

Youtube as Your Anytime Fitness Trainer

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on how Youtube platform can help people maintain their fitness by providing free access to many exercise videos. I conducted 7 interviews of people who have experience in using online videos on Youtube to do exercise at home to find out how they leverage this technology in their daily life. The results of the interview show some common behaviours between these users, and suggestions of which criteria make people click a video and what make they like a channel or trainer after that. The study also investigate user opinion about fitness app (this study only mentioned about fitness app for work out) and going to the gym. It was interested that majority of the interviewee thought "Youtube is enough" and did not interested in paying for the app. Meanwhile, people attitude about being a gym member were quite positive. Better conclusions in this study can be achieved with more interviews and better question design.

Questions design

Interview; Online Videos; Exercising; Online Trainer; Youtube; Fitness App

LITERATURE REVIEW

"Leveraging Social Media Technologies to help clients achieve behaviour change goals"-A publish by Carol E. Torgan, Ph.D., FACSM and Tara M. Cousineau, Ph.D

The publish discussed the benefits of social media to help people achieve healthy behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to figure out if there is any common behaviours amongst people who use Youtube videos to do exercise at home. As Youtube is the third most visited site after Google and Facebook [1], the platform has many affects on our daily routines, especially among the young people. To answer for the question how people leverage Youtube in fitness, the study was broken down into different small topics to further investigate people behaviours. These topics include:

- 1.How often people do exercise and what type of exercise they normally do at home and how their set up is
- 2.How people manage their exercise video
- 3.How people find the video on Youtube and their preference about video format and the trainers
- 4.People's opinion about other apps used for work out
5. People's opinion about going to the gym

STUDY DESIGN

This is a qualitative research as the purpose is to gain in-depth understanding of user's thinking process while using advance in social media technology in daily life. The study designed to be semi- structure interview with 7 participants aged 15-50, who had some experience of using the video on Youtube to exercising at home. The interviewees were recruited with convenient sampling; and each interview took around 18-30 minutes.

Questions design

The questions were designed based on the research topics. It began with some warm up questions about people exercise routine and which electrical device they used for watching exercise video. Follow by how their habit of using the video on Youtube, specifically, do they often search for new video, and do they have a playlist for the video they like, etc. Then the question focused more on the selection process: What make people click an exercise video and how they decide if they like it or not. This would be the main focus point of the study. Then interviewee would be asked about their opinion about other fitness apps and going to the gym with real physical trainer. The 2 last questions were open-ended questions so the interviewees could freely sharing their ideas about the topics.

List of questions

How often do you do exercise? When (time of the day) do you often do exercise? Do you often use video on Youtube to do exercise? What kind of exercise do you often do?

Where do you do the exercise (with Youtube video)? How do you set up your workout place? Which device and browser do you use to open Youtube? Where do you put your device while doing the workout?

Do you normally practice the same video or find new video every time? Do you have favourite channels that you subscribe? Do you have a playlist for exercise videos?

How do you search for new video? Which keywords do you use? How long does it take for you to find a suitable video? Why do you click a video? What is your criteria for good video? Do you have any preference of the trainer (gender, training style)? Do you follow from the start to the end of the video?

What is your opinion about using Youtube comparing to other fitness app?

What is your opinion about going to the gym with real trainer comparing at home exercising with virtual trainer?

The interview could follow above questions. However, depending on the interviewee interest and background, the

questions were changed to make the interview more friendly and natural. It was necessary to adding more questions if the answer was not clear or it had relevant information and removed some questions that were unnecessary or out of interest of the interviewee. For example, when the interviewee answer mentioning that they had a favourite trainer/channel, I would like to ask more about the reasons why they like them.

Process

At the beginning, the interviewee was introduced about the purpose of the study, which is how people use Youtube video to do exercise, then the interviewee had to sign the consent form. They acknowledged that the whole interview was recorded for researching purpose. After that, they was asked to fill in a short survey about demographic and their background.

All the interviewees were people I knew, as I hope they would be more open when answering my questions. Most of them are students, one is student and working part-time trainer at the gym, one is currently working full-time. Majority of the interviewee was female. The results from the short survey.

The interviews were conducted at different places: library, living room, bed room, Skype, coffee shop. The places were selected for convenience of both interviewer and interviewee.

The whole interview was recorded and took around 18-30 minutes. I tried to make it as comfortable as possible, so the interviewee would not feel tired and boring.

The interviews focus on personal preference of using online video for fitness purpose: what makes they like and dislike about the videos.

After that, all the records would be transcribed and analysed individually.

Analysis

After reading through all the transcripts a few times, I highlighted some keyword that I found interesting for each question. Like this, I could easily look for the piece of information in the transcript. Appendix A shows transcripts of all interviewed with highlighted keywords.

First, I would like to focus on individual interview and analysis which answer is interesting, is there any relation between their background or personality and the answer.

Based on the similarity in their answer, I were able to made some conclusions about using Youtube to do exercise.

While reading the interview many times, I found that some keywords which are similar in meaning were mentioned by different interviewee. By grouping these keywords, I try to generalise the case by coming up with some hypothesis and assumption.

FINDINGS

I found some interviewees quite unique. Below I would like to introduce the background of all interviewees and summarise some points that I found interesting for each

person. Each interviewee was numbered based on their transcript number. For the table, it

Interviewee demographic

Overview of participant demographic

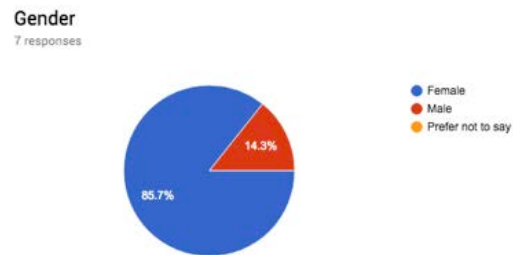


Figure 1: Gender percentage of participants

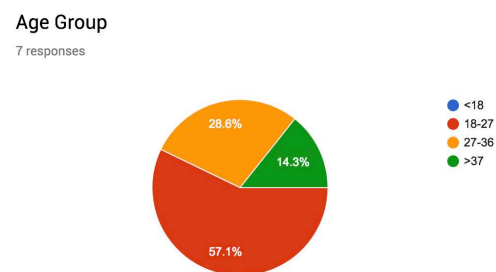


Figure 2: Aged group of participants

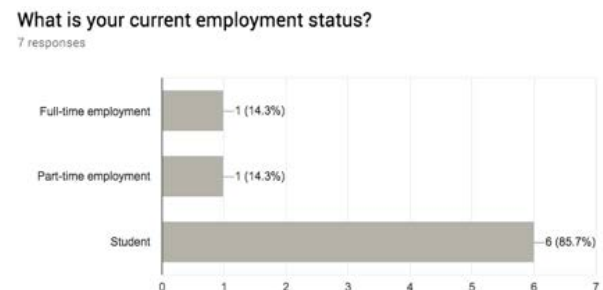


Figure 3: Participant employment status

**one person was student and part-time employment at the same time*

Highlight of interview

#1: Interviewee was a student in computer science and she likes trying new apps. She used another app call Musi to keep the exercise playlist.

#2: Interviewee was a student and enthusiastic in doing exercise. Her answer for how often you do exercise was “almost every day” and she also answered that she would watch “all the videos” from the channel that she followed. The answers somehow shows her serious attitude toward exercising.

#3: Interviewee was a full-time employee. She used to use video on Youtube to do exercise, but currently she only engaged in fitness center, and not often exercised at home. When asking her opinion about going to the gym, unlike others, her answer did not mention about the membership fee for the gym, while other people mentioned it. I hypothesised that because she had stable income, experience was more important for her than the money that she had to spend to get that experience. Like she said “It’s up to the user what kind of experience that want to try.”, exercising at home or going to the gym.

#4: Interviewee was a student and she was a big fan of a trainer on Youtube. When asking about the source of video she was using to do the exercise, she answered that she only follow the videos from one single source which was named Blogilates. Through follow up questions, she expressed her admirable feelings for the trainer.

#5 Interviewee was a student and she admitted to be introvert. Therefore, when asking her opinion about going to the gym, she immediately answered “I don’t feel comfortable going to the gym” and did not have many opinions

#6 Interviewee was a male student and he had back pain. He used “back pain” example many times during the interview. It was difficult to find male interviewee for the study as most of them don’t use Youtube to do exercise at home, they prefer going to the gym or do some sport outdoor. So for this interviewee, I believed because of his health problem, he needed more light weight exercise at home to improve his condition

#7 Interviewee was a female student and was working part-time as fitness trainer. Her purpose of using Youtube video was different from others. She used the videos “for inspiration” and to check how other “build up their lessons”. When I asked her opinion about other fitness app, she was the only one that immediately answer “I don’t like them”. She felt like “the app is very impersonal, and like many people have the same schedule”. And she also gave an interesting example about video background that was weird. She gave an example: “There are some videos that they have baby bed in the background”, “Who does exercise in front of the baby?” I found that she also had a baby, so I think she was more sensitive about this issue.

Generalisation

By looking at the demographic as well as the answer in the transcription, I hypothesise that female student tend to do exercise at home using online video. Lustyk et al. (2004) [2] found that women engaging in regular, low-intensity activity report higher self-esteem and quality of life when compared to women engaging in regular, high-intensity activity. Therefore, female students also do not require as much intensive training as men. They can achieve their target condition of fitness by regularly exercise using the online video.

Some common forms of exercise that can be done at home are pilates, bodyweight, yoga, exact words used in the

answer are listed in **table 1**. These form of exercise does not require many equipments or machines to support.

No.	Keywords
#1	yoga, abs, legs, exercise using body weight
#2	body weight exercise, burpie, squat, push up
#3	HIIT, cardio, stretching
#4	Blogilates, pilate, arm circle, squat, something on the floor, usages of every body part
#5	yoga or pilates
#6	routines for arms, legs, back

Table 1. Highlighted keyword from the answer for what type of exercise you often do.

** transcription keywords were highlighted in yellow*

From the interviews, iPad seems to be the best device to open the video. There were three people mentioned they used iPad, two used laptop (they do not have iPad) and only one used the mobile (she also did not have iPad, but she mentioned iPad would be better to view the video). They often put the device on the floor or on the study table. Because some of the rooms were quite small, they have to do exercise in the empty area of the room, properly between the bed and study table.

People often create different playlist to keep their video that they like and want to watch again in the future. One of the interviewee use ‘watch later’ playlist-a playlist created by Youtube to keep video that she would like to do the next day, then she can just remove it from the list after watching. Time needed to find a suitable video for exercising differs between participants, according to the keywords in **table 2**. For those who needed more than 10 minutes would watch the selected video after that, their answer highlighted ‘favourite list’, ‘watch it again’, ‘practice many times to achieve the results’ in interview #3, and ‘80% rewatch’ in interview #5 denoted that they would like to use these videos many times in the future. That properly was the reason why they spent more time on deleting the video.

No.	Keywords
#1	take 3 times, save to the playlist
#2	i don't have to search, subscribe a channel, try all the videos, a lot
#3	within 10-20 mins, I can make decision
#4	just this one channel, a lot, it's really easy to pick one
#5	15 minutes
#6	around 5-8 minutes

Table 2. Highlighted keyword from the answer for how long do you take to find a suitable video?

** transcription keywords were highlighted in purple*

From the answers, It was also possible to conclude that people have gender preferences for the trainer. Women would choose the exercise videos from a female trainers as the exercise was designed to compatible for women body. Besides, it could be more motivation for them if the trainer was in the same gender.

What make people click

By analysing their answer for the question which criteria that make them click an exercise video in the search result, Except the number of views since Youtube's algorithm normally displays videos with high views and likes on top search results, I found that there are 3 main factors that make people select a video to try.

Firstly, thumbnail is an important factor that gives user many clues to judge a video and make decision of viewing. According to the interview [table 3], people prefer to see the trainer face in the thumbnail, so at least they know who will do the exercise with them. Some interviewee mentioned that thumbnail with the trainer was doing the exercise was more attractive to them. This could be explained that because some people did not like trainer who talk too much without actually doing the exercise, having trainer doing the exercise on thumbnail could make them think this trainer was serious about the workout, not a disguised training video that had a lot of talking to promote nutrient food and just a little exercise. Besides, adding text on the thumbnail is also a way to attract user attention.

No	Keywords
#3	high resolution, don't like show of their body
#5	definitely the thumbnail, HD quality, indoor environment, trainer are doing, some texts, colorfull
#6	thumbnail is important, working out ..interesting, not interested, portrait, sketch, showing core muscle that you work
#7	thumbnail, catch my attention, have the trainer, little bit text, surrounding

Table 3. Highlighted keyword from the answer about thumbnail

** transcription keywords were highlighted in light red*

If the thumbnail is the first think people notice. They will read the title secondly if they found the thumbnail interesting. According to the interviewee' suggestions, the title should be concise about the type of work out, timing and maybe effect of the work out. This was derived from their answer of which keywords you use to search the video. The title should avoid to exaggerate the effect of the exercise, as many people can evaluate the real effect of the video.

Thirdly, the video is from a channel or a trainer or a series that user has already known and trust. For example, if the user like a trainer A and have watched many video from this

trainer, when Youtube shows the top search results, one of the video is from this trainer, user may try to click this video before other videos.

What make people stay

Except the video from the trainer or the channel that people have already been familiar, they would check the video first by just watching the video the first few minutes, then skip to the middle and the end. There are a few factors that encourage the viewer to watch full video. In this case, watching and working out according to the video.

The main factor was the trainer style, the way they talk to the user and explain the movement. There are different types of trainer, some trainers just do the exercise with less talking, some trainers are very cheerful and talk non-stop during the video. Everyone have their own preference for the trainer. However, I believe that most female user prefer to have trainer which is cheerful and have a positive attitude. Having nice voice is also a plus, because when watching the video on Youtube, user will have difficulty to see the screen for some movement. However, they can listening to the instructor's description to do the work.

Some interviewee mentioned that they did not like trainers who have too much explanations and promotion talk. It was mentioned in interview no. 2 "I don't like it when there is too much explanation" or in interview no. 6 he did not like those trainer who "promote their product". I think most people who looked for video to do exercise like trainers who really focus on the work out. I think this absolutely reasonable because their fitness goals such as loose weight or 6 packs abs could only be achieved via hard-work exercising, not by only watching the video. So adding some unnecessary talk would waste the user time.

Besides, good video editing is also one criteria to evaluate the video. As there are many exercise videos available on Youtube, user standard for a good video is increasing. Well-edited video is a sign that the trainers put a lot of effort in making the video, as a result viewers will like these videos more, and shows their appreciation by like, sharing the videos, and subscribe the channel. What Youtube trainer can do to make the video look more professionals are adding the timer and the sound, having the name of the exercise and number of rep when they mention it, or adding background music, etc. These improvement were suggested by the interviewee.

What people like about Youtube exercise

The answers from the interviewees show they prefer watching the exercise video from Youtube to the video from the fitness apps.

Besides the obvious reason that people have to pay for the fitness app and Youtube is free, some interviewee mentioned that they like Youtube more because doing exercise with the online video gave them the feeling that the trainer were doing the exercise with them, more details are in table 4. And they like this feeling that the Youtube video can give them while the fitness app failed to do so. As one fitness app is from a specific company, they normally do

not have enough time, money and manpower to invest in the video. Their video often very short and only have one movement, the user then just need to repeat that movement. While Youtube trainer combines all movements to one video to make completed flow, the app breaks down it to multiple small movements video around 1 minutes and then auto play the next video when user finish the repetition. The pause in between remind user that the video is just a recorded and they do not feel to have strong interaction with the trainer. Although this was not clearly state from the transcription, this could be the main reason why people like Youtube more because they feel more engaging in the exercise. Further scientific verification is needed to clarify this hypothesis.

No.	Keywords
#1	I don't use, improve, go to the gym
#2	not free, less variety, Youtube, more choices
#3	tried a few, not really into it, play one by one, time practice..short, count down, frustrating, not sync up with you, same time
#4	Youtube already sufficient, app..sometimes useful, depend on..you, like to it with..some body
#5	easiest to access, free, many choices, good enough
#6	routine, schedule, notifications, don't follow, stop using, app..workout..beginner, concept good, Youtube..more choices.. harder
#7	I don't like, impersonal, absolutely not specific

Table 4. Highlighted keyword from the answer about other fitness app

** transcription keywords were highlighted in blue*

Another reason is the rest time between different movement. It is common for some fitness apps that they just show the movement one time and the users just need to repeat that movement for a number of times. It seems that the number of repetition sometimes is quite overwhelming for the users, especially for female users. The interviewee said that they feel stress when the app counts down and she couldn't follow the pace. For Youtube video, the trainer will do the same repetition with you and you may think that "if she can do it, I also can do it". The thought will motivate user to continue following the video. This kind of interaction is disrupted in the app. Of course, not all Youtube video have appropriate rest in between, it still depends on the trainer who design the exercises. It was mentioned during the interview that "I like when they (the trainer) offer modifications" or exercisers can modify by themselves "do another exercise in the mean while" However, Youtube has many more options for the videos than only one single app.

Youtube vs Gym

There are two main disadvantages of going to the gym. The first disadvantage is you have to pay monthly subscription fee which is not cheap. The second one is you have to travel to the gym. It's ok if the gym is near to your house, but if it's quite far away, you spend more time just for travelling to the place.

People all know the benefits from being membership of the gym is you can access its facility and equipments, running machine, different size of dumbbells and bars, many other work out machines, which make your work out more effective. More than that, community is also important factor to encourage fitness behaviours. It's always more fun if we do the work together with someone else. Sometimes the trainer at the gym to can help you adjust your position and postures.

DISCUSSION

In the interview, I used the term fitness app which was not an accurate term to use in this circumstances as I wanted to compare with other apps that also provided video to workout and training, not including health or activities tracking app. However, most of the interviewees were able to understand my intention.

Although majority of participants showed that they were not interested in using a fitness app to do the exercise, there are actually a lot of people use the apps to work out daily. As mentioned by one of the interviewee, her friend were using a paid app name 'Filetics' to do the work out. These apps often offered many interesting functions such as scheduling your work out routine, tracking your progress, gamification by rewarding badges when you achieve the target. So it is good to know who would like to use the app and why they uses this app instead of Youtube.

REFLECTIONS

All participants are not native English speakers. Therefore, how they interpret the questions and the vocabulary used in the answer are a little different. For example, in transcript #6 the interviewee often use the word 'routines' to indicate the sets of movements. And they also had some limitation in expression their opinion and idea.

Language barrier also made the analysis process longer and more difficult. Their answer sometimes lengthy and repeated because they have to find an appropriate way and vocabulary to express their idea. This cause some problems when transcribed the interview. I did not follow one-by-one word transcription from the recordings because it did not make a fluent sentence for easy reading and analysis.

The research question was quite general. I did not have any hypotheses at the beginning need to justify through this study so the interview was designed to cover all topics related to using the Youtube video to do exercising. That makes the interview lengthy and unable to dig deeper into one topic. Only after analysing the interview, I discovered

some interesting idea that I wished to study in details. For example, if there were any significant differences about which criteria to choose an exercise video between male and female.

When interviewing more people, I tend to compare this answer with previous answer. For example, when asking which equipments they had for exercising, the previous answer was yoga mat; when the next interviewee answered 'No', I tried to reconfirm if he also did not have an exercise mat. This kind of questions came randomly in my mind during the interview.

I changed the interview questions based on the participants' interest. So when the interviewee was a trainer and most of the time she did not do exercise at home, I did not ask question about how she set up the exercise at home. Another example was when the interviewee did not often search for videos, I do not ask them what made them click a video appeared in the search results.

There were also interesting details I would like to clarify with the participants, but I did not have a chance because I only realised it when I investigate their answer. One example could be in interview no. 6 I would like to ask more questions about his back pain and if it was the reason why he often did exercise at home; or I want to know more about the Musi app mentioned in interview no. 1

The topic is kind of broad, some are interest for this person some don't. Will be nice if have more time for the observation, check their playlist and their exercise surrounding

CONCLUSION

Young generations easily emerge technology in their daily life. For students, especially female students, Youtube provides an alternative solution for them to be in shape. The study has uncovered some interesting points about the users such as exercising at home is more prevalent in women than in man; thumbnail with trainer doing the exercise and text will look more interesting to the user; trainers who only explain about the workout without really doing it cannot gain the trust from the user; people prefer Youtube video to videos in the fitness apps.

Knowing how people use exercising video on Youtube can help trainers, Youtube makers to provide better quality videos and services, for example spend more time on designing the thumbnail and editing the video. The result from the survey may suggest new idea for the gym or the company doing fitness app to improve their services and products.

For this study, more interviews should be conducted with focusing set of questions to give a better conclusion about user behaviours.

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