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Abstract

Social media, specifically Instagram, has become a major aspect of American culture. Unlike traditional media, it gives each individual user the ability to create and share their own content. Likewise, it also gives these users the ability to respond to others' content. The goal of this study is to analyze how plus-size women utilize Instagram and how that usage reflects their position and identities within society. I surveyed sixty-nine women who self-identified as plus-size. The survey asked these women questions on what they post, why they post it, and how the public responds to and influences these posts. There was also an examination of identity and how being plus-size influences a person's individual and social identities. The results of the study showed that while these women post unique types of content, they have similar experiences on Instagram. Overall, the women received more positive responses than negative responses to their posts. These negative responses featured the reinforcement of common plus-size stereotypes including the connection to health-related problems. Within the positive comments, there was an interesting dichotomy between being considered inspirational and confident. The most discussed social rules involved how much skin a user should show in her posted pictures and whether or not this would cause them to be censored by the app or other users.

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