C4: Pilot Test Notes + Transcripts

Interviewee #1: Huarui Lai's interviewee

Link:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kjfWIX4sAEGdOMtFYDpWmxgtSF0xiWw_/view?usp=sharing

Notes:

- Thats a good question, I don't really remember off the top of my head. Usually I scroll past them. Probably political ads
- 30 seconds ago… let me pull it up "huntington bank" - about 25000 views
    - Only read the content because i told them to
    - Knows its an ad bc "learn more"
    - Appeared as another post on your feed
    - Pretty similar–into finance and pretty on brand
- **Cares about seeing:** people I care about (seeing what they're up to), memes and funny accounts (to laugh), sports and news (nice way to catch up on real-time news)
- **Stopping and read an ad:** interesting and beased in the city, more likely to click on it, matches personal interest like sports
- Overlooks ads on his feeds, if he really cared about ads that much he'd be following the account anyways
- Will read ads if there's nothing else to do–will scroll through ads if no service (e.g. like on an airplane), or if a friend recommended something and that ad came up on their feed
- Doesn't remember seeing a biased ad on their feed (political ads) especially during election times
- Thinks about: will reporting really make a difference? Lots of reporting platforms might feel pointless and requires effort on the user's end.. sometimes you'd rather just keep scrolling
- Would report if it was attacking in any way–bringing people (themselves and/or friends) down or negative
    - If they feel uncomfortable or disgusted
- **Benefit:** if enough people report an ad, maybe Instagram will consider removing it, user gets to give feedback on the ad, user feels like they're more in control of what they see and don't see
- **Con:** people might not feel incentivized to do it, aren't motivated to
- **Initial idea:** engage with a certain number of ads a month, and won't see ads for the rest of the month→could lead to biased and unreliable data
    - This is the million dollar question
    - Doesn't really have an answer to that

Interviewee #2: Sophia Hao's interviewee

Notes:

Hi. Thank you for the time and help for the project. I'm Sophia and I am a student from C M U'S User-Centered Research and Evaluation class. In the class, we are working on a project where we're trying to understand how people view and react to biased ads on social media platforms like Instagram. And through our research, we are working toward solutions that can encourage people to be more.

cognizant of ads content and motivate them to act upon the biased ads when encountered. I'll be interviewing you to learn about your experience with ads on Instagram, not evaluating you and what you do. Your name will be kept confidential and will not appear in any document and discussions. Is that okay?

Yes.

Yes. Let's. We will conduct an interview whether in person or via Zoom that is roughly about 25 to 30 minutes. The interview is conducted remotely, we will be emailing you the link prior to the scheduled interview time, we will ask you to bring a device that has your Instagram account on it.

During the interview, we may ask you to describe a certain experience with Instagram from the past, and occasionally we'll be asking probing questions like, why did you do that, or how does that feel? You can always decline to answer any questions. We ask permission to record the audio for the interview. Is that okay?

Yes.

All the information recording will be kept confidential and will solely be used for project purposes for the course again, and the sole purpose of the interview is to learn about how Instagram users interact with sponsored ads on their feet. Hi. Okay. To get us started, what has been the most interesting or unusual you have seen recently on Instagram?

That's a very good question. So, uh, is it okay if I spend some time, like, uh, just 20 seconds to go over?

Yeah, take your time.

Actually, can I just browse through my Instagram?

Oh yeah, that's okay as well.

Yeah. I kind of want some reminders cuz I don't really like to look at the ads. There's, uh, one ad that's, uh, really interesting. It's about the top 10 US states ranked for having the longest and hardest winters. Uh, it's very random. I think whoever posted the ad is like a, uh, it's like a news or maybe, uh, just like a knowledge transfer and that kind of website or just like a, like a website with interesting facts. So I think that's sort of interesting. Uh, I don't think there's another, um, there's also like, An ad with all kinds of challenges. So there's like a marathon, there's riding, like I guess bicycle, like biking challenge and there's all kinds of challenges. Mm. Okay. Yeah. Then, um, can you tell me about the last time you opened up Instagram, like before just now and saw an ad on your.

Do you remember what it was, or like, was it in line with the rest of your feed or did you read the content in the ad at all? And did you read the content in the ad?

Not really because, um, yeah, I didn't really read the content cuz it kind of blends in with the rest of the feed. So it kind of, it's kind of like a post, like I didn't really see the ad until there's like a learn more banner there.

But you did remember the ad content, is that correct?

Yes. It's a hotel.

Okay. What do you care about seeing on your Instagram feed?

I guess just no ads in general, like, uh, , less ads and more like, uh, stuff that I care about, uh, like who I follow and, um, yeah. Wait, it's the, . Is this like a good answer ?

Yeah. Any answer is a good answer. What ad content slash design will prompt you to stop and read the ad?

very interesting question. Um, I think for me, if I stop at an ad, Um, what I'm looking at is mostly the content. So if it's like, for example, um, oh, I just saw this ad. It's, uh, like a camera, like it has some really interesting posts, uh, like photos or films taken, like taken with their camera. I think an ad for me has to look really good. like, it's not just like some bad graphic and design like, uh, for, uh, for me to stop at the, yeah, it's mostly the content. Like for photography, if the camera's good, I will just take a look. But if it's like, if it's like a new game that's coming out, I'll also just check it out. Uh, if it's like a really nice hotel. I might just stop there for like two seconds and then if it's like coding related, I'll just scroll through. Um, and yeah, I think it's mostly the content and then, uh, as long as the post, like the photography or the design's, not too shit. Uh, I'll stop there for like two seconds. Mm.

I know that you kind of talked about this already in your response just now, but what criteria needs to be met for you to pause and read the ad? Like ad content or situational context?

Uh, for me, yeah. I kind of mentioned the ad content has to. my interests. Mm-hmm. , uh, like for example, like traveling, photography, uh, like, uh, uh, yeah, some stuff like that. But, um, in terms of design, it has to be visually appealing, uh, and. . Yeah. Like I don't really care too much about the design, as long as it's not too bad, but it's mostly the content, so. If it's like that, if it looks interesting to me, and I'll stop there.

Is there any situation that would prompt you to read the ad more carefully or, um, vice versa? Any situation that would like, um, prompt you to scroll through the ad.

Uh, wait, sorry. Could you repeat the question?

Mm. Like is there any situation that will encourage you to slow down your scrolling and read the ad more carefully or vice versa? If there's any situation that will prompt you to, um, scroll through the ad.

Okay. Yeah. So I'll talk about the slowdown part first.Mm-hmm. , uh, but the slowdown, uh, yeah. First of all, if the product is like, uh, like interesting and then the, the, the design, like, um, the ad design design is really appealing, like visually appealing or just like aesthetic or is like pleasant for viewers. And I know there's like two types of like, there's like video or, or like an image. If it's like, if it's like an image, it has to be like really, like well designed, um, or else like that would just like interrupt my, uh, like that, like that would just be like spamming my Instagram. Like I, I would just like to scroll through that like, and like 0.0000. Like, if it's like a video, then, um, actually I think I might stop a bit more for the video for like, instead of the images, cuz it's more like dynamic. There's, uh, more stuff happening. So, um, yeah. And then, I mean, for the images there's also like a sliding ones, like there's like multiple, the ones like one post, but with like many images. So, Yeah, I guess the stuff has to be interesting to me and um, yeah. Uh, yeah, I guess it's not, it's just really content based.

Okay. Moving away a bit from the content of ads. Can you tell me about the last time you saw a biased ad you encountered in your Instagram feed?

Actually, I don't really recall seeing such a bias that Okay. Yeah. I don't like it, I guess even if it's too biased, I would just like to scroll through it. But I feel like Instagram is like doing a decent job at filters. . Um, yeah, so I don't, like, I don't really encounter any biased acts.

Mm. Okay. Um, then, and what would make you report in that, if there's any Oh, reporting.

Yeah, that's, uh, I've had experience with that. . Uh, so if it's related to , uh, for example, my work or some, um, areas that I'm just like, if I see it, I really like my mental health . Like actually

I'll, I'll be serious. So, um, yeah, I think, uh, if it's like InApp, firstly if it's like inappropriate or like maybe like there's some like sexual or there's like, uh, or maybe the ads there itself, it's like, just of offensive and I'll report it. But I think mostly there's not really like a, yeah. Like I don't see those ads. Um, and I'll, uh, I guess if it's like, uh, really. As I mentioned, if it's work related, I'll just report it. It's, uh, I don't want to be associated with work when I was scrolling through Instagram. So, and then, or like if, like I wouldn't report if the graphic is too, or like the design is too bad though, but I think, uh, I'll just leave them alone.

Okay. Then what do you perceive to be the benefits and drawbacks of reporting an ad?

Uh, the benefits, uh, for sure. If it's like offensive stuff, uh, then it will just help, uh, with, I guess the online community. Like, uh, just letting other people avoid the sensitive content. Uh, Instagram is a better place. But if it's, uh, I guess drawback, uh, nah, I don't see drawbacks with that. If it's sensitive shit, like I would just block it or like report it right away. Okay.

Then what are the best ways to motivate ad reporting from you personally?

Why does it need to like, encourage me to report an ad?

Um, cuz like you mentioned earlier before, um, sometimes you just scroll through ads instead of reporting them even when it can be possible.

Okay. To motivate, um, I guess, uh, for some of the ads, uh, cuz I mean like for the actual like sensitive or like, uh, inappropriate ads will be filtered out by Instagram. Um, but for some of them, if, uh, I guess if they have like a. metric for assessing how the, uh, the sensitivity or like how inappropriate the ad will be out of like a hundred. Like some, cuz they will probably, maybe bypass some of the ads with like, for example, 50 instead of a hundred. Like a hundred being really inappropriate, zero being appropriate. And the fifties, like in the middle it could be like inappropriate, but they just like show, show it on the. Um, I guess for those kinds of ads, they can put an extra like, uh, bar, uh, like, uh, be below. Say, do you find this content to be inappropriate? That kind of stuff. And then a yes or no. Um, if the user likes scrolls through and then you'll like, I guess make the bar more appealing so they can just like press it and then Yeah, it will show, it will just, if it's actually inappropriate, then user.

It will be likely to, like, if it's inappropriate, that means the user actually saw the ad and they'll probably press yes to report the ad. Mm. Okay. Um, okay.

Thank you very much for your time. Do you have any final thoughts on the content of ads or the ad reporting mechanism?

Any thoughts? Uh, yeah, I guess just, um, to summarize a bit, I think ads are really, I mean, like they're, they're kind of, it's essential to the business, but, um, I mean, I feel like, uh, like Instagram is doing a pretty good job at the filtering and trying to. , uh, like inappropriateness. But, uh, yeah, I think, uh, as a user I like, fine with it, as long as it's not spanning like too much ads. Uh, and for ad reporting, as I mentioned, like there could be a better mechanism for reporting ads or just for those to, just to avoid those like false positives, right? Like if there's like a, actually, like an inappropriate ad that's being, uh, Uh, broadcast it and we can, uh, use this kind of reporting mechanism like this pop-up, yes or no, to make sure that those ads will go through the second stage, which is like actual human like verification instead of a computer like machine learning algorithm. So I think that's, uh, that would be helpful. And uh, maybe one thing is just to get, uh, users who report ads, like who. Report those fa positives, like, uh, reward or just like a thumbs up or just to show some encouragement. Uh, but yeah, I think, uh, I, right now I don't see too many problems, but there's some room for improvement, as I mentioned. I think that's kind of my opinion on this.

Okay. Then do you have any further questions for me?

I don't have any questions, but I think it's really, it's a really good, uh, interview and really good survey questions really, uh, brought out a. thinking for me personally as a user, cuz I don't really think about this a lot. So I think you guys are doing a great job. That's just a comment. Yeah.

Okay. Thank you very much for your time and participation. Thank you.

Interviewee #3:

An ad about the alcohol, maybe they just bought the entire singapore, but its not a typical ad for me because im not a drinker and i should not be drinking because im a muslim.

It is an ad about a mobile game called grand mafia, its not in line with any of my feed, although it IS 3D graphics and im interested but ive never played mobile games in my life, and it seems like one of those scammy games…

Content that suits me, if its supposed to served to my interests or my niche. Otherwise, the feed should be something i use to catch up with my friends rather than content that is served towards me.

Usually huge texts on screen, visuals that pique my curiosity and huge vibrant colors. And then I realise its an ad before its too late. Can tell if its an educational content then I would stop. Usually there's a hook that is a little far out.

Intentionally because I don't want to be sold something. Unintentionally I scroll past just

because it blends in with the rest of my feed.

Only if the ad piques my interest or is visually interesting then I would stop to appreciated it, especially if its artistically curated. If its low quality or cheaply done, I wouldn't give any more of my time.

An ad that is a hard sell. What's a biased ad?

> What do you think is a biased ad?

An ad that is trying to push the user towards a singular idea and to take action on it. Let's say a brand or company is trying to tell them that they are 'no.1' in this area, or trying to push a community into a certain ideology.

If an ad offends me or if its unsafe, I think I saw an ad about a game that is pretty graphic, and I wouldn't want that to appear on kid's feeds if there's an option for that.

If this content is hurtful to a certain group of people if they reach a larger amount of people then the impact of the harm is larger.

Reporting an ad takes more time for action to be taken, the feedback is not as fast I wished to curb the damage of biased ads from spreading.

When the ad is being served towards me, I would assume that its safe because in order to get to me it must have gotten through all the safety checks. But if the app prompts me that this ad might contain false information, I might stop and check, because I wouldn't want to let it slip. \

I'm a marketer so i'm answering these questions about ads (which I deal with daily) in a way that makes the most sense to me.

Interviewee #4:

Interview notes:

Stating the leading question (How might we encourage people to be cognizant of the content and ads on their Instagram feed)

and interview goals (probing what kind of content people care about seeing on their feed and

encouraging people to act on the biased ad they found).

What do you care about seeing on your Instagram feed?

The feeds for me are usually fashion items and make-up tutorials. Let me see what I have right now. MARVEL x PANDORA... Yeah, basically like this. Unlike many people hate the ads around, I actually like these ads cause they help me catch up with the fashion trend and new make-up products. Well, I guess it's not 100% true saying I like all ads. Sometimes, I saw irrelevant ones and really want to get rid of them. So for me, content is the most important thing for Instagram feeds. Obviously, their feeding algorithm still needs some improvement.

What types of ads/sponsored content get your attention?

Usually, there are three types of content that always get my attention:

1) the fields I'm interested in for a long time, including make-up, fashion, and cooking.

2) the ads about breaking news or trending products, you know, the things that are influential enough and everyone knows.

3) the videos are super funny. Recently, I always saw a woman styling her hair while she was actually bold. She literally did all steps seriously and carefully... She is probably doing some behavior arts.

Situational contexts where people interact with ads on your feed?

I normally do nothing to the content I felt "unwanted" since there are so many ads refreshing and it seemed useless to block/report some of them while the new ones will keep showing up. But I do think it is of significance to react in some way to the "improper/unwanted" feeds to show users' thoughts to the tech development group and expose the downsides of the current ad-targeting system.

The reasons you overlook the ad?

I use Instagram for seeing and chatting with friends, ads are distractions and waste my time. Even though I got really annoyed with ads, I chose to overlook them most of the time cause blocking/reporting them obviously needs more time and won't stop me from seeing other ads.

Interviewee #5: Jennifer Kim's interviewee

We're gonna start with an icebreaker question. To get us started, what has been the most interesting or unusual ad you have seen on Instagram recently?

I don't even know. I see I got a lot of clothing. And so I just sometimes like nice clothing. I'm kind of like, Oh, this looks cute.

Okay, the next part is questions about the content of your Instagram feed. Can you tell me about the last time you opened up Instagram and saw an ad on your feed? What was it? Was it in line with the rest of your feed? And did you read the content of the ads?

I've definitely opened Instagram earlier today, I know, I definitely saw ads. But I'm also the type of person that I just like, don't like ads. Once I get an ad I just close out. And so it must have been i The one thing I noticed, like, I get a lot of clothing ads. I think that's because of my like Google search history and stuff like that. But, um, I only follow people, like, I don't really follow any brands or anything on my Instagram. And so I think like, they got my, I mean, it's probably because I look at the clothes. I'm like, Oh, this is cute. I click on it, or something like that. But I don't really open it often.

Would you say that the last ad that you saw was relatively in line with the rest of your feed, if you can remember?

My feed the people I follow, or, like people that I'm friends with or stuff like, like, I just saw people, my friends from home or whatever. And so, it's not in line in the sense that, I don't follow any brands. And so I shouldn't be getting clothing recommendations, but I think I get where they're coming. Because of my Google search history or something like that.

What do you care about seeing on your Instagram feed?

Um, I mean, I don't really like seeing that. I just feel like I go to Instagram to follow my friends and stuff like that. And so I just scroll. And then I catch up with people and what they are doing and then, I don't even go through stories really, because there's so many ads on the stories. I just keep clicking through them. And then like as soon as I can close. Yeah.

What ad content or design will prompt you to stop and read the ad?

For really big sales. Sometimes you're gonna sell it's like, 70% off, like, what 70% off? Or are just like really pretty close. Sometimes, because a lot of Instagram ads, I feel like they are kind of janky. I get nothing's like that. Cool. But sometimes you're going to add it's like, oh, like this clothing looks nicer. And so we like, click on it, or like, this looks cute. Yeah, so I guess this topic matters.

Can you clarify what you mean by janky?

Well, a lot of there's like a lot of Instagram brands that look very much like Shein ad. I'm looking at the ad and I just have a feeling that it looks better than the clothes will be, or the brand does not have a good reputation.

Do you overlook ads on your feed? If so, why is that?

I've never bought anything from an Instagram ad or, I've never yeah, I've never really been that invested in anything from Instagram ads. And I think it's just like a general like my mom is just super like Internet safety or like, she doesn't trust anything. And so I feel like she just raised me and my sister to be like that too. Or we just get things on Instagram and we just don't really trust anything. And so yeah, like Instagram ads, like okay, this just, I don't know why I just like a bad attitude towards ads. And so I don't really like to spend time on

What you mentioned, about distrust, what makes you feel like that towards them (ads)?

it's because it's like, it's not. It's like what supposed to be like, a social media site for like, for talking to your friends or like keeping up with your friends and stuff like that? Like, why would you be selling me stuff?

What criteria needs to be met for you to pause and read the ad. When we say criteria, this can be like ad content or it could be like, the context of the situation you're in, like your physical environment. What on the screen or off the screen criteria needs to be met for you to pause and read?

um, it has to be like, I have to like the item a lot in the picture. It has to typically it's from a reputable brand, or just looking at like, very, like, it just exudes a sense of high quality and then so I'll read into it. But then the next thing is like, if it's not cheap, but I want it. And so yeah.

Can you tell me about a time when like an ad we were talking about, like clothing ads? Can you talk about your experiences with ads that aren't clothing, but they still made you pause?

I mean, I just had so much clothing. I can only remember black sweaters or swimwear. Like things like that, that come up in my feed. I got bag ads before. Yeah, it's because I don't use Instagram too much. I remember one time I was looking at watches for my dad. And they got like men's watches for a bit and was like quality of men's watches. But it was never through Instagram, it was always through my Google search history. Which is why also I don't like them because I'm like, why is my Google search history connected to Instagram ads?

Now we'll move on to the acting upon biased ads section. So can you tell me about the last time you saw a biased ad in your Instagram feed, or just on Instagram?

What's a biased ad?

I think we'll define it as an ad that you perceive to have some sort of bias, whether it be, for instance, like political bias or like, bias toward a certain group. It can be like not an inherent negative bias.

Oh, I like I don't. I mean, I guess the bias is just like, it gives a general sense of, like, I feel like the (ad) item looks really nice. I'm talking about like, buying into it definitely. Like it's just like a wealthy lifestyle. Or, like, there's an inherent, like, the idea that something's high quality makes me want to look into it more. I feel like there's a wealth privilege or bias there.

What are you thinking when you are viewing an ad that you are considering reporting? What kind of thoughts do you have when you're considering reporting an ad?

I've never reported I feel like if I ever saw something that I was like, oh, But I feel like I sometimes, not on Instagram but sometimes I see an ad like oh like if I ever saw something that where there's definitely something manipulative here. There's a lot of people with less internet training than I have that might buy into it. And it's like a dangerous mindset to fall into like I would just yeah, that's like an important

So you would think about if this ad could be a danger to other people?

Yeah. I guess I've never really gotten an ad like that.

That's an example of one you would consider reporting. Okay. And when we say danger and that kind of stuff, do you mean financially?

No, I mean on Instagram sometimes, especially when I first had my tick tock account and then like algorithm towards you, sometimes you've got just like people are saying really nasty things about like women or like, people of color or there's people that come up because it like people will calibrate like the Tick Tock algorithms like hands Sometimes, like still, like, I got like when the whole Harry and Megan thing was happening, there was a bit of time where it didn't know if I liked Harry, Megan or not. So I would get people dragging Megan. And I love Harry and

Megan. And I think a lot of people aren't really mean to Meghan on the basis of race, and people were calling her out, names that are very, that have big connotations with race. And so I was like, Well, I don't want other people to believe this. this is not true.

Can you tell me more about what scenarios would make you report an ad other than what we've just discussed?

I have, like, it's, it's just if I see something, I'm like, why are they? Yeah, I don't like, I just like, people should not be viewing this content or believing it or something.

What kind of content should people not be viewing or believing?

I mean, I don't know. All right, I want to insert an article How to lose weight, things like you probably shouldn't promote weight loss gummy vitamins or something.

What do you perceive to be the benefits and drawbacks of reporting an ad?

I mean, I feel like a report doesn't really do anything, unless a lot of people report it. Like I assume that Instagram is not reviewing every single report that ever happens. Like if there's like a spike in report or something like that, then they do something about it. But yeah, I think it's just internet trainings, like not something it's very new, because, even in high school is something that the librarian went through with our classes every single year, like, be careful what you see, what you consume, a lot of other intentions, and we it was a very thorough, be careful what you consume. And that's just like an A so the people that get through that type training are like young kids, barely older than me. And so there's lots of generations of people that like just not are just not aware of like how people take advantage of social media

Do you not perceive there to be a benefit of reporting an ad unless many people report it?

Yeah.

Do you perceive there to be a benefit to you?

Like yeah, gives you peace of mind also, I don't want to see more ads like that.

What would be the best ways to motivate ad reporting from you?

I don't get ads like that. I feel like if I got more bad ads, I'd report more ads.

You mentioned clothing, that you get clothing ads that seem a bit too good to be true. You wouldn't categorize these as bad?

No, that's not harmful per se. Yeah, it's not directly harmful. I just don't really like it. I don't even participate in it because I keep getting them but I also as soon as I click through stories in the second I like it like three stories a day. Maybe three stories that get to an ad. I click out of it.

Research Guide Critique: Positives + Possible Points For Improvement

Positives

- Open ended questions were able to prompt the users talk more about their experience and thoughts then we planned
- The responses to the original questions (which were a bit more broad) often gave way to insightful and unique follow up questions and responses
- Pausing after participants stopped talking sometimes prompted them to elaborate on their answers through concrete examples to fill the silence = less possibility of interviewers following up with a *leading* question

Issues

- When it comes to the context/situations, the participant don't understand what exactly we're anticipating
- Participants completely overlook Instagram ads and couldn't respond to our questions without going on the platform during the interview.
- Participants had trouble remembering some experiences
    - Opening up Instagram to see ads helped a lot of interviewees talk about their current feelings about that ad
- Participants would sometimes answer with what the answer they thought we were looking for, rather than what they truly thought
    - i.e the responses are more generic, almost like answering a test question.