

Research report about the loneliness of international students

IDEA9106 Design Thinking

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Introduction

Loneliness is an part of human emotional expression that cannot be avoided. In the history of human development, the countless intellectuals and poets in their language describe their story related to the loneliness, such as the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer also said that the loneliness is the art of getting along with yourself. In this view, loneliness may be particular strong for the international students.

While with the development of the Internet, social media and other new technologies, interpersonal communication and information change becomes more convenient and faster. However, The current mainstream social media model does not seem to help people, especially the international student, to mitigate loneliness. The ambition of this research is to mitigate the loneliness of target users by combining new technologies with current social media model.

The target group is determined to be the international student. Due to the limitations of researchers, it is not possible to obtain a comprehensive worldwide sample. Therefore the target group is narrowed down to the international students of the University of Sydney.

Introduction

In terms of the methodology, the methods of observation in empirical research should be considered. And also directly interviews will be used in the study.

As the subject of this research, the international student, 10 students will be randomly selected for interview. And also issues questionnaire for all international students to get as many samples as possible. Then based on the statistical data conduct desired in-depth reports that can be used in the future design.

The specific research scope should include the perception of loneliness among international students, the usage of social media, and the connection between these two elements.

This research will help designer understand the treatment of loneliness for international students through the combination of new technology and social media, and lay a good foundation for the subsequent design proposals that can help the target group to relieve their loneliness through a good empathy design.

Background Research

There are three key words that need to be clarified.

Firstly, Loneliness. In 1973, Robert Weiss gave an explicit definition of the loneliness, which can be divided into two different subsets, emotional isolation and social isolation. A long-term lonely situation is bad for the health statistics. With vast research deployment, loneliness is closely related to sub-health status and blood pressure indicators. In addition, this sub-health state not only affects the patient's quality of life, such as a chain reaction that can lead to sleep issues, but can also cause potential social issues, leading to serious chain reactions such as crime or attack (Blair & Rita Justice, 1988).

The next key word is Social media. From the Merriam-Webster in 2016, the definition of social media is a form of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).

Background Research

The third key word is the international student. By the definition from UNESCO, the legal definition of international students is Students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education by holding student visa published from the destination country and are now enrolled outside their country of origin.

As one of the biggest country where is the destination of global international students, a large number of students from all over the world coming to Australia start their abroad experience. According to a UNESCO statistics, in 2012, the number of people in the world who demanded international higher education reached nearly 4.5 million. This data is expected to exceed 7 million by 2025. For Australia, the department of international education has estimated that 940,000 international students will study in Australia in 2025 and contribute 33 billion economic income for this country (Australian trade and investment commission, 2018).

However, in the face of such growth, the mental health of international students has gradually entered the field of vision. A study shows that the mental health needs of international students are fully satisfied (Hyun, J., Quinn, B., Madon, T. and Lustig, S., 2007). The loneliness is the biggest psychological problem that plagues international students.

Background Research

Although the world has become flat and integrated with the development of the Internet, it is not a simple matter for everyone to go to an unfamiliar environment to study alone. At this time, as a practical tool, social media inevitably enters the lives of international students and brings fresh air to their tedious and challenging life. Through social media, international students can get the information and culture of local students more quickly, so as to mitigate their social isolation.

According to a research in 2016 established by Naslund& Aschbrenner etc. that shows the social media can be used as a new way of health to cure mental illness. By interacting, social media can integrate more people into the known social circle and provide people with high interest points in the circle to eliminate loneliness of the international students.

At the same time, for social media developers and designers, the current network environment is highly variable. Related to an article about future social media trends, the author suggests that if the social media company wants to stand their business in the industry and keep the competitive advantages. The only method is to ensure high-quality social media content and constantly innovation by embracing new technologies (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Therefore, as a comprehensive interactive platform, social media with enhance user experience brought by novel and rich content and mature high-tech applications will be more popular.

Project Overview and Plan

For related research on background issues, this project will analyze the loneliness of the target group, the international students, and integrate social media as a solution of loneliness mitigation into this research. The goal is to find out how does the target group people prefer to use social media and how does the social media utilization is connected to loneliness, and finally to guide the design of the design proposal with the research data and information obtained.

In order to obtain sufficient information, integrate disordered information, analyze unstructured or semi-structured information and utilize valuable information in a more efficient and effective way, A comprehensively strategic plan is essential. That should include high-level project charters and some specific implementation details. With regard to do this, the research has developed different implementation schedules.

The next section will elaborate the execution schedules and priorities of this research and the project methodology.

Project Overview and Plan

1 Identify the research requirement

In this phase, the research background information and research guideline information should be clearly defined, that is, the relationship between the loneliness of target group, the international students, and the usage of social media.

Through this stage of collecting information and pre-research, the research blueprint will be conducted and it can lay the foundation for follow-up work.

2 Delineate the potential interviewee

The gender, age range, grade and student status (international or domestic students) and career information of interviewees can be clarified.

The final number of interviewees is 9 people, including international students and domestic students, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and also tutors as stakeholder.

The determined respondents cover all students studying in the University of Sydney, so the best way to deploy the questionnaire survey is distribute randomly within campus.

Project Overview and Plan

3 *Recruitment and Implementation*

In order to ensure academic rigor, a relatively formal interview application was submitted to these identified nine interviewees, and observation notes and interview recordings were made during the interview.

The questionnaire uses a network distribution model, which is fast and efficient. The survey information can be collected and analysed to conduct structured data.

4 *Analysis and summary*

Generate interview transcription based on the interview voice recording and observation notes. And also conduct some personas by using affinity diagram.

Import the electronic data of the questionnaire survey into some data analysis tool to classify and summarize the unstructured and semi-structured information, which can help create tables and charts.

These structured data can be directly used in the following design proposal.

Project Overview and Plan

The Schedule of Interview and Questionnaire		
Time and Date	Task	Completion
7/09/2018	Identify the research requirement	Defining the experimental direction, determining the target of the experiment, and generating specific detailed research needs
9/09/2018	Develop plan and Delineate interviewees	Create a rough schedule and plan. At the same time to make sure which is my potential stakeholder or interviewee
10/09/2018	Recurite my interviewees	Send the invitation message to the potential interviewees, And Determine interview time
11/09/2018	Formulate the survey questions and interview questions	Use the tool (surveymonkey) to design and send my questionnaire to the potential respondents. Also conduct and print the interview questions for future interview
11/09/2018	Implement a questionnaire	Put the hyperlink of questionnaire suvery to the students community. And Keep focusing on the survey results
12/09/2018	Interview the first and second interviewee	Get preliminary interview information and make appropriate changes based on this information to prepare for the next day's interview
13/09/2018	Interview my third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh interviewee	According to the appropriately revised interview questions, expand appropriately and get more comprehensive and specific information to make up for the lack of information about the previous interviews
14/09/2018	Complete interviews with the other two interviewees	Double check for the potential missing information
14/09/2018	Conduct the transcription	Write a briefly important information of transcription based on the interview recording
15/09/2018	Analyze data from the survey	Generate visual data charts or tables and simply annotate pictures
16/09/2018	Analyze the interivew information	Categorize and summarize to generate

Table 1. The High-level hierarchy implementation schedule

Project Methodology

1 Interviews

This research defines semi-structured and open-ended interview questions. The interview location and time is decided by the interviewees. The interviewer is responsible for making records and notes during the interview.

Challenges

Depending on the personality and experience of the interviewees, the usual challenge is that the interviewee has limited content.

Other challenges include the inability to communicate, and the expansion of time and place conflicts.

2 Questionnaires

This questionnaires are designed through survey tools, which can help conduct the logic, testing, and distribution.

This questionnaire of this research are distributed directly through the network.

Challenges

Sometimes it's hard to determine whether the problem defined by the question is in the set of related questions.

The sample of respondents is not comprehensive enough because the channel is single.

Project Methodology

3 *Observation method*

As part of an empirical research method, For further information cannot be expressed by words from observing the body language of the respondents movement and facial expressions.

Challenge

How to make the respondent eliminate their consciousness about we are observing as much as possible and let him show the normal state as much as possible is the biggest challenge.

4 *Concept mapping and Think-aloud*

Define a core problem point in advance and give some concrete tasks based on this problem point. Then making records or taking notes according to the situation.

Challenge

Without being skilled in this method, the user may not be able to complete the assigned task independently.

This method is more limited in use and can only complement the missing information.

Survey Data Analysis

1 International students group

The survey is setting two group questions. Question 1 aims to differentiate groups of students. Question 2 to 8 are designed for the international students.

Finally there are 63 international students give their own response

2 Domestic students group

Also the domestic student is another party to provide help and stakeholder. Question 1 aims to differentiate groups of students. Question 9 to 14 are designed for the domestic students.

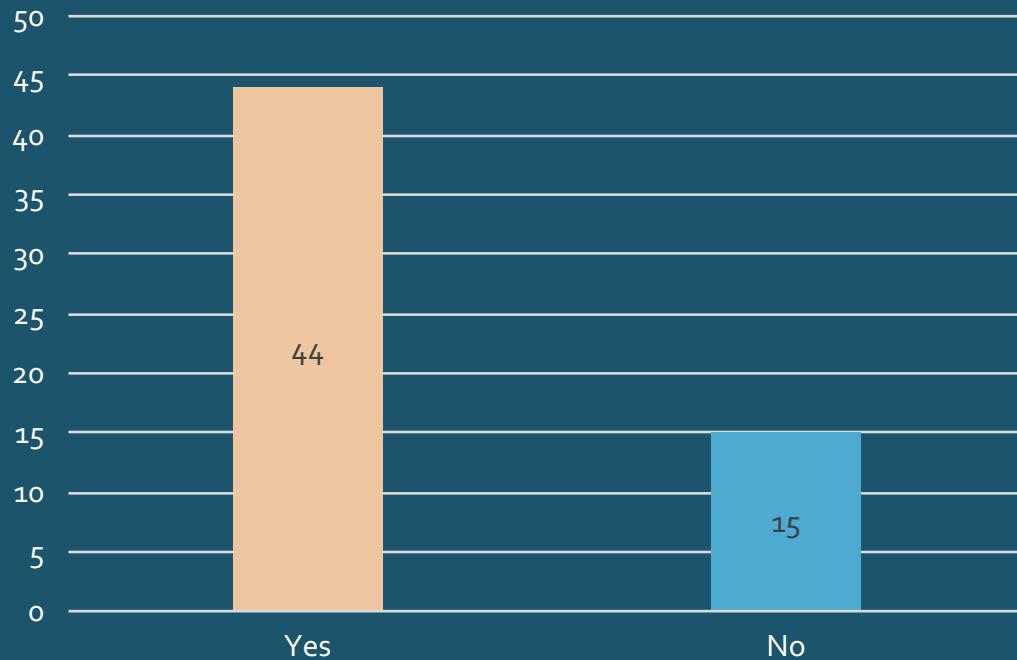
Finally, there are 14 domestic student give their own response.



Table 2. The result of question 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	81.82% 63
No	18.18% 14
TOTAL	77

Q2: Have you experienced loneliness period when you are studying abroad?



Graph 2. The result of question 2

The question 2 reveals the basic information of whether overseas students have experienced loneliness.

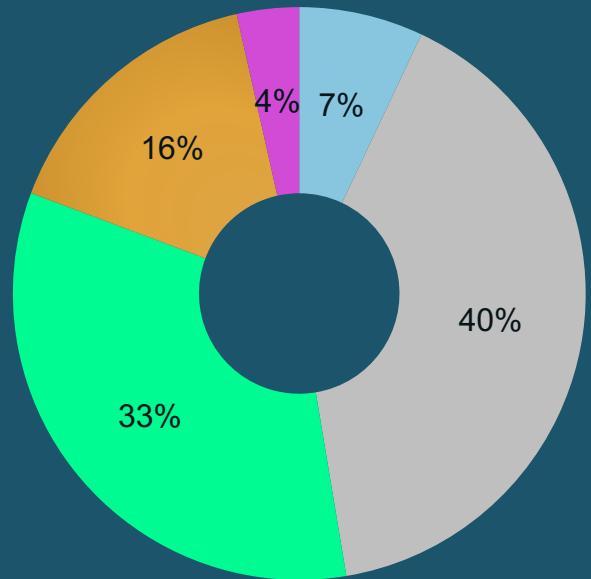
In this part the Table 3 and Graph 2 show that nearly two-thirds of international students have experienced the loneliness during their studying abroad.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	74.58%	44
No	25.42%	15
TOTAL		59

Table 3. The result of question 2

Q3: What is the frequency of your loneliness?

■ Never ■ Quite a few ■ Sometimes ■ Quite often ■ Everyday



Graph 2. The result of question 3

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Never	7.02%	4
Quite a few	40.35%	23
Sometimes	33.33%	19
Quite often	15.79%	9
Everyday	3.51%	2
TOTAL		57

Table 3. The result of question 3

The Question 3 further explores the basic details of whether an international student has experienced loneliness, and thus investigates the frequency of overseas students experiencing loneliness.

From the charts on the left side, it can be seen that nearly 93% of overseas students have been plagued by loneliness, and nearly one-fifth of them are seriously affected. And also, Only a handful of international students claim that they have never had a sense of loneliness.

#	RESPONSES
1	Being alone
2	No
3	No
4	Too busy to have fun
5	We are not engaged in the local life and occupied in the assignments
6	no friend
7	being shy
8	When I am feeling sad or having pressure
9	Lack of friends
10	Hard to find friend from other countries
11	relationship
12	no reason
13	boring
14	Apart from families and friends
15	Lack of help when it is needed.
16	Study, exercise
17	Food
18	Food
19	fewer local friends
20	homesick
21	Being scared
22	Long time no chatting with friends
23	too many assignment

24	hungry
25	Too much study work so i don't have enough time to socialize.
26	boring
27	No one loves me
28	No person to relate to
29	Homesick
30	Idontknow
31	have no money
32	miss home
33	stress of assignments
34	single
35	not many friends here
36	communication
37	Long distance love and affection
38	language barrier
39	find it hard to make new friends
40	study
41	Break up
42	Few friends

Table 4. The result of question 4

The Question 4 is 'What reason do you think can cause the loneliness?'. The table 4 is describe the detail information about this question. And as the Table 4 shown above, this question finally got 42 valid answers.

After statistical analysis, the two reasons that respondents gave the most were the lack of friends and the pressure of learning. And there are 11 times and 7 times respectively. This result is also in line with the initial forecast of this study.

#	RESPONSES
1	playing games
2	Go to gym
3	Chatting
4	listening to the music ; talking with my friends; joining the local activities;
5	watch movies
6	Watching TV
7	Chat with friends online or watch a movie
8	Go out, talk with my friend
9	Game
10	play game
11	Texting with friend
12	Go out
13	Read fictions.
14	No need for mitigation.
15	Work and video call
16	Work and study
17	Ourdoor activities
18	hang out
19	Doing my hobbies
20	Ask friends to hangout
21	watch video
22	studying
23	Plan time and join activities actively

24	travel
25	Watch movie on phone
26	go to b e d
27	Distraction such as video games, movies
28	Play computer games
29	cooking
30	shopping, do sports
31	I might think about to get a pet
32	contact with friends
33	talk to friends and families
34	call my friends
35	games
36	go to gym
37	Go back to hometown
38	play online game
39	games
40	watch video
41	Sleeping
42	Party

Table 5. The result of question 5

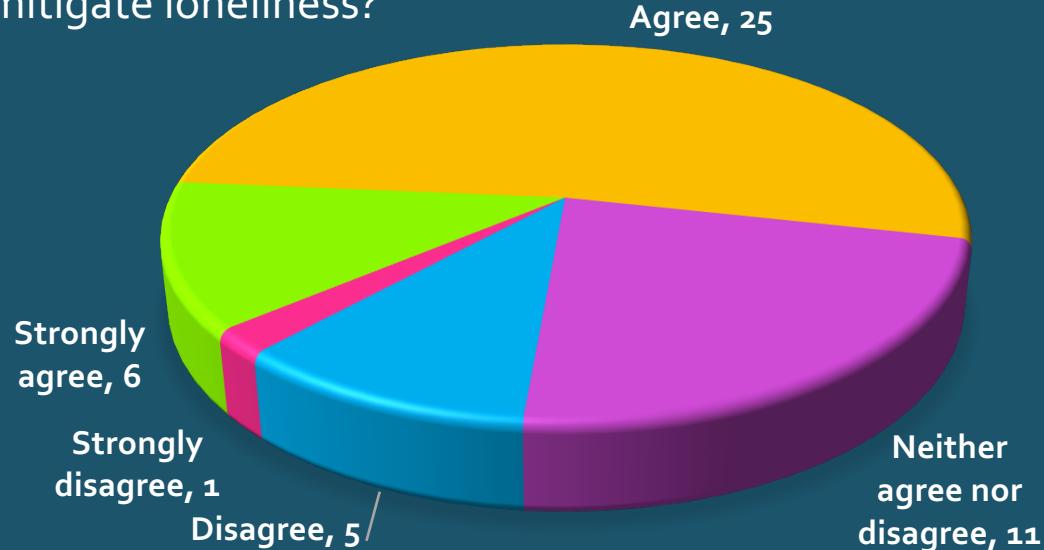
The Question 5 is 'Suppose if you feel lonely, What method do you prefer to mitigate loneliness?'. The table 5 is also interpret the specific responses about this question. And as the Table 5 shown above, this question finally also got 42 valid answers.

After statistical analysis, for this question, the answer is more diverse. The most frequent ways to play games, chatting with other people or friends, watch videos or movies, and go out find some interesting things to do. Most of these highest frequency solutions are available online by social media.

The purpose of Question 6 is to understand the importance of social media in relieving loneliness in the minds of students.

A relatively large number of the international students think that social media may play a role in mitigating loneliness, and more than half of them agree with the problem. However at the same time, it is also noted that nearly 15% the international students deny that social media may ease loneliness.

Q6: Do you think the social media can help mitigate loneliness?



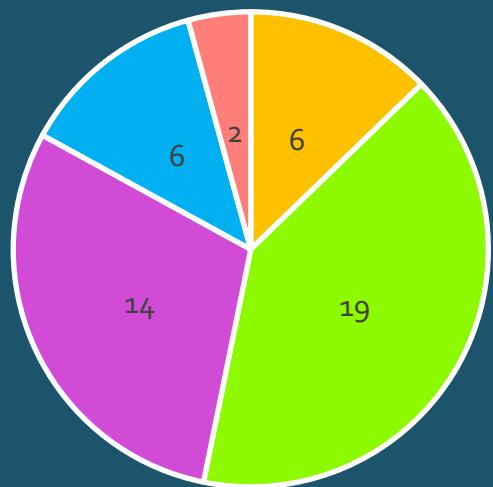
Graph 3. The result of question 6

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	12.50%
Agree	52.08%
Neither agree nor disagree	22.92%
Disagree	10.42%
Strongly disagree	2.08%
TOTAL	48

Table 6. The result of question 6

Q7: Are you willing to join some physical meeting activities from these social networks?

■ Very likely ■ Likely ■ Neither likely nor unlikely ■ Unlikely ■ Very unlikely



Graph 4. The result of question 7

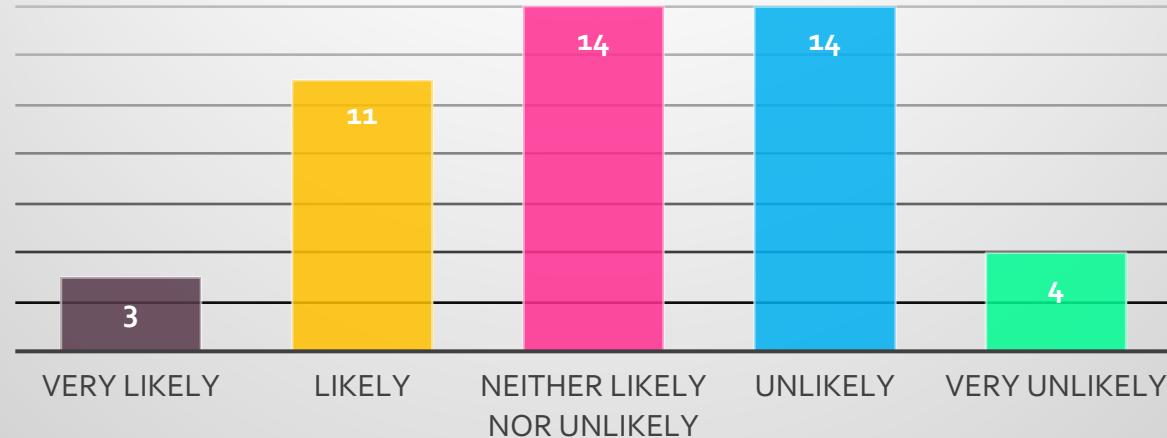
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very likely	12.77%	6
Likely	40.43%	19
Neither likely nor unlikely	29.79%	14
Unlikely	12.77%	6
Very unlikely	4.26%	2
TOTAL		47

Table 7. The result of question 7

In order to further understand what kind of activities can attract international students to participate in, and to mine valuable information for subsequent design proposals, the research has settled the issue of the intersection of offline and online activities.

More than half of the international students think they will participate in similar activities, but nearly 30% of students have a conservative and neutral attitude, which may depend on the amount of free time and is also related to personality.

Q8: When you feel lonely, will you accept a stranger to help you relieve that?



Graph 5. The result of question 8

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very likely	6.52%
Likely	23.91%
Neither likely nor unlikely	30.43%
Unlikely	30.43%
Very unlikely	8.70%
TOTAL	46

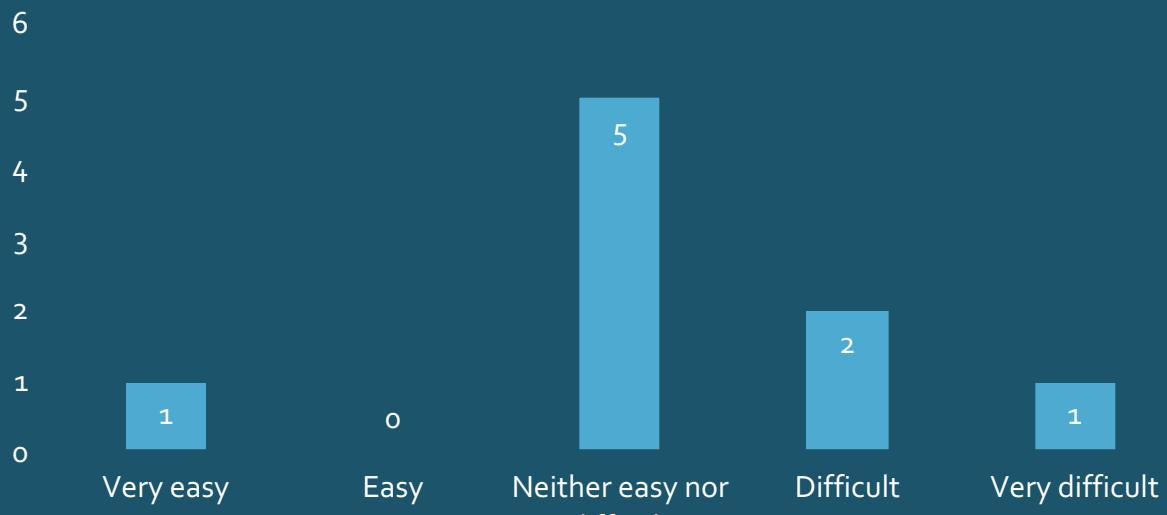
Table 8. The result of question 8

The last question about international students is to think from the perspective of the middleman. As a group to receive help, it is a vital important step to understand whether the international students accept help from outside. So raise the question 8.

For the result of this question, More people hold a relatively neutral or negative attitude. There are very few people can accept or reject it in extreme extend.

This also reminds us that we should pay attention to protecting the safety of beneficiaries when conduct design proposal.

Q9: Do you think international students can integrate into your learning community or friend circle?



Graph 6. The result of question 9

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very easy	11.11%	1
Easy	0.00%	0
Neither easy nor difficult	55.56%	5
Difficult	22.22%	2
Very difficult	11.11%	1
TOTAL		9

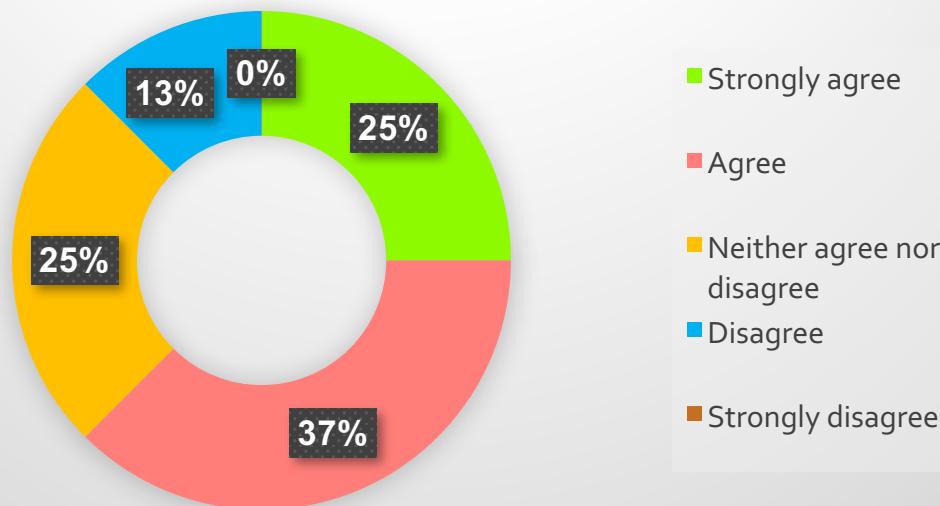
Table 9. The result of question 9

This section interviews are related to the domestic students as another party of stakeholder which will help designer discovers how to better help others ease loneliness.

In the question 9, the research wants to know if there is a gap between international students and domestic students.

The consequence may be obviously. Indeed, International students have a gap with domestic students and basically may become a big hidden danger of eliminating loneliness.

Q10: Do you think the social media can help mitigate loneliness?



Graph 7 . The result of question 10

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	25.00%	2
Agree	37.50%	3
Neither agree nor disagree	25.00%	2
Disagree	12.50%	1
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		8

Table 10 . The result of question 10

This question aim to know about whether the domestic students think that social media is good for healing loneliness.

For the result of in the left side charts, Most of the domestic students hold a relatively neutral or positive attitude toward this question. There are very few people do not agree with this point.

#	RESPONSES
1	Language and cultural barriers
2	Culture and language barrier
3	Homesickness - Away from family and friends and life that they are used to
4	Language barriers with local students
5	LANGUAGE
6	Lack of connection to local communities
7	Difficulties making friendships
8	Home sick, difficulty to culture intergration

Table II. The result of question II

The Question 11 is ‘What reason do you think can cause the loneliness for international students?’. The ambition of this question is to know the reason can lead to the loneliness for the international students. The table 11 is describe the detail information about this question.

After statistical analysis, the two reasons that respondents gave the most were the language or cultural barrier and the homesick.

#	RESPONSES
1	Go and meet people
2	Socialise as much as possible. Work in groups. Get along with local students, not just international.
3	Distract myself with new friends - specifically activities and hobbies that friends do such as uni clubs
4	Try to join clubs/societies, try to make friends with people in my groups (if I have group work)
5	SHOPPING
6	Meet other foreign friends for sports and activities
7	Join clubs, societies, go to events and meetups
8	contact family member, remain silent

Table 12. The result of question 12

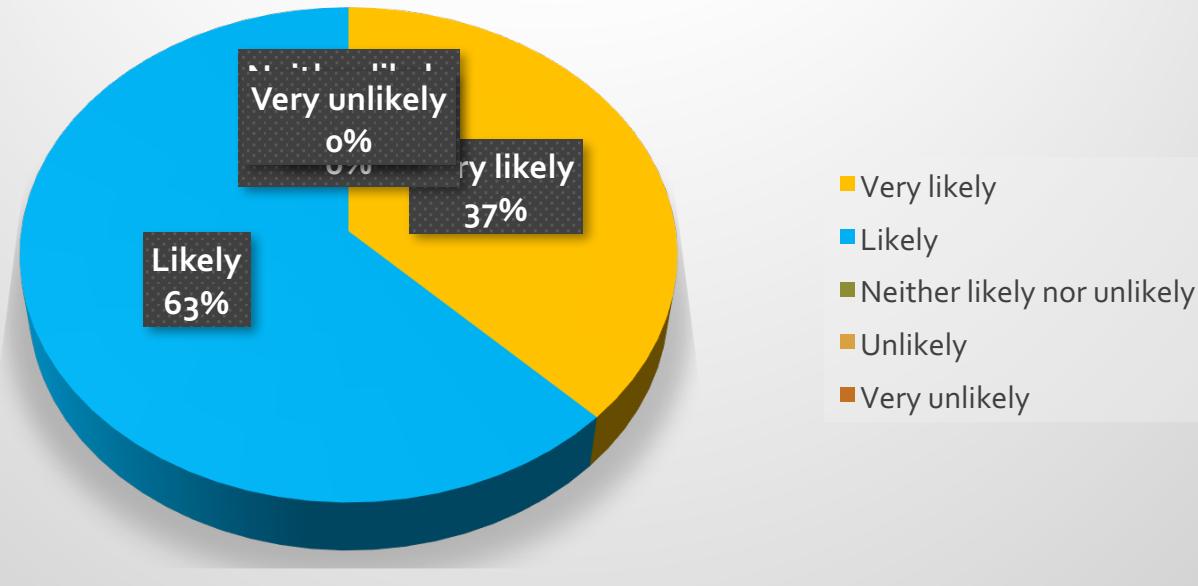
The Question 12 is ‘Suppose if you are now studying abroad and feel very lonely, how will you mitigate this loneliness?’. The ambition of this question is to know the method from the domestic students chose to mitigate loneliness. The table 12 is describe the detail information about this question.

After statistical analysis, go outdoors and doing some social activities are the best ways for domestic students to think about alleviating loneliness.

This section interviews are related to providing assistance to international students.

It is very gratifying that all the domestic students surveyed are willing to give their hands to help those international students who are in trouble for loneliness, which also provides important ideas for our design proposals.

Q13: Suppose when you hear an international student who is just your classmate, feel very lonely, are you willing to take the initiative to help them?

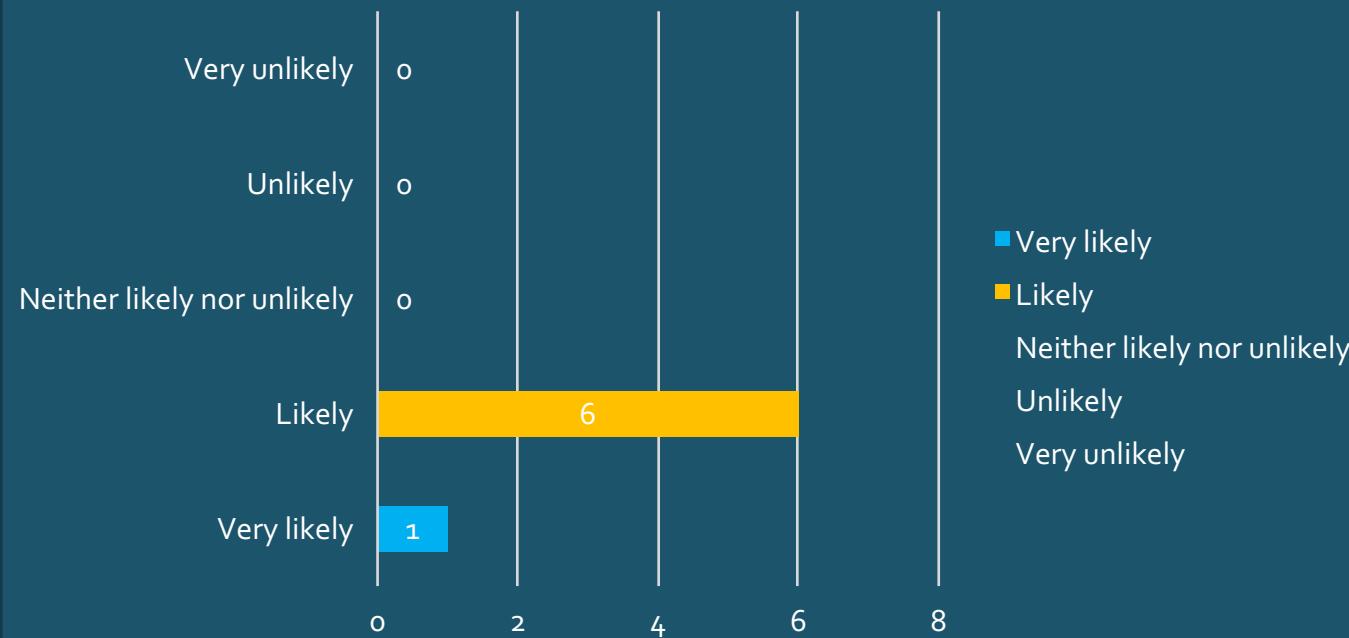


Graph 8 . The result of question 13

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very likely	37.50%
Likely	62.50%
Neither likely nor unlikely	0.00%
Unlikely	0.00%
Very unlikely	0.00%
TOTAL	8

Table 13 . The result of question 13

Q14: Are you willing to join some physical meeting activities to help them mitigate loneliness?



Graph 9 . The result of question 14

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very likely	14.29%	1
Likely	85.71%	6
Neither likely nor unlikely	0.00%	0
Unlikely	0.00%	0
Very unlikely	0.00%	0
TOTAL		7

Table 14 . The result of question 14

The last question prepared for the domestic student also aims to know about whether the domestic students are willing to do some physical activities to help the international students.

For the result of in the left side charts, most of the domestic students hold a relatively neutral or positive attitude toward this question. They are most likely to hang out and take part in some physical meeting activities to help international tackle these problem.

Affinity Diagram

1 Generate and Display ideas

The first step is aiming to collect as much usable information as possible.

So in this stage, the researcher will combine the results of the questionnaire with the interview transcriptions and use brainstorming methods to write all meaningful or important ideas on the Post-In card.

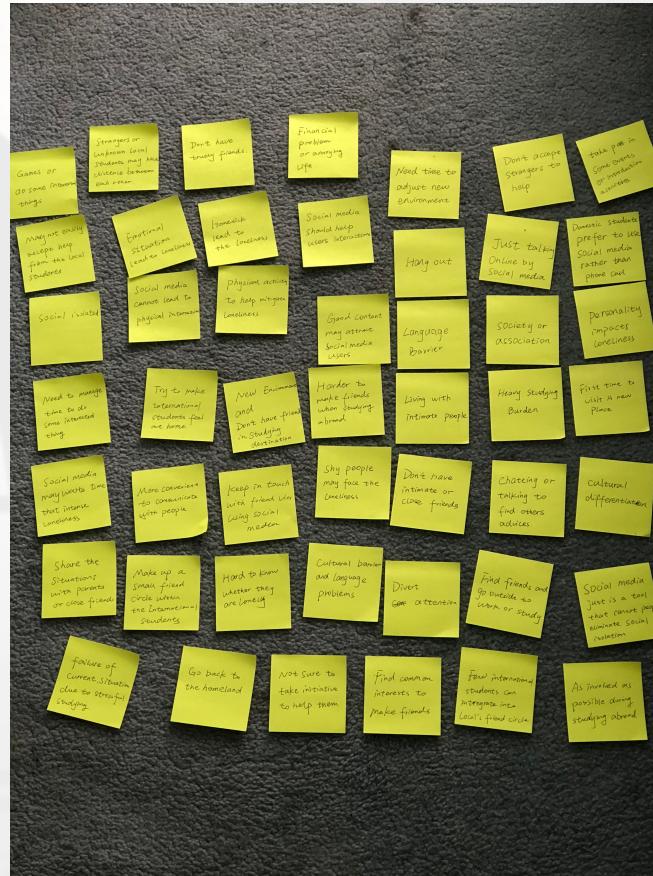


Image 1. generate ideas and display

Affinity Diagram

2 Sort and Heading idea groups

After collection of the semi-structured information from the first step, the second phase will create a grouping and categorizing idea sets.

So in this stage, the researcher needs to use their logical thinking and with the help of another different color Post-In card as the heading card to identify the different groups.

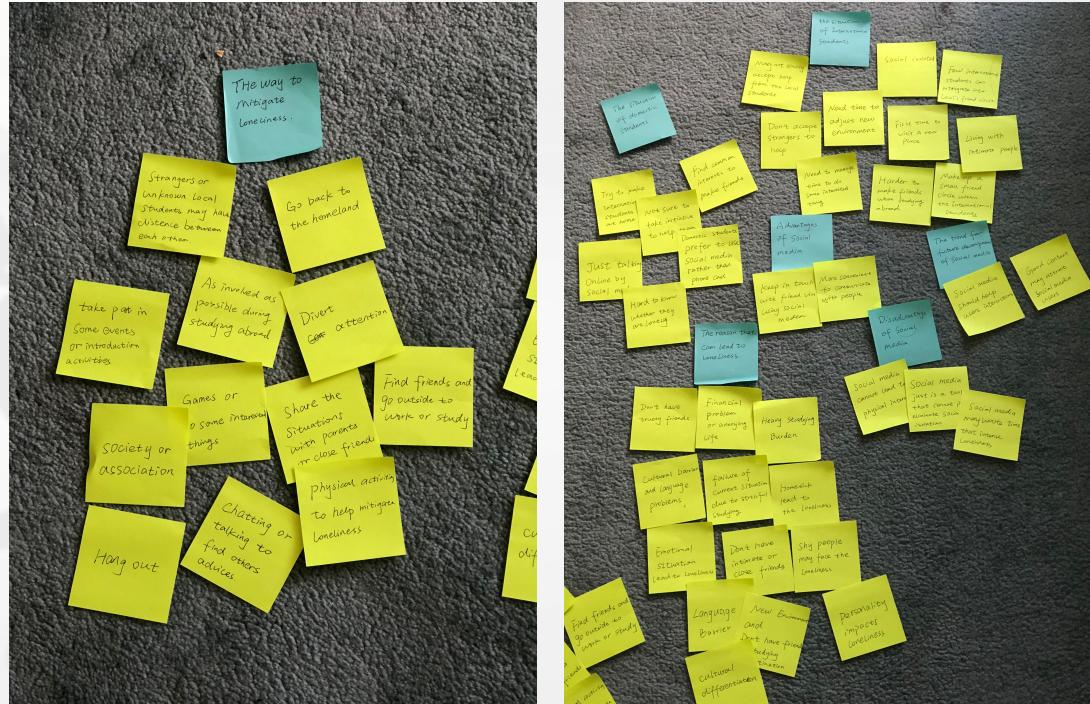


Image 2, 3. Sort and Heading idea group

Affinity Diagram

3 Superheading the sorting group

This phase will further abstract the set of ideas that can be abstracted or necessary to be abstracted, the name of this phase also can be called as Supergrouping.

In this research, the researcher conducted further abstract nominations for two idea groups, which is the Attitude of Students and the Present and Future of social media respectively.

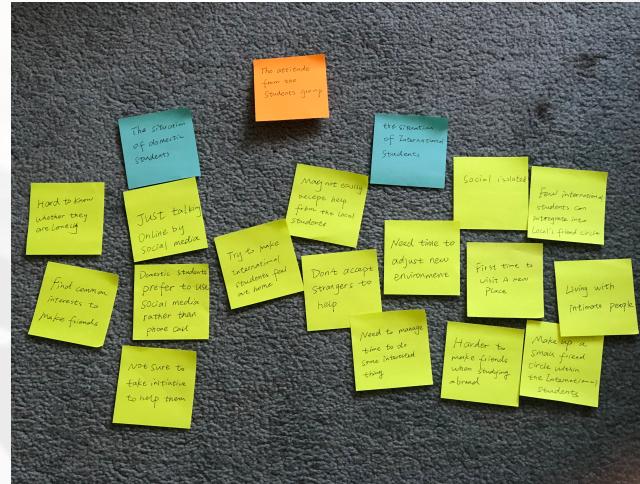


Image 4. Supergroup of students attitude

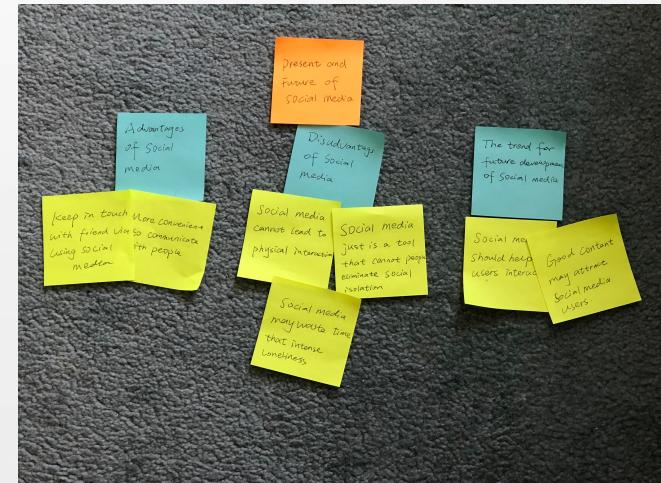
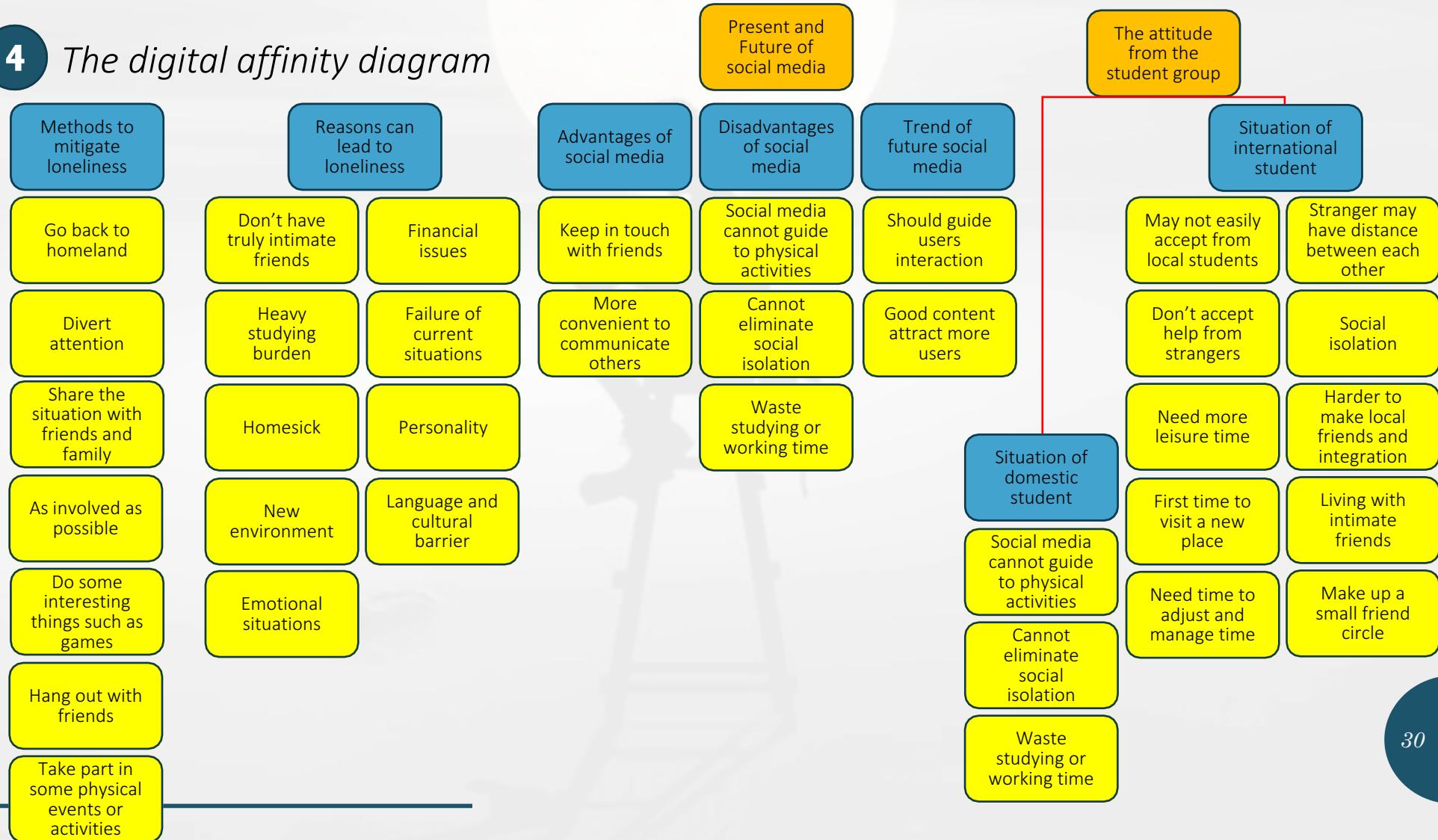


Image 5. Supergroup of Present and future of social media

Affinity Diagram

4

The digital affinity diagram



Discussion on finding

1 *Social media can mitigate loneliness*

According to this interview and questionnaire research, social media does have the effect of relieving loneliness caused by social isolation.

And as a generation in the information age, high technology has penetrated into every corner of life for international student. If they suffered or are suffering from loneliness, the social media can be considered a important treatment program that with the help of the attribution of the ease of use and universality.

2 *Social media combined with more interactions*

The current social media model tends to exist in a virtual interactive platform, which relies heavily on the richness of network resources or virtual content. High quality content and guidance of interaction are still the most important.

Moreover If some high-tech products such as augmented reality (AR) or virtual reality (VR) or wearables can help the physical activities and virtual platforms combined with each other, it may be possible to greatly reduce the loneliness from social isolation, and also it is more likely to attract those people who do not accept social media as a mitigating solution.

Discussion on finding

3 Relieving loneliness cannot simply rely on external forces

According to this interview and questionnaire research, the reason lead to loneliness is not only from the environment, but also related the personal personality.

For international students, the new environment and new cultural background in a new country needs them to push themselves to go out of their the safety circle properly, For instance to take part in as many events as possible. Rather than simply indulging in the virtual world or expecting active assistance from others.

4 The combination of social media and mental health

For a new social media model, adding the Internet of Things(IoT) or sensors to the current social media platform, and also combined with more intelligent algorithms, for example, can help build friendships for lonely international students.

If the social media platform can connect their data with medical institutions and comprehensively record the health of social media users, this new social model will help ease the social isolation of modern people in a more scientific way.

Name: John

Gender: male

Age: 21

Education: Bachelor of Psychology,
international student

Bio:

Love psychology, worship Freud, and hope
to be a qualified psychiatrist to ease the pain
of others

Motivation:

International students are one of the main
groups in mental health research, and they can
gain practical experience by communicating
with different students.



Persona

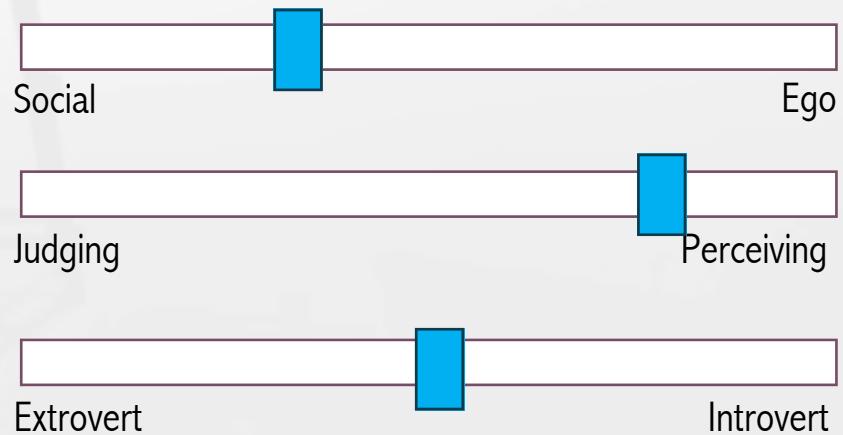
Challenge:

Not interested in online communication, I hope
to communicate by phone call or in the form of
a physical meeting activities.

Goal:

Make more truly friends in the mental health
society

Personality:



Name: Amber

Gender: female

Age: 24

Education: Master of Accounting,
international student

Bio:

For the digital sensitivity, my major is accounting, and I study hard to get a certified public accountant.

Motivation:

I hope to meet more domestic students and understand the domestic culture of their country so I can not only improve my language but also can possibly integrate into the local community.



Persona

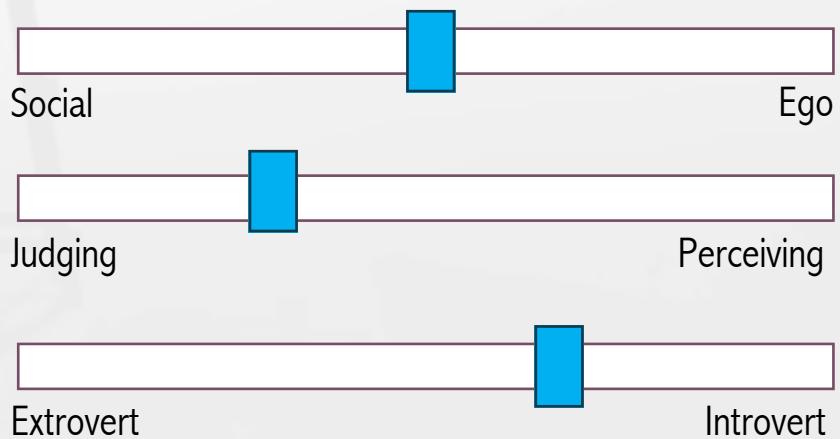
Challenge:

Refused to be friends with strangers because of being more shy and cautious.

Goal:

Try to join the association and actively participate in the study to communicate with domestic students.

Personality:



Name: Tracy



Gender: female

Age: 23

Education: Bachelor of Law, domestic student

Bio:

I am a law student and full of Confident and logical thinking. Focusing on the present studying and hope to become a lawyer in the future.

Motivation:

I hope to meet more international students and understand the culture of their country so that they can work in international law in the future.

Persona

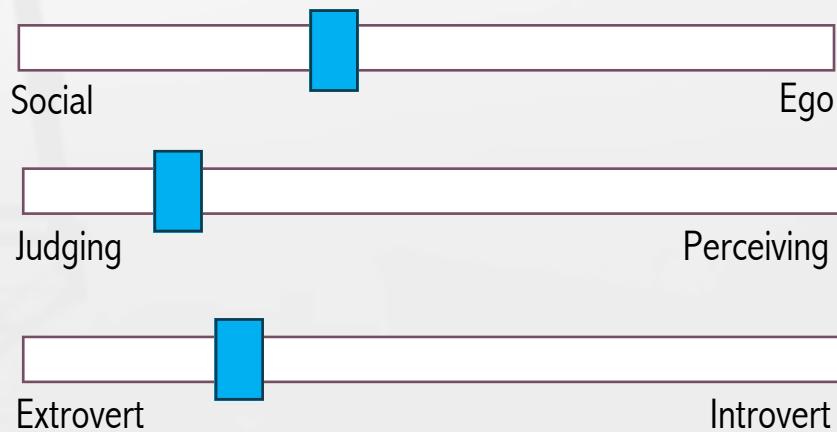
Challenge:

Not time to take part in some events holding by society or social media.

Goal:

Better time management to squash more leisure time to meet new international students friends.

Personality:



Name: Scott

Gender: male

Age: 22

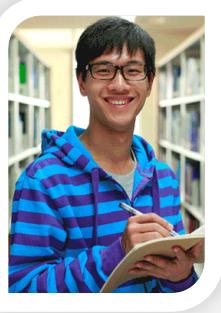
Education: Bachelor of Computer Science,
domestic student

Bio:

I am a computer science student and have a passion for computer or technology since I was a child. I hope to change the world with the power of technology.

Motivation:

Love using social media and hope to make social media platforms smarter by improving algorithms.



Persona

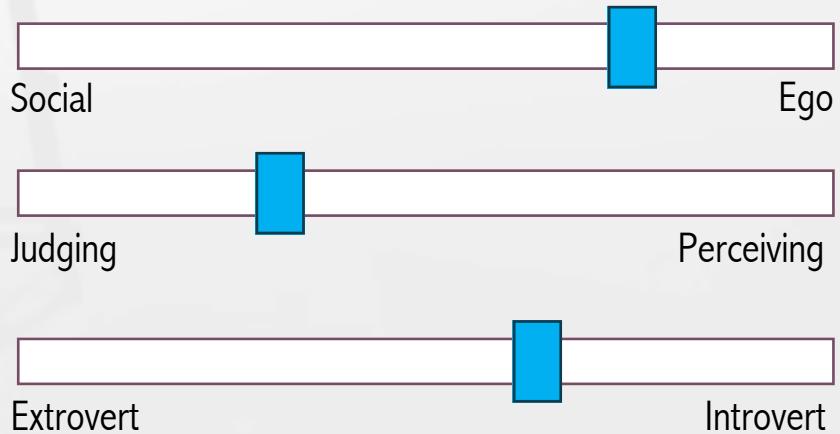
Challenge:

Not good at communicating with people, and experience loneliness. It is very normal to undertake stressful workload and solve problems alone.

Goal:

Hope to help students ease their loneliness by creating more fun social media models.

Personality:



Conclusion and Reflection

For the students group not matter who is birthed in Australia or from abroad countries, loneliness as one part of human being emotion that cannot be avoided. Through this research, the student community has a more positive attitude toward the idea that social media can alleviate loneliness. But at the same time, social media gives people an impression about entertainment and leisure that seems to be connected with wasting time.

Moreover, This study analyzes the problem from two perspectives of international students and domestic students. The results obtained are also consistent with the assumptions found during the background research phase. However, due to the limitations of working hours and the limitations of the research sample, there is no way to give a more concise conclusion to the investigation. In order to further obtain accurate and meticulous results, if there is an opportunity, this research can conduct more in-depth research in the future.

Design Precedence

As mentioned above context, the current social media model still has room for development. And also social media is just like a communication tool to convenient lives of students.

With the gradual expansion of 5G technology and the Internet of Things (IoT), as one of the online data terminal platforms in the network link, if social media can analyze and process valuable information and reasonably give promotion for these information, it will definitely create a new miracle. For example, information can be collected through wearable devices, social media analysis and Unicom medical departments, and give users a health push. Therefore, the future design direction will be more user-centric and highly usable.

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Appendix- screenshot of questionnaire

The loneliness of international students

1 Are you an international student?

Yes
 No

NEXT

0 of 14 answered

The loneliness of international students

2 Have experienced loneliness period when you are studying abroad?

Yes
 No

0 of 14 answered

The loneliness of international students

1 Are you an international student?

Yes
 No

NEXT

0 of 14 answered

The loneliness of international students

4 What reason do you think can cause the loneliness?

1 of 14 answered

40

Appendix- screenshot of questionnaire

The loneliness of international students

5 Suppose if you feel lonely, What method do you prefer to mitigate loneliness?

1 of 14 answered

The loneliness of international students

6 Do you think the social media can help mitigate loneliness?

Strongly agree Disagree
 Agree Strongly disagree
 Neither agree nor disagree

1 of 14 answered

The loneliness of international students

7 Are you willing to join some physical meeting activities from these social networks?

Very likely Unlikely
 Likely Very unlikely
 Neither likely nor unlikely

1 of 14 answered

The loneliness of international students

8 When you feel lonely, will you accept a stranger to help you relieve that?

Very likely Unlikely
 Likely Very unlikely
 Neither likely nor unlikely

1 of 14 answered

Appendix- screenshot of questionnaire

The loneliness of international students

9 Do you think international students can integrate into your learning community or friend circle? 

- Very easy
- Difficult
- Easy
- Very difficult
- Neither easy nor difficult

1 of 14 answered

The loneliness of international students

10 What reason do you think can cause the loneliness for international students? 

1 of 14 answered

The loneliness of international students

11 Suppose if you are now studying abroad and feel very lonely, how will you mitigate this loneliness? 

1 of 14 answered

The loneliness of international students

12 Do you think the social media can help mitigate loneliness? 

- Strongly agree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree

1 of 14 answered

Appendix- screenshot of questionnaire

The loneliness of international students

13 Suppose when you hear an international student who is just your classmate, feel very lonely, are you willing to take the initiative to help them? 

Very likely Unlikely
 Likely Very unlikely
 Neither likely nor unlikely

1 of 14 answered 

The loneliness of international students

14 Are you willing to join some physical meeting activities to help them mitigate loneliness? 

Very likely Unlikely
 Likely Very unlikely
 Neither likely nor unlikely

1 of 14 answered 

Appendix- Interview questions

Interview Transcript

For international student

Hello! I am going to do a research interview. The topic of this interview is related to the loneliness of international students. I really hope you can give me some your views or opinions on this topic.

Q1. Where are you from? Which subject do you study? How long have you been there or studying abroad?

Q2. Do you feel lonely during your study abroad? Why do you think you are lonely? Is this loneliness strong?

- Maybe everyone has their own friend circle. Why do you think you (they) are still feel lonely? (Can you please give me some reasons?)
- When do you usually have loneliness?

Q3. With the development of social media, do you think social network, like Facebook, Instagram, Weibo, is helpful to deal with loneliness?

Q4. If you feel lonely, do you prefer to choose social network to mitigate loneliness?

- How to do that?
- Are you willing to join some physical meeting activities from these social networks?

If not

Q5. What method do you choose to mitigate loneliness?

- Why do you choose this method?

Q6. When you feel lonely, will you accept stranger to help you relieve that? Why?

Q7. Do you have any other opinions about loneliness to communicate with me?

Social media (extra features, VR + touch technology, content can enhance the user experience. Different user experience. Enough user's moments integration into local community, New app in the Uni model)

For local students

Hello! I am going to do a research interview. The topic of this interview is related to the loneliness of international students. I really hope you can give me some your views or opinions on this topic.

Q1. Which subject do you study? Do you have friends who are international student?

Q2. What reason do you think can cause the so-called loneliness?

Q3. Do you think they can integrate into your learning community or friend circle? Why do you think so?

Q4. With the development of social media, do you think social network, like Facebook, Instagram, Weibo, is helpful to make friends with international students?

Q5. Suppose if you are now studying abroad and feel very lonely, how will you mitigate this loneliness?

Q6. Suppose when you hear someone who is just your classmate, feel very lonely, are you willing to take the initiative to help them?

- How to do that?
- Why?

If not, why?

Q7. Do you have any other opinions about loneliness to communicate with me?

Page 1 of 2 418 Words English (US) 103%

Appendix- Interview transcription

Transcription

Magda

Q: Hello! I am going to do a research interview. The topic of this interview is related to the loneliness of international students. I really hope you can give me some your views or opinions on this topic. So would mind me to record your voice?

A: No problem

Q: Could you please just simply introduce yourself?

A: I am from Poland, and my major is interaction design, and I have been there for almost 8 weeks.

Q: Do you love this city?

A: Of course! I enjoy it. Although I think I have no time to explore the city.

Q: Do you feel lonely during you studying abroad?

A: I live with my husband. I am not lonely but what worries me is I have not time for meetings or for like normal university life like going to clubs with another people

Q: That's good! Even the daily life is busy but you still can enjoy the lovely life. So could you please give me some reasons that some other people feel lonely after their study period?

A: I think that depend on the person. Because I notice that kind of people after their first semester, they have more time to develop their friendships. I think sometimes lonely because I want to have relationship with other people except my husband, not the romantic one just like friendship. And I have just like connection with friend within campus rather than out of campus. Maybe no one have time to enhance their relationship after class.

Q: which method do you prefer to use to communicate with other guys in the Sydney Uni?

A: The strangest thing is that I found people don't give me their phone number, they just give me like contact of Facebook. For them is normal but that is little bit different in Poland. The disadvantage of just give Facebook is most of the time I cannot call to these guys. The only connecting method is using Messenger. I feel more disconnected. I think the effective method to enhance friendship is to go out. But I cannot find anyone who are willing to hang out with me. Maybe the reason for this phenomena is no one have time, so many homework and heavy studying burden.

Q: that's really interesting phenomena. Do you think with the development of the social media that the relationship of people will become more shallow?

A: I think it depends on the person. Because when I talk with my best friends from Poland. It is ok. Because I know them very well. But I think that sometimes if you don't know person

well they are just send their friend moment or just send some mini multicast. It is often fake because we don't have really relationship. In the existing social media, even you may have friendship in this platform, they still don't talk to me in real life. It happens and strange in Australia.

Q: That sound very different from your homeland. Maybe that is one part of culture differentiate. Do you think the culture background can impact between international students and domestic students?

A: I think it depends on the country and depends on the students. Like you, you are very friendly and open. But some people are very shy and don't want to talk with local students. So I think it is slightly differences. And also for the domestic students, they should know that it is harder to study in a secondary language country. The international students need to translate some kinds of words and spend more time to communicate. The local students should become more empathetic.

Q: That's true! Studying abroad means that you need to change your habit, face a new environment and language.

A: Yes, I arrived at 8 weeks ago. So I also need time to how to get familiar with all of this new environment such as food or accommodation. Everything is difficult.

Q: Suppose if you feel lonely sometimes and you still face some problems, how do you choose to mitigate this problem.

A: sometimes I prefer call some friends who may have some distance from our problems. So he may help me solve these problems as a bystander.

Q: Do you think why even some people have friend but still feel lonely?

A: yes, that is one of issues. Sometimes it is hard to open the mind. And the relationship may seem shallow. Also some people they don't know each other very well yet. They are not willing to share their intimate feeling with these normal friend. They prefer to choose more intimate friends to share their feeling. As for me, I just share very intimate experience with my best friend, but my friend still lives in Poland and never leave there. She doesn't understand some certain thing. And I was looking for a girl in Australia as my friend to share my problems and may get some useful solutions.

Q: If you feel lonely, can you accept some strangers to give you some help?

A: maybe not. If these people from a certain organization or association to help. I think I can accept this sort of help. Most of the time, the normal friend like strangers. So most of the time I cannot accept the help from them.

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Appendix- Interview questions

Transcription all Search in Document Share Styles Pane

Gleb

Q: Hello! I am going to do a research interview. The topic of this interview is related to the loneliness of international students. I really hope you can give me some your views or opinions on this topic.

Could you please just simply introduce yourself?

A: my major is IT, and specialization is software engineering.

Q: how long have you been the Sydney?

A: well, half a year

Q: Do you feel lonely during study abroad?

A: No, not anymore. But I used to feel that kind sense during my bachelor degree.

Q: could you just tell me why do you feel lonely in that kind of period?

A: emm, I had no person to related to when I was studying my bachelor degree.

Q: why you say that?

A: I didn't have many friends and it's hard to adjust because that was my first studying abroad experience.

Q: So can you still give me some elements that can lead to your loneliness?

A: maybe it was about culture little bit and you know for the most part probably different cultures; the language is fine but mentality and people which was different what I am used to.

Q: when you face this kind of loneliness, how do you mitigate that?

A: when I was doing is basically, for the most part just try to distract myself by reading books, watching movies and play video games

Q: How long have you been trapped in this state?

A : just the first year of my bachelor

Q: after that do you experience any other loneliness?

A: Not really. Because I have found some friends and there was some work to do, studying. That was busy.

Q: With the development of the social media, do you think the social media or social network can help international students to mitigate loneliness?

A: No I don't think so. I don't think social media can help in that regard.

Q: Why do you say that?

A: I think the meeting and talking to people with face to face way is the only way. Using software or electronic way to communication certainly doesn't help.

Q: actually the social media is one kind of tool to communicate with people

A: yes, it is but in my opinion, well, at least for me, communicating with somebody person is very different from communicating somebody using social media.

Q: Could you please try to describe why you prefer to communicate people by face-to-face?

A: that is just my preference. It just a tool. You cannot see their face expression or their body language. And also for a long distance, some communication quality maybe depends on the quality of the Internet.

Q: OK, which kind of technology do you think that can enhance the users experience about using social media?

A: Maybe the technology become more immersive and deliverable. It will be able to see somebody in front of you, like VR or AR technology that can help user watch the truly person and touch that kind of people.

Q: Suppose if you feel lonely sometimes do you prefer to use social media to mitigate this problem?

A: no, as I told I usually gonging for entertainment. Social media does not help to mitigate this kind of problem

Q: if the social media become a matchmaker to promote some offline physical meeting, do you prefer to take part in that?

A: Yes! Maybe. I Once used that in here to meet with the essay society in Sydney. I once attend that meeting. I found about them through their website basically.

Q: If you feel lonely, can you accept some strangers to give you some help?

A: Not. Because they are strangers. You don't know the true aim of them. If these people from a certain organization or association to help. Maybe that is ok.

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Appendix- Interview transcription

Grace

Q: Hello! I am going to do a research interview. The topic of this interview is related to the loneliness of international students. I really hope you can give me some your views or opinions on this topic. Could you please just simply introduce yourself?

A: I am the tutor of usability engineering.

Q: Do you have a friend who is an international student?

A: No one getting one that I regularly keep in touch with, but people now and then.

Q: What kind of reason do you think that can lead to so-called loneliness?

A: I think sometimes it is like the language barrier or maybe cultural barrier because it is often quite different when you move to a different country to here. It almost a whole new world

Q: Do you think they can integrate into your learning community or friend circle? Why do you think so?

A: yes, I have seen that in some cases. I think it just so the mass of matter of Luck, he just meets the right people at the right time. And in order to get into that situation. I know that international students often put themselves out there to do so. I know the shy person that might be difficult. But I do think it's quite like possible to integrate.

Q: Do you think another element can impact the loneliness?

A: well, also I think it just like the external thing. When you move from different country, you are wave from your family you are wave from your friends back there. The fact is the new environment and the fact that new people are not always the same as the people who from where you are from.

Q: With the development of social media, do you think social network is helpful to mitigate loneliness for international students?

A: yes, I think so. Because when you have social media. It makes a bit easier to keep in touch with people and me. So when you study abroad, you meet someone in class, and you adding them in Facebook and you can start talking to them. It lots easier to just see them every time like once every week. Because of the social media, you are able to communicate with them more regularly. And for kind of closer relationship out that way.

Q: You also sometimes the student just communicates based on the group work rather than private social. What kind of reason for this phenomenon?

A: well, you are not always in click. Or can't make friendship with everyone you meet. Obviously everyone has different interests. In our university, of students that it's hard to

find people as the same interests. In the group work, you have that kind of similar thing you working on but afterwards you no longer have anything in common.

Q: so that is a good point to recommend people to join some society or association to find people with common interests. Suppose if you are now studying abroad and feel very lonely, how will you mitigate this loneliness?

A: If I were studying abroad, I would just make sure to get as involved as possible. Just go as many events as I can. Make sure to meet people, try extra effort to maintain the relationships. At the same time, I will know students from overseas through a similar kind of introduction and introduction activities. But another the same time, like everyone is normal people, they can introduce people that they know and then you can integrate.

Q: Suppose when you hear someone who is just your classmate, feel very lonely, are you willing to take the initiative to help them?

A: Definitely, if that something knows to me, I would. But most of the time, when you in class, it's hard to tell one's feel like that if I know I will definitely approach someone.

Q: Could you please tell me how to approach them?

A: Like the common approach, just approach and say hey, and then make the conversation with them.

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Appendix- Interview transcription

Transcription all

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Scott

Q: Hello! I am going to do a research interview. The topic of this interview is related to the loneliness of international students. I really hope you can give me some your views or opinions on this topic. Could you please just simply introduce yourself?

A: I am the student of computer science.

Q: Do you have a friend who is an international student?

A: yes, I do

Q: Do you think they can easily integrate into your learning community or friend circle? Why do you think so?

A: problem not as easy as the domestic student but it's definitely possible. Like my international friendly is definitely integrated into my social group. And I think the probably number one reason is language barrier. Then maybe also like the cultural barrier as well.

Q: What kind of reason do you think can impact the loneliness?

A: I think specifically maybe not having experience that coming to the university in Australia. And not having as many Australian friends as you would be thought. When people came to Australia, they may realize that making friends with Australians is harder than they think. Maybe this contribute the loneliness.

Q: Suppose if you are now studying abroad and feel very lonely, how will you mitigate this loneliness?

A: I think I just try to meet as many domestic students as possible. I guess it depends like where you living. If you living with a lot of international students, there are lots of communicate event helping you meet domestic students. If you just live alone such as some private houses that may lead to loneliness. In addition, the best way to meet people is society. in the society, the people will most possibly meet the friend who has common hobby.

Q: With the development of social media, do you think social network is helpful to mitigate loneliness for international students?

A: I am not sure if it can because I don't know if loneliness is necessarily online. I say loneliness is more later physical interaction, you can still feel lonely talk with people online. Probably more. If you alone, you would better be talking face to face or hanging out with friend in real life. Actually maybe we can meet people online but it is better to go outside with people to mitigate that kind of sense.

Q: Suppose when you hear someone who is just your classmate, feel very lonely, are you willing to take the initiative to help them?

A: I wouldn't say certainly I have. But I have been a group with international students and I will to try make them feel like at home. I wouldn't say I would gone the specifically out my way. Firstly, I cannot identify the lonely or not but I wouldn't say I will specifically got to say 'hey you look lonely, would you want to hang out?'

Q: the last question, which kind of features that added into the social media can help them mitigate loneliness?

A: I think the content is the key thing to attract users. As the Instagram, good content can make people feel deeper and forget some troubles such as the loneliness. And also, a good interaction feature also can help them communicate and give them feeling more like to do in the reality activities.

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Appendix- Interview transcription

Appendix- Interview transcription

A: by asking what the problem they facing sometime the studying load may lead to the lonely. And do my best to do that. May just take the initiative to talk them even they are shy and may give some recommendation or guideline to help them.

David
Q: Hello! I am going to do a research interview. The topic of this interview is related to the loneliness of international students. I really hope you can give me some your views or opinions on this topic. Could you please just simply introduce yourself?

A: I am studying the MITM. And just 6 months been in the Sydney.

Q: Do you feel lonely during you studying abroad? WHY?

A: sometimes. I think the assignment is not too much or full out of schedule.

Q: So could you please give me some reasons that some other people feel lonely after their study period?

A: Sometime the people in the midnight just to think about the unpredictable future. So this may lead to the loneliness. And also, when listen some music, that may lead to loneliness.

Q: With the development of social media, do you think social network is helpful to mitigate loneliness for international students?

A: I think the social media may increase the loneliness. Sometimes the social media may give you more imagination to think too many things such as future or reality trouble. So talk with the real people is more useful to mitigate this sense. For me if I feel lonely, I will hang out with my friend, and eat or drinking or just talking this kind of trouble rather than tackle by myself.

Q: Are you willing to join some events that promoted by these kind of social media?

A: yes, why not. That is a good opportunity to meet new friend. And if the social media is formal and legal one, this kind of event may most possible is a good one. So I don't mind about the safety and quality issues.

Q: Are you willing to receive help from a stranger?

A: no, they are stranger, they don't know me very well. And they may have some aim about unpredictable thing.

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Appendix- Interview transcription

Transcription all

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Gloria

Q: Hello! I am going to do a research interview. The topic of this interview is related to the loneliness of international students. I really hope you can give me some your views or opinions on this topic. Could you please just simply introduce yourself?

A: I study the bachelor of psychology. And I have been there for almost one year. I LOVE THIS CITY.

Q: Do you feel lonely during you studying abroad? WHY?

A: YES, for example last year I experienced a period of lonely time. That is my first time to leave my homeland and my friends. And that period I don't have much time to connect with my family and the studying load is very high, stressful, that also Intense the loneliness. But after that period, I can adjust myself and mitigate it.

Q: Do you feel lonely during your leisure time?

A: yes, sometimes my roommate just went back to homeland. And I don't have friend and feel very lonely.

Q: With the development of social media, do you think social network is helpful to mitigate loneliness for international students?

A: of course. Like the former international students, they don't have such convenient social technology to communicate with their family. But today family and friends can easily access us and easily connect to us.

Q: what kind of reason do you think that can lead to so-called loneliness?

A: firstly, it just like the failure about the current situation. And secondly, it related to the emotional state. If someone who is single, they may not have a very close to talk with. And for international students, you don't have so many social activities to make friends. You will free to go outside and talk with others. And there is only yourself to talk with.

And addition, when we accomplish something, we may feel very satisfied. Failure is kind of elements that can lead to the stress and upset. These negative emotions will cause the loneliness.

The cultural or language barrier may also one of the elements to lead to the loneliness.

Q: if you feel lonely, which kind of method do you prefer to choose to mitigate that kind of sense.

A: talk with friends. Not only just talk but also post some moment and emotional situation to the social media platform.

Q: Are you willing to join some events that promoted by these kind of social media?

A: I will be interested that but I will free to go there. And I will free to communicate with stranger and local students. I prefer to choose an event that host by my friend.

Q: Are you willing to receive help from a local student?

A: It depends on the situations. If this student seems like very kind and friend. Most probably I will. But I don't think I can always accept the help from the local student.

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Appendix- Interview transcription

Transcription all

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Angela

Q: Hello! I am going to do a research interview. The topic of this interview is related to the loneliness of international students. I really hope you can give me some your views or opinions on this topic. Could you please just simply introduce yourself?

A: the first time I was been there is 2015, and I used to be a Chinese teacher in Melbourne.

Q: what kind of reason do you think that can lead to so-called loneliness?

A: from my perspective, the loneliness may be caused by the lacking of friends. And also the heavy studying load may lead to a very serious loneliness. Because in that time, everything we need to do it by ourselves and no one can help us to tackle these challenges.

Q: Maybe everyone has their own friend circle. Why do you think you (they) are still feel lonely? (Can you please give me some reasons?)

A: I think for many international students; they don't have really friends here. And they don't want to express their own mind out. Maybe they face not only the challenge from their studying but also include the finance and daily life. Also the cultural barrier or cultural difference is the key thing to differentiate two groups, international students and domestic students. Sometimes they are free to go outside to make friends and understand different culture in Australia. So many students have their own friends circle that may not have some domestic students.

Q: With the development of social media, do you think social network is helpful to mitigate loneliness for international students?

A: yes. The social media maybe can decrease the loneliness. Sometimes we just watch our phone. There are a majority of interesting thing that can attract people to use that. And these kind of interaction seem to make people feel immersive. But sometimes the physical meeting is also an important part of the social life. The social media just provide some tools to communicate with people. If they don't want to communicate, the loneliness may not be mitigated.

Q: suppose if you feel lonely, do you prefer to choose the social media to mitigate this kind of sense?

A: no, I don't. I prefer to manage my time to hang out or just take part in some parties. I know there are a lot of activities or societies in our school. If I like that I think I can make many friends in that kind of organizations. But the key thing is not I don't have enough time to join that kind of group. And maybe if I have a big block of free time, I prefer to travel with my friends to mitigate loneliness.

Q: Are you willing to receive help from a stranger?

A: no, they are stranger, we have distance to understand each other. And they may have some aim about unpredictable thing. For international students, We need to protect ourselves.

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