Social Media Intervention

Psychology of Social Media

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In this report the topic, audience, and choices made for the intervention 'Social Media does not portray real life' are explained. The intervention can be found here:

i. Introduce your topic and choices made

"Pics or it didn't happen" this popular phrase was coined to describe the ultra 'sharing' culture that online platforms like Instagram fosture for individuals to engage with others on a day-to-day basis. With the increase of photographic evidence individuals have to be thoughtful of how they want to portray themselves on this online presence. Also known as impression management, many young adults take this crafted concept of self to a new level. According to Edward Higgins' Self-discrepancy theory which explains the idea of each person being of three selves; the actual self, the ideal self, and the ought self, "Individuals are - consciously or unconsciously - motivated to reach a condition where their 'actual self' is in balance with their 'ideal' or 'ought' self - depending on which is considered most important," (1987). Many individuals manage the outward appearance of their life by communicating the sense of 'self' - but why? Young adults have specific psychological motivations as to why they utilize platforms like Instagram. These are laid in the layers of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, that include psychological needs of belonging (intimate relationships, love, etc) and self-esteem (feeling of acceptance). Specifically for the online realm, the group honed in on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G). This intervention attempts to bring attention to how social media, specifically Instagram, connects to identity and self-esteem in individuals ages 18-34 years old. A short clip was produced to draw attention to the inconsistencies that occur on this platform and how it can affect other users by evoking either positive or negative feelings. The clip was uploaded to Facebook to allow ease in the sharing and tracking processes.

ii. Justify your choice of intervention topic, audience and artifact

Utilizing the theories discussed in the introduction, as well as our own experiences with social media we decided upon creating an artifact (the intervention video) that would feature an instagram influencer and show her life as it actually is, instead of how it's portrayed on social media. This can be linked to the self discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), because we believe that most people post unrealistic/edited versions of themselves online. These images are then viewed by their followers and considered to be norm and/or as realistic and become part of the *ideal self* of the viewer while they're not reality. This can result in *upward social comparison* (Attrill, 2015) where one feels terrible/negative about his or her own life situation, looks, job etc. because it is less than those of the influencers followed. We sought, through our intervention to shed some light on this discrepancy. Because self-esteem and identity is such an important issue in the ages 18-34 we selected them as well as one of the mediums that they use most often: Instagram. It is used by 53% of the target audience, more than Snapchat for instance with more daily users and therefore an ideal choice (Murphy, 2017). Attention Span of this generation, 18-24 year olds more specifically in research, is generally short therefore we aimed to make a video that would be under a minute as to maximize our opportunities of being viewed (McSpadden, 2015).

iii. Analyze the success and failure of your intervention

Any interventions meet successes and failures throughout their process and our project is not an exception. We believed that by creating video content, it would be more appealing to the viewers than text and also that it would reach a larger public. We succeeded in having our video watched over 750 times and collecting 112 surveys. The subject we chose to explore for our intervention was relevant to this era and relatable for a large range of age, which played in our

favor. In addition, our team includes members from the Netherlands, Slovenia, the United States of America and from Canada, which helped us collecting data from diverse culture. This is an important aspect considering that the issue presented in our intervention touches population from many countries and this could deepen our analysis. Besides, during the making-of of our video, we used all of our team members' strengths in order to produce an efficient message and this allowed us to post the intervention early enough to get a good amount of responses.

On the other hand, we were disappointed that only 112 people out of the 750 that watched our video, decided to answer our questionnaire. We believed that it could be due to the fact that many people tend to consume social media, without actively engaging with it. They interact by watching and "liking" the video, but nothing more. Of course, one mistake was to only publish our intervention on our private facebook accounts, since it would have gain a lot more attention if we would have used multiple media outlets.

Another limitation to our project involved the content presented on the phones of both our characters, in our video. The blank instagram templates we needed in order to create fake profiles were prohibited, due to copyrights, so we had to make the profiles on photoshop, from scratch, and turning the files into jpeg. This made it impossible for us to interact with the phone, creating discrepancies in the footage we used.

iv. Evaluate the need for intervention on this topic

Our society is becoming more and more visual, but it is important to remember that what we see is not always the truth or an accurate representation of real life. Especially with the rise of Instagram influencer marketing, where many photos that said influencers post on social media are staged and planned ahead. Social comparison (either upwards or downwards) is taking place when individuals engage in social media usage. Social comparison can greatly affect our

self-esteem (positively or negatively), since the way in which we evaluate ourselves is often tied up with how we see ourselves in comparison to those around us (Attrill, 2015). This is why we feel that an intervention is needed, to remind people of the possibility that Instagram is not real life.

v. Make recommendations for future interventions around this topic

It is important to keep making people aware of the fact that social media does not portray real life. Considering our intervention and our project, we have some recommendations for future interventions. We suggest a longer timeline for the intervention. Our intervention was online for 3 weeks and we got 112 responses. The longer the intervention is online, the more people will see it. Also, we suggest sharing the intervention with more accounts and/or via different platforms. If the intervention can be promoted by influencers or via payments, that would be a good idea to do. The more people see the intervention, the better the outcome. Finally, we suggest that for future video interventions actors are hired. For our video, we couldn't use faces, because none of our team members wanted to be recognized in the footage. Hiring actors will grant the opportunity to visualize faces as well, which could have help the audience relate more to the video.

vi. Conclusion

In conclusion, our intervention must inform instagram users that social media does not always portray reality. People's self-esteem can be negatively affected by this kind of behavior, it is important for the target audience (individuals ages 18-24) to be aware of these effects and engage in caution. With the video we created we aimed to raise awareness of the misperceptions of online influencer marketing. The study was successful, out of the respondents

most 112 people responded to all questions. Almost every respondent understood the message, and about 43 percent of the respondents related to the "viewer" in the video, while less then 10% identified with the "influencer" while some did not respond to that question at all. Over 60 percent of the respondents said they compared themselves to other people on social media. When asked if social comparison provokes any kinds of feeling most responded with experiencing neutral or negative feelings, both 33 percent. In conclusion, according to our results people identify marketing influencers messages and many people can experience negative feelings by seeing untruthful posts on social media. Below, in attachment 1, the results of the survey can be contemplated.

viii. References

Attrill, A. (2015). *Cyberpsychology*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Higgins, E. (1987). Self-Discrepancy: A Theory Relating Self and Affect. American Psychology

Association Inc., 94(3), 319-340. doi:0033-295X/87/$00.75

McSpadden, K. (2015, May 14). *You Now Have a Shorter Attention Span Than a Goldfish*.

Opgehaald van Time: http://time.com/3858309/attention-spans-goldfish/

Murphy, C. (2017). *What's Better For Hotel Marketing: Instagram Stories Or Snapchat?*

Opgeroepen op November 2017, van Revinate:

https://learn.revinate.com/social-media-management/infographic-what-s-better-for-hotel-marketi

ng-instagram-stories-or-snapchat

Attachment 1. Survey questions and answers

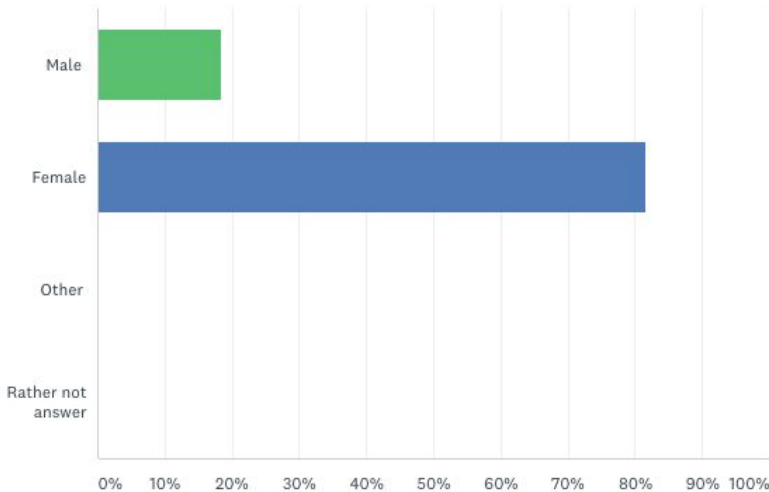**1.1** Age of the person completing the survey

Age:

Answered: 60   Skipped: 0
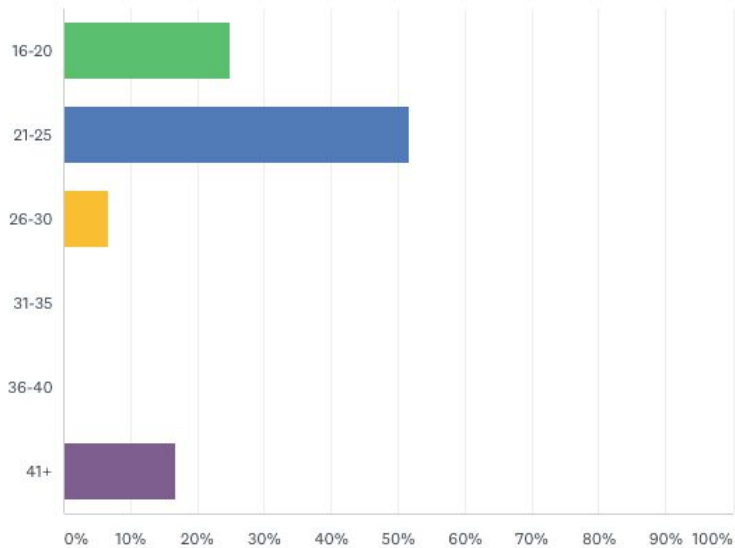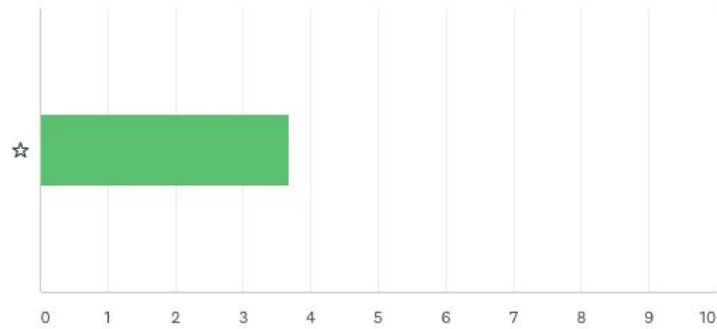

1.2 Gender of the person completing the survey

Gender:

Answered: 60   Skipped: 0

1.3

Did you like the video?

Answered: 60   Skipped: 0

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
☆	0.00% 0	8.33% 5	33.33% 20	40.00% 24	18.33% 11	60	3.68

1.4 Here are some of the comments participants left at the end of the survey. We did not have access to all of them, without the premium version

Warning for online anonimity, and thus the potential danger that comes with.

12/23/2017 7:33 PM   View respondent's answers

Laat je niet teveel beinvloeden door sociaal media want het is ver van de realiteit

12/23/2017 3:38 PM   View respondent's answers

It is not always true what we see - so we should stop constantly comparing our lives to the pictures and videos of others in social medias

12/23/2017 10:26 AM   View respondent's answers

That what people post on social nedia isn't a reflection of their life, life isn't as perfect as the pictures people photoshop & filter on social media because people don't post the best stuff on social media and only filter out the good stuff to post there

12/22/2017 8:08 PM   View respondent's answers

social media is not truthful, genuine etc. we should always think about what is posted, nothing is as it seems.

12/22/2017 4:24 PM   View respondent's answers

Social media isn't always showing the whole picture

12/21/2017 8:33 PM

What is shown on social medias is just a small portion of reality. (if not completely false)

12/21/2017 7:30 PM

The grass isn't always greener on the other side.

12/21/2017 7:25 PM

We need to think about our own behaviour

12/21/2017 6:40 PM

What you see on the internet isn't always reality

12/21/2017 6:40 PM

That you don't need to compare yourself with the "perfect" people on instragram, you don't know it their life is as perfect as it looks like

12/21/2017 3:45 PM

Things aren't always as perfect as people make them seem

12/21/2017 3:19 PM

To not believe everything you see on social media.

12/21/2017 2:38 PM

everyone has problems

12/21/2017 2:06 PM

Dat social media niet de werkelijkheid hoeft te zijn

12/21/2017 1:53 PM

1.5

Which character of the video do you relate the most to?
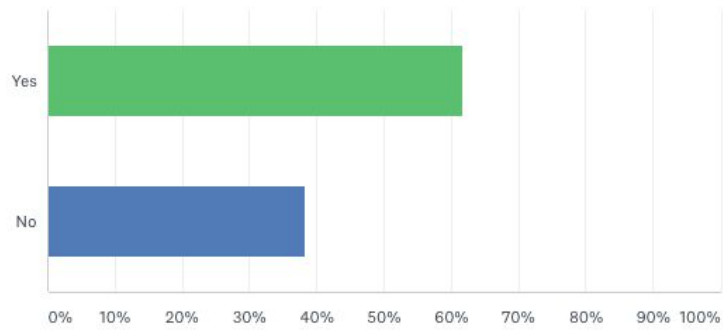
Answered: 60   Skipped: 0
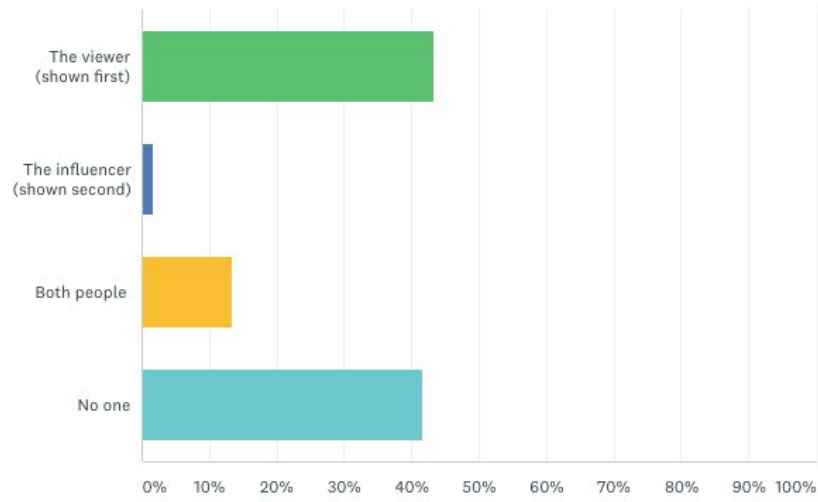
1.6

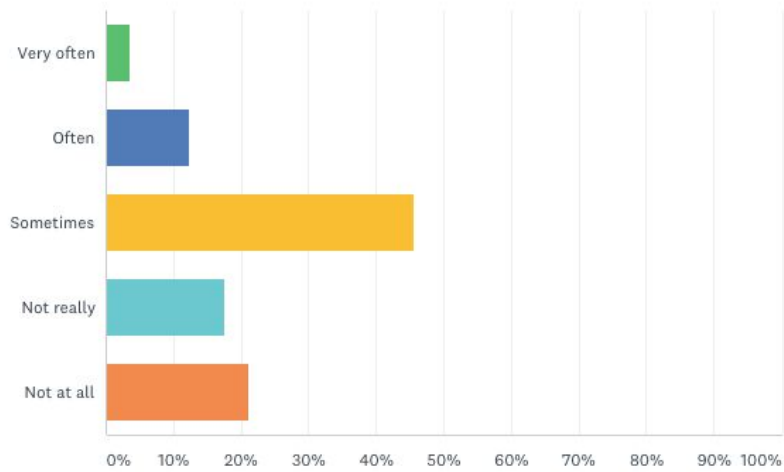## Do you compare yourself to other people on social media sites?

Answered: 60   Skipped: 0

1.7

If yes, how often do you compare yourself to other people on social media?

Answered: 57   Skipped: 3

1.8

Does comparing yourself to others on social media provoke any feelings?

Answered: 58   Skipped: 2