

CURTIN UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MEDIA, CREATIVE ARTS AND SOCIAL  
INQUIRY

## ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET

**To be attached to all assignments**

**(ALL SECTIONS MUST BE COMPLETED)**

STUDENT NAME: Ranvit  
Jeewooh.....

STUDENT  
ID: 18897481.....

UNIT NAME AND NUMBER: NETS2002      Social Media, Communities and  
Networks.....

DUE DATE:  
07.05.18.....

WORD COUNT: 2233.....

TUTORIAL DAY AND TIME: Wednesday 13:00-  
15:00.....

**TUTOR'S NAME: Mylene  
Diquette.....**

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOUR TUTOR'S NAME IS ON ALL SUBMITTED ASSIGNMENTS

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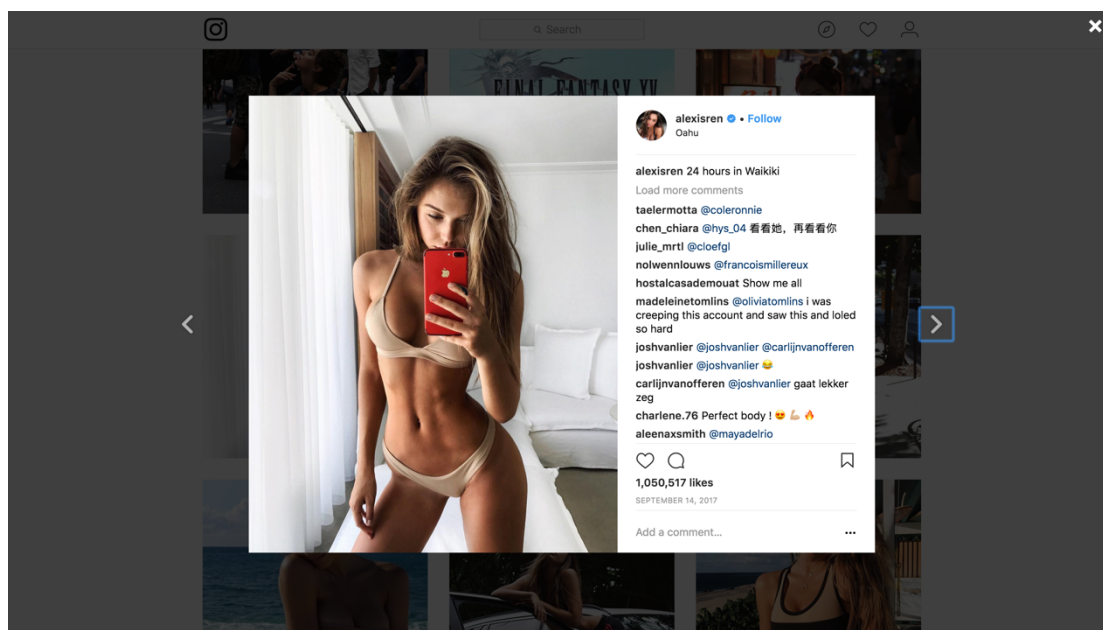
**Date: 07.05.18.....**

## Title: Social media and Body Shaming

Abstract: This essay talks about the impact that social media is making in the life of people, emphasizing on the fact that social media is promoting body shaming. According to Snyder (2014), "Body shaming is the action of critiquing someone's size, being called too fat or too thin and many people blame social media sites saying that they are making it easier to judge people by sitting behind a computer screen." Social media promotes new trends and unknowingly these trends in a way promote body shaming and people keep following it because it is considered to be normal nowadays. There is also terms like Body surveillance and the way it affects the health of individuals. Examples have been shown in the essay to better demonstrate how memes are making fun of people based on their physical appearance.

In this era of digitization, the way people are living their lives is completely changing, also with the invention of smart phones and web 2.0 platforms, everything is becoming so easy and talking about this era where some of us spend most of our time online, chatting with our friends, scrolling over the newsfeed of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or other social platforms. There are thousands of pages, celebrities, influencers and many more that people follow on social media and what they post surely makes an impact on their way of living. Body shaming is one of the impact where users are starting to have self esteem problems, new beauty standards are being created and these are creating a lot of negative results in the society. According to Snyder (2014), "Body shaming is the action of critiquing someone's size, being called too fat or too thin and many people blame social media sites saying that they are making it easier to judge people by sitting behind a computer screen." Also there is the term "Body surveillance", "sexual objectification, a culture where woman's body are separated from her person, makes woman engage in self-objectification and it is self objectification or body surveillance that leads to the psychological effects and mental health risks associated with sexual objectification such as body shame, eating disorders, anxiety, depression and sexual dysfunction." (Ruckel & Hill, 2016). Social media is the platform where body shaming is promoted. So, it would be appropriate to emphasize that social media influences our lives to a powerful extent. Relating to the posts that are put up, there are many who affect, and continually shape body images and insecurities. And when speaking about body images, it is inevitable to speak about body shaming on social media which is one the main causes of body shaming.

Social media is one of the best platforms where promotions can be done, many companies create their pages on Facebook or create an account on Instagram, let us take for example, the fashion industry, long-ago they were only on written media and television but now having a perfect web presence is their new strategy. So they post all their works on social media and there are various influencers and models that are related to these pages or account and other people just follow their lifestyles. While following their lifestyles, some people tend to think that looking like them is considered as normal. often these models or influencers set new trends which are then followed by social media users. Furthermore, I personally searched for some famous models that are on Instagram and I fell upon one name “Alexis Ren”

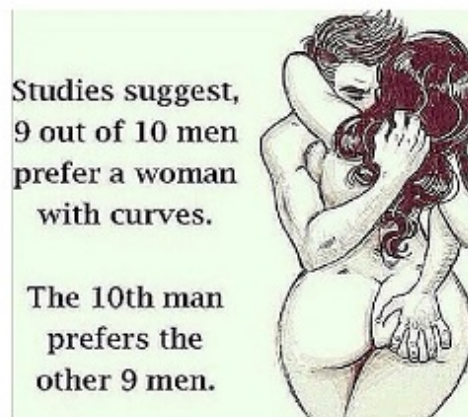


("Alexis Ren on Instagram: "24 hours in Waikiki"", 2018)

As it is seen in the screenshot, the picture gained over 1 million likes and lots of comments and one from them is written, “perfect body”. It shows how social media is creating standards of how a perfect body looks like and that’s the body that will make individuals famous on social media. What they don’t realize is that these are not totally natural, there’s a little bit of plastic surgery, a little bit of Photoshop and also the help of make up, there’s a lot more things that contribute to take this supposedly “perfect selfie”. Furthermore, these pictures intimidate the youth and makes them think that they are not beautiful, they do not have the X factor to impress their followers on Instagram and tends to think that this is how they should look and they start following and copying everything that the model does. In the other hand, people use to think that body shaming applies only for girls which is not the case because

boys today view the ideal “perfection” to become more “muscular and overall physically fit.” Even for male models, a certain amount of make up is being applied before shooting and Photoshop is used almost all the time.

“By perpetuating the ideology of a single, perfect feminine image, BuzzFeed (along with other forms of popular media) is engaging in the formation of a social practice or institution that regards body shaming as “a culturally supported endeavor” ” (Gee 2014: 34). In the thesis of Roodt, (2015), she mentions, “through the comparison of one’s own body to the body of another person, with consideration of the fact that body shaming has become a popular social norm, women describe themselves by how they look: if they measure up to society’s expectation of what is beautiful (an idea which changes constantly) they will perceive themselves to be adequately feminine and therefore develop a positive body image and self-esteem.” In regards to what she said, before, zero sized body was considered to be “perfect” but now social media is promoting curves rather than being skinny and also Jade (2018) mentions in her article “in an age where society has integrated social media, it’s a frequent occurrence to come across pages where body positivity is highlighted in ways that can be frustrating. “[It feels like] if you’re not fat like Ashley Graham [a famous plus-sized model], it’s not okay,” Holmes-Robinson said. “You can be plus-sized, but you can’t have a belly, your thighs can’t have cellulite.” Hence I agree with what she said because people have the tendency to follow the trend on social media without realizing that they are making up their mind that if social media is promoting “Ashley Graham” then they should also look like her in order to be beautiful for the society. Below are some posts that are being massively shared on social media;



(Nykjaer, 2018)

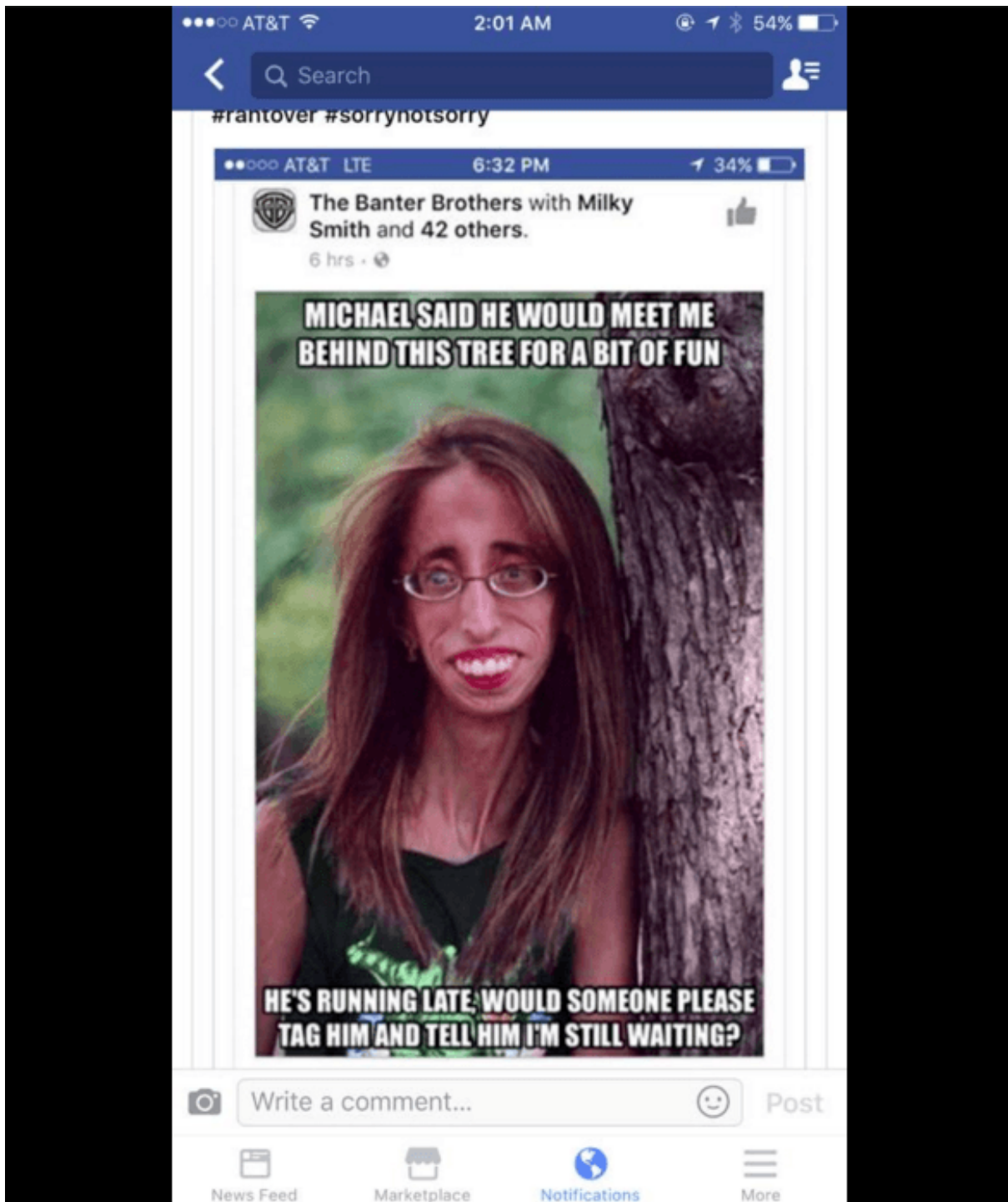
To further discuss the effect of trends, the above posts are being analyzed and it is found that “curvy woman” are creating this new beauty standard but by doing this they are bringing down skinny women. This is actually the new trend; it is affecting skinny girls more than empowering women in general. It creates insecurities for girls that has fast metabolism, that is they get difficulties to gain weight, thus this can lead to depression and other types of mental or physical issues. “Real men like curves, only dogs go for bones”, this makes the girls think that this is how they should be in order to feel accepted by others or to be loved by others. Again this is not the case only for women, it also applies for boys.



("funny pictures Archives - Page 2 of 2 - JokesFB", 2018)

This picture portrays how skinny guys are being judged on social media, they are also being carried away by the mainstream media that he is not a good looking guy and a skinny guy with abs is being related to a fat girl with tits which in this case there's a double side of body shaming, both affecting skinny and fat girls. Actually there are many pages that share these kind of body shaming post, the goals for many users on social media is to obtain maximum likes, share and comment and these are the kind of post that they propagate in order to get likes because they take advantage of these situation as they know that people will share it in order to feel superior and at the same time hurting the "others" .Back to the thesis of (Roodt, 2015), "said about empowering "we" is not necessarily positive, meaning that they are using the theory of othering," it's like a community of plus size or curvy people bringing others down or a community of skinny people bringing others down in order to empower themselves. Not only page on Facebook but there are also accounts on Instagram or even Tumblr that post sexualized images and make a sort of community where they share and promote their kind of beauty standards and individuals are free to follow. Well without realizing it is also a sort of body shaming because people are getting used to see these picture on their daily feed it can lead to frustration for people that does not meet the beauty standard of the community.

Subsequently, Limor Shifman's *Memes in digital culture* knowledgeably contextualizes, speculates, and historicizes online memes within a broader sociocultural framework. It is an enjoyable and comprehensive text that situates online memes as an integral and significant aspect of participatory culture. Shifman poignantly defines memes as 'a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form and/or stance' (emphasis original, p. 7). According to Garcia.P (2016), "You could argue that 2016 was the year when the meme fully went mainstream. In the past, these obscure, mostly silly splashes of Internet humor usually stayed within the confines of Tumblr or Twitter, but in 2016, memes became the way in which we consumed and commented on breaking news". Furthermore, we are living in the meme culture where some people spend their time scrolling on Facebook or other social platforms in the search of memes. Memes has also a factor of how social media is promoting body shaming, being part of the participatory culture where a lot of media content are being remediated that is people are taking picture available on social media and creating memes with. Many people have been victims of body shaming through memes. One example is the case of the well-known motivational speaker Lizzie Velasquez; she was born with a rare congenital disease that prevents her from accumulating body fat. Yet, she was targeted in a meme like;



(Gordon, 2016)

In the meme above, it can be found that people are actually making fun of her for example the wordings. In such a meme, people would be most likely to tag their friends and make fun of them or even 'react haha' as per Facebook function. It is to no wonder that this woman even won the title of being 'the ugliest person of earth.'

Since childhood everyone is being taught that beauty lies in being fair, thin and tall. Thus resulting to trolling of people who are the contrary of it, as portrayed in the picture above.



Even though this results to bringing down the personality or the image of someone, viewers on social media do not put themselves in the shoe of the targeted person as they keep on supporting the troll by sharing or liking the picture. Just because someone is skinny, black or has a disrupted face that they are seen as the opposite of the ideal beauty or gorgeous person. The fault lies between the perception of the people but the root of the problem is the society as since always even the toys for children for example Barbie girls or Disney character for girls has been portrayed as long, fair, no acne, no scars, or stretch mark. Because when little chubby ,dark girl sees this they start seeing themselves as the opposite ideal beautiful girl and this results to much drawbacks such as suicide, depression or go for services such as dermatologists or plastic surgery just because the so called ‘society’ never motivated or encouraged girls who were dark or chubby to accept themselves the way they are , and many girls are afraid to update their feed just because they fear that they may become the prey of trolls or they are afraid of how people will react or comment on their figure.

Adding on to that, those ‘chubby’ girls who are afraid of showing themselves on social media because of their insecurities regarding their colors, shapes or other features of their own bodies, they become preys to eating disorders. For example, Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa. They are both fatal illnesses that create disturbances in their eating behaviors. Anorexia, for instance refers to when people see them as being overweight even if they are seriously underweight. Anorexic people whenever they eat, they tend to vomit the food in less than 5 minutes in order not to build up fats or cholesterol in their bodies. They are so obsessed with having a perfect figure that they tend to forget that eating is a part in one’s life and they have to eat in order to survive. On the other hand, Bulimia Nervosa refers to another type of eating disorder when people often eat unusual amount of food and they have no control over that. This occurs very frequently in one day. Now referring this point in a social media aspect now, it can be said that these types of eating disorders such as Anorexia and Bulimia are promoted due to the different numerous posts about having a perfect body on social media platforms or in movies or even in magazines. In the other hand, there is body surveillance and self-sexualization , that is people starts to adopt a new culture and neglecting their health in order to be beautiful, this is also because there no big limits on social media, people post whatever they want and believe what they see.

Due to the fact that social media is now a major part of our lives, it is surely a platform where body shaming is being massively promoted voluntarily and also involuntarily. Meaning that there is no rule that say we can not put a post against a skinny person, a fat person or

someone who is “ugly”. It is all about the trends on social media and positive or not most people tend to believe that they should also follow the trend without realizing they are being victims of body shaming or participating in promoting body shaming.

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