The bridge between two minds to encourage people to talk more and think more – Re-thinking the traditional research method

Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to explore how to use the in-depth interview, supported by a creative visual method to explore artists' life stories in the modern art market. In this paper, first, I will address a few issues relating to the in-depth interview and analyse the reasons why it is necessary to provide other methods to conduct in-depth interviews in this research. Second, the new analysis framework – the RAINBOW framework will be described and I will also show how this framework is applied to explore artists' life stories, and especially their career. Finally, the issue of how the RAINBOW framework may be able to contribute to portrait artists' life stories in the art market will be discussed.

Keywords: in-depth interview, the creative visual research method, an analysis framework, creativity, draw, write and talk

Introduction:

"The whole tendency of modern communication ...is towards participation in a process, rather than apprehension of concepts" (McLuhan et al., 1995, p73)

It is evident that one significant contribution of social media to the media studies is how they have changed the way of human communication. The most noticeable change is enabling one to one communication to that of many to many (Karakas, 2009; Scolari, 2009; Hall, 2013; Aslinger and Huntemann, 2013; Neuman and Guggenheim, 2011). This kind of change means that social media allow people to communicate more efficiently to relay information in real time to provide an opportunity of sharing experience and thoughts or even changing work and life style. However, apart from the point of view of efficiency, how can we ensure communicating at a deep enough level? Accordingly, in this paper, I will analyse the process

of conducting an in-depth interview. For making a connection between two minds - such as that of interviewers and interviewees or researchers and participants – the analysis process of the "RAINBOW framework" based on the creative visual research method will be illustrated. Finally, its contribution to the media research and other disciplines will be demonstrated.

Re-thinking of the in-depth interview method:

It can be seen that the in-depth interview has been one of the most important methods of collecting qualitative data. It is even estimated that almost ninety percent of investigations in the social sciences apply the interview method to obtain data (Brenner, 1981, p115). However, even though the interview method has advantages for qualitative research purposes in that it provides in-depth information, it is also very easy for people to treat it not as seriously as other research methods, because it mainly involves conversation, which is also used in our daily life. According to Radley and Chamberlain (2011), they state, "conducting interviews does not require extra-ordinary skills and needs only mundane skills, such as listening to the answer, producing questions or asking interviewees to explain certain terms" (2011, p391). Other criticisms maintain that the interviews seem only to be casual daily conversations and the collected data is "unreliable, unimpressive and not objective" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p12). Besides, following the perspective of objectivity, Hermanowicz and Hamersley criticise the position the interviewers hold may influence the value of the data they obtain. For example, when designing the interview questions, to some extent, the questions are from the perspective of what the interviewers believe or they want to approve or disapprove of. These kinds of questions will only demonstrate the interviewers' perceptions or opinions. Moreover, during the interviews, it is also highly possible that interviewees will sense what the interviewers expect and follow their thoughts. It is considered one of the factors impacting the objectivity of the in-depth interview method (Hermanowicz, 2002; Walford, 2007; Hammersley, 2008).

To some extent, Radley's critique reflects the normal misunderstanding of the interview method by considering the interview as a no-skills activity. However, according to Oakley who uses a metaphor to give a perspective, "Interviewing is rather like a marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed door there is a world of secrets" (Oakley and Roberts, 1981, p41). Moreover, Fontana and Frey state,

"Asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first. The spoken or written word always has a residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions and report or code the answers. Yet, interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human being" (Fontana and Frey, 1994, p361). They both demonstrate that there is more to the interview method than is first evident

Actually, even though the interview process seems simple, to use it as a research method, apart from a means of communication, other auxiliary tools and techniques need to be used to elicit deeper meaning. Because of these auxiliary methods the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee may be affected and therefore the resultant message may also be affected. So the additional techniques used may inspire both the interviewer and the interviewee and produce more meaningful and deeper information. For example, interviewers (researchers) are expected to begin with the "breaking the ice" stage and progress from general questions to specific ones. Interviewers should take special care not to influence the conversation with personal opinions and remain objective (however, some interviewers will share their opinions with interviewees in order to establish trust) (Fontana and Frey, 1994). Apart from this, in fact, other aspects of the interview process may impact the outcome, for instance nonverbal elements - glances, body postures, long silences, the way interviewers dress (Goffman, 1999).

An application of the creative visual method:

Even though verbal methods are applied in many disciplines and considered skillful research methods, the drawbacks of verbal research methods, such as the in-depth interview, should not be overlooked. It is true that an in-depth interview, a type of verbal method, presents certain issues that we have to be aware of. For example, the relationships between interviewees and interviewers form an important part in the process of collecting qualitative data. As mentioned above (Hammersley, 2008), the interviewers may be involved in manipulating or directing unconsciously the interviewees' perspectives or answers because the interviewers control the process of designing interview questions. Qu and Dumary also argue the interview research shows an "asymmetry of power" as the researcher is responsible for questioning interviewees who are voluntary or sometimes a bit naive (2011, p231).

Moreover, when researchers do not prepare properly or conduct an interview in a casual manner, it may produce disappointing results and prove to be a waste of resources (Hannabuss, 1996). Mainly, these arguments focus on how researchers interact with the participants during the process of collecting data and they show that it is possible when the process of collecting data is revised, the consequences of fieldwork and the data may be significantly affected.

However, creative visual research methods provide different perspectives to that of the verbal research methods. First, in terms of the role of interviewers (researchers) and interviewees (participants), the criticisms of the verbal research methods indicate an imbalance between interviewers and interviewees because of the process of the interview being controlled by the interviewers. In contrast, one of the characteristics of the creative visual research method is the emphasis on empowering the interviewees (participants) to take an active part in the flow of the process. For example, Gauntlett explains "creative visual research method", as a kind of research which enables people to communicate, in a meaningful way, their identities and experiences, and their own thoughts about their identities and experiences, through creating things themselves and then reflecting upon what they have made (Gauntlett and Holzwarth, 2006, p83; Gauntlett, 2008) When researchers apply these methods to ask participants to create their media content, such as drawing, making video, taking photos or making their artefacts, for getting the data, very often, the main point of the method is to focus on the participants' own thoughts/ opinions rather than the typical interview process during which interviewers ask questions and interviewees are expected to give answers. Gauntlett points out that it is not very easy for participants to provide the thoughtful descriptions instantly, so the accuracy of data will also be influenced. Instead, the creative visual research method normally will give the participants time and offer a tool to share their thoughts or understanding. Meanwhile, participants will obtain more creative opportunities to express their own meanings (Gauntlett, 2007, p183).

According to what Gauntlett says, the creative visual methods counteract some disadvantages of the verbal methods, such as lack of time for participants to respond and provide interviewees more creative opportunities to express something they may not be able to or feel comfortable to express in the world. Moreover, Guillemin and Drew state the benefits of the creative visual method from both sides - researchers and participants, which shows that researchers are able to use this method to broaden the scope of data, while participants can be

empowered by it to make their voice heard instead of being controlled by the formal interview process (Guillemin and Drew, 2010, p177-178). As mentioned above, Gauntlett... etc. all explain the drawbacks of the verbal methods, for example, the participants' voice is hidden in the process of the interview. Moreover, using images or artefacts is also considered as one of the methods which can enhance interview process or other methods of data gathering (Sutton, 2011, p193; Kara et al., 2015). It shows the potential of the combination of the in-depth interview and the creative visual research method to add the value of the collected data. From the perspective of improving the process of interview to get more credible data, actually, it is not necessary to focus too much on whether verbal methods or the creative visual method can provide more accurate data (Gauntlett, 2011; Kara, Gergen and Gergen, 2015; Buckingham, 2009), instead, it is better for researchers to consider how to create a new research method to enhance the value of research data or how to revise the existing methods to improve the process of collecting data. Therefore, on the one hand, it can be seen that both verbal methods and creative visual research methods have disadvantages which should be considered seriously and on the other hand, it is worth mentioning that the characteristics of different methods can support each other. For example, if the verbal methods and the creative research methods can be used together in the research, the creative visual research method can give participants more time to express their thoughts instead of answering the questions instantly while the verbal data can also support the creative visual research method to make some abstract meaning clearer (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006; Alshengeeti, 2014; Guillemin and Drew, 2010; Vince and Warren, 2012; Heinonen and Hiltunen, 2012; Gauntlett, 2007).

How to develop the "RAINBOW framework" - From 'draw and write' to 'talk and write' / talk with visual template (TW)

Following the above introduction, this research will provide a new analysis framework based on the creative visual research method and the in-depth interview method. The creative research method was originally implemented by Wetton in 1972, who applied the concept of 'draw and write' to explore the children's (7-8 year old) feelings and emotions mainly in the field of health and education research (Gauntlett and Horsley, 2004; Catherine Angell et al., 2015). Comparing traditional methods with creative research methods, the former, such as

focus groups, observation, in-depth interview or questionnaires, are indicated to be less effective when doing an analysis of a children group (Davis, 2010). In fact, as a result, these days more and more creative methods are being applied in the study of children. One of the methods is called "Draw and Write" and later, the limitations of the 'Draw and Write' was discussed (Catherine Angell, Jo Alexander and Jane A Hunt, 2015). 'Draw, Write and Talk' (DWT) was proposed as a better method to address the problem of children often not being able to express themselves very clearly using traditional methods. In the end, DW and DWT are becoming increasingly popular and applied in children research or other fields (C. Angell et al., 2015; Backett-Milburn and McKie, 1999; Noonan et al., 2016).

It is worth noting that the creative visual research should be applied differently to children and adults. For example, because children may not be able to explain themselves clearly, drawing and writing are used as a tool to help them to express themselves better. However, when it comes to adults who are supposed to have better communication skills, the tools should be considered differently. For example, adults can talk and write better than children so I applied in-depth interview in my research because the cases involve adults (artists). On the other hand, I still believe that the creative visual research method can reveal thoughts in people's minds and assist researchers to collect valuable data, so I decided to revise the visual method - draw, write and talk (DWT) to divide my analysis framework into three parts, including connecting the visual template to the whole interview process, conducting in-depth interviews (talk) and participants' writing, named the 'RAINBOW framework'.

The main difference between DWT and RAINBOW is that in the process of DWT, it is evident that drawing, writing and talking are the three main parts, while in the 'RAINBOW framework', I will also use writing and talking but in terms of drawing, I will prepare the visual templates with seven lenses for participants to explore their thoughts to replace the part of drawing. The reason for designing the framework is to integrate the concept of creative visual research and the systematic and visual way to illustrate the interview process. Therefore, the interviewer and the interviewee may be able to develop a closer relationship and in-depth understanding allowing to collect data and the formation of a systematic, structured model architecture and effective analytical thinking tools that could help researchers to obtain more valuable research material.

The application of the "RAINBOW" framework.

Consequently, the aim of this paper is to show a method of establishing a connection between two minds through the application of a kind of the creative visual research method alongside a traditional method: in-depth interview and creating a visual and systematic approach for participants to reflect on their thoughts and life. Based on the concepts of the 'RAINBOW framework', the research is divided into three stages: the first stage - the design and preparation of a visual template, the second stage - application of the traditional method and the creative visual research method, as well as the third stage – the analysis of the collected data.

First stage – the design and preparation of the analysis framework.

At this stage, I connect colours to different analysis perspectives to design a visual template for the process of the in-depth interview and the analysis framework.

Before interviews, I will prepare paper in seven colours and cut it into circle shapes. When I conduct the interviews, I will provide my interviewees with the seven colour circles and explain what each colour circle signifies. Before an interview, the interviewee will be told the meaning of the seven colours and an outline of the interview framework. For example, based on the seven colours of the rainbow the analysis framework is divided into seven parts - red (R) refers to reflection, orange (A) means audience, yellow (I) indicates Innovation, green (N) means to network, blue (B) represents business, indigo (O) shows opportunities and purple (W) indicates weaknesses.

Originally, the design concept of the 'RAINBOW framework' came from the social media research framework. Hansen et al. (2011) provide a constructive framework - the 'honeycomb framework of seven social media building blocks'- which includes identity, presence, groups, relationships, reputation, sharing and Conversations (Hansen and Greenhow, 2011; Jan H. Kietzmann, 2011). The systematic framework is mainly used to explain the functionalities of social media and users' experiences. It focuses on the analysis of the relationships between users and the external environment. However, it still lacks a way to address users' personal experience and the development of social media platforms,

which can bring about the changes to people's lives. In my research, I chose artists as the subjects of my cases to explore the relationships between users' career experience and the environment of social media platforms. Regarding the research on artists and the art environment, scholars start to pay more attention to artists' career and life experience (Steiner and Schneider, 2013; Markusen, 2013; Jeffreys, 2015). For example, some scholars investigate how artists are satisfied with their job, the relationships between artists and galleries or how artists cope with the difficulties of life (Abbing, 2002; O'Reilly, 2005; Prinz et al., 2014). Yet there is very little research focused on the relationships between artists and the art ecosystem. In fact, with the advent of social media, the art market ecosystem has become more complicated than before. In order to conduct the relationship research, it is necessary to follow a systematic approach to acquire a broader view of the reality of relationships between artists and the art market and the social media environment. This is the reason why the design of the 'RAINBOW analysis framework' aims to connect artists' life experience and the development of the art market, especially in the as happening alongside of the advent of social media.

The second stage - the application of the creative visual research method and a traditional method - the in-depth interview.

Based on the design of the 'RAINBOW framework', the interview will be conducted from the seven analysis perspectives - reflection, audience, innovation, network, business, opportunities, weaknesses. Also, in this part, I will use a traditional research method - indepth interview followed by the visual items and participants' writing. This is how I combine the in-depth interview method with the creative visual research method.

Before each part of the interview, the participants will be told about the meanings of the seven facets of the 'RAINBOW framework', next, I will give them the relevant colour circles. During the interview and after the interview, participants will write about what they talked about, using a few keywords or short sentences. The participants can also choose to write after their talking. The purpose of the writing process is to help participants to find the most significant explanations for their answers. Meanwhile, it can also assist interviewers or researchers to understand better what the participants mean. In this research, the writing process is similar to the process of drawing, which gives the participants an opportunity to

say what they want to say. Moreover, through their writing, the participants may re-think or re-organise their thoughts.

The third stage - the analysis of collected data.

This fieldwork will start with how artists reflect on their life story and the interviews will be conducted regarding artists' experience in their career. For example, from the artists' perspective, I will focus on their relationships with the 'actual audience' and 'imagined audience'. With regards to innovation, I will analyse the relationships between artists' creativity and their art career as well as the influences of social media on artists' creativity. Regarding artists' networks, I will explain how artists' networks change and are influenced by social media. Meanwhile, to obtain a broader view of how artists' networks have changed compared to the traditional art market, I am going to describe how artists use new ways to develop their networks. In the end, following the exploration of the artists' relationships in their lives and career, I will integrate the discussion of the perspectives of the artists' business, opportunities and weaknesses and explain the relationships between their career and the development of economy from attention economy to 'attention-emotion economy'. In this part, I am going to describe how the economic environment has changed because of the advent of social media, impacting, for example, a change in customers' attitudes. For a long time, people believed that money was a powerful currency. Through the popularity of the Internet, people have started to believe that money does not always mean the real currency. In the Internet era, more people believe that "attention is currency" (Ghosh and Aiyer, 1997). However, with the popularity of the Internet and the emergence of social media, the process of attracting people's attention has become more competitive. Therefore, consumers need to have stronger reasons, such as emotion, to make decisions to pay for things Here, this research calls this new trend "attention - emotion economy" (Falkinger, 2008; Patalano, 2009; Kuzmina, 2010; Davenport and Beck, 2002; Puschmann and Alt, 2016).

The conclusions:

To sum up, this research focuses on two areas. First, from the perspective of research methodology, I would like to propose that no method is perfect or better than the others and it

is always necessary for researchers to review the traditional methods and re-think the possible approaches to enhance the value of the resultant data. For example, a combination of verbal method and creative visual research may reduce the imbalance of the power relationship between researchers and participants. Finally, the result of research will be more persuasive and objective. In addition, in terms of the creative visual research method, 'draw and write' and 'draw, write and tell' (DWT) are proving to be good tools for children to express their thoughts instead of being controlled by the world of adults. However, instead of applying the research methods to children education, I used the creative visual research method to explore the development of the artists' career. Also, I revised one type of the creative visual research method - draw, write and tell (DWT) to apply it to the part of my research, which is called the "RAINBOW analysis framework". I believe adult participants can explain themselves better and have more logical thinking capacity. Therefore, instead of asking participants to draw, I prepared visual templates for my participants (adult artists) to write down their thoughts. Meanwhile, apart from writing down their thoughts, they also used verbal language to share their experiences. I believe it may improve the process of the interview and provide a more systematic analysis framework to explore people's lives.

Secondly, when it comes to the contribution to the field of media research, the main purpose of this study is to provide a systematic analysis model in the study of social media relations. In the field of media research, most focus is on theoretical analysis, user behaviour patterns, the effectiveness of social media marketing research. However, due to the influence of the hybridization and convergence of social media, I believe that the study of social media should be more comprehensive. For example, it can be seen that as there are more and more artists who use social media platforms in their work, the relationships between users, the social media environment and the art ecosystem have also been transformed significantly. Therefore, the RAINBOW framework provides a fuller view of how artists connect with the art market, and the social media environment. The more complicated the phenomenon is, the more necessary it is to have a systematic framework as a map to guide our direction to obtain the valuable material in our research in order to develop a new systematic and comprehensive method to connect creative visual research method and the verbal method - in-depth interview, to conduct qualitative research in the field of media research. Furthermore, it is also expected that this analysis framework - the RAINBOW framework - may well be applied to different disciplines apart from media research in order to explore the development of people's life stories in modern society.

References

- Abbing, H. (2002). Why are Artists Poor?: The Exceptional Economy of the Arts, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press.
- Alshenqeeti, H. (2014). Interviewing as a Data Collection Method: A Critical Review. English Linguistics Research, 3, pp. 39.
- Angell, C., Alexander, J. and Hunt, J. A. (2015). 'Draw, write and tell': A literature review and methodological development on the 'draw and write' research method. *J Early Child Res.*, 13, pp.
- Angell, C., Alexander, J. and Hunt, J. A. (2015). 'Draw, write and tell': A literature review and methodological development on the 'draw and write' research method. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 13, pp: 17-28.
- Aslinger, B. and Huntemann, N. B. (2013). Digital media studies futures. *Media, Culture & Society*, 35, pp: 9-12.
- Backett-Milburn, K. and Mckie, L. (1999). A critical appraisal of the draw and write technique. *Health Education Research*, 14, pp. 387-398.
- Brenner, M. (1981). Problems in collecting social data: a review for the information researcher. *Social Science Information Studies*, 1, pp. 139-151.
- Buckingham, D. (2009). Creative'visual methods in media research: possibilities, problems and proposals. *Media, Culture & Society*, 31, pp. 633-652.
- Davenport, T. H. and Beck, J. C. (2002). *The attention economy: understanding the new currency of business*, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Davis, T. 2010. Understanding Children as Consumers. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*: SAGE Publications.
- Dicicco-Bloom, B. and Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical education*, 40, pp: 314-321.
- Falkinger, J. (2008). Limited attention as a scarce resource in information-rich Economies*. *The Economic Journal*, 118, pp: 1596-1620.
- Fontana, A. and Frey, J. (1994). The art of science. *The handbook of qualitative research*, pp: 361-376.
- Gauntlett, D. (2007). *Creative Explorations : New Approaches to Identities and Audiences*, London: Routledge.
- Gauntlett, D. (2008). *Media, gender and identity: An introduction,* New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- Gauntlett, D. (2011). *Making is connecting: The social meaning of creativity, from DIY and knitting to YouTube and web 2.0,* Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Gauntlett, D. and Holzwarth, P. (2006). Creative and visual methods for exploring identities. *Visual Studies*, 21, pp: 82-91.
- Gauntlett, D. and Horsley, R. (2004). Web. Studies: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Ghosh and Aiyer, R. (1997). Economics is dead, long live economics. pp.
- Goffman, E. (1999). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*: Peter Smith Publisher, Incorporated.
- Guillemin, M. and Drew, S. (2010). Questions of process in participant-generated visual methodologies. *Visual Studies*, 25, pp: 175-188.
- Hall, R. (2013). A Political Genealogy of the Victims' Rights Movement. *Cultural Studies*, 27, pp: 650-653.

- Hammersley, M. 2008. Questioning Qualitative Inquiry. SAGE Publications, Ltd.
- Hannabuss, S. (1996). Research interviews. New Library World, 97, pp. 22-30.
- Hansen, D. L. and Greenhow, C. (2011). Exploring social media relationships. *On the Horizon*, 19, pp: 43-51.
- Heinonen, S. and Hiltunen, E. (2012). Creative Foresight Space and the Futures Window: Using visual weak signals to enhance anticipation and innovation. *Futures*, 44, pp: 248-256.
- Hermanowicz, J. C. (2002). The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed. *Qualitative Sociology*, 25, pp: 479-499.
- Jan H. Kietzmann, K. H., Ian P. Mccarthy, Bruno S. Silvestre (2011). Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. 54, pp. 241-251.
- Jeffreys, T. (2015). Can art exist on social media? Apollo magazine. Features, pp.
- Kara, H., Gergen, K. J. and Gergen, M. M. (2015). *Creative Research Methods in the Social Sciences: A Practical Guide*: Policy Press.
- Karakas, F. (2009). Welcome to World 2.0: the new digital ecosystem. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 30, pp: 23-30.
- Kuzmina, J. (2010). Emotion's component of expectations in financial decision making. *Baltic Journal of Management*, 5, pp: 295-306.
- Markusen, A. (2013). Artists work everywhere. Work and Occupations, 40, pp. 481-495.
- Mcluhan, M., Mcluhan, E. and Zingrone, F. (1995). Essential McLuhan: BasicBooks.
- Neuman, W. R. and Guggenheim, L. (2011). The Evolution of Media Effects Theory: A Six-Stage Model of Cumulative Research. *Communication Theory*, 21, pp. 169-196.
- Noonan, R. J., Boddy, L. M., Fairclough, S. J. and Knowles, Z. R. (2016). Write, draw, show, and tell: a child-centred dual methodology to explore perceptions of out-of-school physical activity. *BMC Public Health*, 16, pp: 326.
- O'reilly, D. (2005). The marketing/creativity interface: A case study of a visual artist. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 10, pp. 263-274.
- Oakley, A. and Roberts, H. (1981). Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms. *Doing feminist research*, 30, pp. 1.
- Patalano, R. (2009). Understanding economic change: The impact of emotion. *Constitutional Political Economy*, 21, pp: 270-287.
- Prinz, A., Piening, J. and Ehrmann, T. (2014). The success of art galleries: A dynamic model with competition and information effects. *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 39, pp: 153-176.
- Puschmann, T. and Alt, R. (2016). Sharing economy. *Business & Information Systems Engineering*, 58, pp: 93-99.
- Qu, S. Q. and Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 8, pp: 238-264.
- Radley, A. and Chamberlain, K. (2011). The study of the case: Conceptualising case study research. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 22, pp. 390-399.
- Scolari, C. A. (2009). Mapping conversations about new media: the theoretical field of digital communication. *New Media & Society*, 11, pp: 943-964.
- Steiner, L. and Schneider, L. (2013). The happy artist: an empirical application of the work-preference model. *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 37, pp. 225-246.
- Sutton, B. (2011). Playful cards, serious talk: a qualitative research technique to elicit women's embodied experiences. *Qualitative research*, 11, pp: 177-196.
- Vince, R. and Warren, S. (2012). Participatory Visual Methods 16. *Qualitative* organizational research: Core methods and current challenges, pp. 275.
- Walford, G. (2007). *Methodological Developments in Ethnography*: Elsevier JAI.