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The Link Between “Likes” and Self-Worth: How Women Use Selfies on Instagram for Self-Presentation and the Effects of Social Comparison

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The Link Between “Likes” and Self-Worth:

How Women Use Selfies for Self-Presentation and the Effects of Social Comparison

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Purpose of Study

1. Explore the selfie phenomenon
2. Better understand and be able to predict social media behaviors of women
3. Examine the impact of selfies on individual self-esteem among college-aged female users of Instagram

Literature Review

A “selfie” is a self-shot self-portrait, typically taken with a mobile phone, and then posted on a social media platform in which the self-portrait may be viewed by a large, sometimes public, audience. **Instagram** was launched in 2010, joined Facebook in 2012, and hosts 200 million users today that share their photos and use the app’s numerous photo-editing features (Huffington Post, 2013). “Likes” refer to the Instagram audience members’ positive reaction to an Instagram post. **Self-esteem**



(SE) refers to one’s appraisal of one’s own value or worth of the self (Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2011). Evaluations of self-esteem are both internal and external (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). **Self-Presentation** states that in any type of social interaction people have the desire to control the impressions other people form of them (Goffman, 1959). Social media allows users to selectively present positive images of one’s self to affirm themselves (Toma, 2013). **Social Comparison Theory (SC)** (Festinger, 1954) suggests that individuals evaluate their own opinions of self and engage in social comparison with similar others. So, women who post selfies to Instagram would compare their posts to other users’ similar to them.

The Selfie Phenomenon: A Timeline



Hypothesis & Research Question

H1: Women are more likely to post selfies to Instagram when their self-esteem is high.

RQ1: Is there a relationship between the number of likes a selfie receives on Instagram and the self-esteem of the subject?

Method

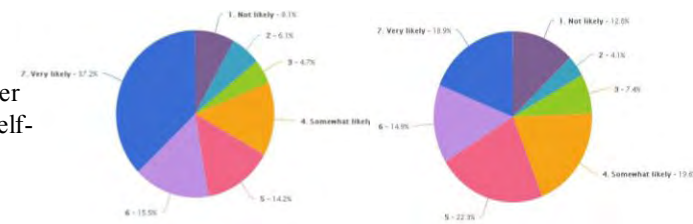
IV: Self-esteem

DV: Frequency of selfie posts on Instagram.

Participants: College students.

| Operationalization of Variables | |
|--|-----------------|
| H1: Likert scale to ask how likely participants are to post a selfie in given scenarios with different SE levels. | |
| <i>“You’ve just left the salon after changing your hair-style, and you love it!”</i> | |
| Not likely | Somewhat likely |
| 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 7 |
| RQ1: Likert scale items measuring self-esteem connected to the reactions to Instagram posts. | |
| <i>“Your selfie just hit 34 likes and your S.O.’s ex-girlfriend’s selfie has 11 likes.”</i> | |
| Strongly Disagree | Agree |
| 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 7 |

Different scenarios with SC



Conclusions & Discussion

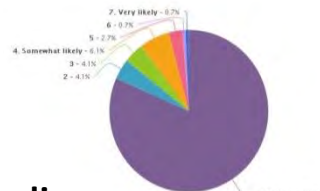
H1: Women are more likely to post selfies to Instagram when their self-esteem is high. Likelihood to post a selfie is **highly correlated** with self-esteem by $r=0.79$. This means Goffman’s theory of self-presentation is further validated in the realm of social media research, and it gives insight to predict social media behaviors.

Implications: Social media use has been shown by numerous research studies to lessen depression (Tandoc, Ferrucci, & Duffy, 2014), increase self esteem (Steinfeld, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008), and encourage self promotional behavior (Carpenter, 2011). Although decreasing depression and increasing self esteem may sound like positive effects, these studies also found that these social media behaviors may lead to narcissism, egotism, and increased implications of social comparison such as envy.

RQ1: There is a **minor relationship** between the number of likes a selfie receives on Instagram and the self-esteem of the subject. A correlation of $r=0.3$ does not offer significant evidence to determine whether social comparison impacts the self-esteem of an Instagram user. Due to the negative implications the supported hypothesis may have, a minor relationship means participants of this study may not endure the psychological stress that comes with social comparison.

Results

Scenario with Low SE



Scenario with High SE

