

# Qualitative Social Media Research Resource Guide

To make a suggestion, email Jenna Drenten at [jdrenten@luc.edu](mailto:jdrenten@luc.edu)  
For updates and additional resources, go to: [digitalconsumerculture.com](http://digitalconsumerculture.com)  
(last updated: August 29, 2024)

---

## CONTENTS

Click on each heading to jump to the associated section.

1. [Tools and Tech](#)
    - a. [Tools for Data Collection & Analysis](#)
    - b. [Tools for Visually Capturing Findings & Responsibly Publishing Data](#)
  2. [Research Networks, Trainings & Curated Reading Lists](#)
    - a. [Research Networks & Communities](#)
    - b. [Opportunities for Academic Research by Platform](#)
    - c. [Other Trainings, Guides, and Speaker Series](#)
  3. [Recommended Readings on Digital Methods & Qualitative Research](#)
    - a. [Monographs & Handbooks](#)
    - b. [Articles Related to Specific Methodologies](#)
  4. [Where to Publish](#)
    - a. [Journals within Marketing/Business](#)
    - b. [Journals Beyond Marketing](#)
    - c. [Academic Conferences](#)
  5. [General Writing Groups & Writing Resources](#)
- 

## SOME CONTEXT!

*These resources are curated by me, Jenna Drenten – I am an Associate Professor of Marketing at Loyola University Chicago and I use qualitative methods to study [digital consumer culture](#). My research captures the important sociocultural role of digital technologies and social media platforms in mediating and monetizing everyday consumer life. These resources are shaped by my own experiences and perspective and are certainly non-exhaustive. Some of my hope in sharing these resources is to enable more cross-disciplinary sharing of thought, methods, and approaches. While many of the resources reflect my broad area of interest (digital culture and society), I hope you will be able to integrate the resources into your own research, regardless of your discipline.*

# TOOLS AND TECH

## TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

### YouTube:

- [YouTube Video Downloader](#) (Free!): To convert and download individual videos from YouTube.
- [YouTube Channel Tools](#) (Free!): Several tools for downloading data from YouTube, including comments on videos.
- [SnapSave](#) (Free!): Tool to manually download individual YouTube videos.

### Instagram:

- [Instaloader](#) (Free!): A powerful Python-based program that downloads Instagram data, including comments, captions, geolocation-based images, profile-based images and more.

### TikTok:

- [TikTok Python Crawler](#) (Free!): Captures TikTok videos, metadata, all available video comments, and more (created by Deen Freelon).
- [SaveTT.cc](#) (Free!): A TikTok video downloader to download individual TikTok videos as MP4s directly to your computer. (This is a good alternative to individually saving videos to your phone.)
- [ViralMoment](#): An AI-powered video analysis tool for social listening.

### Twitter:

- [Netlytic](#): A program to collect and visualize tweets; up to 10,000 with the free subscription
- [TAGS for Twitter](#) (Free!): A powerful Google Sheet that scrapes Twitter for tweets related to a hashtag, search term, or from a profile.

### Other:

- [Social Media Research Toolkit](#): A list of 50+ social media research tools curated by researchers at the [Social Media Lab](#) at [Ted Rogers School of Management, Toronto Metropolitan University](#). The toolkit is updated annually and only features tools that have been used in peer-reviewed academic studies. Most of the tools featured are free to use and require little or no programming.
- [Export Comments](#) (Free! + Paid Options): This platform allows you to download up to 100 comments for free from TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitch, Discord, and VKontakte. There are paid options to have unlimited exports and to download more comments with replies.
- [Upwork](#) and [Fiverr](#): Websites to hire freelancers for data collection support, including coding, programming, and other data science needs

- [ChatGPT](#) or [Google Bard](#): AI-powered chatbot that uses natural language processing to support human-like conversation; be mindful of ethical concerns using such software for data analysis, writing, paraphrasing, and other research activities

### **Immersion, Transcription & Analysis:**

- In-app folders: Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter (paid account) enable bookmarks and folders to be created in-app for saving content
- [Otter](#): Excellent cloud-based transcription software that can be used to transcribe videos, interviews, and other recordings. (NOTE: I have the Annual Pro Education subscription which provides 6000 minutes of transcription every month and is \$49.99/year.)
- [MAXQDA](#): Qualitative data analysis software that allows for coding text, video, and images, among other powerful features. MAXQDA offers extensive [video tutorials](#) and recommended [readings](#). (NOTE: I have the [MAXQDA Analytics Pro Perpetual License for Single User](#) which is \$750. The license can be installed on up to two computers at once and is a one-time payment for lifetime access.)

## **TOOLS FOR VISUALLY CAPTURING FINDINGS & RESPONSIBLY PUBLISHING DATA**

- [GraphicRiver](#), [FreePik](#), and [CreativeMarket](#): for relatively inexpensive or free downloadable templates to make [social media mock-ups](#) of illustrative posts for publication
- [Canva](#) and [BeFunky](#): for editing images, such as blurring faces or using filters to alter the image identifiability/searchability
- [Unsplash](#), [Pixabay](#), [Nappy](#), and [Pexels](#) (Free!): for royalty-free pictures and videos to use to mock up illustrative examples instead of using content from data
- [GridBank](#): for accessing user-generated content for vertical video platforms; could be used to create mock up examples or could be used for facilitating projective techniques
- [Flim.ai](#): a search engine for video content
- [Opus.pro](#): AI-powered video editor
- [Savee](#): a platform to save creative inspiration from Instagram or other browsers
- [Paraphrasing Tool](#) (Free!): for paraphrasing text in order to avoid searchability (Note: This is a recommended approach by the [AoIR Ethics Guide](#))
- [Name Generator](#) (Free!): for generating pseudonyms for screen names and usernames
- [Namelix](#): brand name generator
- [Adobe Creative Cloud](#): for more advanced editing of images or mock ups using Photoshop, InDesign, and Illustrator
- [SlidesGo](#), [Beautiful.ai](#), and [SlidesCarnival](#): for formatting slide decks - free templates! (GraphicRiver has many paid templates.)

- [Flaticon](#), [The Noun Project](#), and [Iconfinder](#): for using icons in creating diagrams or presentations; Markus Geisler has a great slide deck on [how to design concept visuals in consumer research](#) - I highly recommend it as you work toward conceptually pulling together your findings.
- [Fiverr](#) and [Upwork](#): for taking photographic images and illustrating them (instead of using the original photo)
- [Raw](#): for data visualization; very user-friendly

## RESEARCH NETWORKS, TRAININGS & CURATED READING LISTS

### RESEARCH NETWORKS & COMMUNITIES

- [Association of Internet Researchers \(AoIR\)](#): The Association of Internet Researchers is an academic association dedicated to the advancement of the cross-disciplinary field of Internet studies. It is a member-based support network promoting critical and scholarly Internet research independent from traditional disciplines and existing across academic borders. In particular, the AoIR has a comprehensive and well-developed [Ethics Guide for Internet Research](#), now in its 3rd iteration.
- [Content Creators Scholars Network](#): The Content Creator Scholars Network (CCSN) is an interdisciplinary and international community hub dedicated to supporting humanistic and critical qualitative studies of digital creators and emerging platform economies.
- [Digital Ethnography Collective](#): This group was formed through the London School of Economics to explore the intersections of digital culture and ethnographic methods. They have some excellent recorded webinars and a useful [collaboratively sourced reading list](#).
- [DigiLabour](#): Investigates connections between the world of work and digital technologies.
- [DISCO Network](#): The DISCO Network integrates critical humanistic, social science, and artistic approaches to digital studies and foregrounds questions about the cultural implications of technology to envision a new anti-racist and anti-ableist digital future.
- [Discord Academic Research Community \(D/ARC\)](#): The Discord Academic Research Community is an inclusive and supportive network for anyone researching Discord and Discord-related communities, platforms, or cultures.
- [Meme Studies Research Network](#): An international and interdisciplinary research network for scholars who study memes. It aims to bring people together and foster discussion about memes from various academic fields, methodological practices and theoretical standpoints.
- [Rutgers Digital Ethnography Working Group](#): This group's goal is to develop a deeper understanding of how people live in this digital era and uncover the most innovative methods to study digital communication, information, and media from an ethnographic standpoint

- [TechnoSoc: Sociologists of Digital Things](#): A member-led community of sociologists who study digital phenomena and/or study social life using digital methods in any capacity; get involved via Slack.
- [TikTok Cultures Research Network](#): A portal for scholarly resources, research projects, and events that connects networks of qualitative scholars of various disciplines from around the world studying TikTok.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH BY PLATFORM

Many mainstream social media platforms invite academic researchers to formally be involved in research projects through funding and/or API access. The list below provides links to more information.

- [Meta \(e.g., Facebook, Instagram\) RFPs for Research Awards](#)
- [Meta Research PhD Fellowship Program](#)
- [Microsoft Social Media and Society Project](#)
- [Microsoft Research PhD Fellowship](#)
- [YouTube Researcher Program Application](#) (for API access)
- [Twitter Academic Research](#) (for API access)
- [TikTok Research Program](#) (for API access)
- [TikTok's PhD Internship Program](#)

## OTHER TRAININGS, GUIDES, AND SPEAKER SERIES

- [Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University](#): The Berkman Klein Center's mission is to explore and understand cyberspace; to study its development, dynamics, norms, and standards; and to assess the need or lack thereof for laws and sanctions. Home to the [Rebooting Social Media](#) research initiative.
- [Center for the Connected Consumer](#): A center at George Washington University, "dedicated to understanding how consumers interact with smart objects that are connected to the Internet."
- [Center for Information, Technology, and Public Life \(CITAP\)](#): A research center at UNC-Chapel Hill focusing on "the intersection of technology platforms and democratic society. We analyze how social differences shape unequal dynamics in our information systems and prioritize questions of power. And that work produces insights that inform a digital future rooted in equality and justice."
- [Critical Algorithm Studies Reading List](#): A collection of critical literature on algorithms as social concerns. The work included spans sociology, anthropology, science and technology studies, geography, communication, media studies, and legal studies, among others.
- [Critical Data Studies Resources](#): A non-exhaustive list of resources compiled by Angele Christin on the fuzzy and interdisciplinary world of Critical Data Studies (aka Critical Algorithms Studies, Digital Media Studies, Critical Platform Studies, Digital STS, and many related terms).

- [Data & Society](#): An independent, non-profit research organization that produces original research on topics including AI and automation, the impact of technology on labor and health, and online disinformation. [Faculty fellows and alt-ac jobs](#) are available.
- [Digital Cultures Research Group](#): At Monash University in Sydney, Australia, this group brings together leading experts on digital media and the impacts of technology on our culture and society. Our research covers domains from health and cybersecurity to surveillance, sexting, and social media.
- [Digital Ethnography Research Centre \(DERC\)](#): A center at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia, this research center “focuses on understanding a contemporary world where digital and mobile technologies are increasingly inextricable from the environments and relationships in which everyday life plays out.”
- [Digital Public Interest Collective](#): A research group whose aim is to “bring together interdisciplinary researchers and scholars who are interested in the ways that digital communication technologies can contribute to the public interest, and the ways in which they undermine it.”
- [Doing Fieldwork in a Pandemic](#): This Google doc was collaboratively sourced at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, when many traditional methods of qualitative research (e.g., fieldwork) became limited due to social distancing. There are a ton of great resources for how to use digital methods in the midst of the pandemic.
- [Projective Techniques and the Use of Visual Images in a Digital Age](#): This is a resource that I co-authored to outline ways that we can adapt traditional projective research methods using digital technologies.
- [SAGE Research Methods: Doing Research Online](#): HIGHLY RECOMMEND! This is a huge set of videos, case studies, how-to guides, and datasets. It’s entirely online. You can get access through a free 30-trial. The PDFs can be downloaded for reference later.
- [SAGE Teaching Resources on Digital Methods](#): A collection of PowerPoint slides, syllabi, and other resources to bring digital methods into the classroom.
- [Social Media Research: A Guide to Ethics](#): This is a very easy to read, user friendly guide (featuring a great flowchart!) for approaching issues such as informed consent, anonymity, public versus private data, and legalities.
- [Sprout Social’s ‘Social Listening’](#): A great overview of social listening - what is is, how it works, and why it’s useful.
- [Understanding Digital Culture Training](#): This is an excellent resource for more extended training on internet research. The course was funded through the NEH Advanced Topics in the Digital Humanities Institute hosted by the University of Central Florida and was held June 1-5, 2020 virtually due to COVID-19. Understanding Digital Culture provides resources, training, and a community of collaborators to engage both computational network and data analysis tools and the ethics and best practices of using the web as a site of research. This course is the open-access version of materials from the live institute. The program features a great list of [social media tools](#) to explore and walks you through thinking more critically about platforms.

- [Microsoft's Race and Technology Speaker Series](#): Brings together leading voices at the intersection of race and technology for discussions around data, the internet, justice, genomics, and more.
- [UCLA Center for Critical Internet Inquiry](#): UCLA Center for Critical Internet Inquiry (C2i2) is a critical internet studies community committed to reimagining technology, championing racial justice, and strengthening democracy through research, culture, and public policy.
- [UPenn's Center on Digital Culture and Society](#): CDCS aims to create collaborative spaces for discussion and debate among academics, citizens, and activists; develop critical approaches to the study of digital culture and technology; help train new generations of digital researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and beyond; build global networks of researchers; advocate for socially just design, production, and use of digital technologies; and explore and foster new visions of digital futures through scholarship and public communication.
- [Algorithmic Methods Impact Lab](#): The Algorithmic Impact Methods Lab (AIMLab) examines algorithmic impact assessments from the ground up. Launched in May 2024, AIMLab works with research partners to generate, pilot, and disseminate empirically grounded methods for algorithmic impact assessment that foreground the rights and needs of impacted communities and center the public interest.
- Some specific questions were asked in prior workshops about algorithms and how they shape methodologies and/or findings. Suggested readings:
  - [Algorithms as culture: Some tactics for the ethnography of algorithmic systems](#)
  - [Beyond the hashtag: Circumventing content moderation on social media](#)
  - [What's in a \(pseudo\)name? Ethical conundrums for the principles of anonymisation in social media research](#)
  - [Trace publics as a qualitative critical network tool: Exploring the dark matter in the #MeToo movement](#)
  - [Understanding and interpreting algorithms: toward a hermeneutics of algorithms](#)
  - [Gaming Algorithmic Hate-Speech Detection: Stakes, Parties, and Moves](#)
  - [Critical Algorithm Studies: A Reading List](#): This reading list is curated by the Social Media Collective at Microsoft Research Labs; The SMC offers excellent internship and postdoc opportunities in addition to ongoing programming.



# RECOMMENDED READINGS ON DIGITAL METHODS & QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

## MONOGRAPHS AND HANDBOOKS

- [SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods](#) - Edited by Luke Sloan and Anabel Quan-Haase
- [Internet Inquiry](#) - Edited by Annette N. Markham and Nancy K. Baym
- [Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice](#) - Written by Sarah Pink, Heather Horst, John Postill, Larissa Hjorth, Tania Lewis, and Jo Tacchi
- [Netnography: The Essential Guide to Qualitative Social Media Research](#) - Written by Robert V. Kozinets
- [The Datafied Society: Studying Culture through Data](#) (OPEN ACCESS!) - Edited by Karin van Es and Mirko Tobias Schäfer
- [Data Feminism](#) (OPEN ACCESS!) - Written by Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein
- [Digital Methods](#) - Written by Richard Rogers
- [Qualitative Research in Digital Environments](#) - Written by Alessandro Caliendo and Alessandro Gandini

## ARTICLES RELATED TO SPECIFIC METHODOLOGIES

NOTE: This is specific to articles about digital methods & qualitative research, rather than qualitative research more generally.

- [Walkthrough Method](#): "a method, grounded in a combination of science and technology studies with cultural studies, through which researchers can perform a critical analysis of a given app" (Light, Burgess, and Duguay, 2016); See ["Reconsidering the Walkthrough Method for Analyzing Apps"](#) (Duguay and Gold-Apel, 2023) for more multidimensional app analysis
- [Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis](#): "a multimodal analytic technique for the investigation of Internet and digital phenomena, artifacts, and culture" (Brock, 2016)
- [Narrative Analysis on YouTube](#): "a possible extension of narrative analysis to a new medium of expression of consumer behaviour, specifically YouTube" (Pace, 2008)
- [Hashtag Mapping on Instagram](#): "a methodology for studying Instagram activity, building on established methods for Twitter research by initially examining hashtags, as common structural features to both platforms" (Highfield and Leaver, 2014)
- [Digital Practices Tracing](#): "a methodological framework for a systematic capture and analysis of consumer lurking practices in digital environments"
- [Video Ethnography of Social Media Apps](#): "method is based on the combination of context-oriented recordings made with user-worn camera glasses and mobile screen video capture" (Figeac and Chaulet, 2018)
- [Screencast Videography](#): "an approach to studying interactions and experiences in the digital space" (Kawaf, 2016)



- [Visual Cross-Platform Analysis](#): “the study of still and moving images across two or more social media platforms” (Pearce et al., 2018)

# WHERE TO PUBLISH

## ***Specific to folks in the marketing discipline...***

*You might ask yourself, where can I publish or present this type of research? Below I have provided a list of journals and conferences within marketing and outside of marketing that could be appropriate (i.e., friendly) outlets.*

## JOURNALS WITHIN MARKETING/BUSINESS

This is not at all an exhaustive list. Journals are increasingly receptive to new and innovative qualitative methods using social media data. The journals listed below are each well-respected (According to ABDC journal list) and have either 1) previously published this type of research or 2) have editorial board members with experience in this type of research. (Listed alphabetically.) Special issues are also an exceptional way to publish this type of research. I encourage you to reach out to the special issue editor(s) in advance to get guidance and feedback regarding fit.

- [Consumption, Markets & Culture](#)
- [European Journal of Marketing](#)
- [Gender, Work & Organization](#)
- [Journal of Advertising](#)
- [Journal of Consumer Affairs](#) (note: this journal charges a \$125 fee for submission; \$25 for students -- this covers the membership cost for the American Council on Consumer Interests which sponsors the journal)
- [Journal of Consumer Behaviour](#)
- [Journal of Consumer Marketing](#)
- [Journal of Consumer Research](#)
- [Journal of Interactive Marketing](#)
- [Journal of Macromarketing](#)
- [Journal of Marketing](#)
- [Journal of Marketing Management](#)
- [Journal of Services Marketing](#)
- [Journal of the Association for Consumer Research](#)
- [Qualitative Market Research](#)

## JOURNALS BEYOND MARKETING

Certainly the goal is to publish within the field of marketing and there are indeed journals friendly to qualitative social media methods. This is a short non-exhaustive list of alternative journals beyond marketing which publish some exceptional work using qualitative social media methods. The articles in these journals may be helpful in providing templates for how to best structure articles using qualitative social media research methods. *Journals are listed alphabetically.*

- [Big Data & Society](#)

- [Celebrity Studies](#)
- [Convergence](#)
- [International Journal of Cultural Studies](#)
- [European Journal of Cultural Studies](#)
- [Feminist Media Studies](#)
- [First Monday](#)
- [Information, Communication & Society](#)
- [Journal of Communication Inquiry](#)
- [Journal of Socio-technical Critique](#)
- [Media, Culture & Society](#)
- [New Media & Society](#)
- [Social Media + Society](#) (note: this journal charges an \$800 fee for mandatory open-access publication)
- [Surveillance & Society](#)
- [Qualitative Inquiry](#)
- [Qualitative Research](#)

## ACADEMIC CONFERENCES

- [American Marketing Association \(AMA\) Winter Educators' Conference](#)
- [Association for Consumer Research \(ACR\) Conference](#)
- [Association of Internet Researchers \(AoIR\) Conference](#)
- [Console-ing Passions Conference](#)
- [Consumer Culture Theory \(CCT\) Conference](#)
- [EPIC Conference](#)
- [Gender, Work & Organization \(GWO\) Conference](#)
- [GENMAC \(Gender, Markets & Consumers\)](#)
- [International Communication Association \(ICA\)](#)
- [NETNOCON](#)
- [Race in the Marketplace \(RIM\) Conference](#)
- [Social Media & Society Conference](#)
- [Society for Cinema and Media Studies \(SCMS\)](#)
- [Society for Social Studies of Science \(4S\)](#)
- [Transformative Consumer Research \(TCR\) Conference](#)

# GENERAL WRITING GROUPS & WRITING RESOURCES

As far as publishing research, I have found it very helpful to be involved in interdisciplinary writing group communities. Some resources that I suggest:

- [Mirya Holman's Aggressive Winning Scholars Newsletter](#)
- [100 Days of Writing](#) organized by [Margaret Echelbarger](#)
- [Laura Portwood-Stacer's Manuscript Works Newsletter](#) (for book publishing)
- [The Writing Workshop](#) by Barbara Sarnecka
- [Writing Goals Worksheet](#) by Sa-kiera Hudson
- [How to Write a Journal Article in 12 Weeks](#) by Wendy Laura Belcher
- [Jenna Drenten's Academic Writing Checklist](#)