

RESHAPING BEAUTY STANDARDS AND LIFESTYLE BEHAVIOR OF
LEBANSE YOUNG FEMALE ADULTS:
QUALITATIVE INSIGHT ON THE EFFECT OF INSTAGRAM

A Thesis
presented to
the Faculty of Humanities
at Notre Dame University-Louaize

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Media Studies: Advertising

by
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JULY 2021

Reshaping Beauty Standards and Lifestyle Behavior of Lebanese Young Female Adults:
A Qualitative Insights on the Effect of Instagram

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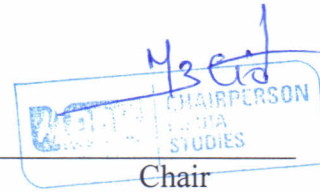
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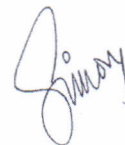
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Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my husband and my mother for supporting me and taking care of the kids when I was busy working on this thesis and in accomplishing my dream.

To Maria and Matthew I hope you would be proud of me one day and sorry for the days I was working and not focusing well on you. I've done all this for you.

To you my Dad I aim my best to make you feel proud of me.

To my colleagues Andre, Rania and Nicole for their full support and always inspiring me to move forward and believe in myself. Without you it could have been impossible.

Last, but not least a special thank you goes to Dr. Rita Sayyah, my advisor and Dr. Simon Abou Jaoude for their full dedication and support in guiding me all through.

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Abstract

Instagram, is considered one of the fastest growing social media platform in recent years. There has been minimal studies on the effect of Instagram in reforming and affecting the beauty standards and lifestyle behavior of the Lebanese female young adults. The standard of beauty is essentially a variable standard of what it means to be attractive that is contingent on the feminine beauty ideals that are present in a given culture. The aim of this thesis is to investigate whether the usage of Instagram by Lebanese young adults affects in reforming their beauty standards and changing their lifestyle behavior.

A qualitative method, focus group (n 31) was used in this research paper to study the Instagram effects on beauty standards as in changing physical appearance and attractiveness to lifestyle behavior as in eating, dressing, exercising, of Lebanese female young adults. The results showed that 81% of the participants changed their lifestyle behavior after being exposed to Instagram posts and got affected by what they are being exposed to on Instagram whether through the celebrities they follow or through normal posts they see. 80.6% of the results showed that participants would want to look like their influencers and had undergone a type of reformation in their physical appearance and due to the celebrities' effect on their lifestyle behavior. These findings confirmed that Instagram usage would directly influence beauty standards set and lifestyle behaviors exercised by these young female adults.

Keywords: Instagram, Lifestyle Behavior, Body Image, Thin Ideal, Social Media Influencers, Eating Behavior.

Chapter 1

Introduction

With the rise in social networks, new communication platforms have emerged. Among these platforms but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become an essential media platform visited by most young adults. According to BBC, most of the people spend at least two hours on social media platforms every single day (Galer, 2018). We are living in a world of social media invasion, where it has been affecting most of our daily lives, whether directly or indirectly, in a positive or negative aspect. It touches it positively by bringing the world closer and facilitating our lives whether in research or scholar etc. Its negative effects are more on the social level, since a huge number of people are using social media in an excessive manner that it is invading their privacy. Many of these people are becoming addicted to it to the extreme that in America 88% of young adults aged between 18- 29 year olds use some form of social media with 80% using Facebook and 71% using Instagram (Pew Research Center, 2018) the time spent on social networking sites has increased by 44% worldwide since the COVID-19 pandemic (Statista 2020). This is not surprising as Instagram has lately been a topic of concern in the public debate (Saas, 2014; Winter, 2013).

Can we blame social media that has become an integral part among young adults life, where new norms and new standards are being displayed and where these generations are following and changing their physical appearance and lifestyle behavior to imitate their preferred celebrity? Or those users are to be blamed and parents should become alert to

know when to draw the limits and to set the appropriate behavioral standards in using these media platforms.

In his study, Nigel Barber (2013) found out that women in general, are more concerned about their physical appearance than men. This understanding makes us aware of the fact that women are more likely to get affected, in terms of beauty standards and lifestyle behavior, especially when they are exposed to images of ideal women on social media. All these research facts brought up the need to probe further in the study to know more about the recent societal concern about the effects of manipulated photos in social media among teenagers on their physical appearance and setting their beauty standards in addition to affecting their lifestyle behavior.

A very common example we can consider is the 19-year old Iranian girl, who has undergone a celebrity obsession, Sahar Tabar, who has undergone 50 cosmetic surgeries to look like her most preferred celebrity, Angelina Jolie (picture Appendix A). Tabar, is only one of the many girls who underwent extreme measures to look like other celebrities, because she was constantly and indirectly told by the media that she is not good enough. The unfortunate truth is that even celebrities don't look the same way they are portrayed in magazine covers. According to body image and media literacy expert Claire Maysko, "While social media is not the cause of low self-esteem, it has all the right elements to contribute to it. Social media create an environment where disordered thoughts and behaviors really thrive" (Pereyra, 2017). These idealistic standards are creating a tendency towards perfectionism among youngsters. For years, the media have defined what the ideal image of the "Perfect Woman" is supposed to look like. Girls have been spoon fed that a

woman can only be truly beautiful if she has long legs, a thigh gap, curvy figure, and great hair. Beauty standards are not the same all around the world; in popular cultures like in the USA and Europe; however, the fact is that not all girls and young women look like that, and yet, they still try to fit themselves into this image of false perfection. Just like Sahar Tabar, many young people are resorting to cosmetic surgeries, liposuctions, tummy tuck surgeries, yoyo dieting, and even developing eating disorders, all for the sake of “beauty”. Most young adults are reforming their natural physical appearance through all sorts of social media excess usage in order to blend in and look like these influential followers. In Lebanon, a similar trend is directing towards following and being influenced by Instagram influencers; such as, Karen Wazen (6 M followers), Nour Arida (9.1 M followers), Jessica Kahawaty (1M), who have many followers and young adults are being influenced by (Instagram Accounts). All these numbers raise our curiosity to know to what extent are our Lebanese youth being affected by and in which means they are abiding by their trends and lifestyle. Are our young adults being affected by Instagram posts. Are the young adults changing their lifestyle behavior because they are being exposed to Instagram? Is the time spent on social media and Instagram pages creating a fear of missing out (FoMO) statuses in the life of our female youth in Lebanon?

Thesis Objectives

Little research in this perspective has been conducted on the Lebanese society and more specifically on Lebanese young adults (16-25 years old) regarding their approach and usage of Instagram and its effects in trying to fit in with the other users or influencers who try by all means to influence their followers.

This research aims to analyze how social media and especially Instagram are reshaping the beauty standards for women and especially teenagers and young adults, and how setting the beauty standards via social media and mass media are affecting these young adults' physical appearance. This research investigates the effect of Instagram posts on the lifestyle, behavior and beauty standards of female youth in Lebanon.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into 6 chapters:

In the first chapter of the thesis, the topic of the thesis is introduced, along with the thesis statement and the thesis structure.

The second chapter of the thesis deals with an overview of the key literature that is relevant to the research topic

The third chapter discusses and evaluates the theories that are most relevant to the research and used for the thesis.

The fourth chapter explains the quantitative methodology used for the thesis.

The fifth chapter relates the findings of the survey that was done and compares those findings to what had been exposed in the literature review and theoretical framework chapters.

The last chapter, which is the conclusion, restates the thesis statement and highlights the key points of your work, explaining to the reader why this thesis is important and how it contributes to the field.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This section provides an overview of the scholarly work conducted on Instagram and its usage among females. It first defines the medium Instagram and its effect as a social medium, it defines Influencers and celebrities then identifies the beauty standards between traditional media and the female body image perception on Instagram. Then defining Lifestyle Behavior and finally ending it up with the new terms of Instagram .

2.1 Instagram Overview

Instagram which is one of the most recent platforms that came to light in 2010, and its usage took over every demographic group worldwide providing a platform for communication, interaction, and photo-video sharing in fulfillment interest and social life (Jokinen, H. 2017), as well as business e-commerce.

Available data indicates that there are over 800 million active users of Instagram and 25 million businesses available on the platform (Etherington, D. 2017), the majority of the users are between the age of 18 and 29 years old (Lister M. 2017). According to the results of Statcounter Global Stats, recent statistic done on social media usage in Lebanon, 44.57% of the Lebanese population use Facebook, 33.05% use You Tube, 10.66% use Pinterest, 8.23% use Twitter and 3.03% use Instagram, whereas 0.18% use LinkedIn (Statcounter).

The age group of Lebanese Instagram users is mainly between 18 and 25 years and where 41% of this age group spend 1 to 2 hours daily on Instagram (Araigy, 2018).

According to Djafarova and Rushworth, Instagram is a social media platform based on visual aesthetics and filtered images, which makes it a suitable environment for promoting beauty products, stimulating certain body images and supporting luxurious lifestyles and conspicuous luxury brands (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). Whereas, in reference to Blight et al., Instagram is also a social media application that allows users to collect followers, connect with diverse brands and individuals, and facilitate social interactions among consumers (Blight et al., 2017).

Social media influencers who become famous through their social media presence and fame, as opposed to the traditional celebrities who got their fame from movies, music, or TV shows (Khamis et al., 2016). When studying the effect of social media influencers on their followers, it has been found that followers have a stronger connectedness toward them (Tran and Strutton, 2014) and they perceive them as more genuine (Stefanone et al., 2010).

The engagement used on Instagram through liking and/or commenting on posts creates interactions and such interactions create social bonds among users and increase their attachment and emotional belonging to the community (Zeng et al., 2017).

Researchers explain that Instagram is about posting manipulated pictures and presenting oneself in a photo album form to others, creating contacts with friends, gaining attention and admiration, making a lot of likes and followers; in addition to, making money through advertisements (Wnent, 2016). On the other hand, Wendy Donaghey, sees Instagram as a medium of connecting physical and digital space, enhancing online presence and identity,

interacting with customers for marketing and promotional purposes. (Abbott, W., Donaghey, J., Hare, J., & Hopkins, P. 2013). Stamper explains Instagram uses images as the medium through which user share their lives and interests with friends noting that females dominate male users on this platform. Stamper; hence, defines Instagram as a simple, image-based social network, used for both taking and sharing pictures and short videos with friends or followers (Stamper, A. M. , 2016) .

2.2 Influencers and Celebrities

Advertising and marketing researchers have long driven their attention and research on the celebrity endorsement, since celebrities involve in orienting customers what to consume.

Researchers have found important effects of celebrity messages on many outcomes of marketing communication, including brand evaluation (Amos et al. 2008; Kamins et al. 1989), brand attitude (Amos et al. 2008; Kamins et al. 1989), purchase intention (Jin and Phua 2014; Pradhan et al. 2014; Till Busler 2000) and corporate celebrity (Spry et al. 2011).

Since the appearance of social media as a famous and active communication channels, the arrival of a new type of celebrities appeared, known as the social media influencers, who started climbing the fame and influence (Khamis et al. 2016). Influencers are called so, because they affect the learning and cognitive behavior of their followers through modeling reinforcement and social interaction (Folkvord et al., 2019).

Influencers are personalities who conquered self-presentation strategies on social media, by which they founded a distinctive identity and compiled a significant number of followers who are attracted to their personal brand image (Khamis et al. 2016; Marwick 2013). This experience changed the traditional celebrities' endorsement; such as, the actors, singers, or entertainers.

Influencers play an interactive role with their consumers, as they technically approach them through diverse platforms on social media which facilitates a high level of parasocial communication between the source and the followers (Jin 2018). The feeling of companionship or illusion of friendship with media figures is referred to Parasocial interaction (Ferchaud et al. 2018; Giles 2002).

The social media influencers' recognition and fame is largely built upon their efforts and engagement on social media that helped in creating their personal brands (Abidin 2016).

2.3 Beauty Standards Between Traditional Media and Social Media

The use of social networking sites; such as, Facebook and Instagram has taken over the use of mainstream media; like TV, Magazines etc. among young women (Bair, Kelly, Sardar, Mazzeo, 2012) and 90 percent young adults (age 18 to 29) reported as active users to those platforms (Perrin et al., 2015). The exceptional combination of peer influences and media descriptions concerning the ideal female body image, inherent to the social networking sites environment. This provides a perfect ground for women to adopt the "thin ideal", and examine their own appearance based on the perceived norms. Such process typically leads to dissatisfaction and disorder eating (Rodgers, Charbol, & Paxton, 2011).

The term beauty, according to Berry et al., is not a normal human or innate trait, rather it is accessible as a commodity that must be obtained by women through purchasing beauty products and participate in the beauty practices to fit in with the ideal. (Berry 2007; Gallagher & Pecot-Hebert, 2007). As Berry et al. state that despite its vague meaning, beauty is a perception that is fairly agreed upon throughout society. Multi-dimensional and constantly changing beauty standards are created and embedded within society with the help of media (Berry 2007; English, Solomon, & Ashmore 1994). Women face strict beauty standards that are hard to achieve, despite their continuous efforts, since media images are more often one directional and idealistic (Hendricks, 2002).

Park (2005) who had conducted a research studying female college students and their relationship between beauty images in fashion magazines and the female desire to be thin. Park's research outcome was fueled by the mass media effects on women's eating behavior and body images; he found out that fashion magazines had both direct and indirect effects on college female students to be thin.

A significant differentiation between social media and traditional media is its formats, since social media's content is generated by peers and is considered as interactive. Users not only can create their personal profiles and create photos and information, but also they can search posts and interact with other users. The act of viewing and posting of photos has been identified as a major reason for body image and

eating concerns (Cohen et al., 2018; Holland and Tiggemann, 2016; Meier and Gray, 2014).

Consequently due to all these concerns, Instagram has attracted the researchers, since it is the platform allocated merely to posting and sharing photos. Active users can “follow” or “share” other people’s accounts; in addition to, searching for content and people by using hashtags. Instagram is also considered as one of the most popular social networking sites worldwide, pertaining more than 1 billion active users (Statistica, 2019a). According to Cohen, Instagram use has been linked to body dissatisfaction and body surveillance among women in correlation studies. (Cohen et al., 2017; Fardouly et al., 2017b; Feltman and Szymanski, 2018; Hendrickse et al., 2017).

As per Levine and Murnen, the negative effect of social media like traditional media (Levine and Murnen, 2009; Want, 2009) have always been related to social comparison procedure, Whereas, it has been argued by Tiggemann that social comparison is specifically related to social media, since the comparison targets are mainly peers who compare themselves to the models they see in the fashion magazines (Tiggemann et al., 2018). According to Festinger, the pursuit for self-evaluation initiates users to compare themselves with similar rather than dissimilar others. (Festinger, 1954).

2.4 Female Body Image Perception on Instagram

There are many scholarly interest in the effect of social media on the female body image perception over the past years; these studies have proven that social media usage among young female users, has a negative effect on their wellbeing; such as, poor sleep

quality, low self-esteem, increased anxiety and depression (Woods and Scott, 2016; Primack et al., 2017), low appearance satisfaction and negative mood (Fardouly et al., 2017), high risk of body dissatisfaction and obsession in thinness (Hendrickse et al., 2017). Participants who are exposed to more than two social media platforms are more susceptible to experience depression and anxiety symptoms (Primack et al., 2017). As per Woods and Scott, the overall social media use may be associated with poor sleep quality (Woods and Scott, 2016).

According to Fobair, body image is defined as the mental picture of one's body, an attitude about the physical self, appearance and state of health (Fobair et al., 2006). Body image is not how a person sees his body, but rather how others perceive them which affects directly their self-esteem (Cafri et al., 2006).

As for Dittmar, body image is a strong trait of consumers' identity (Dittmar, 2017). It does not only affect the way an individual feels about himself/herself, but it also may influence a person's behavior (Featherstone, 2010). Body image is critical to self-esteem and self - concept and has the ability to impact psychological performance and diverse behaviors (Clay et al., 2005).

The social media application; Instagram, consists of the multifaceted semiotic means or assets of videos, images, sounds, speech, text, captions, and hashtags. These technological semiotic resources unite to create social meanings that occur in combinations and change over time to constitute and reflect boundaries of sociality

(Graham, Laurier, O'Brien, & Rouncefield, 2011 p. 88). For Goffman, identity is not a natural or genetic state but a series of idealized performances that people present which are unconscious and conscious but can also be contrived to achieve, obtain, or even deceive. Social media provide a digital platform for idealized identity performance and experiment; for example, on Instagram, users can make use of various filters and to modify, enhance, and transform their appearance. These aesthetic representations of authenticity can also be drawn upon as a successful marketing strategy (Gaden & Dumitrica, 2015) to attract followers. Abidin, suggests the concept of “calibrated amateurism” is an adaptation (Abidin, 2017) of Goffman’s theories of strategic interaction, and in particular, the notion of “front region” and “backstage” identity performances (Goffman’s, 1956).

On one hand, researchers proposed a study that young women who follow fitness figures on social media are more likely to have severe weight loss behaviors; such as, crash dieting and severe exercising plans. The result of this study discovered that social media might influence young women to involve in social comparison with their followers, which lead to feelings of low self-esteem (Lewallen & Behm-Macrawitz, 2016).

2.5 Lifestyle Behavior

As Joseph-Shehu, et al., divides the health promoting lifestyle behaviors into six to seven sub-divisions: (1) nutrition indicates a person’s eating habits and food preferences; (2) the actions an individual undertakes that make him active; (3) health

responsibility which indicates the ways someone acts to improve his health; (4) stress management which pertains knowing the factors that increase the stress level and managing those factors; (5) self - actualization, the ability to achieve life goals in a creative and positive approach; (6) spiritual growth it is not necessarily related to any religion, but rather signifies the ability to connect to one's inner self and with others and having a purpose in life to excel and to reach life goals and fulfillment; (7) interpersonal relations means achieving resourceful and sustainable relationships with others, with any communication form (Joseph-Shehu, et al, 2019).

Each health promoting lifestyle behavior is essential in preventing and controlling both communicable and non-communicable diseases, as they are part of the activities of everyday life that influence happiness, values, and well-being (Nassar OS, Shaeer, 2014). The factors prevailing the adoption of healthy lifestyle behaviors suggests that individual cognition and intention influence decision making about healthful behaviors (Armitage, 2005,2007; Blue, 2007). Media provides a great amount of information to the public concerning lifestyle behaviors, through media and interpersonal sources that they can seek out. (Blumler & Katz, 1974).

A cross-sectional evidence proposes a relation between active information seeking and engaging in healthy behaviors (Kelly et al.,2005); however, research has been unavailable to prove that the relation is causal, that seeking influences behavior.

According to one of a few studies done on Instagram, that included 117 participants between the age of 18 and 29 years old, where the researchers studied the relations between Instagram uses, social comparison, depressive symptoms and strangers followed; the results showed that Instagram was directly related to depressive symptoms with more frequent Instagram use and more strangers' follow (Lup, 2015).

The excess use of the social media platforms and in specific Instagram is reshaping the communication between individuals, and developed new methods of communication regardless of time and location. This new communication method has activated a new negative consequence of this virtual world, where one of its negative aspects is the fear of missing out (FoMO).

FoMO is a main type of problematic attachment to social media, and is associated with a range of negative life experiences and feelings, such as a lack of sleep, reduced life competency, emotional tension, negative effects on physical well-being, anxiety and a lack of emotional control (Alutaybi, A., Al-Thani, D., McAlaney, J., & Ali, R. (2020)). Despite indicators of the effect of FoMO on users' well-being, guidance and tools that allow people to manage it are still not available.

The term lifestyle behavior that is used in this paper is referred to the way young adults are acting and behaving in comparison to what they see on Instagram. What is meant and targeted after using this term is the way young adults eat, work-out , style themselves, behave; meaning their mood fluctuations, when exposed to Instagram like the influencers they follow or the posts they see on Instagram.

2.6 New Terms of Instagram

“Fitspiration” is a recent online trend. The word fitspiration is made up of the amalgamation of the words fitness and inspiration. Fitspiration consists of designed images that encourage people to exercise and seek for a healthier lifestyle (Abena, 2013). Fitspiration stimulates health and well-being, through promoting healthy eating, working out and self-care, the comprehensive philosophy is one that highlights strength and empowerment. Fitspiration aims at targeting health and fitness in opposing to thinness and weight loss. This is what positioned fitspiration as the healthy alternative to “thinspiration” which is the amalgamation of thin and inspiration. Thinspiration consists of an excess of images of skinny women with an accompanying text encouraging viewers to lose weight and promoting an eating disorder lifestyle (Ghaznavi and Taylor, 2015). A new form of marketing is formed nowadays which is Influencer marketing. The influencer marketing is a form of social media marketing which occurs when brands choose social media influencers to introduce a brand awareness, conduct product placements, and endorse products on their personal accounts to increase purchase behavior from their followers. (Lou and Yuan, 2019). In return the social media influencers get paid for the endorsement or gets free products from the firm. Brands are widely using this method by influencers due to its effectiveness. 3.7 million brand sponsored ads were posted on Instagram in 2018 and this number was suggested to rise in 2020 to 6.12 million (Mediakix, 2019).

Having overviewed the above references and literature triggered the need to know the effects of Instagram in reframing the beauty standards and body image on the

Lebanese female young adults and whether or not they are undergoing any form of physical or lifestyle change due to their exposure to this renowned and famous medium. We mean by lifestyle behavior in this research is how the audience are being affected through their everyday routine from the way they eat; meaning the food they choose or the way they work-out and exercise to stay fit and healthy and how they react in styling their external physical appearance and dress themselves after being influenced by the posts they get exposed to.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

As this thesis investigates how Lebanese female young adults aged between 16 and 25, are reshaping their beauty standards, physical appearance and lifestyle behavior after being exposed to Instagram posts and affected by the influencers they follow, it is guided by the Uses and Gratification theory as described by Mark Levy and Sven Windahl, in order to understand why this age group uses such medium and to what extent they are being affected by the outcomes of this usage.

3.1 Uses and Gratification Theory

In the 1970's uses and gratification approach to studying individuals' selection and consumption of media emerged as a tool of understanding why people choose one media over the other (Rubin 2009). The uses and gratification approach is based on expectations about users' psychological traits, what triggers them to select certain messaging approaches, and to what extent is their level of involvement with that medium and/or message (Katz et al.1974; Rubin 2009). As a matter of fact, according to this approach social media users are naturally active, classifying their needs, then choosing the media, message, post, or any form of communication that they expect will gratify those needs. According to this perception, if young women have chosen any form of social media platforms to gratify a need, it is essential to identify which platform they choose and how they are using it. The uses and gratification approach permits technology and media researchers to explain and clarify users' numerous goals when engaging with

media, which consents for a better understanding of various behaviors, outcomes and perceptions (A.D. Smock et al., 2011). As Perloff (2014) explains, young adults search information on weight loss via social media platforms and certainly try to apply what they see on those platforms on their personality traits in the transactional model of social media and body image concerns (Perloff, 2014). Individuals with low self-esteem and those who seek for perfection are the ones influenced or affected by media images of a thin ideal (Perloff, 2014). Katz et al. (1973) focuses on the recursive connection between user expectations and practices inherent in uses and gratification approaches, which analyze the “social and psychological origins of needs, which generate expectations of the mass media or other sources, which lead to differential patterns of media exposure, resulting in need gratifications and other consequences” (Katz et al.1973).

Knowing that the uses and gratification theory which has been rooted in the communications literature, can be an essential part in emerging better scales and measurements for social media marketers. According to Lariscy et al., the fundamental principle of uses and gratifications theory is that individuals pursue media to fulfill their needs and leads to ultimate gratification (Lariscy et al., 2011).

The uses and gratification theory is used by researchers to explain why and how users use certain media (Sun et al., 2020). Researchers who support the uses and gratification theory believe that the reason users use a certain technology or media is to satisfy their motivations or needs and once the motivations or needs are gratified, they will tend to regain the same experience (Sun et al., 2020) (Huang et al., 2019) (Leong et al., 2019). With the popularity of social media and the growing user market, the uses and gratification has been extensively applied while researching in this context. For example,

Jung and Sundar discovered three types of social media features on the gratification of users' needs based on the uses and gratification theory and proved the positive correlation between them (Jung & Sundar, 2018). Alksasbeh, et al. revealed that when social media meets the needs of student users, it might increase the media use frequency (Alksasbeh et al., 2019).

In addition, some scholars have found that gratification of needs may affect the excess use among users (Chen, 2013), (Song et al., 2004). In other words, when consumers see their needs are gratified through social media, then the tendency to use the platforms may increase, to reach further gratification. Once the intensity of use exceeds a certain reasonable level, excessive use will occur (Sun et al., 2020).

There are studies that looked at uses and gratifications in respect to the internet; such as Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999), the Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) and Ko et al. (2005).

According to Whiting who has done a research on why people use social media through a uses and gratification approach, the study identifies ten uses and gratifications for using social media. The ten uses and gratifications are social interaction, information seeking, pass time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, expression of opinions, convenience utility, information sharing, and surveillance and watching others (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

In this study, Lebanese young adults were asked the reason behind their excess use of Instagram and the sense of gratification they are reaching through this platform use where young adults are using Instagram out of boredom or entertainment or even to spend time;

thus, fulfilling a certain gratification; hence they will continue using this platform more and more to reach more gratification; thus, satisfying their needs. In this research paper participants were asked during the focus group how many times do they access Instagram and what is the reason behind accessing Instagram several times per day to measure the reason of the use of Instagram in this age group and the outcome of gratification they are reaching while being exposed to this medium and the reason they follow influencers and check their stories and posts often.

3.2 Hypotheses and Research Questions

Instagram usage is increasing gradually and our teenagers and young adults are being affected by its daily exposure. For years, women have been targeted to look thin and have an ideal body image on traditional media platforms; whereas, now the messages; such as, the posts and stories found on Instagram that celebrities and bloggers transmit through social media, since it is the new trendy media that female young adults are being exposed to. Because of the aforementioned reason, there is a need to know whether the same trends and outcomes are similar and/or can be applicable to Lebanese female teenagers and young adults.

This study examines whether female teenagers and young adults are being influenced by what they see on Instagram; to what extent they imitate their influencers and seek to look like them whether physically and psychologically; and whether this effect is changing their whole lifestyle behavior

As noted in the literature review, very minimal if not scarce are the researches done on the Lebanese society on this subject matter. This research will focus on the use of Instagram by Lebanese female young adults and their effect on their Lifestyle Behavior, with the aim to discover whether they are opting to change their lifestyle behavior by just being exposed to Instagram or is Instagram a medium that is motivating them to change their beauty standards and lifestyle behavior, and their. Thus, below are the research questions and hypotheses that are tested in this research.

RQ1: Does Instagram usage affect female young adults in reforming their beauty standards?

H1: Instagram is affecting female Lebanese young adults in raising the “thin ideal” need.

H2: Young adults in Lebanon using Instagram tend to have a perfect body shape.

RQ2: How are female Lebanese young adults receiving Instagram posts on healthy food eating?

H1: Lebanese young adults are having a form of dietary techniques or changing their eating habits after being exposed to Instagram

H2: Female young adults who spend more time on Instagram are more susceptible to follow severe diets.

RQ3: Are female Lebanese young adults facing a change in their Lifestyle Behavior due to their exposure to Instagram?

H1: Lebanese female young adults change their lifestyle behavior because of increase access on Instagram.

H2: Lebanese female young adults are affected by Instagram in changing their lifestyle behavior.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design, the sample used, the different variables to examine along with the data collection and analysis. For this thesis, the qualitative research method will be used.

4.1 Research Design

The research design used is the qualitative research method seeking to understand the research problem or topic from the perspectives of the population it involves. The strength of this method is the ability to understand how people experience on a specific matter. Qualitative research methods can be either participant-observation, indepth interviews or focus group.

Therefore, a qualitative study is used in this research to test and explore the use of Instagram among female young adults in Lebanon and its effect on their body image, and lifestyle behavior. The amount spent on Instagram and the effects that Instagram has on their physical appearance, lifestyle behaviors, and body image, and reshaping the beauty standards will be tested through focus groups. The focus group methodology is chosen in testing the research questions, since it elicits data on the norms of a group and permits in - depth findings and explorations of the hidden issues and triggers for the occurrence of the behavior providing an overall understanding of the deeper experience of individuals (Willig, 2013).

4.2 Sample

The sample composition used in this study is a purposive sample - a sampling technique in which the researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study (Black, 2010). This research study targeted females only with a specific purpose which was to investigate Instagram usage and its effect on framing their lifestyle behavior and reshaping their beauty standards.

The purposive sampling technique was used by the researcher to choose a sample based on a number of criteria or certain characteristics that the population should be, in our case females with an age range from 16 to 25 years old. The sample chosen to conduct this qualitative research, were high school female teenagers to young female adults, selected from high school students grades 10, 11, and 12 and university students. The targeted age group were females ranging from 16 to 25 years' old who are obviously still continuing their education whether in school or university. Some of them might be working in a part-time job and some might have already graduated from the university with a bachelor degree. The focus group members were educated people who have been exposed to many technological outcomes and are aware and familiar with social media and its usage.

4.3 Instrument of Measurement

To address the research questions, a questionnaire was used in the form of a structured interview. There were three reasons for choosing a self-completion questionnaire. The first reason was to ensure consistency among participants in the four focus groups. The second, it enabled responses to be gathered from large numbers relatively quickly, and cost efficiently. The third reason, a questionnaire guaranteed higher levels of objectivity compared to many alternative methods of primary data collection.

The focus group was held through a structured interview form and at times when the discussion drifted to other purposes, the interviewer made sure to put back the focus group on track to continue and ensure the coverage of all the questions on a timely matter.

Different variables were tested throughout the structured interview; such as, how many times do they access Instagram per day and what is the reason they access Instagram several times per day. In addition participants were asked if they get influenced by the posts they see to trigger the answers to later questions concerning the lifestyle behavior and physical appearance and beauty standards and whether or not they have the urge to compare their life to theirs after being exposed to many Instagram posts. Participants were informed from the beginning that they can retreat at any time from the focus group.

4.4 Validation of the Questionnaire

Before conducting the study, the questionnaire was tested on a sub-sample of 10 participants, in order to examine if the questions are understood and interpreted properly. This would help ensure greater reliability of the measure.

One of the proposed strategies is the suggestion to validate the questions. This research-made questionnaire needed to undergo the face - validation process. Face validity is mainly established when the researcher who is an expert reviews the questionnaire concludes that it measures the characteristic or trait of interest (Devous & Born, 2005). To achieve this purpose, the researcher conducted a pilot survey using a sample of population. including a colleague at work, a professional at a university, a respondent from the population understudy, a professional in the field, and a student of his cohort. The aim was to check the appropriateness of questions to the target population, the correctness of the instructions to be followed, and most importantly, whether or not the questionnaire fulfils the objective of the study.

Then, face validity involves an expert looking at the items in the questionnaire and agreeing that the test is a valid measure of the construct being measured just on the face of it (Black, 2010). This important step in the validation process requires sending the questionnaire to a statistician. The researcher entered the collected responses into a spreadsheet to clean the data. Having the statistician read the values aloud and another entering them into the spreadsheet greatly reduces the risk of error. Once data is entered, the next step is to reverse code negatively phrased questions (Cornell, 2018). The chances, again, suggested by the professional were considered. The final

stage of the validation process was to revise the questionnaire based on the information you gathered from the principal components analysis. The overall format of the questionnaire remained unchanged (See Appendix figure 3) demonstrating adequate reliability and validity.

4.5 Procedure

As mentioned earlier, this thesis opted to use the qualitative method of focus groups. The focus groups were conducted online using Zoom as a platform of discussion, due to the pandemic COVID-19 and the respect of social distancing. An invitation was sent to the female young adults randomly through WhatsApp messaging (Appendix B). The focus group sessions were formed according to availability in time. A Zoom link was sent before each session through Whatsapp to facilitate the joining of attendees. Four focus groups were conducted each pertaining between 7 and 10 participants. As stated by Greenbaum (1988), concerning the homogeneity principle, it is very important that the focus group does not include participants with different cultural levels, social status and hierarchial positions, to avoid inhibition or situations where some participants are reluctant to talk in front of people who are distant from them in terms of life experiences. Each focus group session ranged between 45 and 90 minutes depending on how open and interactive the participants were. At the beginning of each focus group, an introduction was made about the study. Participants were informed that the recording will only be used for for academic purposes. A friendly environment was created to make sure the

participants feel the positive and comforted environment in order that the answers were as genuine and real as possible.

During the focus groups, participants were asked 15 questions varying between their age, if they have Instagram accounts, what accounts do they usually follow, how many times do they access Instagram per day, what interests them most on Instagram, whether or not they follow influencers, name some of the influencers they follow, do they get influenced by the posts they see, do they feel they want to look like the influencers they follow, do they feel they want to look, eat, or workout like the celebrities they follow, do they feel they want to change their lifestyle behavior after being exposed to Instagram posts, whether or not they want to look like the influencers they follow, do they feel unhappy when exposed to many Instagram posts, did they change their lifestyle behavior after being exposed to Instagram posts.

Then, participants were shown during the session pictures of middle Eastern influencers; such as, Jessica Kahwaty, Karen Wazen, Nour Arida, and another slide showing Cynthia Samuel, Dina Zharan, and Rima Zahran.

4.6 Variables

The hypotheses which were formulated and stated earlier assisted in identifying the variables, based on the literature review and the theoretical framework. The variables of the study are:

H1: Instagram is affecting female Lebanese young adults in reforming their beauty standards

IV: Instagram DV: reforming beauty standards

Conceptual Definition: Instagram: Wnent explains that Instagram is about posting pictures and presenting oneself in a photo album form to others, creating contacts with friends, gaining attention and admiration, making a lot of likes and followers; in addition to, making money through advertisement (Wnent, 2016).

Whereas, defining the dependent variable: beauty standards, according to Berry et al., beauty is not a normal human or innate trait, rather it is accessible as a commodity that must be obtained by women through purchasing beauty products and participate in the beauty practices to fit in with the ideal. (Berry 2007; Gallagher & Pecot-Hebert, 2007). Multi-dimensional and constantly changing beauty standards are created and embedded within society with the help of media (Berry 2007; English, Solomon, & Ashmore 1994). Women face strict beauty standards that are hard to achieve, despite their continuous efforts, since media images are more often one directional and idealistic (Hendricks, 2002).

The operational definition in measuring the beauty standard perception of Lebanese young adults was tested by showing the participants during the focus groups celebrity pictures whether they are and were asked if they know them and whether or not they compare themselves to them another question targeted was whether they opt to look like the celebrities they follow and if they had undergone any changes in their physical appearance to look like their celebrities.

H2: Lebanese female young adults have changed their eating habits through excess Instagram use.

IV: Lebanese young adults Instagram users DV: eating habits

Conceptual Definition: female young adults between 13 to 25 years of age who create as well the youth range. As per Barth and Starkman (2016) young media consumers are more vulnerable to the effects of advertising, including body dissatisfaction and eating disorders.

The operational definition of H2 was tested during our focus group by asking participants if they ever change their eating habits or working out due to being exposed to Instagram posts and whether or not they went through eating behavioral change after being exposed to many Instagram posts through asking those questions about their eating behavior we will know if they are obsessed with healthy eating or not and whether they changed their eating behaviors due to Instagram's influence.

H3: Female young adults change their lifestyle behavior due to increase access on Instagram.

The IV: Increase Instagram use DV: change lifestyle behavior

Conceptual Definition: As Joseph-Shehu, et al, divides the health promoting lifestyle behaviors into six to seven sub-divisions: (1) nutrition indicates a person's eating habits and food preferences; (2) the actions an individual undertakes that make him active; (3) health responsibility which indicates the ways someone acts to improve his health; (4)

stress management which pertains knowing the factors that increase the stress level and managing those factors; (5) self - actualization, the ability to achieve life goals in a creative and positive approach; (6) spiritual growth it is not necessarily related to any religion, but rather signifies the ability to connect to one's inner self and with others and having a purpose in life to excel and to reach life goals and fulfillment; (7) interpersonal relations means achieving resourceful and sustainable relationships with others, with any communication form (Joseph-Shehu, et al, 2019).

The operational definition for lifestyle behavior was tested by asking the participants if they follow the accounts or celebrities who follow a certain healthy lifestyle and whether or not they get influenced by these behaviors or did they ever apply those tips and advices they see on Instagram in their daily lives. The researcher tried to approach them by asking them to tell us about actions whenever they see health related posts, participants were asked who they follow, meaning people who are aware about lifestyle behavior. Or whether or not Instagram has played a role in making them become more fit or health oriented or if they were athletics before or after Instagram use. Participants were asked if they get influenced by the posts they see and if they ever changed anything in them due to being exposed to Instagram posts.

Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion

5.1 Data Analysis

After having conducted the focus groups, the answers were transcribed verbatim and the emerging data was compiled. Results showed that the participants chosen that are females aged between 16 and 25 years, have Instagram accounts, and that they access their Instagram accounts more than 5 times per day. The pages that the participants follow vary among fashion, photography, celebrity, food, art and travel. 37% of the participants follow fashion accounts and 35% of them follow celebrities accounts as shown (*in figure 5.1*) Participants access Instagram several times per day, *“I feel lost if I don’t access Instagram many times per day”* answered Lama when asked about the reason they access Instagram several times per day. 40% of the participants are scared to miss out on something (FoMO) as shown in (*figure 5.2*). *“It’s a habit, more than that a daily ritual”* answered Ella and another participant second her in one of the focus groups. 34% answered that they access to check stories and posts. 20% answered that they access several times to entertain themselves.

Reshaping Beauty Standards and Lifestyle Behavior of Lebanese Young Female Adults:
A Qualitative Insights on the Effect of Instagram

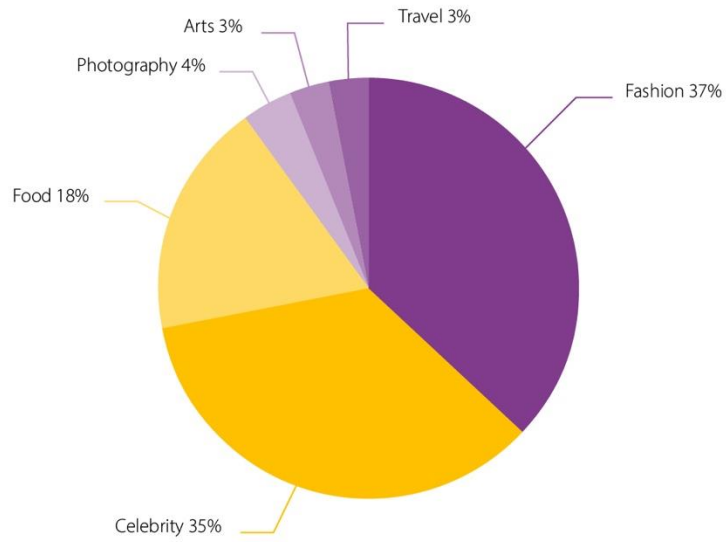


Figure 5.1 Pages the participants follow

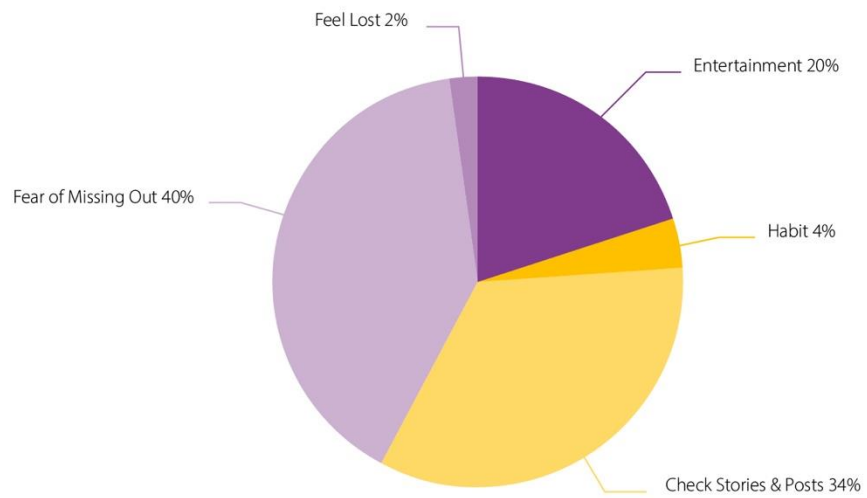


Figure 5.2 Reason of accessing Instagram more than 5 times per day

When asked what pages on Instagram do they actually access, 80.6 % are interested in Fashion accounts ; whereas, 77.4% are interested in celebrities and influencers. The rest of the percentages varied between diet tips and sports and photography with 9.6 %. When participants were asked to name the celebrities or influencers they follow, the answers varied among names such as, Tamara Farra, Rita Dahdah, Christina Karam, Yara Khawam, Emma Chamberlaine, Keera Ferrani, Kylie Jenner, Kim Kardashian whereas 51.6 % answered that they follow Karen Wazen and 41.9% answered that they follow Nour Arida.

Participants who answered that they follow foreign celebrities, reasoned that these relate to their lives more and they like to look up to their life. Participants believe that these celebrities or influencers are more realistic than local or Arab influencers.

During the focus group, a slide containing 3 celebrities Cynthia Samuel, Rima Zahran, and Dima Zahran was shared with the participants. These celebrities were chosen randomly and due to their popularity and fame on the Instagram. This part was done to check the participants' familiarity with Lebanese influencers and some of the Arab ones, who in turn were chosen randomly to represent the Arab celebrities. Participants considered Cynthia Samuel who is a Lebanese actress, an ex- Miss Lebanon runner up who became an Instagram Influencer , as a famous platform. 96.7% of the participants in the 4 groups knew Cynthia Samuel whereas, only 6.4% knew Rima and Dima Zahran who are Arab influencers who live in United Arab Emirates and they have a huge number of followers Rima Zahran (275 K followers) and Dina Zahran (171 K followers).

In the second slide the participants were shown 3 other celebrities Jessica Kahawaty, Karen Wazen, and Nour Arida. The celebrities or influencers chosen were chosen randomly just taking into consideration their fame and popularity on Instagram in accordance to being of the Lebanese nationality. The results came out that all participants knew all three even the participants who had answered they don't follow celebrities nor influencers, knew who these influencers were and even named them. These findings show that participants are well aware and are being acquainted on a frequent level to many Instagram influencers. Since all the participants ended up knowing the Lebanese celebrities, they stated that they do get influenced by their actions, posts, stories and their lifestyle behavior. *Figure 5.3* shows that 90% of the participants get influenced by the Instagram posts they see and in specific they get influenced by the influencers and even their peer posts, as Gaelle, one member of a focus group commented saying *"I even get influenced by my friend's posts and many times I wish I could be in their places and enjoying my time as they are."*

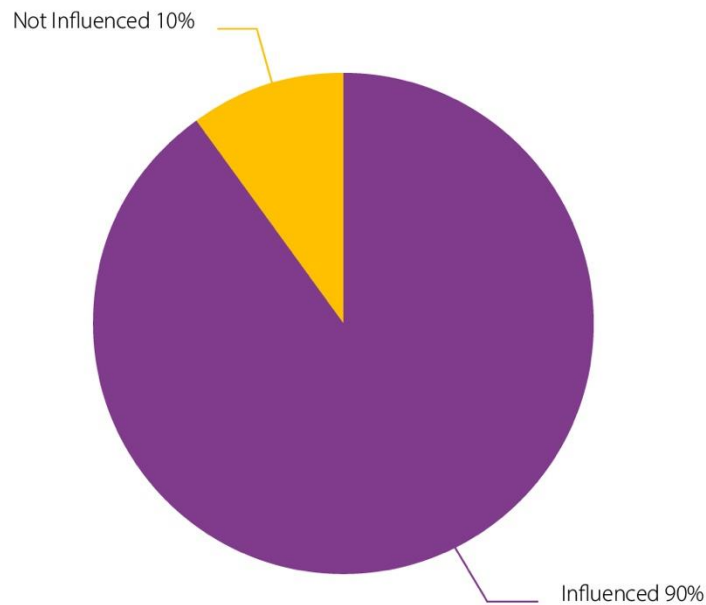


Figure 5.3 Percentage of participants being Influenced or not by Instagram posts

Answering whether or not the participants get influenced by the Instagram posts they get exposed to, some participants answered that it depends on their mood. If they are in a low mood status, they get influenced more than if they are in a good state of mind. Other participants put in their mindset that every time they access Instagram they are reminded that it is not a real medium, and they keep reminding themselves to split between what they see on Instagram and the life they are living. Albeit all the awareness this generation is getting and the arguments they have in mind to keep themselves aware that celebrities and influencers make up all their posts and they are not natural all the time in front of the camera, 80.6 % of the participants yet get influenced by the Instagram they get exposed to, while only 19.35% that they do not get influenced (*as shown in figure 5.3*).

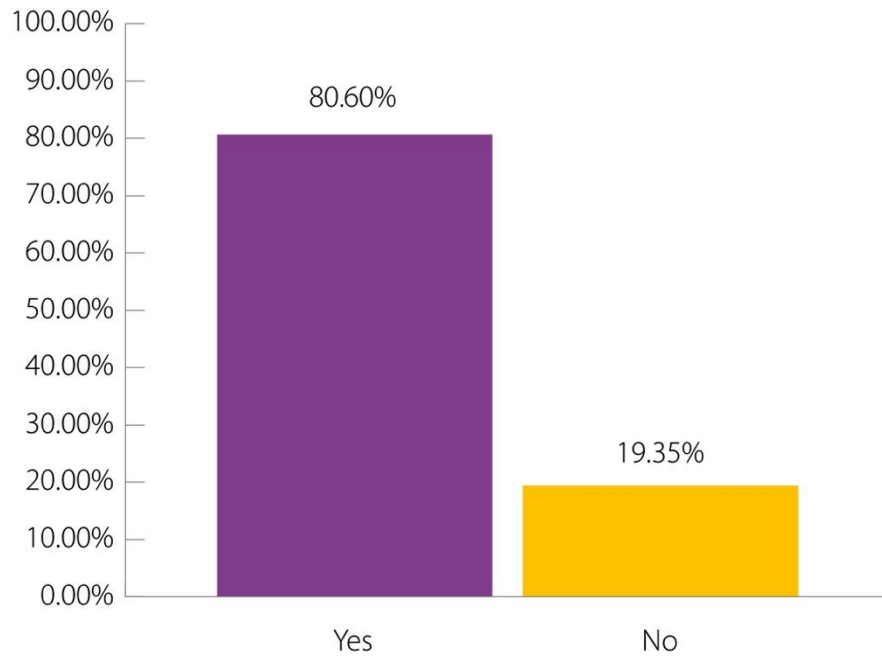


Figure 5.4 Percentage of whether or not they want to look like their influencers

“*No, No, No,*” directly answered Tonia when asked if she wants to look like the influencers, but Tonia herself later shared that she had done Botox for her lips. Due to being exposed to Instagram posts, and everytime exposed to a post where a girl had nice lips she would be affected. During the session, she added that she even looks at their body and would want to have a similar body image. Then, she reminds herself that the influencers are starving themselves to have the perfect body image and appearance. This same participant, Tonia, was too negative at the beginning of the focus group while discussing the effects of celebrities and influencers posts on Instagram. She confessed that she had undergone all types of diet measures and read tips and bought special shakes

that she saw with celebrities, trying to lose weight and to have the thin ideal look like the celebrities she follows. By time and when she realized she was being overwhelmed with what she is being exposed to, she decided to let go of the ideal thin image she had built through Instagram posts and try to accept herself the way she is and like her curvy body shape.

This account by one of the participants in the focus group encouraged many other participants to open up about their internal challenge while being exposed to excess Instagram screen time. 80.6% of the participants were courageous enough to answer by yes they would like to look like their influencers (*as shown in figure 5.4*). While others answered that they get influenced in their lifestyle not only the influencers' physical appearance. Several of the participants commented that there isn't anyone who does not get affected by what they see on Instagram either positively or negatively. They believed that everyone gets influenced by anything they see. One participant vowed that many times she gets influenced, but then she says no it is not worth trying. She gave an example on how many times she opts to do her upper lip, and every time she gets exposed to influencers' posts she opts to try fillers in her upper lip but then she gets hesitant and says that it is not worth it.

87% of the participants feel like wearing, eating and working out like their influencers
(as shown in figure 5.5)

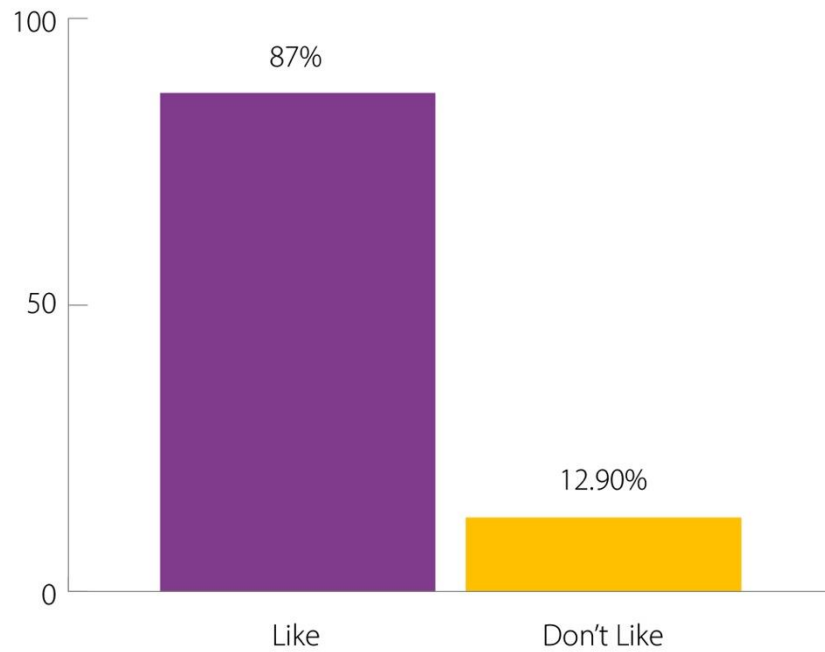


Figure 5.5 Percentage of participants who feel like wearing, eating, working out like their celebrities

64.5% of the participants answered that they would want to eat like their influencers since when they get exposed to the Instagram posts of their influencers or through normal Instagram posts, the posts open their taste buds and they would want to eat their delicious meals or their healthy light meals that do not look like the meals participants have at home.

64.5 % of the participants answered that they like to wear like their preferred Instagram influencers, they like to have their looks and styling methods. Whereas, only 22.5 % of

the participants answered they get motivated to work - out like them these participants answered that they started working out after seeing Instagram posts and tips that initiated them to join the gym and take care of their physical appearance.

87% of the participants compare their lifestyle to the celebrities' lifestyle they see on Instagram. Some wish that their influencers' posts and stories are their own lifestyle and the way they live on a daily basis. One participant answered that she compares her life to these Instagram influencers, due to how well they are paid and she has an anger reaction to unfairness of life. Even after having all the skillful education what makes her angry about the situation is that these influencers are getting easy money and are living a luxurious life.

“I envy them everyday especially during COVID-19 lockdown, since the influencers I follow even during lockdown they had the luxury of living and they had spacious places to sit in not like us we were locked up in a small apartment not knowing how to spend the endless hours of the day” added Gaelle on the discussion.

No matter how much the participants keep on reminding themselves that what they see on Instagram is at many times staged or unreal, they pass through endless days and times of mood fluctuations and lifestyle comparison of what they see on this platform and how they are living, whether from the way they eat, go out, get dressed or simply living the whole luxury lifestyle their influencers are living.

87% of the participants responded that they want to change their lifestyle behavior (*as shown in figure 5.6*) meaning the way they look, appear, dress, eat, and even work - out

and travel after being exposed to Instagram accounts. Participants opt to have the lifestyle behavior they are being exposed to and look up to changing their own way of living to have the life their preferred celebrity is having with the overall looks and physical appearance.

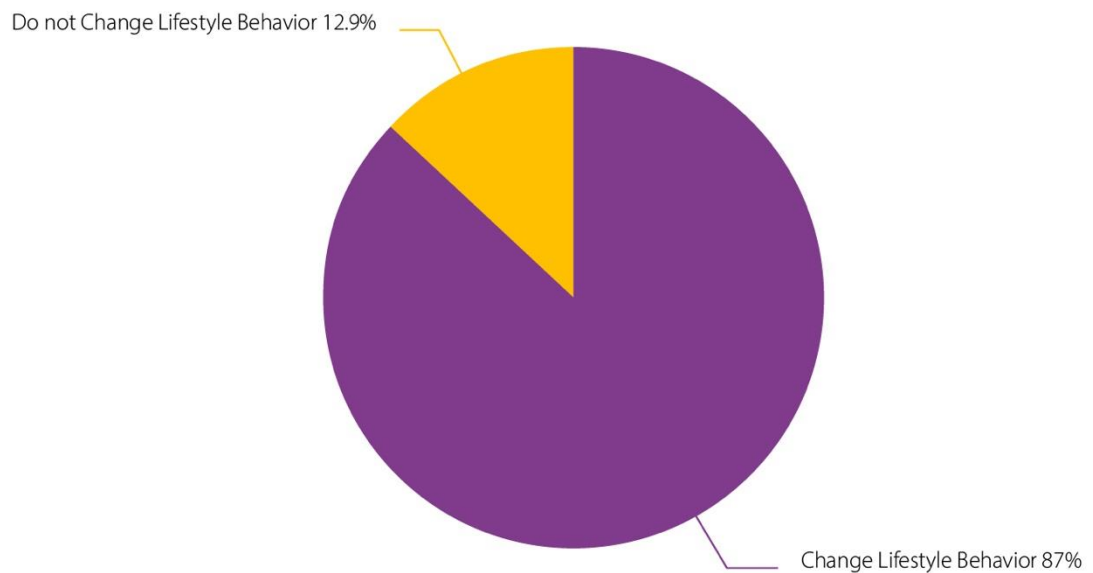


Figure 5.6 Whether or not participants undergo Lifestyle Behavioral Change

87% of the participants answered that they changed the way they work out and following a healthy lifestyle, by having healthy meals, and mainly they opt to change their style in the way they dress and make-up, since they look up to changing their lifestyle according to what they are being exposed to. 16% also answered that they changed their mood after being exposed to Instagram posts, whether from quote related pages they follow or from their celebrities' positive messaging. 12.9% also answered that they try to take the positive from what they see on Instagram and try to adapt it to their lives, whether through taking positive tips to set their life goals and try to achieve more, so that they become successful in life.

Moreover, the below discussion is what Instagram is capable of doing nowadays in making our population develop happy or unhappy motive. This excess exposure and contact on Instagram is resulting in a percentage of unhappiness in the consumers' lives, since when consumers are being exposed to huge amounts of posts and live feeds on Instagram daily, a sense of unhappiness is rising in their lives, due to the social comparison they unconsciously are passing through and due to the sense of needing more from life and from the surrounding. 87% of the participants feel unhappy while exposed to excess Instagram posts and all these feelings might result in a depression.

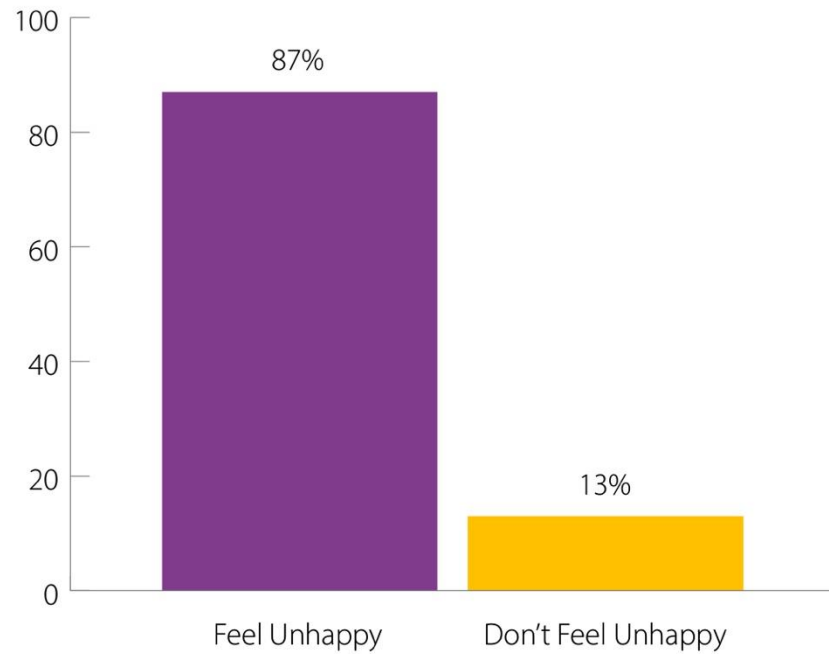


Figure 5.7 Percentage of participants who feel unhappy or not when exposed to Instagram posts

Participants who feel unhappy when exposed to Instagram posts, especially during these days while they remain at home most of the time due to COVID-19 lockdown and due to the economic and financial situations that Lebanon is passing through, when on the other hand, they see people and celebrities who are going out and enjoying their life on Instagram.

A major and important outcome concerning this question was that a participant opened up during the discussion to confess that not the posts she sees that is making her unhappy it is the amount of time spent on Instagram and the screen time that is making her feel unhappy and another participant agreed with her that it is not when she sees people happy

then she feels unhappy. Participants responded that they all agreed that the amount spent and the level of exposure to Instagram posts daily is giving them the sense of comparison and the feeling unhappy in what they have. Such a social comparison may result in one believing that external conditions or socially approved benchmarks are more important than internal and personal traits.

Other reasons participants answered about feeling unhappy when exposed to many Instagram posts, whether from the way of life, the brands they wear, or the food they eat. 80.6 % of the participants get the urge to act the same as the people who are exercising and eating healthy on Instagram, their answers varied by yes they can get motivated from any post even from close people they know when they post and they get the urge to do the same when they see that the results are positive. They try to apply the tips to reach the results they are being exposed to. Another participant answered that at the beginning of the pandemic she was very motivated by the sports posts that seriously motivated her to do sports for approximately 6 months. Someone tried to become a vegetarian due to being exposed to Instagram posts, but it didn't work with her. Another started eating healthy for a while. Another was motivated to join the gym due to being motivated to have a nice body image.

19 % would not change any physical change in themselves due to being exposed to Instagram posts; whereas, 81% would want to change their lifestyle behavior after being exposed to Instagram posts and to the celebrities' accounts they follow (*as shown in figure 5.8*).

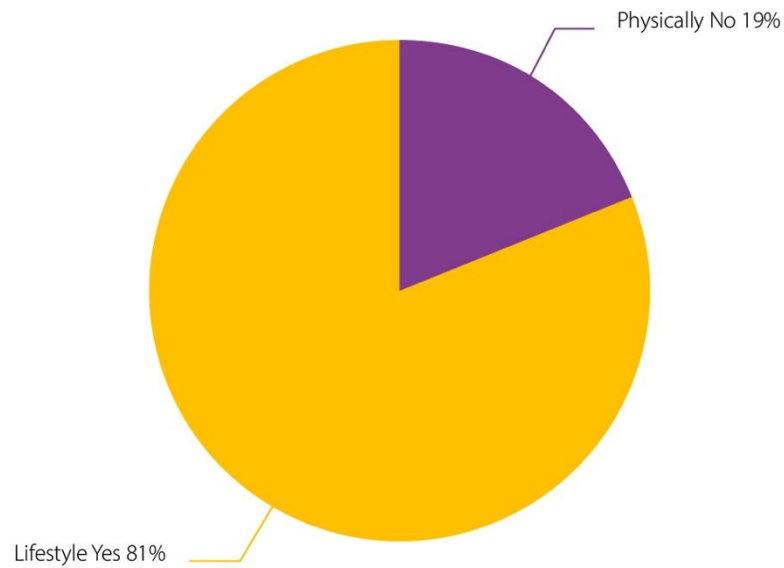


Figure 5.8 Whether or not participants have undergone any changes after being exposed to Instagram posts

The answers to this question varied to what they had changed in themselves due to being exposed to Instagram posts, 22.5% of the participants had done eyelash lifting after being exposed to influencers who had undergone this or due to being exposed to posts on this matter. 64.5% had changed a lot in their style due to being exposed to Instagram posts. Another one added that she tries to follow anything that is a trend, for example she does her makeup like the tutorials she sees on Instagram. 6.45% of the participants had dyed their hair blue and pink, after being exposed to Instagram posts. 9.6% of the participants shared with us that they had tried cutting their own hair and their bangs after being exposed to such posts on Instagram. 25.8% of the participants answered they had a nose

pierce and have earrings on all their ear due to random Instagram posts they saw. One participant had done an earring after Amy Winehouse. 12.9% of the participants had done filler technique for their upper lip after being exposed to Instagram posts and more than 5 are thinking of doing their upper lip filler but are still hesitant about it.

5.2 Discussion

Looking into the above results, it appears that Instagram plays an important role in life of young females. The importance of active Instagrammers' presence on Instagram, specifically in what concerns beauty standards and life style behavior, seems to be a tendency that is growing.

We may conclude by summing up the findings of this research: First, based upon the sample chosen, female Lebanese young adults are affected by a lifestyle behavioral change when exposed to Instagram posts. Second, findings showed that Lebanese female young adults are setting their goals and putting themselves in the positive mood. Some participants answered that they are influenced by the posts that they see from their preferred celebrity or influencer and try to apply it on their life. This is shown in the way they try to set their plans to reach those goals and be successful as their preferred celebrity. Third, Lebanese female young adults would be ready to change their lifestyle behavior after being exposed to Instagram posts. from the food they eat, or by the way they got influenced to workout. Fourth, self-actualization is also sensed in this focus group, where some participants answered that they get inspired by the celebrities to achieve life goals in a creative and positive approach. Fifth, interpersonal relations are

being built through the use of Instagram where all the participants answered that they have Instagram accounts and they access their accounts more than 5 times per day to ensure they see everything and stay up to date on all the events and activities their friends are undergoing. This effect on our ability to interact and communicate is visible throughout all areas of society. It certainly affects how we engage with one another across all venues and ages. There has been a shift in the way we communicate; rather than face-to-face interaction, we are tending to prefer mediated communication. Such results show that participants are undergoing the fear of missing out phenomena when asked the reason they access their Instagram accounts more than 5 times per day. This shows that the Lebanese young adults want to stay up to date and that they feel wrong or lost if they do not access it several times per day. This compulsive behavior arises the feeling of instability and anxiety in their lives according to what the results had showed while the discussions were held. With these diverse answers we can relate that the female Lebanese young adults are forming some form of FoMO, which is a main type of problematic attachment to social media, and is associated with a range of negative life experiences and feelings, such as a lack of sleep, reduced life competency, emotional tension, negative effects on physical well-being, anxiety and a lack of emotional control (Alutaybi, A., Al-Thani, D., McAlaney, J., & Ali, R. 2020).

Female young adults are comparing their lives to the lives of the celebrities they follow. Participants during the focus group answered positively when they compare their lives to the celebrities' they follow. The excess Instagram use is creating in them a feeling of sadness and a sense of depressive mood while being exposed to Instagram posts. This finding is supported by studies done on Instagram usage, and social comparison, depressive

symptoms; the results showed that Instagram was directly related to depressive symptoms with more frequent Instagram use and more strangers' follow (Lup, 2015).

Adding to this, participants in the study have confessed that they had undergone some sort of physical change after being exposed to Instagram; such as, Botox and fillers at this young age, in order to fit in and try to reach the ideal beauty standard set by media. According to Berry et al., the term beauty is not a normal human or innate trait, rather it is accessible as a commodity that must be obtained by women through purchasing beauty products and participate in the beauty practices to fit in with the ideal. (Berry 2007; Gallagher & Pecot-Hebert, 2007). Participants as well have answered that they have undergone a sort of change in their eating habits after being exposed to Instagram posts or after following their preferred celebrity and opt in many times to be influenced in what they see and try to adapt it. Answers varied from the participants on this matter. One thing that is clear is that participants are influenced by the Instagram posts and that they try to imitate what they see either in their lifestyle behavior or in their physical appearance; meaning opting for the “thin ideal” or undergoing a beauty makeover in order to fit in.

5.3 Limitations and Further Suggestions

As in all researches, there are limitations. The sample population could have been larger in number. The possibility of outliers is part of what makes large sample size important. A possible larger number may help in determining the concept of “theoretical saturation,” or “the point in data collection when new data no longer bring additional insights to the research questions. Due to its small sample number, the results cannot be

generalized. A major focus group limitation is the fact that focus groups cannot be generalized; thus, the results of the focus group can be used to conduct a quantitative research on the same subject matter, where the participants can answer the relative questions in a questionnaire format where their answers could be more genuine, since they will not have the fear of opening up and saying the truth of the effects of Instagram on their lives.

Another possible limitation is that there could be extraneous variables that may have interfered during the focus groups; such as, the inadequacy of answers related to participants not being totally truthful in the presence of others. For example, participants undergoing a sort of physical effect or any mean of change in their lifestyle behavior, would not be truthful about speaking it up in public. The researcher made the effort to help participants express more about the causes and effects of Instagram use, but sensed that every time at the beginning of the personal questions; such as, to name the influencers they follow and whether or not they get influenced by the posts they see on Instagram, the participants were a little defensive or shy to answer; hence, when further questions were asked, participants tried to open up and started giving the researcher more and more genuine answers. As Sim states: “the absence of diversity in the data does not reliably indicate an underlying consensus” but rather could result in an environment, which may hide individual opinions (Sim 1998). Some participants as well were answering genuinely at the beginning, but when one or two participants answer negatively, they back up from answering. This made it challenging to the research to retrieve the answers from the participants who were willing to answer sincerely. The researcher orchestrating the focus group not only had to deal with diverse discussions, dynamics, individual personalities,

possible disruptive behavior and potential side talk conversations, but also has to stimulate the discussion as needed; project a firm but friendly authority over the group with an ease style, and minimize possible bias from dominant participants (Roller, 2020).

Another limitation is that the time of the research. This research was done during the period of lockdown; as we all know, much of qualitative research typically relies on face-to-face interaction for data collection through interviews, focus groups and field work. The option of using Zoom sessions in this focus group was a good solution to move on with research during COVID-19 social distancing measures, but the limitation was that participants had the option of turning off their cameras which was not so engaging to communicate at some point, since there was one session, where only 3 cameras were turned on and the rest of the participants had their cameras off all throughout the discussion. The transmission of the connection was another obstacle, where sometimes the researcher had to double check who was answering and who was not answering; whereas, if the focus group was handled face to face, it would have definitely been easier to make everyone answer and make sure all the participants are answering and discussing openly, since the internet connection was a main issue on this matter.

A fourth limitation, depending on the currency or scope of the research topic, there is very minimal research in Lebanon, if any, prior to my research on this topic. The sample consisted of Lebanese female young adults residing in Lebanon and thus results may not

be generalized to other groups. This ensures the fact that future quantitative studies could be done on this topic.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Even though social media has been recognized as the most potentially powerful medium in life practice of young people, there is lack of understanding in terms of why they use social media and how they perceive social media posts and messages.

Instagram is the new trendy medium that most youth are using nowadays whether excessively or within limits; therefore, its effects are amply and scarce are the published papers conducted on the Lebanese young adults in the form of checking its effect on their physical appearances, and or on lifestyle behavior as in eating healthy, exercising and following a whole new health trend. This study has proven that Lebanese female young adults are affected by Instagram in changing their lifestyle behavior whether in changing their eating habits, working out, and styling themselves and the Instagram effect on their mood fluctuation is a variable that could be measured and taken into consideration for future study.

Knowing the effects of such a medium and its users on the health aspects of our youth is of an essential element. Just as studies were conducted on the traditional media, the new social media effects are as important. Researches can contribute to this field by discovering, to what extent are the youth in Lebanon affected by these platforms and in specific the Instagram platform.

As a Lebanese female and as a mother who is always protecting her children from any harm, this topic meant a lot to me. Since if we, the adults are facing some form of comparison and get influenced by the posts we see on Instagram what is then the case with the youth? Being always alert and up to date with the new technological outcomes and its effect is our duty as parents, to ensure that our children are not facing any severe changes in their life or undergoing any risk that would endanger their lives and behaviors.

Despite the aforementioned limitations derived from this study, the results derived from this focus group has opened up the chance to do further researches, but this time a quantitative research should be held where the results found can be used to generalize the effects of Instagram in reshaping the beauty standards and lifestyle behavior of Lebanese female young adults. A great approach for future and further studies on this matter would also be to test the Instagram audiences mood and mental effect due to the result that was revealed in the focus group that Instagram users are facing a feeling of unhappiness due to being exposed to this platform and its excess usage.

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Focus group Zoom Sessions Recordings links

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/70cvtWvg3-OuU4W_shlNpECCBE6YioS7pq7rFZQBLXQ2M3Osa8IC6JFsfpTZ7bq.U5WkvQEA9T-yIr6k Passcode: #=JDG\$8Q

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/UqnlUs5AZkvhnSNLR2r_vd2eB-w2Uc_BRptzxYjZoztzFri-yOVb2PxV1PzMQVyT.g5KxswLRLKxJiKeK Passcode: y0P%?7G0

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ok4SDQ7emsRW9RAiTdGyXqT5dml-ci1c/view?usp=sharing>

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/GutVn6rx45tkuUE-KzzzmpW-TuoOQMSMX0Das1kQ5sA-H3KE7KUtGP5Or9MFuzQ.a6ewzHPJE7S8jW7D> Passcode: 3pw88c&X

Appendix A



Fig. 1 Sahar Tabar who has undergone more than 50 operations to look like her preferred celebrity Angelina Jolie

Appendix B



**Fig 2 the whatsapp message sent to groups to invite participants to join the focus
group session**

Reshaping Beauty Standards and Lifestyle Behavior of Lebanese Young Female Adults:
A Qualitative Insights on the Effect of Instagram

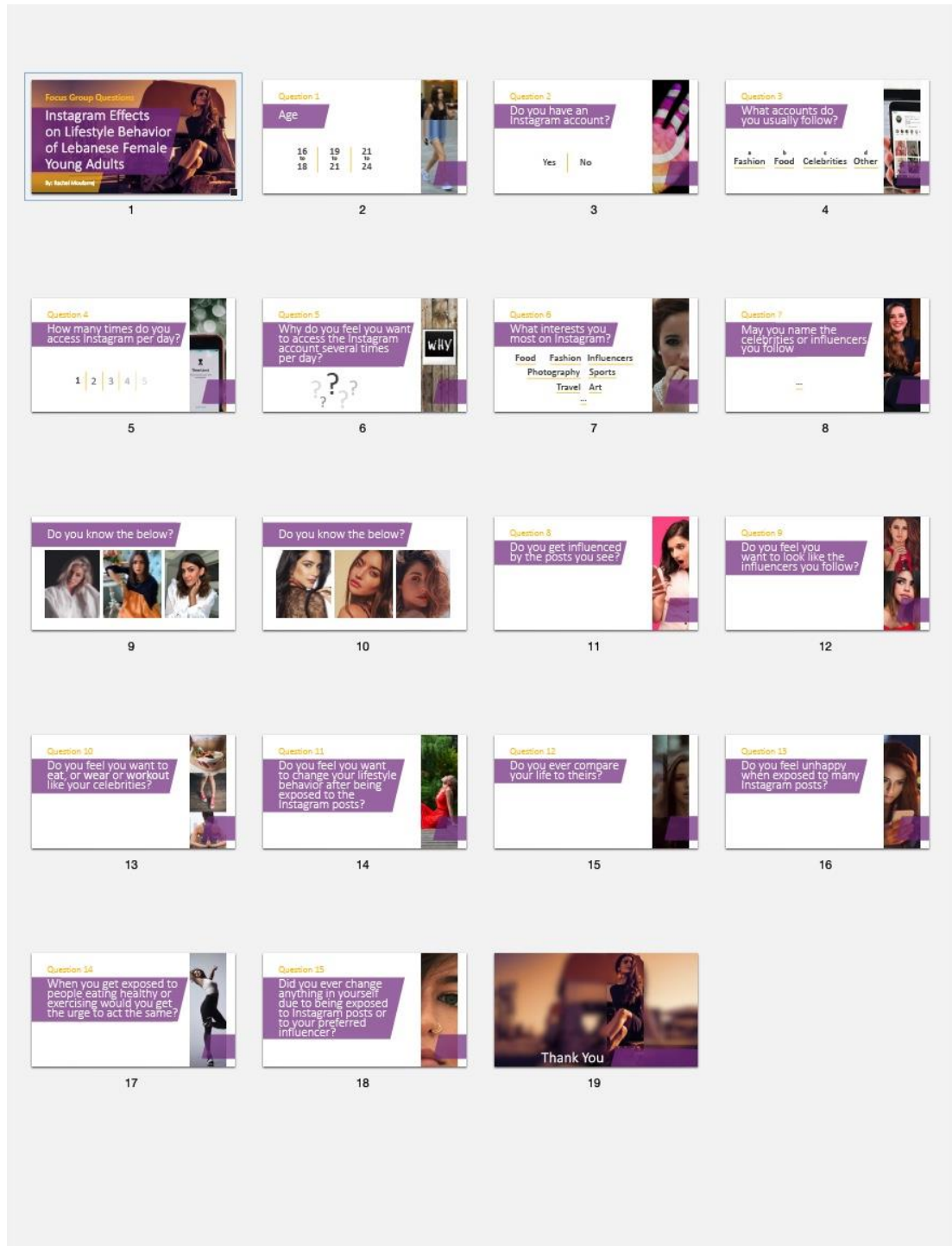


Figure 3 Power point presentation shared during the online focus group session.

Appendix C

Focus Group Questionnaire

1. Age:
2. Do you have an Instagram account?
3. What accounts do you usually follow?
 - a. Fashion b. Food c. Celebrities d. Other
4. Name the celebrities or influencers you follow
5. How many times do you access Instagram per day?
6. Why do you feel you want to access the Instagram account several times per day?
7. Do you get influenced by the posts you see?
8. Do you feel you want to look like the influencers you follow?
9. Do you feel you want to wear, or eat or workout like your celebrities?
10. Do you feel you want to change your lifestyle behavior after being exposed to the Instagram posts?
12. Do you have the urge to compare your life to theirs?
13. Do you feel unhappy when exposed to many Instagram posts?
14. When you get exposed to people eating healthy or exercising would you get the urge to act the same?
15. Did you ever change anything in yourself due to being exposed to Instagram posts or to your preferred influencer?

Focus Group Data Collection

Focus Group 1: 7 participants
 Focus Group 2: 7 participants
 Focus Group 3: 10 participants
 Focus Group 4: 7 participants
 All Focus Groups: 31 participants

Age Range between 16-25
 All participants who participated have Instagram accounts
 All participants have Instagram Account

Pages they follow			
Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
Fashion: 7	Fashion: 5	Food: 3	Food: 2
Celebrities: 7	Celebrity: 5	Fashion: 7	Fashion: 6
Food : 1	Food : 7	Celebrity: 6	Life Quotes: 1
Performing Arts: 1			Influencer/Celebrity: 6
			Photography: 2
			Art: 2

Why they Access Instagram Several Times			
Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
Entertainment: 5	Entertainment: 5	Checking Stories: 7	Check Stories: 5
Feel Connected: 2	Habit: 1	Posting: 5	Motivation: 1
Feel Lost: 1	Shopping: 1	Curiosity: 1	FoMO: 5
FoMO: 7	FoMO: 2	FoMO: 6	Habit: 2

Name Celebrities you Follow			
Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
Tamarra Farra: 2	TV Series Actors: 1	Emma Chamberlaine: 1	Karen Wazen: 4
Karen Wazen: 4	Rawan Bin Hsein: 1	Kylie Jenner: 4	Rita Dahdah: 1
Nour Arida: 6	Nour Arida: 2	Kim Kardashian: 1	Christina Karam: 1
Kylie Jenner: 1	Karen Wazen: 2	Karen Wazen: 4	Yara Khawam: 4
Kardashians: 1	Tamarra Farra: 1	Beauty by lama: 1	Nour Arida: 5
		The Hamaoui family: 1	Joe Matar: 1
		The Rahal Family: 1	Kyara Ferrani: 1

Participants who knew the Celebrities			
Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
Cynthia Samuel: 7	Cynthia Samuel: 6	Cynthia Samuel: 10	Cynthia Samuel: 7
Rima Zahran:0	Rima Zahran:0	Rima Zahran:0	Rima Zahran: 2
Dina Zahran: 0	Dina Zahran: 0	Dina Zahran: 0	Dina Zahran: 2
Jessica Kahawaty: 7	Jessica Kahawaty: 7	Jessica Kahawaty: 10	Jessica Kahawaty: 7
Karen Wazen: 7	Karen Wazen: 7	Karen Wazen: 10	Karen Wazen: 7
Nour Arida: 7	Nour Arida: 7	Nour Arida: 10	Nour Arida: 7

Do they Get Influenced by the Posts they see			
Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
Yes: 7	Yes: 6	Yes: 8	Yes: 7
No: 0	No: 1	No: 2	No: 0

Do they want to look like influencers they follow			
Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4

Yes: 5	Yes: 5	Yes: 10	Yes: 5
No: 2	No: 2	No: 0	No: 2

Do you feel you want to eat, wear and work-out like the influencers			
Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
Yes: 6	Yes: 6	Yes: 9	Yes: 6
No: 1	No: 1	No: 1	No: 1

Do you feel you want to change your Lifestyle Behavior			
Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
Yes: 6	Yes: 5	Yes: 10	Yes: 6
No: 1	No: 2	No: 0	No: 1

Do you feel you compare your life to theirs			
Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
Yes: 7	Yes: 5	Yes: 10	Yes: 5
No: 0	No: 2	No: 0	No: 2

Do you feel Unhappy when you get exposed to Instagram posts			
Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
Yes: 7	Yes: 5	Yes: 8	Yes: 7
No: 0	No: 2	No: 2	No: 0

Did you ever change anything in yourself after being exposed to Instagram posts			
Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
Yes: 7	Yes: 7	Yes: 10	Yes: 6
No: 0	No: 0	No: 0	No: 1

When you get exposed to people eating healthy would you get the urge to do the same			
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Reshaping Beauty Standards and Lifestyle Behavior of Lebanese Young Female Adults:
A Qualitative Insights on the Effect of Instagram

Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
Yes: 6	Yes: 6	Yes: 8	Yes: 5
No: 1	No: 1	No: 2	No: 2