"Did You Lose Weight? Love Your Shirt!" Cultural Differences Predict Approval of Selfie-Commenting on Body Shape vs. Trendiness

METHOD Continued

Poster

May 2019

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.31567.74409

CITATIONS

0

READS

41

4 authors, including:

Anna M. Schwartz
CUNY Graduate Center
30 PUBLICATIONS
10 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Christina Shane-Simpson
University of Wisconsin - Stout
42 PUBLICATIONS
392 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

All content following this page was uploaded by Anna M. Schwartz on 27 June 2019.
“Did You Lose Weight? Love Your Shirt!” Cultural Differences Predict Approval of Selfie-Commenting on Body Shape vs. Trendiness

Rita Obeid¹, Anna Schwartz², Christina Shane-Simpson³ and Rudy Abi-Habib⁴

¹Case Western Reserve University, ²Boston College ³University of Wisconsin Stout, ⁴Lebanese American University, Lebanon

Contact Information: rita.obeid@case.edu

INTRODUCTION

When posting selfies online, the only feedback users get on their posts is in the form of comments/likes, and this also represents the common “passive” user pattern for social media, in contrast with posting selfies or generating other types of original content. These interactions on social media may be shaped by personality traits and cultural values, and contribute to understanding about why an individual believes certain comments are appropriate public responses to people’s selfie posts. Research has shown that cultural values play a critical role in shaping our personality (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). For example, research has shown that countries scoring higher on individualism also demonstrate high narcissism (Foster, Campbell & Twenge, 2003).

Study Objectives: To examine whether personality traits and cultural orientations predict perceptions towards selfie-commenting on social media.

Hypothesis: Due to predictions about the importance of hierarchies and power in Lebanon society (Hofstede, n.d.), we predicted site differences between Lebanon and the US among which traits/values predicted selfie-commenting attitudes. Some research assumes the United States should represent one homogenous culture (Hofstede, 1983), so we sought to test this assumption as well by examining more than one site in the US with reputations for cultural differences.

METHOD

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

676 college students were recruited from three regions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site of Data Collection</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Age (M(SD))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midwest US</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>19.60 (3.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Coast US</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>20.38 (3.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>20.9 (4.29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GENDER

- Middle East
- East Coast
- Lebanon

RACE/ETHNICITY

- Black/African American
- White
- Latino unspecified race
- Middle Eastern/North African
- African
- White Latino
- Latin American
- West Indian/Caribbean (non-latin)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

PROCEDURE

Demographics Questionnaire

Questions about age, gender, ethnicity, major, etc.

Interest in Self-Appearance (Goldberg et al., 2006)

Physical Attractiveness (Goldberg et al., 2006)

9-item Likert scale. Sample item: I am considered attractive by others

Grandiose Narcissism (Gentile et al., 2013)

13-item Likert scale. Sample item: I like having authority over other people

Cultural Orientations (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998)

16-item Likert scale assessing horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism.

Questions on Social Media Commenting: “When you are viewing someone else’s selfie, how appropriate is it to post a positive comment about:

- Their weight
- Whether their outfit/makeup is appropriate

RESULTS

Two linear regressions used to explore demographics (e.g., gender), personality traits (interest in self-appearance, physical attractiveness; Goldberg, 2006), narcissism, (Gentile, 2013), and cultural orientations (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). These variables predicted:

1) User perceptions about the appropriateness of posting positive comments about another person’s weight, R² = .04, F(1, 474) = 2.38, p = .02.
2) User perceptions about posting positive comments about another’s fashion choices, R² = .05, F(2, 474) = 3.20, p = .02.

Predicting commenting on weight:

- Positive commenting on someone’s weight was only predicted by gender and cultural orientations.
- Men reported commenting on weight as more acceptable (β= .2, p = .02)
- A Vertical cultural orientation also predicted weight commenting as more acceptable (β= .12, p = .006) and culture (horizontal: β= .11, p= .026).

Predicting commenting on fashion sense:

- While not directly comparable, the pattern for commenting on a person’s fashion sense was predicted by one’s interest in fashion (β= .14, p = .006) and culture (horizontal: β= .11, p = .026).

Post-Hoc Analyses:

- Post-hoc analyses showed significant differences were between participants in the Midwest (Fashion: M=3.98, SD=.77; Weight: M=3.09, SD=.80) compared to participants in the Northeast (Fashion: M=2.38, SD=.96; Weight: M=3.50, SD=.78) and Lebanon (Fashion: M=2.27, SD=.83; Weight: M=3.38, SD=.74).

- Participants in the Midwest demonstrated the lowest acceptance towards commenting on both weight and fashion.

DISCUSSION

- Findings support prior research that selfies are used differently by men and women, likely because of cultural expectations surrounding the acceptable appearance parameters for men versus women.
- Our findings indicate that a primary motivation for the types of comments people leave in response to selfies is either a sense of egalitarianism or a value of establishing social dominance.
- Findings also suggest that relational behaviors in geographical communities differ significantly in their online behaviors, requiring more research and suggesting an mediating impact of culture on how new technologies are adopted into a community.
- Future work should qualitatively examine people’s understanding of selfie-posting and why they post selfies.
- Limitations: In this project, we asked participants about the appropriateness of positive commenting. Future work should also examine when and whether it is appropriate to provide negative comments on social media in relation to fashion sense and weight and compare that to in-person comments.

REFERENCES