# Social Media Based Diary Method

Worksheet

Full resource: <https://www.ncrm.ac.uk/resources/online/all/?id=20838>

Work through the below questions to help you, first, design your diary methods and, second, produce some guidelines which you can share with participants during the recruitment stage.

**Clarifying your research**

* What is your research topic?
* What are your research aims?
* What is/are your research question(s)?
* Is there anything in particular you want to explore through diary methods? Brainstorm some ideas below.
* Are there any particular media you would like to collect (e.g. photos, videos)? Are there any particular formats that would be useful (e.g. meal diaries, demonstration videos, before and after photos)? List some ideas below.

**Identifying a platform**

* Looking at your answer above, is there a particular platform that is well suited to your needs (e.g. Instagram for photos, TikTok for videos, WhatsApp for discussions and multi-media sharing)?
* What are the demographics of your sample?
* Are your participants likely to favour a particular platform? You may need to conduct some research here, but by way of example TikTok seems to be favoured by the under 30s, whereas Facebook seems to be favoured by the over 30s. This is a good guide to get you started: <https://khoros.com/blog/social-media-demographics-guide>
* Are there any ethical considerations to consider e.g. anonymity, sensitivity of the research topic, etc?
* How will you overcome these?
* Considering your answers above, will you use one platform, or will you use two or more? Consider the practicalities of running multiple diary studies. Which one(s) are you leaning towards?

**Designing your diary**

Choose a suitable time frame for your diary methods. What is long enough to enable you to collect all the data you need, but not so long that it affects participant commitment and engagement?

How structured will your diary be? Will you give your participants prompts or ask questions regularly (structured), will you give your participants a brief and then leave them to it (unstructured), or will you give them a brief but still offer some input now and then to improve engagement and expand on certain topics (semi-structured)?

When do you want participants to share diary entries? Tick all that apply.

 At specific time intervals e.g. daily, weekly, fortnightly

 Whenever a specific event or experience takes place

 Whenever you send a question or prompt

If you selected “at specific time intervals”, outline the time intervals you have in mind below.

If you selected “whenever a specific event or experience takes place”, outline the events or experiences you are interested in below.

If you selected “whenever you send a question or prompt”, outline the questions or prompts you might send below.

**Producing guidelines**

Below are some wordings for guidelines. These guidelines could be included in the Participant Information Sheet or could comprise a separate Diary Guidelines document.

Thank you for your interest in my research. As part of this study, you are asked to [insert platform and format of diary e.g. create an Instagram account or join a private, closed WhatsApp group] and keep a diary of [summarise diary topic e.g. your Christian vegan experience]. The duration of the diary will be [enter timeframe] OR The diary will run from [start date] until [end date].

Unstructured (provide brief): As part of this diary, you can share whatever you feel represents [diary topic e.g. the Christian vegan experience]. For example, you could share summaries of [e.g. your day, your meals, your experience doing x], reflections, photos of [e.g. your meals, your purchases, key activities], audio recordings of [e.g. your day, how you are feeling, an event], videos of [e.g. cooking, fitness, an event], etc. [You could provide a more detailed bullet point list here if appropriate]. Please share diary entries [frequency e.g. daily, weekly, any time a specific experience takes place].

OR

Semi-structured: As part of this diary, you can share whatever you feel represents [diary topic e.g. the Christian vegan experience]. For example, you could share summaries of [e.g. your day, your meals, your experience doing x], reflections, photos of [e.g. your meals, your purchases, key activities], audio recordings of [e.g. your day, how you are feeling, an event], videos of [e.g. cooking, fitness, an event], etc. [You could provide a more detailed bullet point list here if appropriate]. Please share diary entries [frequency e.g. daily, weekly, any time a specific experience takes place]. I will also on occasion ask questions or share prompts to further my knowledge and deepen the conversation.

OR

Structured: I will be sharing prompts and questions with you [frequency e.g. daily, weekly, whenever a specific event takes place, etc] on the topic of [diary topic], so please share whatever you feel relates to the question or prompt I have given. This could include an audio recording of [e.g. your response to my questions], photos that [e.g. reflect what I have asked], written responses to my questions, etc. [You could provide a more detailed bullet point list here if appropriate].

**Some housekeeping points:**

* Please contribute regularly to the study [if you are conducting a diary group:] and engage with others by commenting and responding to the discussion.
* If you share photographs or videos of other people, please ensure you have their consent. Where people (including yourself) are shown in photographs or videos, only a description will be saved in my data transcripts, and the photographs and videos themselves will be deleted at the end of the study to ensure confidentiality.
* If you share content produced by others (e.g. a website, blog post, or YouTube video), please ensure it is publicly available and that a link to the source is provided.
* [If you are conducting a diary group:] Everything posted in the group must be kept confidential, so please do not share information or personal details with others outside of the group.
* [If you are conducting a diary group:] Unkind, discriminatory, abusive, etc language will not be tolerated and may result in you being removed from the study.

National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM)
Social Sciences
Murray Building (Bldg 58)
University of Southampton
Southampton SO17 1BJ
United Kingdom

Web www.ncrm.ac.uk
Email info@ncrm.ac.uk
Tel +44 23 8059 4539
Twitter @NCRMUK