**A bridge between two minds - how to talk more and think more with a visual thinking tool?**

1. **Introduction:**

The aim of this paper is to provide an approach to improve in-depth interview method and encouraging artists to share their experiences and narratives. First, the perspectives of ‘making media studies’ proposed by David Gauntlett (2015) will be introduced. The following is the analysis of the weaknesses of the in-depth interview method to illustrate the reasons why I created the visual analysis approach, which I called the ‘RAINBOW analysis method’, to execute the relationship research in social media era, especially for artists. Second, I will further explain the content of the ‘RAINBOW analysis method’. Two cases will be applied to show how the ‘RAINBOW analysis method’ can be adopted to assist artists to share their experiences and also conduct the relationship research in social media field.

1. Rationale behind the ‘RAINBOW method’

These days, the development of the Internet has significantly changed our lives. Based on the development of the networked world, Gauntlett proposes ‘making media studies’ to illustrate how people can change their lives through making or creating things and after the revision of what Eno says, Gauntlett sees, “media as triggers of experiences and making things happen” ([Gauntlett, 2015](#_ENREF_6)). [[1]](#footnote-1) After Eno and Gauntlett, it can be seen that ‘art’ and ‘media’ are both the triggers of experiences and they can both make things happen ([Eno, 1996](#_ENREF_4) and [Gauntlett, 2015](#_ENREF_6)). Particularly, with the advent of social media, artists indeed have more opportunity to share their experiences of making art and they use social media to cooperate or seek support from people all over the world. This trend does prove that artists are able to share experiences. At the same time, scholars started to pay more attention to artists’ career and life experience ([Steiner and Schneider, 2013](#_ENREF_18), [Markusen, 2013](#_ENREF_12) and [Jeffreys, 2015](#_ENREF_10)). 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](#_ENREF_2), [O'reilly, 2005](#_ENREF_13), [Prinz et al., 2014](#_ENREF_15)). 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 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/ social media environment.

In terms of the social media ecosystem, 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](#_ENREF_8), [Jan H. Kietzmann, 2011](#_ENREF_9)). The framework is mainly used to explain the functions of social media. However, considering the relationships between artists and their art careers in social media, I am going to make the seven categories more relevant to artists’ real life experiences. Hence, I changed them to seven facets, including reflexivity, audience, innovation, network, business, opportunities and weakness, which focus more on artists’ real life experience and their art career.

1. The content of the RAINBOW method

To elucidate artists’ in-depth thoughts and opinions, it is commonplace to adopt an in-depth interview approach to obtain the relevant information. However, even though this typical approach has been applied by researchers very often, it is not fully understood or actually, it has to be revised. For example, Radley and Chamberlain believe that 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 ([Radley and Chamberlain, 2011](#_ENREF_17)). To some extent, Radley’s arguments reflect the normal misunderstanding of the interview method by considering the interview as a no-skill activity. However, drawing on my experience of being a journalist for ten years, conducting an interview is more than chatting or conversation. In fact, in order to obtain a better understanding of interviewees’ in-depth thoughts, it is necessary to prepare thoroughly to develop a good relationship between interviewers and interviewees. Moreover, having a proper medium can also support interviewers to develop their “bridge of communication” with participants. In this research, I choose to make a visual tool ~~as~~ my medium of communication with interviewees. According to the seven facets – R: Reflexivity, A: Audience, I: Innovation, N: Network, B: Business, O: Opportunities and W: Weaknesses, I applied seven rainbow colours to them – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and purple. Before the interviews, I make rainbow coloured circles. During the interview, the rainbow coloured circles serve as the signposts to direct the conversations, while the participants write their thoughts in the circles based on the seven topics. The rainbow coloured circles alsoassist the participants, leading them in the flow of thought on a certain topic and make the whole conversation efficient and productive.

1. The perspectives of the RAINBOW interview

Accordingly, in this paper, I am going to explain how and why I connect the RAINBOW analysis method to my cases for analysing the relationship between artists and their career in the social media era. Before the analysis of artists’ career, this research will start with artists’ life history and their self-identity. Later, the interviews will be conducted based on 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 together 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. 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](#_ENREF_7)). 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, in order to make decisions to pay for things ([Falkinger, 2008](#_ENREF_5), [Patalano, 2009](#_ENREF_14), [Kuzmina, 2010](#_ENREF_11), [Davenport and Beck, 2002](#_ENREF_3), [Puschmann and Alt, 2016](#_ENREF_16)). Here, this research calls this new trend “attention - emotion economy”.

1. **Case studies and the short conclusion:**

To conclude, this paper comprises of three parts – first, an overview of the relationships between the ‘RAINBOW analysis method’ and ‘making media study, second, an

explanation of a new approach- the ‘RAINBOW analysis method’, third, the

consequences of ‘the RAINBOW analysis method’. Hence, apart from the explanation of the content of the RAINBOW framework, I will use examples of my cases to illustrate what the role and function of the thinking tool in ‘making media study’ is and also how the RAINBOW analysis method may contribute to the art world and other fields in developing a communication bridge to get a better understanding between two different minds.

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1. Eno says- “ stop thinking about art works as objects, and start thinking about them as triggers for experiences… the other way of thinking about art, is not that it’s a channel for communicating something but that it’s a trigger; it’s a way of making things happen” (Eno, 1996:368 and 2013:23) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)