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Research Trends in Different Social Media Platform and Body Image

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Abstract

This review will critically analyse the impact of short social media videos on body image. This review focuses specifically on the perception of social media and body image and the impact of different social media platforms on users' body image. It was found that there are positive (Trekels et al., 2018; Gilmour et al., 2020) and negative (Cohen & Blaszczynski, 2015; Yurdagül et al., 2021) effects on body image when people use social media. And, social comparison is one of the essential factors influencing the impact of social media on body image (Rahmadiansyah, 2022). Furthermore, the impact of social media on body image is stronger than that of traditional media. Furthermore, among social media, those based on sharing videos have a greater impact on body image than those based on images and texts (Engeln et al., 2020). However, there are still many limitations to the impact of social media on body image, and further research is needed to determine the specific impact of social media on body image, taking into account the characteristics, content, functions and tools of different social media platforms, as well as user thinking and cultural contextual factors.

Keywords: Review, Social Media, Body Image, Social Comparison, Social Media Platforms, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok

Introduction

Scholars studying mass communication have long sought to explain the impact of traditional media idealisations of beauty on users' body image (Barlett et al., 2008; Grabe et al., 2008). Body image refers to an individual's self-perception of themselves and the positive and negative emotions that arise in the process of self-perception (Veldhuis et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2019). However, with the rise of social media, an increasing number of researchers are focusing their research on the impact of social media on users' body image (Veldhuis et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2019; Casale et al., 2021). Perloff (2014) states that compared to traditional media, social media has a higher image has a higher intensity of influence than

traditional media. Nowadays, social media is gradually replacing other forms of mass media as the mainstream media and its influence on users in terms of shaping the desired beauty and body image has increased (Perloff, 2014). Namely, the increasing popularity of social media has led to a proliferation of research related to users' body image (Trekels et al., 2018; Gilmour et al., 2020; Cohen & Blaszczynski, 2015; Yurdagül et al., 2021). Numerous studies have shown that social media has a strong relationship with users' body image (Perloff, 2014; Trekels et al., 2018; Cohen et al., 2019). However, despite the similarity in communication methods sought across different social media platforms, the degree of impact on users' body image as well as their mental health can vary due to the different social media platforms targeting different percentages of outward appearance image content. Furthermore, the impact of social media on body image is a recent research issue and few studies have considered the impact of different social media platforms on users' body image and physical health. Therefore, there is a need to examine the functions of different social media platforms to fill the research gap. This review will critically analyse the impact of social media on body image. Specifically, this review will analyse the perceptions of social media and body image, as well as the impact of different social media platforms on body image, and conclude with recommendations for future research. This study provides valuable insights for researchers and practitioners in the field of mass communication, as well as for the measurement of audiences in social media on body image.

Social Media and the Perception of Body Image

Social media refers to an online networking platform that allows users to create and share content (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). Xue et al (2023) state that social media has advantages over traditional media in terms of more personalised content, diverse user personas and high data value. In addition, research has found that traditional media has varying degrees of influence on the perception of body image for both men and women (Barlett et al, 2008; Grabe et al, 2008). Body image refers to the audience's thoughts and perceptions of physical appearance (Veldhuis et al., 2014). Studies have found positive (Trekels et al., 2018; Gilmour et al., 2020) and negative (Cohen & Blaszczynski, 2015; Yurdagül et al., 2021) effects on body image when using social media. Buote et al (2011) argue that social media messages are as influential as traditional media messages to today's users. And, Perloff (2014) states that social media has a higher intensity of influence in terms of body image compared to traditional media. Nowadays, more and more researchers are focusing on the relationship between social media and users' body image. At the same time, social media is replacing other forms of mass media as the dominant media, and its influence on users in terms of shaping desirable beauty and body image has increased (Perloff, 2014). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that media interference with body image can be divided into two mechanisms: internalisation of social ideals and appearance-based social comparison (Thompson et al., 1999; Fardouly & Holland, 2018). Social media users make social comparisons of themselves based on the internalisation of ideals presented by social media (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016; Hogue & Mills, 2019). Furthermore, social media portrays male body images as muscular and fit, and female body images as slim, in an attempt to set the standard in terms of body image (Veldhuis et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2019). Furthermore, users selectively share photos and videos that are satisfactory to them based on the internalisation of the ideals presented in social media (Shafie et al., 2012). Amongst others. Belonging and self-presentation are the main social needs for users to share selfies on social media (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). When users show a more positive impact on body image while using social media, it boosts self-esteem

and welcome (Bell et al., 2016; Trekels et al., 2018). However, Rodgers and Rousseau's (2022) study elaborated different findings. Their findings suggest that different groups have different levels of influence on the impact of body image in social media, with adolescents having a greater impact on body image in social media and a more negative impact on the younger female group who are more concerned with self-worth and appearance (Rodgers & Rousseau, 2022). Tiggemann (2011) explains the impact of social media on negative impact on body image by explaining that the media presents the ideal of thinness and beauty to the audience, but because the audience is unable to achieve the ideal of thinness and beauty, it leads to dissatisfaction with body image. Among these, mass media is considered to be one of the most prevalent and even influential factors contributing to users' body image dissatisfaction (Tiggemann, 2011). At the same time, research has shown that the pursuit of a slim and perfect body may generate negative emotions and trigger a series of negative knock-on effects (Cecon et al., 2017). Empirical studies have demonstrated that the ideal beauty and body image portrayed by the media increases users' psychological distress about body image (Kleemans et al., 2018; Fatt et al., 2019). Meanwhile, Saiphoo and Vahedi (2019) state that users generate social comparisons during their use of social media based on ideal internalised body images and generate dissatisfaction in the process of comparison. Fox (2020) argued that excessive social media use by users increases feelings of loneliness and is accompanied by binge eating, dissatisfaction with body image and even eating disorder behaviour. However, a study by Fardouly et al. (2023) found different results; although users' use of social media caused body image dissatisfaction and mood swings, interventions for body image reduced body image dissatisfaction and appearance comparisons. Overall, the impact of social media on body image is both positive and negative (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). On the one hand, social media provides users with a platform for self-presentation, which leads to better self-confidence, self-esteem and increased well-being, and allows for a shared exploration of ideal beauty and body image (Trekels et al., 2018). On the other hand, users make social comparisons based on ideal beauty and body image standards shaped by social media, and striving to meet unrealistic beauty and body image standards can cause psychological related disorders in users (Chatzopoulou et al., 2020). However, despite the similarity in communication methods sought across social media platforms, the extent to which body image as well as psychological well-being of users is affected can vary due to the different social media platforms targeting different percentages of appearance-image content. Studies have shown that social media based on shared videos have a greater impact on body image than social media based on images and text (Engeln et al., 2020). Therefore, the impact of different social media platforms on users' body image and physical health needs to be considered.

Different Types of Social Media Platforms

Facebook and Body Image

In the past, most of the research related to social media and body image has focused on Facebook (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Cohen et al., 2017; Gilmour et al, 2020). Facebook refers to a social media platform through which a social media platform where users create personal profiles to share and interact with family, friends (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). Data shows that by 2022, more than 2.96 billion users will be active on Facebook daily, with the US, India being the main audience for Facebook (Dixon, 2023). And dividing users using Facebook into the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups found that the majority of users are likely to be female (Dixon, 2023). Cohen et al (2017) noted that the level of

internalisation and body monitoring of the ideal body image of thinness by young women is largely driven by the use of specific social media focused on appearance (Facebook and Instagram). Tiggemann and Slater (2013) noted that Facebook, as a socio-cultural medium, had a significant impact on adolescent females' internalisation of ideals and motivation to be thin that was confirmed by (Fardouly and Vartanian, 2015). Fardouly and Vartanian (2015) concluded that young women's use of Facebook positively influenced body image concerns and moderated the effects of body image concerns through outward appearance comparisons and upward comparisons with peers around them. That is, more time spent on Facebook by young women generates increased body image concerns through outward appearance comparisons with others (Hogue & Mills, 2019). However, according to Cohen and Blaszczynski (2015), the negative effects of Facebook on body image were found. Cohen and Blaszczynski (2015), the ideal beauty and body image portrayed on Facebook leads to higher body image dissatisfaction among its users, with an associated risk of eating disorders. However, Trekels et al (2018) examined the impact of social media on users' body image from a different latitude. The findings found that users boosted self-esteem and welcome when using Facebook. Gilmour et al (2020) concluded that social support on Facebook improves users' mental health issues as well as increasing overall well-being. These studies establish a preliminary evidence base for research related to the impact of Facebook and body image and suggest that Facebook has varying degrees of impact on users' body image. However, it is unclear whether the impact of Facebook on users changes as a result of the popularity of other social media, so research on other social media platforms is needed.

Instagram and Body Image

Instagram is a social media platform where one can share photos, videos and interact with other users and even celebrities (Tiggemann, 2020). Data shows that Instagram is used by 30% of internet users worldwide (Dixon, 2023). According to Brown and Tiggemann (2016), female body image leads to dissatisfaction with their own bodies as well as negative emotions due to exposure to Instagram images of celebrities and peers, but the admiration of celebrities will mitigate this set of negative effects. Engeln et al (2020) conducted a study on the effects of Facebook and Instagram use on young women on comparative appearance, body satisfaction, and mood. The researchers found a striking finding that young women who used Instagram showed higher levels of body comparison and lower levels of body satisfaction and emotions in relation to body image compared to Facebook. Primarily because women have been surrounded by messages related to aesthetic standards and social pressure in terms of body image dissatisfaction and appearance comparisons, resulting in women's control over their bodies exposing women to greater socio-cultural pressure than men (Murnen, 2011). Tiggemann et al (2020) similarly noted that relative to the effects of other social media on body image Instagram social media visuals have a greater impact on body image, particularly targeting Instagram visuals that are beneficial to body image increases women's appreciation and satisfaction with their bodies. In addition, Chatzopoulou et al (2020) found that male Instagram users with lower body esteem were more conscious of their body image in their study of male Instagram users' body image and behaviour. They also found two different phenomena in their study, namely that one group of users became anxious and the other more confident during body reinforcement (Chatzopoulou et al., 2020). However, Casale et al (2021) found the opposite, as Casale et al (2021) noted that the effect of exposure to attractive same-sex people in Instagram on body image differed between males and females, with females experiencing body image dissatisfaction in exposure to

attractive same-sex people in Instagram, but males did not experience body image dissatisfaction. However, Yurdagül's body image is not as strong as that of the men. However, Yurdagül et al (2021) found that body image dissatisfaction from Instagram use indirectly affected anxiety-related psychological disorders in women, while body image dissatisfaction from Instagram use indirectly affected depression, loneliness, and anxiety-related psychological disorders in men. It can be seen that users using Instagram have a more significant impact on body image compared to those using Facebook and have both positive and negative effects on users' body image as well as their mental health. Brown and Tiggemann (2016) state that status appearance comparisons can mediate users' use of Instagram to produce body image negatively. Furthermore, research has shown differences in the impact of users' gender on body image when using social media (Chatzopoulou et al., 2020; Casale et al., 2021). Furthermore, the focus on Instagram users is on young women and men, and the impact on body image is relatively weak for users of other ages.

TikTok and Body Image

In recent years, TikTok has become a fast-growing social media platform that has quickly taken over as one of the most popular platforms for users (Daniel, 2023). TikTok is a social media platform known for sharing short videos, allowing users to create and share short video content to users around the world, and has powerful editing features (Liu, 2021). According to data, over one billion users are active on TikTok daily by 2023 and this number is increasing rapidly (Daniel, 2023). A study of TikTok found a shocking result compared to the direct effect that Facebook and Instagram use had on users' body image. Hülsing (2021) notes that the effect of TikTok on women's body image is complex, and that while TikTok portrays the ideal of a thin and slim female body image to its users, the TikTok social media platform's body-positive communication gradually weakens the negative impact on body image. Furthermore, Pryde and Prichard (2022) found in their study that users were not dissatisfied with causing body image when exposed to appearance-related TikTok short videos, but only had some impact in response to appearance comparisons and emotions. Mink and Szymanski's (2022) study also confirms the idea that TikTok only plays an indirect role in influencing body image and is more of a comparison of appearance. Rahmadiansyah (2022) found a striking result in a body image study targeting social comparison and TikTok, where men generated more social comparisons in their use of TikTok than women. This shows that social comparison is one of the essential factors in social media related research. However, Hung's (2022) study suggests that TikTok content about thinness and beauty ideals may induce negative body image disorders in users, which can lead to adverse eating disorder outcomes. This is in line with the findings of previous studies on social media (Cohen & Blaszczynski, 2015; Yurdagül et al., 2021). Furthermore, the study found that Fitspiration-related Tiktok content, while not emphasising the ideals of thinness and beauty, can have a large number of negative comments, which can influence users' perceptions of body image. As TikTok is a recently popular social media platform, relevant research on body image is relatively weak, and recent studies have shown that TikTok users are more socially comparative when using social media compared to Facebook and Instagram. Social comparison is often seen as a negative behaviour, but plays a positive role in terms of self-improvement and motivation (Cramer et al., 2016). However, it is unclear whether the impact of TikTok on users has changed as a result of the content provided, and the social media features and tools available for social comparison, so research into the features of social media platforms is needed to fill in the research gaps.

Conclusion

To conclude, this review critically analysed the perception of social media and body image and the impact of different social media platforms on body image. It was found that an increasing number of researchers are focusing their research on the impact of social media on users' body image (Veldhuis et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2019; Casale et al., 2021). The findings suggest that there are positive (Trekels et al., 2018; Gilmour et al., 2020) and negative (Cohen & Blaszczynski, 2015; Yurdagül et al., 2021) influences on body image when using social media. And, social comparison is one of the essential factors influencing the impact of social media on body image (Rahmadiansyah, 2022). Furthermore, the impact of social media on body image is stronger than that of traditional media. Furthermore, among social media, those based on sharing videos have a greater impact on body image than those based on images and texts (Engeln et al., 2020). However, there are many issues relative to the impact of social media on body image. For example, although different social media platforms have similar communication methods, the extent to which they affect body image and mental health varies depending on the proportion of appearance-specific content on each social media platform. As the minds of users are constantly changing, it is important to consider the impact of the progression of users' minds on body image across social media platforms. Secondly, although gender has been the focus of research, the impact of different cultural backgrounds on body image across social media platforms needs to be considered in the research process. In addition, the features, content, functions and tools of social media platforms are constantly evolving and it is important to consider whether the impact of social media on users changes as a result of the content provided and the social media functions and tools available for social comparison. This study provides valuable insights into the impact of social media on body image.

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