

Participant Information Sheet

1. Research Project Title and name of researcher(s):

Title: Attentional Environments in Social Media

Researcher:

Archie-Lee Thomas Irving

Email: atirving1@sheffield.ac.uk

Supervisor:

Monica L Paramita

Email: m.paramita@sheffield.ac.uk

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to participate in a research study as part of an MSc dissertation at the University of Sheffield. Before deciding whether to take part, please read this information sheet carefully. It explains why the research is being carried out, what participation involves, and how your data will be used and protected.

Taking part is entirely voluntary. You may ask any questions before deciding whether to participate.

3. What is the project's purpose?

Short-form video feeds are widely used, but different feed designs may shape how people view and respond to online content. This study examines how different short-form social media feed designs affect attention and memory during online video viewing to understand which interface design influences how people attend to, process, and remember content.

This study is being carried out as part of The University of Sheffield's MSc Dissertation module.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited because you are aged 18 or over, use, or are familiar with, short-form social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, or YouTube Shorts.

You should not take part if you are under 18, do not feel able to give informed consent, or would feel uncomfortable completing a screen-based task involving short-form video content and eye tracking.

5. Do I have to take part?

No. Taking part is completely voluntary. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to complete a consent form before the study begins.

You can stop taking part at any point during the study without giving a reason. You may also withdraw your data after taking part, up to the 1 August 2026, by contacting the researcher and providing your participant ID. After this point, it may not be possible to remove your data because it may have been anonymised and included in the analysis.

Taking part in this research is voluntary and will not create a legally binding agreement or any form of employment with the University of Sheffield.

6. What will happen to me if I take part? What do I have to do?

The study will take place in The Wave iLab Research Facility at the University of Sheffield.

If you agree to take part, you will:

1. Read this information sheet and complete a consent form.
2. Complete a brief pre-task questionnaire.
3. View two short-form video feeds.
4. Complete a short recall and recognition task after each feed.
5. Take a short break between the two feed tasks.
6. Receive a debrief at the end of the study.

You will be asked to use eye-tracking equipment during your interaction with the video feeds. While you view the video feeds, the eye-tracking equipment will record attention-related measures, such as where you look on the screen, fixation duration, dwell time and pupil-based measures. The web-based experiment will also record behavioural data, such as how long you view content, skip behaviour and completion rates.

The video feeds will include short-form video content and advertisement-style stimuli. You will be asked to interact with the video feeds as you normally would on platforms such as TikTok. You do not have to watch every video fully and may skip videos as you wish. However, for data comparability, you will be asked to progress through the full set of content in each feed task, unless you choose to pause or withdraw from the study.

The full session is expected to take approximately 20-30 minutes.

7. What type of content will I see?

You will view short-form videos similar to content commonly seen on social media platforms. Videos will be selected from categories such as lifestyle/daily routines, food and cooking, beauty and fashion, entertainment/humour and educational content.

All videos and advertisement-style stimuli will be screened before the study to exclude distressing, offensive, sexual, violent, political, health-related, gambling-related, alcohol-related or otherwise sensitive material.

Advertisement stimuli will be artificially generated and will not promote real products, brands, services, political content, health claims, gambling, alcohol or other sensitive material.

8. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The risks are expected to be minimal. The main possible risk is mild visual fatigue or temporary discomfort from viewing screen-based video content and completing the eye-tracking task. Some participants may also find the memory tasks mildly tiring or frustrating.

You can pause or stop the study at any time. A short break will be included between the two video feed tasks.

9. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There is no direct personal benefit to taking part. However, your participation will help contribute to research on how social media interface design affects attention and memory during online video viewing.

10. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

You will be assigned a participant ID. Experimental data will be stored using this ID rather than your name. Consent forms and any contact details will be stored separately from experimental data to reduce the risk of identification.

Only the researcher and dissertation supervisor will have access to the data where necessary. The results will be reported in aggregate form, meaning individual participants will not be identifiable in the dissertation or any related outputs.

Confidentiality may only be broken where participant(s) disclose information about criminal activity or risks to public safety, in which case the researcher may be obliged to report to the relevant authorities.

11. Data Protection

This research is carried out 'in the public interest' in accordance with data protection legislation. Further information can be found in the [University's Privacy Notice](#).

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

Your research data will be pseudonymised using a participant ID. This means that your experimental data will be stored under an ID number rather than your name. Consent forms and any contact details will be stored separately from the experimental data in secure University-approved storage, accessible only to the researcher and project supervisor where necessary.

Your data will remain pseudonymised until 1 August 2026, which is the end of the withdrawal period. After this date, the link between your participant ID and your identity will be removed, and the experimental data will be anonymised. Once the data has been anonymised and included in the analysis, it will no longer be possible to withdraw your individual data from the study.

The data will be used for analysis as part of the MSc dissertation project. Anonymised research data may also be retained for academic verification, publication, or future related research, where appropriate and in line with University policy. Anonymised data may also be deposited in the University of Sheffield's ORDA repository where participants have given explicit consent for this. You will not be identifiable in any dissertation, publication, presentation, or shared research dataset arising from this research.

12. What happens to the results of the research?

The results will be used in an MSc dissertation. Findings may also be discussed in academic contexts, such as presentations or future research outputs. Any results will be presented anonymously and in aggregate form, so you will not be identifiable.

Anonymised research data may be retained for academic verification, publication, or future related research, where appropriate and in line with University policy. We will ask for your explicit consent before any anonymised data is deposited in the University of Sheffield's ORDA repository or made available for future research use.

Only anonymised data would be retained or shared in this way. Your name, contact details, consent form and the participant ID key linking you to your data will not be included. Identifiable personal data will be securely destroyed after the dissertation has been assessed and the degree has been granted, expected to be by the end of January 2027.

13. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved by the School of Information, Communication, and Journalism at the University of Sheffield.

14. What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research or report a concern or incident?

If you would like to complain about any aspect of the research or if you feel that you have been exploited, abused or harmed as a result of taking part in the research, please contact the project supervisor (Monica L Paramita; m.paramita@sheffield.ac.uk). If you feel your complaint has not been handled in a satisfactory way you can contact the Head of the Department (Briony Birdi; b.birdi@sheffield.ac.uk). If your complaint is about how your personal data has been handled, you can find information about how to raise a complaint in the [University's Privacy Notice](#).

15. Contact for further information

For any further information about this project you can contact the main researcher (Archie-Lee Thomas Irving; atirving1@sheffield.ac.uk) or the project supervisor (Monica L Paramita; m.paramita@sheffield.ac.uk).

16. Thank you

Thank you for choosing to take part in this project.
A copy of this information sheet, and signed consent form will be sent to the email you provide upon completion of the study.