so, why?
28. Have you purchased products or services from the StudyTubers? Which ones?
29. How do you think StudyTube content could be improved?
30. Does watching StudyTubers impact your approach to staying focused? And if so, how?

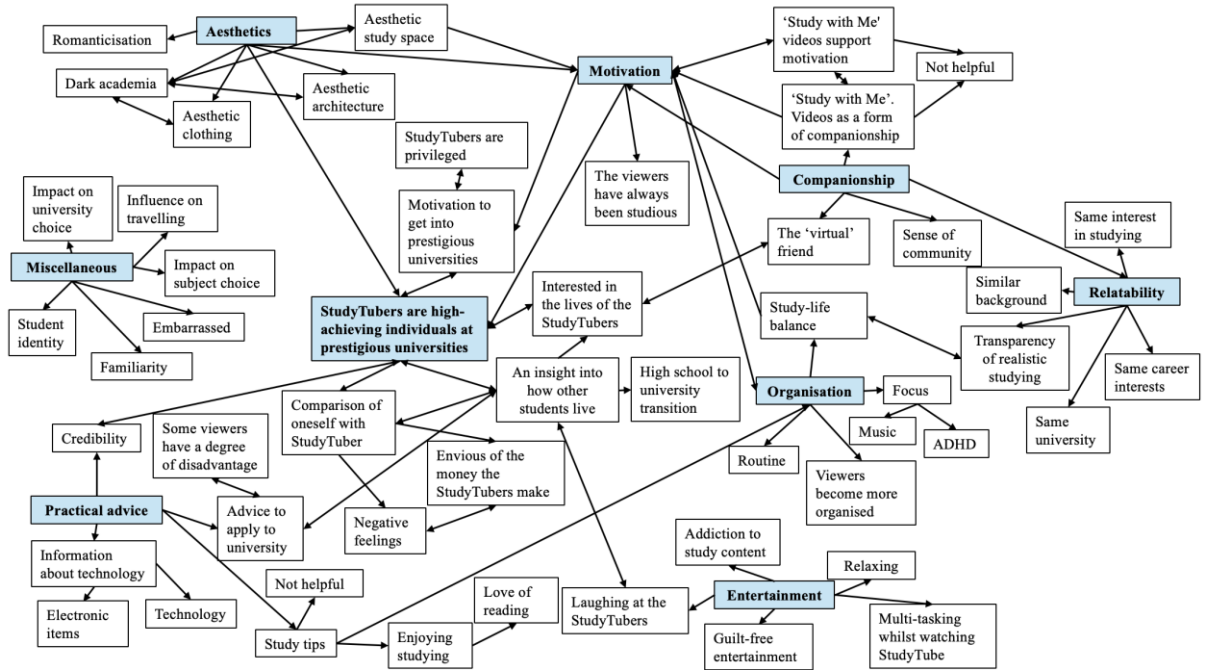
**[Students only]**

31. Did watching StudyTube content impact your academic life, and if so, how?
32. Has it impacted your life outside of academia?
33. Did watching StudyTube content impact your university choices, and if so, how?
34. Did watching StudyTube content impact your subject choices at college or university, and if so, how?
35. Has watching StudyTube content influenced your attitudes about studying? And if so, how?

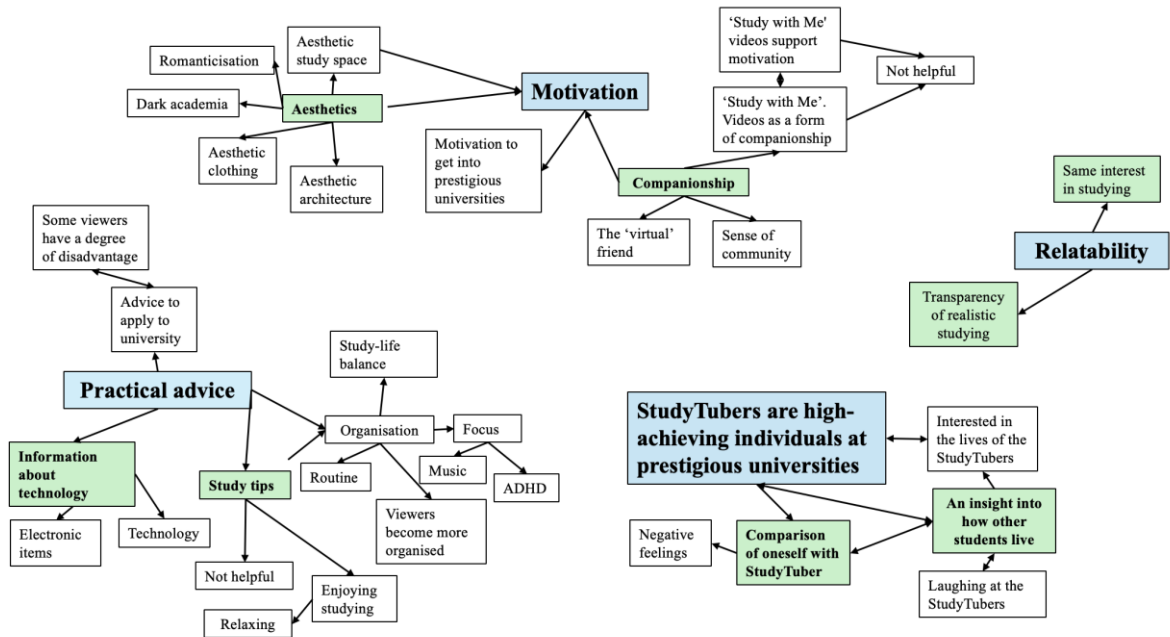
Thank you for your time, is there anything you would like to add?

Debrief about the study.

## Appendix F: First Thematic Map



## Appendix G: Second Thematic Map



## Appendix H: Participant Information Sheet for Interview

Department of Education  
[general.enquiries@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:general.enquiries@education.ox.ac.uk)



James Robson  
[james.robson@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:james.robson@education.ox.ac.uk)

Primary researcher:  
MSc student  
Oxford University telephone number: +44 1865 270000

### **Understanding why people engage with StudyTube content. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

Central University Research Ethics Committee Approval Reference: C1B-24HT-  
Educ-014

#### **Introductory paragraph**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Feel free to ask me if there is anything unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

#### **Why is this research being conducted?**

This study is being conducted to understand why people engage with content by StudyTubers/ Study Vloggers.

You have been identified to participate because you are a student who watches StudyTube content. There will be 10-15 participants recruited.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

No, it is up to you to decide whether to take part. You can withdraw yourself from the research, without giving a reason, by advising me of this decision. The deadline by which you can withdraw any information you have contributed to the research is 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2024. If you withdraw, any data collected will be deleted.

#### **What will happen to me if I take part in the research?**

Consent to participate in the study will be taken by signing a consent form digitally by printing your full name. The interview should take no more than one hour. The interview will take place in person or online. The participant can ask to pause or stop the interview at any time.

The researcher will ask you a set of questions. The interview will explore participants' typical experiences with StudyTube content, initial attraction to it, viewing frequency and duration, preferred content types, implementation of learned techniques, perceptions of academic performance influence, pre-university StudyTube exposure and its influence on university decisions, credibility of StudyTubers, encountered challenges, differences from traditional resources, attitudes or perspectives towards studying influenced by StudyTube, time management strategies, and factors contributing to StudyTube's popularity among viewers. With your consent, I would like to record the interview so I can transcribe what has been said.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks in taking part?**

The disadvantages may include the time commitment of up to one hour for the interview.

**Are there any benefits in taking part?**

While there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the research, it is hoped that this research will lead to understanding why people watch content created by StudyTubers. Moreover, your participation is immensely helpful for completing my dissertation, and I am very grateful for your insights and appreciative of your time.

**What information will be collected and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research objectives?**

Audio recordings will be collected if the interview is in person, and video recordings on MS Teams will be collected if the interview is online. These recordings will then be transcribed using Teams and corrected manually.

Contact details will also be collected in case the researcher needs to clarify any information from the participant.

The interview will take up to an hour and, if in person, will be in a bookable Oxford University room or a location that you would prefer.

I am interested in your experiences of watching content provided by StudyTubers.

The information you provide will help me better understand the motivations of the audiences of StudyTubers.

The researcher will have access to the research data.

Identifiable data I will collect will be your full name, and the audio/video recordings.

Identifiable data, contact details, consent forms and transcripts will be stored on my Oxford University business account OneDrive until November 2024, when it will be deleted.

**Will the research be published? Could I be identified from any publications or other research outputs?**

The findings from the research will be written up in a MSc dissertation.

Your data will remain anonymous and your name will not be attributed to any quotes.

A copy of my thesis/ dissertation will be deposited both in print and online in the Oxford University Research Archive.

Data Protection

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the research. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that is performed in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from the University's Information Compliance web site at <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>.

**Who has reviewed this research?**

The application was reviewed and approved by my supervisor on behalf of the Department of Education's Research Ethics Committee. (Ethics reference: C1B-24HT-Educ-014).

**Who do I contact if I have a concern about the research or I wish to complain?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this research, please contact

Oxford University telephone number: +44 1865 270000

Or

James Robson (dissertation supervisor)  
Oxford University Telephone: +44 1865 270000;  
*Email address: [james.robson@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:james.robson@education.ox.ac.uk)*,

and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

The chair, Education Research Ethics Committee;  
Email: [student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk)  
Address: Department of Education  
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY

**Further Information and Contact Details**

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

Department of Education  
St Cross College  
61 St Giles', Oxford OX1 3LZ  
[Scro4695@ox.ac.uk](mailto:Scro4695@ox.ac.uk)

## Appendix I: Participant Information Sheet for Questionnaire

Department of Education  
[general.enquiries@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:general.enquiries@education.ox.ac.uk)



James Robson  
[james.robson@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:james.robson@education.ox.ac.uk)

Primary researcher: Suzannah Gilbert  
MSc student  
Oxford University telephone number: +44 1865 270000

### **Exploring Perspectives: Why People Engage with StudyTube Content in Higher Education.**

#### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**CUREC Approval Reference: C1B-24HT-Educ-014**

#### **General Information**

The aim of this research is to understand why people watch StudyTubers. We appreciate your time in participating in this questionnaire. You have been invited to participate as you have completed the interview.

This should **take about 1-3 minutes**. No background knowledge is required. This data is needed to add contextual information to the qualitative findings (the interview data). The data used will **not be identifiable** in the written-up findings.

Please read through this information before agreeing to participate.

You may ask any questions before deciding to take part by contacting the researcher (details below).

The Principal Researcher is Suzannah Gilbert who is part of the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. This research is being completed under the supervision of James Robson.

In this questionnaire, you will be asked 11 short questions about your age, gender, ethnic background, where you are from, what your parents' occupation is, and if applicable, questions around what subject you are studying and type of degree at university.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

No. Please note that participation is voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you may withdraw at any point for any reason before submitting your answers by pressing the 'Exit' button/ closing the browser.

We have included a 'Prefer not to say' option for each set of questions should you prefer not to answer a particular question.

**How will my data be used?**

Your names or initials will be collected to link the questionnaire data with the interview data, and to see which participants have yet to complete the questionnaire. We will not collect any data that could directly identify you.

Your IP address will not be stored. We will take all reasonable measures to ensure that data remain confidential.

The responses you provide will be stored in a password-protected electronic file on University of Oxford secure servers and will be used anonymously for the dissertation. Identifiable information will be deleted as soon as it is no longer required for the research. Non-identifiable research data will be stored for three years after publication or public release of the work of the research.

**Who will have access to my data?**

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data and, as such, will determine how your personal data is used in the research. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above.

Research is a task that we perform in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from

<https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>.

The data you provide may be shared with James Robson, the supervisor.

The results will be written up for an MSc degree.

**Who has reviewed this research?**

This research has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, a subcommittee of the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee: C1B-24HT-Educ-014

**Who do I contact if I have a concern or I wish to complain?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this research, please contact Suzannah Gilbert, [Scro4695@ox.ac.uk](mailto:Scro4695@ox.ac.uk) or James Robson [james.robson@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:james.robson@education.ox.ac.uk), and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

The chair, Education Research Ethics Committee;

Email: [student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk)

Address: Department of Education

15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY