The Digital Showcase: A Study on Affective Encounters with Women's Body Representation as Profile Pictures on Facebook

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El escaparate digital: un estudio sobre el encuentro afectivo con la representación del cuerpo de la mujer en las imágenes de perfil de Facebook

ABSTRACT RESUMEN

Facebook Profile Pictures, function as Mixed Realities (MR). They are tools that compensate for the physical absence of users. These aim at remedying the accompanying anxiety of absence, including FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). Profile Pictures are the first component of users' Facebook profiles that audiences engage with. This study shows that women curate and commodify (Kasch, 2013) their Facebook self-presentations. A unique digital identity is aimed at by consciously showcasing elements like attractiveness, lifestyle, and clothing through Profile Pictures. Images are often aimed at gaining a sense of celebrity status evoked through audience's interactions (likes, comments, etc.) with these images. Here, women feel pressured to represent themselves as 'hot' or 'sexy' in order to gain attention. Women are also conscious that their images evoke a range of affects amongst their audiences. This feelings of sexual arousal and the audiences attempt to communicate this through inappropriate messages. Such affect, informed by patriarchy, predetermines patterns of self-presentation and perception of female bodies (Bordo, 1993). This article uses in-depth, qualitative interviews and a modified version of Goffman (1976)'s framework of Gendered Advertisements to analyze millennial women's Facebook Profile Pictures. It concludes that women employ elaborate processes to attain specific goals using these images.

Las imágenes de perfil en Facebook funcionan como realidades mixtas (MR). Son herramientas que compensan la ausencia física de los usuarios. Buscan mitigar la ansiedad que acompaña la ausencia, incluido el FOMO (Miedo a perderse, en inglés, Fear of missing out). Las imágenes de perfil son el primer componente de los perfiles de los usuarios de Facebook con el que las audiencias interactúan. Este estudio muestra que las mujeres organizan y mercantilizan (Kasch, 2013) sus propias presentaciones en Facebook. El objetivo de una identidad digital única es mostrar de forma consciente elementos como el atractivo, el estilo de vida y la forma de vestir a través de la imagen del perfil. Las imágenes a menudo tienen como objetivo obtener un cierto estatus de celebridad evocado a través de las interacciones de la audiencia (me gusta, comentarios, etc.) con estas imágenes. De esta forma, las mujeres pueden sentirse presionadas a representarse a sí mismas como "calientes" o "atractivas" para obtener atención. Las mujeres son conscientes de que sus imágenes inciden de distintas formas entre sus audiencias. Esto incluye sentimientos de atracción sexual y las audiencias pueden intentar comunicarlas a través de mensajes inapropiados. Este afecto, inquirido por el patriarcado, predetermina los patrones de auto-presentación y percepción de los cuerpos femeninos (Bordo, 1993). Este artículo utiliza entrevistas cualitativas en profundidad y una versión modificada del marco de Goffman (1976) de publicaciones de género para analizar las fotos de perfil de Facebook de mujeres milenials. Se concluye que las mujeres emplean elaborados procesos para alcanzar objetivos específicos por medio de estas imágenes.

KEYWORDS PALABRAS CLAVE

Social Media, Women Representation, Facebook, Profile Picture, Affective Communication

Redes sociales, Representación de la mujer, Facebook, Imágenes de perfil, Comunicación afectiva

Rajan B. (2018). The Digital Showcase: A Study on Affective Encounters with Women's Body Representation as Profile Pictures on Facebooks. *Hipertext.net*, (17), 64-73. DOI:10.31009/hipertext.net.2018.i17.06

<https://dx.doi.org/10.31009/hipertext.net.2018.i17.06>

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1. Introduction

Today, our lives are enmeshed with rapid technological innovation and the ubiquity of the digital devices. We have monetised digital relationships and believe in the empowering nature of digital spaces; this has contributed to a unique way of 'seeing' (Hui, 2016). This way of seeing, includes a two-fold process of celebrating the speed of technology while simultaneously being haunted by the anxiety of periodic absence from digital media (Hui, 2016). On social media, this would confirm what is popularly termed FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and one's inability to decipher how many 'likes' or reactions a Profile Picture would collect. These reactions occur within the virtual communities that social media, especially Facebook provides. Virtual communities could be characterised by anonymity, absence of cues that are associated with physical bodies (facial expressions, voice tone etc.) and the ability to withdraw membership at will (Tsatsou, 2016). Given these, social media users form and maintain virtual community relationships by creating a distinct digital identity on Facebook. They use self-presentational tools like posts, images, Profile Pictures, and Facebook stories. This digital identity refers to a digital version of one's identity in the real environment. Here, the real environment refers to the environment that a person perceives without any technological aid (Milgram & Kishino, 1994).

Profile Pictures, then, are digital representations of the body and fall within the realm of Mixed Realities (MR). Such representation involves elaborate processes, where individuals, specifically women, employ various methods to advance a unique identity. This involves focus on specific postures, expression, clothing, and the assertion of class, amongst other representations. In addition, parameters like representation of fitness are considered where one uses processes like photo-editing to enhance certain parts and conceal others. This is in the spirit of the 'cyborg' which Haraway (2006) describes as the physical body to which various technological processes may be applied. Here, ideas of fitness in the female representational body are often associated with such characteristics as weakness, subservience, and grooming as opposed to the traditional masculine identity of strength, and achievements (Markula, 2006). Such duality of definition is embedded within the patriarchal order. This article argues that in their Facebook self-presentations, women often perpetuate this traditional duality despite their belief that their Profile Pictures transcend patriarchal norms. Here, women often claim that the usage of certain images (containing skin-exposure etc.), are empowering and that they promote a positive body image. Yet, such images may instead contribute to the objectification of the body and subscription to the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975). Here, Facebook Profile Pictures are tools consciously used by members to attain goals derived from users' immersion within digital life.

While asserting distinct digital identities, women are often

aware that their Profile Pictures evoke affective responses from their audiences. Here, audiences may experience feelings of sexual arousal, shame upon such arousal and the attempt to curb such feelings. The process behind the female body's self-presentation through Profile Pictures may involve a conscious effort to cater to the affect-evoking capability of these images. Within Ludology or Game Studies, immersion refers to the removal of avatars from the game experience and allowing an individual to engage in first-person perspective (Nacke & Lindley, 2009). Further, Brown and Cairns (2004) address the concept of total immersion as synonymous with the concept of presence. Here a person is subject to feelings of empathy and atmosphere within the gaming environment (Brown & Cairns, 2004). This immersion or presence can be extended beyond gaming to one's engagement within social media and the emotions of presence that accompany it. This is applicable to the Facebook experience. Immersive presence is accompanied by periods of absence. This article acknowledges the existence of physical and immersive absence of the user. Physical absence indicates the absence of users' physical bodies in self-presentations which is compensated through the Facebook Profile Picture. Immersive absence indicates the lack of first-person engagement, for instance, when a user is offline or unavailable to attend to the Profile Picture at a given point. While physical absence is given, immersive absence may be experienced in periodic bouts. The term absence is used to indicate both.

Facebook Profile Pictures, then, may serve as affective triggers during periods of absence, often in order to compensate for the anxiety (including FOMO). The Profile Picture, then, compensates on two levels. On one hand, it may reduce the degree of 'FOMO' experienced, by encouraging users to keep their profile relevant during periods of immersive absence. On the other hand, the self-presentation of users' bodies in Profile Pictures evokes affect amongst the audience. Images trigger affect despite the absence of the user. Hence, the study proposes that Facebook users' Profile Pictures are aimed at asserting digital identities and inducing affect amongst audiences in the users' absence. This paper studies the process behind women's choices of images, the purposes they are consciously aimed at and the affect-inducing power of engagement anticipated with these images.

2. Literature Review

Facebook users consciously represent digital identities by curating and commodifying individual lives. Kasch's (2013) study with college students' curation of self and others on Facebook portrayed that there are two ways of writing one's lifestyle onto social media. One's life is either curated or commodified. Curation refers to an ongoing digital process of organizing, assembling and editing one's images, text etc., in order to construct a self-presentation that exists in the digital sphere (Facebook) but pushes audiences to experience emo-

tions as if the physical body was present (Kasch, 2013). Here, Waterworth, Waterworth, Mantovani and Riva (2010) suggest that in Virtual Realities (VR) individuals often encounter second-person representations of self and others, including images that evoke feelings of presence. This indicates a continuity between the body, its physical self-presentation and its representation on Facebook.

Commodification refers to the amplification of the curated self-presentation and the assertion of identity as capital (Kasch, 2013). Digital identity, here, is used as capital that would allow one to express ideas of socioeconomic and cultural status, securing the user a unique, popular position. This is usually indicated by the number of friends, likes etc., that their Facebook Profile collects. Here, Kasch (2013) suggests that the commodified self is used to make one's digital curation unique and enable it to stand out so that it is consumed and redistributed by Facebook friends and peers. Facebook Profile Pictures allow for such curation and commodification and, hence evoke affect (elaborated below). Users generally use parameters like representation of socioeconomic status, sexual attractiveness, adherence to fashion trends, fitness, etc., to assemble curations and commodifications of one's lifestyle. The layout of such assemblages are propositioned by Deleuze (1987). Deleuzian assemblages refer to the ordering of heterogeneous elements that exist in their multiplicity and can be freely added, subtracted and recombined without ever creating or destroying an organic unified whole (Nail, 2017). Hence, the Facebook user, the Profile Picture, the physical body, one's status etc., are concrete elements that make the assemblage operate in a given way at a given point in time. Assemblages account for the politics of the female body within a patriarchal framework indicating potential for change contained in the freedom of recombination.

3. Mixed Realities and Affect

Facebook allows for an immersive experience characterised by curation and commodification of self-presentations that are embedded within Mixed Realities (MR). For Milgram and Kishino (1994), MR are subject to a virtuality continuum where the real environment and the virtual environment occupy polar opposite positions. The real environment consists of real tangible, embodied objects that are removed from any virtual influence. For instance, the human body, even when infused with technology (Fitbit, Google glasses, implanted microchips) would constitute a real object, whereas an image of the body would fall within the realm of MR. A simulated body would constitute VR. An intermingling of both the virtual and the real indicate Mixed Realities (MR). Here, real objects have actual existence and may be sampled or re-synthesised for digital representation while virtual objects are digitally simulated (Milgram & Kishino, 1994). Such synthesis involves the production, editing and upload of the body's digital image.

MR and Facebook Profile Pictures involve the concept of bodies and the affective dimension of embodiment. While consolidating the theoretical paradigms on affect, Leys (2011) found that the affective dimension is a self-governing system (like the circulatory system) within the body that lies below the threshold of consciousness, meaning, signification, cognition or intention (Leys, 2011). Individuals experiencing affect lack a comprehension of it and its function as informing emotions. Leys (2011) further explains this, by asserting that for affect theorists like Deleuze and Massumi (2002), mediated tools (visual images, literature, mass media, political campaigns etc.) serve to communicate chemical messengers prior to language, meaning or ideology. For Hansen (2006), the affective dimension of the body exists prior to its sensory understanding, and the affective is the frame through which an articulation of the body in the senses is enabled (Cecchetto, 2011). Further, the distinction between the real and the virtual is negated in order to allow for all realities to be recognized as MR (Hansen, 2006). Hence, the affective dimension is considered prior even to the perceived virtual, which is simply an extension of some form of embodiment (Cecchetto, 2011). Here, the affective first translates one's physical experiences with the female body and its politics in the real environment and subsequently allows for sensory comprehension of the images of women that one encounters on Facebook.

4. Female Body Relations

Women curate and commodify Facebook self-presentations keeping the affect-inducing effect of the Profile Picture in mind. This indicates a usage of the female body, its postures and ornamental fashion. Here, Bordo (1993) uses a Foucauldian model to suggest a dual recognition of the status of men and women within the realm of politics of the body. The model acknowledges the enmeshment of men within a patriarchy that may have unduly contributed to their status as 'enemies' (Bordo, 1993). Here, men have internalised practices (such as the objectification of the female body). Yet, they also hold a higher stake in perpetuating the institutions within which they have historically occupied dominant positions relative to women (Bordo, 1993). Within these institutions, women willingly adhere to cultural practices that uphold patriarchy through devices like fashion and surgical enhancement of bodies including silicone breast implants (Bordo, 1993). Here, Mulvey (1975) applies the male gaze to films and suggests that it is an active tool using which man applies his obsessions and fantasies onto the silent, passive image of the woman. This image is attributed qualities of passivity and exhibition, where appearance is coded to visually and erotically influence the audience (Mulvey, 1975). Women's exhibitionist tendencies (obsession with dress and style) indicate a passive representation of self embedded in patriarchal norms (Mulvey, 1975). This is applicable to the Profile Picture which, despite indicating the illusion of women's agency in selection and display, could still be a

result of their adherence to the patriarchal order.

The representation of male and female bodies in Profile Pictures, is perceived subject to the affect associated with such patriarchy. This affect further influences the sensory system to react, allowing for presence to be felt by the audience of the Profile Picture despite the physical absence of the body. For instance, a study by Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman and Tong (2008) studied the perception of physical attractiveness based on Facebook posts and images that implied sexual conduct and binge drinking behaviour. The study found that men's profiles that showed high instances of both were rated as more physically attractive compared to women's which were rated less attractive if perceived as indulging in both. Hence, such traditionally rooted perceptions may be applicable to the Facebook body (Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman & Tong, 2008).

5. Profile Picture and Identity

Facebook affords an autobiography characterised by users' curations, informed by their identities as networked selves and their routine interactions with Facebook's algorithms (McNeill, 2012). Facebook Profile Pictures are the first self-presentational tools consciously used to curate an identity that serves certain goals. This involves women's need to be perceived by others as 'hot', 'sexy', and attractive. This identity represented through the Profile Picture has the ability to induce affect in audiences. Images of other bodies on social media evoke affect that is felt through intensities (shiver, gut feeling). Here, mediated images are experienced through bodies and in the projection of such a self, only physical aspects such as fitness regimes and cosmetic surgery are considered (Featherstone, 2010). Instead, in order to produce bodies that make others stop and take notice, the affective dimension (posture, the look etc.) must also be activated (Featherstone, 2010). This allows the body to create a positive affective charge in other bodies, so that one achieves the identity of being charismatic (Featherstone, 2010). Facebook Profile Pictures often involve women employing their bodies to aspire towards this charismatic identity.

Further, Dimulescu (2015) acknowledges that traditional feminine roles have outgrown those of motherhood and service to those of reclamation and free expression of sexuality, ability to choose what to wear etc. Yet, women are guided by the objectification and sexualisation of their bodies to cater to an economically driven consumer culture (Dimulescu, 2015). Such a consumer culture, in turn, uses digital representations of women's bodies to perpetuate femininity and, hence, patriarchy (Goffman, 1976). All of these contribute to women's self-presentations and digital identity.

6. Methodology

The study is explorative in its nature. It seeks to understand how millennial women in Bengaluru are shaping their digital identity with their Facebook Profile Pictures. It is also conscious of the role affect plays in encounters with the audience to shape this digital identity of Indian millennial women. This is an interpretive research that represents the affective forces in women's digital interactions. It also explores the communication structures that govern the curations of the millennial women's Facebook Profile Picture.

The study applied purposive and snowball sampling to recruit participants for the research. The participants pool for the study comprised of 26 women from Bengaluru. All of them were millennial women, that is, those born between 1993 and 2000 (18 to 25 years of age). Most of them were in their early career or were university students.

Two levels of study are employed. Firstly, semi-structured in-depth interviews was used to gauge first-hand knowledge of the process and effort behind women's Profile Pictures. Semi-structured interviews involve the usage of premeditated questions centred on a specific topic, but which allow the conversation to change significantly depending on the participant's narrative (Fylan, 2005). It allows the interviewer to gain insight into participants' perspectives and to better understand the research question (Fylan, 2005). These interviews lasted for a duration of an hour. The interviews were standardised to an extent, as each interview addressed the same kinds of questions in a similar order. This brought a greater understanding of the meanings inherent in each interview responses as it was easier to reach agreements about their content for coding and mapping the dominant themes. In addition, in-depth interviewing involves a qualitative method of conducting intensive, individual interviews involving limited participants who share their perspectives on the topic at hand (Boyce & Neale, 2006). It was felt that such semi-structured in-depth interviews would assist in gaining insight into the elaborate processes that women employ behind the construction of their Profile Pictures.

The Profile Pictures of the participants were subject to semiotic analysis using a variation of Goffman's framework of Gendered Advertisements (Goffman, 1976). Female bodies in advertisements subscribe to certain criteria (outlined below), in order to perpetuate a culturally constructed and defined idea of femininity (Goffman, 1976; Jha, Raj & Gangwar, 2017). The following framework omits a few of the original criteria and adds a few in order to tailor it to Facebook Profile Pictures of women. Here, the advertised object is assumed to be the female body itself, to which various processes are applied in order to enable commodification (Kasch, 2013). Women's Profile Pictures are analysed under four key themes of class consciousness, attractiveness, 'posture and expression', and

clothes. To develop the themes, following criteria have been applied.

Feminine Touch: Women use their hands to delicately caress and trace contours of objects and, by extension, of themselves as commodities.

Ritualisation of Subordination: Women are shown as lacking power or control over their own selves. Bodies are shown either seated, leaning forwards or backwards as if falling, positioned lower and closer to the ground, seated or lounging on chairs, beds, on their backs, etc.

Licensed Withdrawal: Women are shown to be withdrawn from current circumstances, psychologically or physically removed from the situation (Paul & Sheets, 2012). Images of women avoiding eye contact with the camera, closing their eyes, and diverting their interest to an object within the frame signify withdrawal.

Body Display: Jha, Raj and Gangwar (2017) addition of this category to the framework is considered. They include a range of body (legs, cleavage, shoulders etc.) revealing clothes like bathing suits, mini-skirts, translucent apparel, body-hugging clothes, shorts and the like which specify a degree of nudity (Jha, Raj & Gangwar, 2017).

Subscription to the Male Gaze: This article introduces a category that involves women's images subscribing to the male gaze. It examines whether women are sexually objectified. Here, various indicators like facial expressions (suggestion of sexual arousal), posture (legs spread apart), makeup (bright red lipstick), camera angle (breast, hips, lower abdomen, etc.) and skin exposure are used (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). Subjective interpretation is used, acknowledging probabilities that women in bikinis may not be objectified at all, while those fully clothed sometimes could be (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). Here, Stankiewicz and Rosselli (2008) apply Lindner's (2004) definition of objectification where representations suggest that the primary purpose of the body is to be looked at.

Further, a survey conducted by Pew Research Center found that women and the young (aged 18 to 35) drove Facebook usage (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie & Purcell, 2011). Here, 18% of women as compared to 11% of men update their Facebook status at least once per day and 20% women like content several times a day as opposed to 9% of men (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie & Purcell, 2011).

Acknowledging the above figures, the following research question is considered. Do women use the Facebook Profile Picture as a tool to communicate a distinct, often sexual, digital identity that serves to evoke affect amongst their targeted audience?

7. Analysis

Millennial women on Facebook are often aware of the impact that their Profile Picture can have on the audiences. Facebook Profile Pictures are not static self-presentations. In the essence of Deleuze (1987), elements like users, audiences, clothes, posture and expression, class consciousness and attractiveness lie within an assemblage that contributes to a digital identity. Assemblages are mixtures that are flexible, such that changes in a single contributing element can in turn influence the connected whole (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987). In a similar vein, women's Facebook Profile Pictures often evoke affect in the audience, especially men. Such affect may bring audiences to perceive an objectified self-presentation allowing for sexual arousal. Here, the affective dimension of the body, which registers previous experiences informs its sensory system to react. Here, Clough (2008) points out to Massumi's (2002) usage of 'memory without content' as an internalised bodily memory that influences resultant emotions and actions. In this way, women's self-presentations of their bodies on Facebook evoke affect amongst audiences who are encouraged to communicate and leave traces of this affect through their reactions and messages. A participant stated, "My Facebook images have received various messages including things like 'show me your panties'. Now I avoid anything provocative" (Informant 15, Personal Communication, 22nd April, 2018).

This is registered within the woman's affective dimension and informs her future decisions, including censoring her own Facebook images. Hence, the assemblage itself, retains its dynamic character as it takes account of these new realities. Within this setting, the article analyses the process behind women's curation and commodification of their Facebook Profile Pictures, and hence, their bodies. It uses four key themes of class consciousness, attractiveness, 'posture and expression', and clothes. It argues that all of these cater to a patriarchal framework and a reassertion of women's feminine characteristics. Semiotic analysis using a modified version of Goffman (1976)'s framework of Gendered Advertisements is applied.

8. Attractiveness

Through their Profile Pictures, women often hope to create a self-presentation that addresses attributes of attractiveness and their desire to not be judged as 'trying too hard.' Attractiveness is often expressed using adjectives such as 'cute', 'hot', 'pretty', 'sexy' and the like. Here, a woman acknowledges that her Profile Picture subscribes to these definitions of attractiveness. Simultaneously, she is also aware that these images can evoke affect and hence, emotions of desire, lust, etc., amongst her target audience.

The notion of attractiveness is often coupled with submission to feminine ideals where the body is commodified. Feminine ideals as described by Goffman (1976)'s framework of Gendered Advertisements views traditionally defined femininity as inclusive of behaviours that confirm subservience and submission to the male gaze. This includes women's attention to grooming, clothing, service to masculine needs and self-objectification. The Profile Picture of Informant 13 involves her dressed in a bright yellow Sari (an Indian garment), posing sideways, and staring directly into the camera, smirking. The left palm is weakly placed just below the collar bones. Such a gentle caressing of the self subscribes to Goffman (1976)'s criteria of feminine touch. Despite the image not showing any indications of licensed withdrawal or a large degree of skin exposure, it still does subscribe to the male gaze. The body is objectified to intentionally convey a particular form of physical attraction.

The women in the study often modify their commodified self-presentations depending on the restrictions that their Facebook community imposes. "Through this Profile Picture, I wanted people to think that I look pretty. However, I have family on Facebook and can't put up images with a deep neck etc. I reserve those for other social media" (Informant 13, Personal Communication, 28th March, 2018). Here, women are often responsive to negative affect where ideas like family's honour and image prevent them from expressing themselves as they would otherwise have in the absence of these restrictions. Family honour refers to a family's needs to uphold certain religious, patriarchal or community norms, often by directing the behaviour (dress, relationships, etc.) of community members, specifically women.

Attractiveness does not exist in isolation. It takes into account women's perceptions of their own bodies, their attempt at rectifying perceived flaws through efforts at fitness and the subsequent hope that these efforts would make them look attractive. Here, the Profile Picture of Informant 7 is analysed. It is a selfie where the woman is smiling directly at the camera, her body is leaning forward, a top angle is employed. She is wearing a crop-top where her midriff is exposed. Within this, the image portrays some degree of body display and is clearly engaging the camera. The image compensates for the woman's physical and/or immersive absence from Facebook, such that audiences can engage with the playful image in her absence. She stated, "I work-out and eat healthy so that I can look good." Such efforts further translate onto digital representation. Similarly, Informants 3, 14 and 18 admitted to working out to correct their perceived bodily flaws. One of them said, "I want zero fat on my body. I can't wear certain clothes, if I do I cannot photograph well then" (Informant 14, Personal Communication, 22nd April, 2018).

Another said that virtual aids are often used to correct perceived flaws. "I hate my skinny arms and legs. I often crop my

legs out of images so that they don't look like chicken legs" (Informant 8, Personal Communication, 24th April, 2018). Such tendencies of altering images for digital consumption is a product of the negative affect that women experience through internalised ideal body types and the subsequent imposition of these on the self.

These trends indicate that millennial women's self-presentation on Facebook is guided by their perceptions of attractiveness, ideal bodies and femininity. Physical (working out, poses) and digital (editing, etc.) efforts are employed to achieve images subscribing to these ideals.

9. Posture and Expression

Women often employ a great deal of effort into curating the image for the Facebook Profile Picture. This image contributes to the first-impression of themselves that women want to present. One's posture and expression is carefully thought out and often combine to objectify and commodify the woman's body. Coupled with the idea of class, commodification adds to one's identity capital which assists in getting users noticed, making it easier for them to achieve their objectives. For instance, flirtatious or sensuous expressions are often employed. The Profile Picture of Informant 15 shows her standing relatively erect. However, her expression is flirtatious and she is seen winking and pouting, looking straight into the camera. Such expressions indicate engagement with the audience despite her physical absence. Further, she subscribes to the category of feminine touch, where she is seen stroking her hair with her hands. There is also the usage of bright red lipstick which suggests a level of sensual appeal and passion. She stated, "An entire shoot was set up to get this image. I wanted to look bold and sexy. I had to approach sponsors for a college fest and I knew that such a Profile Picture would get me the attention I wanted" (Informant 15, Personal Communication, 22nd April, 2018).

These participants show that women are conscious that their postures and expressions can help them achieve certain objectives. This goal-attainment process involves the commodification of the self through submission to feminine ideals. These ideal images serve to evoke affect embedded within the patriarchy. Ideal images involve women's self-presentations that cater to the male gaze and, hence, help them achieve the attention that would assist them in their goals.

Further, a common tendency within images is subscription to the categories of licensed withdrawal (aversion of eyes etc.), ritualisation of subordination (taking support from an external object) and subscription to the male gaze. Informants 1, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 18 and 22 were shown averting their gazes, looking down or staring into the distance in order to show conscious withdrawal from current surroundings. Similarly, ritualisation of subordination was a common theme, where

women sat on chairs, the floor, or on lower surfaces, employing a top angle in order to allow for a top-down view. The expressions were often coy or shy. Similarly, postures such as spreading the legs, while seated backwards on a chair, leaning forward to take support from the chair (Informant 3), add to a certain sensualized objectification of the body. Women, however, are aware of these images subscribing to a feminine ideal. For instance, a participant recalls, "When the image was taken, I was aware that it looked very attractive. I knew that these images were catering to men in particular. It is easy to say that provocative images help with body positivity, but sometimes they simply cater to the male gaze" (Informant 3, Personal Communication, 21st April, 2018).

10. Clothing

Participants devoted significant thought to clothing (including hair and makeup). Clothing used in Profile Pictures was either pre-planned or the image itself was chosen because of how the clothes made women look. For instance, Informants 8 and 45 decided to construct an entire shooting session for the Profile Picture. Here, one of them stated, "My friend usually photographs me for all my Profile Pictures. So we picked a day to meet and we thought a lot about the dress. This dress was new and very pretty and shows off my back" (Informant 8, Personal Communication, 24th April, 2018). Similarly, women tend to use images in which they have otherwise dressed attractively. For instance, Informant 14 is a part-time model and uses her Profile Picture to get agencies to recruit her. She is, hence, aware that her images are a part of the commodification process that Facebook affords. She stated, "A company approached me for a makeup shoot. They picked my makeup, my clothes and my head-gear. I think it looks sexy and different and can make me stand out" (Informant 14, Personal Communication, 22nd April, 2018).

In her image, Informant 14 is seen in a mid-close up shot cut below the shoulders, body turning sideways, face resting on a wall. Her expression may be interpreted as depicting sexual arousal. Here, there is usage of large colourful feathers on her hair and ears, bright blue glittery lipstick and big hair. These call for attention and use the face as a canvas, in an objectification drive. The element of body display shows off a little of the shoulder. The body subscribes to ritual subordination where the face itself is leaning into a wall for support and her right hand is clawed (like a cat's paw) and placed on the wall. The visual also generates a sense that she is pushed and pressured to stay in that position. The primary purpose of the pose is simply to be gazed at as a powerless, and malleable sexual object.

Hence, it is clear that elaborate clothing choices contribute to the objectification. Again, women are aware that such clothes and makeup can induce affect in their audience, specifically men. Hence, they avoid certain clothes that are

considered provocative. This occurs on two levels of negative affect. Firstly, these are avoided to cater to the needs of their family and elders within the Facebook community, who act as moral vigilantes. Secondly, obscene or unpleasant Facebook messages from men (who are not their target audience) they have encountered push them to self-censor their images. Both of these refer to negative affective pushes. Here, Informants 13, 14, 15, 18, 23, 20 and 26 echo a similar sentiment and suggest that they would never wear clothing that they considered provocative, such as a bikini. Their current clothing style, they felt, would allow them to avoid such a negative affective push.

11. Class Consciousness

Class, here, refers to a group within the user's Facebook community that possesses a certain high socio-economic status, and cultural awareness. These are determined by the people the users befriend and those that they hope to attract for their specific needs. Here, the female body's image, enhanced by clothes, postures, makeup, lighting, aesthetics, etc., are used to determine high class standards. There are various levels through which millennial women assert their digital identity through a high class status that serves as a commodification tool. Through this, using Facebook's multiple tools, women hope to get their Profiles circulated. This classy identity, then allows women to befriend users that subscribe to the given class.

Users use the Profile Picture to assert class on three levels. Firstly, they judge the images of those around them to ascertain whose images are classy. Classy, here, refers to an expression of high class status indicating a high socioeconomic status, certain cultural affiliations, etc. In popular terms, 'classy' is often used as an antonym to 'trashy (low socioeconomic status, overt expression of sexuality, etc.)'. Here, a participant admitted to judging Profile Pictures of women around her. She stated, "I hate selfies as Profile Pictures. I judge captions and can't stand some of them like 'ma lyf, ma rulz (my life, my rules)'. I also hate it when women pout etc." (Informant 17, Personal Communication, 24th April, 2018).

Secondly, their own images are curated and commodified to project a certain class and attitude. A participant stated, "I want people to think I'm very classy in my Profile Picture. I want them to think that I have cool friends and that I hang out at classy places. Not everyone can approach me. I have my standards" (Informant 26, Personal Communication, 24th April, 2018). Another stated, "Your vibe attracts your tribe. It is important that my Facebook Profile Picture reflects my status" (Informant 20, Personal Communication, 24th April, 2018).

Finally, there is an attempt at emulating celebrity fashion and fitness into their lifestyle. Here, aspirations come into play and women dress and pose in order to gain celebrity status. A participant said, "I try to imitate Deepika Padukone (an Indian

film actress), her poses, her lifestyle, clothes etc. It helps my images and my work as a model" (Informant 24, Personal Communication, 24th April, 2018). Similarly, Informants 8 and 16 try to imitate the Kardashians (and specifically, Kendall Jenner, in their self-presentations on Facebook.

Therefore, there is a conscious attempt to create a distinct digital identity by imitating celebrities in order to achieve celebrity status. High class standards are also maintained by keeping up the number of likes one receives on their Profile Picture. "The number of likes do matter. Once you get a certain number of likes on one Profile Picture, you want the next one to stick to the standards and get the same or more number of likes" (Informant 3, Personal Communication, 21st April, 2018). Likes, here, would refer to a digital representation of affect, where the validation they bring is indicative of the validation offered by the users' Facebook communities.

These four elements of attractiveness, class consciousness, clothes, and 'posture and expressions' are blended in order to arrive at a Profile Picture. Women use these elements to judge their bodies, to remedy any perceived flaws through clothes, makeup, postures and virtual aids (like photo editing). Similarly, women are aware that these commodified images induce affect, often sexual, amongst their audiences. This in turn creates a Profile Picture that adheres to traditional definitions of femininity and is embedded within patriarchy.

12. Conclusion

This study proposes that women consciously use their Facebook Profile Pictures to evoke affect amongst their targeted audience. Elaborate processes are applied behind this image to curate and commodify the female body (Kasch, 2013). This contributes to women's aims at a unique self-presentation on Facebook.

Women's bodies' self-presentation was studied through Deleuzian (1987) concept of assemblages. The assemblage allows for a complex mixture of users, audiences, Profile Pictures, class, dress, posture, expression, attractiveness, the Facebook community, and patriarchy. Within this, it was found that women are aware of the affect-evoking capability of their Profile Pictures in the physical absence of the body. Women were aware that audiences, specifically men, were often sexually aroused while engaging with the Profile Picture. Such affect was communicated to the woman through Facebook messages, which were at times obscene.

Women tailored their Profile Pictures and, hence, their digital identity by responding to these negative affect inducing messages and sought feedback. Such feedback included indirect validation through likes and reactions received on their Profile Pictures. They were also directly discouraged from using certain images on Facebook through feedback provided by their

families, as well as obscene messages sent by strangers. As a result, women self-censored their images, often avoiding clothes that they considered provocative.

Women also objectified (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008; Lindner, 2004) their bodies in order to present a commodified (Kasch, 2013) digital identity. Women often judged their own Profile Pictures as 'hot' and hoped that this identity would help them achieve celebrity status including attention from sponsors, modeling agencies, etc. Elements of attractiveness, clothing, class consciousness and 'posture and expression' were considered. These were blended in order to form an ideal Profile Picture and a unique digital identity. Women paid attention to fitness, hoping that this would reflect on their Profile Pictures. Similarly, the assertion of class was important, and users wanted to be identified as classy, 'hanging out with cool people,' etc. Dresses, bright red lipstick, self-caressing, averting the eyes, sexually suggestive expressions and subordination of the self (leaning on objects, being closer to the floor etc.) were used. Moreover, women often digitally altered or edited out body parts that they were unhappy with. These elements were subjected to Goffman's (1976) framework of Gendered Advertisements and Lindner's (2004) definition of objectification (a body looks like it's sole purpose is to be looked at). Within this, it was found that the body's representation largely adhered to traditional standards of femininity and patriarchy. The images of these bodies sexually aroused audiences whose affective dimensions were informed by such patriarchy.

Hence, this article concludes that women apply elaborate processes to achieve the 'perfect' Profile Picture. This image serves multiple objectives for the user including the assertion of one's class, commodification of the self, etc., contributing to a distinct digital identity. Moreover, women were often aware that these images are embedded in patriarchy, and evoke affective response from their audiences.

Acknowledgments

Elishia Vaz provided assistance with data collection and content, this helped to improve the article.

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El Observatorio de Cibermedios (OCM) forma parte del proyecto del Plan Nacional "**Creación y contenido interactivo en la comunicación de información audiovisual: audiencias, diseño, sistemas y formatos**". CSO2015-64955-C4-2-R (MINECO/FEDER), Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (España).