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Polemical Social Representations in Social Media: “Snapchat Dysmorphia”

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Abstract

Introduction. On social media, it's possible to create a personal online identity, even very different from the real one. Scientific literature indicates that in some cases there may be a risk of incurring serious problems, such, for example the Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD). BDD regarding the use of filters to edit the body image is called “Snapchat Dysmorphia”.

Theoretical background. The Social Representations Theory (SRT) -even if it was formulated during the last century- can be used to read and to interpret emerging phenomena like “Snapchat Dysmorphia”.

Aims. The purpose of the research is to analyze the communication about “Snapchat Dysmorphia”, identifying which type of post (written post, photo or video) is the most common among the hashtags considered, the words and the emoticons used in the captions on the three main social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter).

Hypotheses. During the first step of the research, and behind the choice of the #, there were some expectations: 1) The comparison between the representations of the real body and of the edited body (H1); 2) The rejection of the imperfect body, far away from the beauty standard stereotypes (H2); 3) The promotion of the acceptance of imperfections, following the body positivity movement (H3).

Method. Through the use of six hashtags (snapchat dysmorphia, beauty standard, Instagram reality, selfie dysmorphia, filter no filter, unrealistic beauty standard), the contribution analyses posts published in English on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter in 2021. The analysis were made with the IRAMUTEQ software and the result was the Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC).

Results. The DHC produced six classes: comparison between the own body and the others' body; comparison between the real body and the edited body; positive value dimension; negative emotional/value dimension; stereotypes of beauty; filter and edited body parts. The results show key elements of the S.R.T.: the emotions, the values, the attitudes and the stereotypes of snapchat dysmorphia.

Impacts of the work. Because of the close bond between social representations and practices, the study, in its application value, supports the body positivity actions aimed at reducing the spread of “Snapchat Dysmorphia”.

Keywords: Snapchat dysmorphia, Polemical Social Representations, Attitudes, Emotions, Values, Stereotypes, Practices, Social Media Communication.

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Introduction

An emerging problem in the main social media: “snapchat dysmorphia”

Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) is an excessive preoccupation with a perceived flaw in appearance, often characterized by people going to great, and at times unhealthy, lengths to hide their imperfections (Boston Medical Center, 2018). In the psychological literature, the BDD is classified as a psychiatric disorder DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013); which concerns 2% of the population (Bohne, Keuthen, Wilhelm, Deckersbach & Jenike, 2002). When the BDD regards the use of filters to edit the body image, it is called snapchat dysmorphia (Hunt, 2019). Snapchat dysmorphia is a term used for the first time by Tijon Esho, a British cosmetic doctor in 2018 (Verrecchia, 2021). On the Appstore there are a lot of photo editing applications. Thanks to their use and Instagram beauty filters, the users can change their bodies, promoting unrealistic beauty standards with a lot of possible negative consequences (see inter alia: Brown, 2022; Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian & Halliwell, 2015; Royal Society for Public Health: <https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/status-of-mind.html>).

Rajanala, Maymone & Vashi (2018) identified three categories of users that could have a major risk to develop a disorder like this: younger people, the users of social medias who want to validate their beauty and people who are overly obsessed with details, who think too much, who are perfectionist and who plan unrealistic future goals. For these people, social media focused on appearance and body image could be dangerous because they can cause the development of snapchat dysmorphia.

An “ancient” theoretical approach to explain an “emerging” social problem

Definition of Social Representations

Born in France in 1950's by the initiative of the social scientist Serge Moscovici (1961/1976; 1988), Social Representations Theory (SRT) has gradually spread across different approaches (Abric, 1994; Doise, 1986; Jodelet, 1989, 2016; Laszlo, 2002; Markova, 2003; de Rosa, 2013; de Rosa, Bocci & Dryjanska, 2018; 2019).

Social representations are defined as systems of shared meanings, values and beliefs, symbols and emotions connected to collective memories and attitudinal dimensions related to social practices and actions that enable individuals to construct meaningful knowledge about the social reality (Moscovici, 1961/1976, 1988). This definition is about a shared common sense with the community (social or cultural one) and for this reason it is linked to the story, the context and the group's values: “social representations are the result of the constant effort to make something that is unusual or extraneous real. Through representations, we can dominate this something and we can visualize it in our mental universe” (Nenci, 1997).

Even if it was theorised during the last century – way before Internet – SRT can be used to read and to interpret emerging phenomena like snapchat dysmorphia. The theory can provide a useful contribution both for the hot societal issues and for the close bond between social representations and practices (inter alia: Sensales, Di Cicco & Baldner, 2021).

Hot societal issues and polemical social representations

The social media communication about the hot societal issues can be controversial (see inter alia: de Rosa, Bocci, Salvati & Nubola, 2020; de Rosa, Bocci & Latini, 2021; de Rosa, Bocci, Bonito & Salvati, 2021). So, it's important to look at Moscovici's studies (1988). He distinguishes: *hegemonic*, *emancipated* and *controversial* or *polemical* Social Representations. On the one hand, *hegemonic* social representations hold a meaning shared by all the members of a group (i. e. a nation), and they tend to be constrictive. On the other hand, *emancipated* social representations are typical of groups that are in contact with one another in certain contexts, and they evolve constantly in the sharing and interpretation of symbols in the dialogue among the groups. Finally, *controversial* or *polemical* social representations are shared among minorities and elaborated in the conflict with other groups, resulting as alternative and exclusive. However, these typologies are not rigid.

Body, Social Representations and Practices

On the one hand, the real body, identified by Depretis (2011) as own body, is the idea people have about their bodies. On the other hand, the ideal body is the body that people want but that can be difficult to have. A positive self evaluation tends to increase one's belief in their values, in their skills and abilities, so that they are motivated to act with more confidence; a negative self evaluation can cause the loss of control and the development of eating disorders because food is seen as the way to regain control, as stated by Bruchon-Sweitzer (1990).

This shows the close bond between social representations and practices. Following SRT different schools have been repeatedly asking themselves for a long time about an old question by now: if it is social representations that guide social practices or it is the latter that generate and direct the social representations (de Rosa, Guraliuc & Dryjanska, 2015). We tend to consider this relationship as dialogic-circular (see inter alia: Abric, 1994; de Rosa, Bocci & Dryjanska, 2019; Flament, 1994; Guimelli, 1994; Jodelet, 1989; Wagner, 2015).

Research objectives and hypotheses

The objective of the psychosocial research is to analyze the debate on snapchat dysmorphia, identifying which type of post (written post, photo or video) is the most common among the hashtags considered; the words and the emoticons used in the captions on the three main social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter).

During the first step of the research, and behind the choice of the #, there were some expectations:

- The comparison between the representations of the real body and of the edited body (H1). We expect to find that the authors of the posts tend to compare their representation of the real body with the one edited on social media (similarities, differences, pros and cons...)
- The rejection of the imperfect body, far away from the beauty standard stereotypes (H2).
- The second hypothesis was about the idea that the body was imperfect and not similar to beauty stereotypes and for this reason there could be a rejection of the body.

- The promotion of the acceptance of imperfections, following the body positivity movement (H3). We expect to find that the authors of the posts tend to promote acceptance of imperfections in line with the principles diffused by the body positivity movement.

Method

Material under analysis and operational pathway

Through the use of six hashtags (*snapchat dysmorphia*, *beauty standard*, *instagram reality*, *selfie dysmorphia*, *filter no filter*, *unrealistic beauty standard*), there was the discovery of 257 posts published in English on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter in 2021.

The posts were put in Excel, in which some variables were considered:

- Social media where the posts were published (Twitter, Instagram or Facebook);
- The type of post (written post, photo or video);
- The caption of the post;
- The number of likes, comments and followers;
- The emoticons in the caption of the post. In this case, the whatsapp classification of emojis was used as a reference.

Trying to provide a picture of those who have published the posts, we have considered the brief description that appears under the “nickname” and the profile picture.

Descriptions include: Media/News Agencies, Coaches, Community Associations, Artists, Bloggers, Digital Creators, Communities, Fitness Instructors, Medical & Health, Youth Organizations, Public Figures, Health & Beauty, Mental Health Services, Podcasts, websites etc. The vast majority of profile pictures show *a photo of a girl*. Among those who have a *drawing* in their profile picture, some authors in the description present themselves as artists and among those who have a *logo* in their profile picture, some authors present themselves as media/news agencies, youth organisations, websites etc.

Data collection and analysis were performed by the Authors of the paper.

Data Analysis

The IRAMUTEQ software was used to analyse the data for the Descending Hierarchical Classification (Camargo & Justo, 2013), regarding to posts' captions. The *Reinert's method*, which is the method that was used, is part of the *clustering* category in the *text analysis* menu (Reinert, 1992). The results are represented by a tree diagram, which is called *dendrogram*.

IRAMUTEQ considers utterances as the smallest part of the speech. It considers the vocabulary of a particular utterance as a relevant trace of the point of view of the speaker. The most meaningful utterances are called *lexical world* by Reinert which, in this context, is analysed in relation to the SRT.

Results

First overview

Among 257 posts:

- 87 are related to the hashtag *unrealistic beauty standard*; 62 to *beauty standard*, 49 to *instagram reality*, 39 to *snapchat dysmorphia*, 12 to *filter no filter* and 8 to *selfie dysmorphia*.
- 190 were found on Instagram, 56 on Twitter and 11 on Facebook.
- 205 are photos, 29 posts are written and 23 are videos.
- There are three different ranges of likes, followers and comments: low, medium and high (using tertiles).
- The most used emoticons belong to the category *emoticon and people* (freq. 59) to the category *symbols* (freq. 57), to the category *animals and nature* (freq. 36), to the category *objects* (freq. 10) to the category *food and drinks* (freq. 3) and to the category *activity* (freq. 1).

The most used words related to snapchat dysmorphia are about:

- The body: *beauty* (freq. 490) *body* (freq. 401) *standard* (freq. 320) *unrealistic* (freq. 167) *perfect* (freq. 101) *real* (freq. 135) *reality* (freq. 169) *skin* (freq. 154) *face* (freq. 114);
- Social media: *filter* (freq. 325) *Instagram* (freq. 210) *social* (freq. 201) *photo* (freq. 109).

The use of the word *woman* is the evidence of a phenomenon which concerns mostly women (Habib, Ali, Nazir & Mahfooz, 2022). Moreover, the presence of the verb *feel* (freq. 121) and *see* (freq. 114) is important.

Descending Hierarchical Classification

The Descending Hierarchical Classification is stable because the values are <50% and <20% (see Figure 1).

Fig. 1. Descending Hierarchical Classification graphic

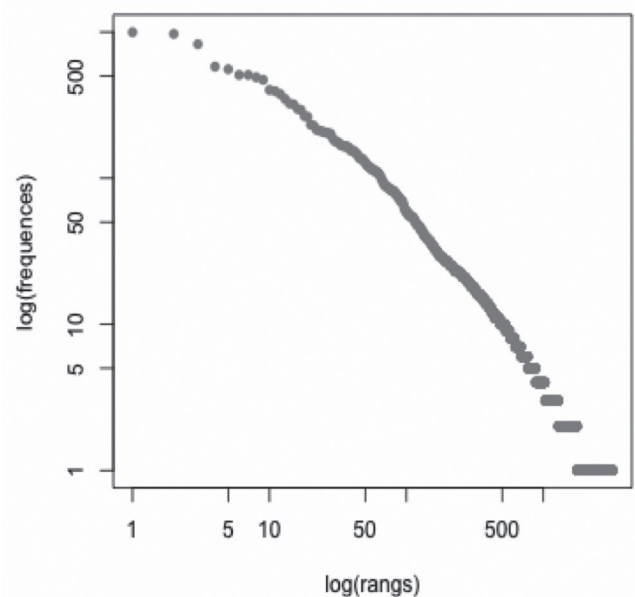
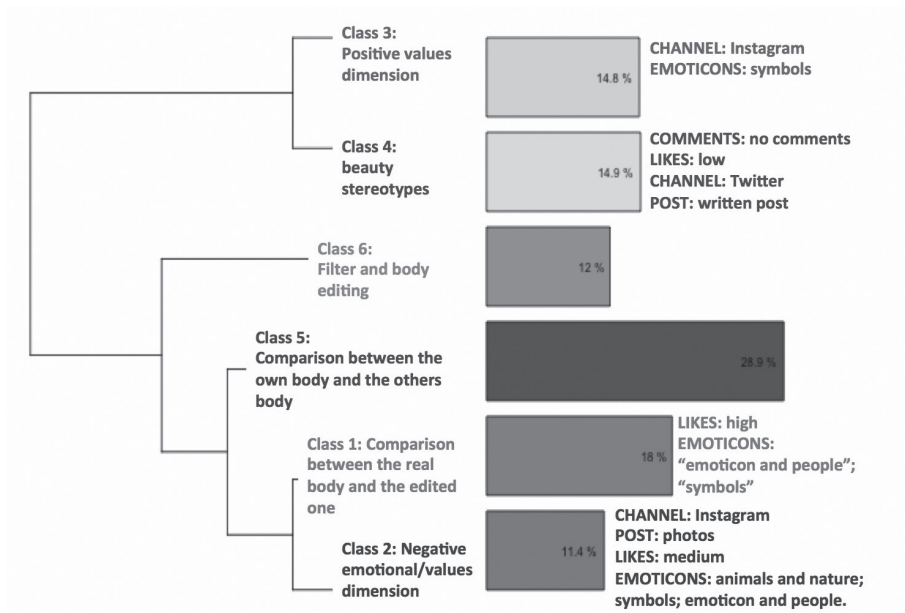


Fig. 2. Dendrogram



The *dendrogram*, which is the result of the IRAMUTEQ analysis, is composed of six thematic classes that are different because of the contents, even if they are related, as shown in the tree-shaped chart. (see Figure 2).

Class number 1: Comparison between the real body and the edited one

The class number 1 has a lot of contents, reaching 18%. The posts of this category have an *high number of likes* ($X^2 = 4,457$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0281$) and in their captions there are emoticons of the category *emoticons and people* and of the category *symbols* ($X^2 = 5,536$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0172$).

The class's contents are about the comparison between the real body and the edited one. The polemical social representations are emphasised by opposite words: *look* ($X^2 = 50,896$, $p\text{-value} = <0.0001$) vs *fit* ($X^2 = 12,084$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0005$); *filter* ($X^2 = 5,678$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0172$) vs *unfiltered* ($X^2 = 5,592$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0180$); *false* ($X^2 = 7,314$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0068$) vs *authenticity* ($X^2 = 4,824$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0281$); *selfies* ($X^2 = 8,676$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0001$) and *photo* ($X^2 = 8,45$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0036$) vs *mirror* ($X^2 = 8,426$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0037$). The terms *myself* ($X^2 = 10,276$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0013$) and *me* ($X^2 = 7,304$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0069$) clarify that the comparison is between the subjects and their body.

Verbs like *match* ($X^2 = 13,699$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0002$) *control* ($X^2 = 7,314$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0068$) and *struggle* ($X^2 = 7,006$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0081$) show people's willingness to adapt their body to the ideal model, even if they have to fight against themselves.

Hate ($X^2 = 29,449$, $p\text{-value} < 0.0001$) *insecure* ($X^2 = 17,75$, $p\text{-value} < 0.0001$) *worry* ($X^2 = 6,001$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0143$) and *pressure* ($X^2 = 5,873$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0154$) are the results of the comparison. So, the comparison between the real body and the edited one can cause a negative opinion of themselves and a refusal of the real body.

In addition, the terms are a sign of the bond between the class 1 and the class 2 as the *dendrogram* shows.

The first hypothesis was about the idea that the analysed contents include the comparison between the real body and the edited one (H1). In class 1 the real body is criticised and people try to conform it to the edited body (outcome of the comparison)^{a, b, c}.

Class number 2: Negative emotional/values dimension

The class number 2, which reaches 11,4% of contents, is mostly composed by *photos* ($X^2 = 5,193$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0227$), posted on *Instagram* ($X^2 = 30,941$, $p\text{-value} < 0.0001$). The number of *likes* is *medium* ($X^2 = 6,745$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0094$) and the most used emoticons of this class are about the category *animals and nature* and the category *symbols* ($X^2 = 6,722$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0095$), and the category *emoticon and people* ($X^2 = 6,512$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0107$). This last category is very used because it permits to express a feeling. In the category *animals and nature* the most used emojis are the drop of water as a tear or the storm one to express burstly and tormented feelings. In the category *symbols* exclamation points are used to highlight an important sentence, while the *x* to underline a wrong idea.

Emoticons and captions revolve around a negative idea of the body and, consequently, they lead to the rejection of the body. *Feel* ($X^2 = 66,991$, $p\text{-value} = < 0.0001$) is the term that has the highest X^2 ; *bad* ($X^2 = 44,558$, $p\text{-value} = < 0.0001$) *wrong* ($X^2 = 13,934$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0002$) *insecurity* ($X^2 = 11,281$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0008$) *fear* ($X^2 = 9,101$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0025$) and *failure* ($X^2 = 9,101$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0025$) are about the negative values and emotional dimension. The negative feeling is also emphasised by the verb *judge* ($X^2 = 23,423$, $p\text{-value} < 0.0001$).

The second hypothesis was about the idea that the body was imperfect and not similar to beauty stereotypes and for this reason there would be a rejection of the body (H2). The second hypothesis is confirmed by two classes: the class number 1 with the fight against the own imperfect body and the class number 2 in which the body is seen as ugly, wrong and meaningless^{d, e, f}.

Class number 3: Positive values dimension

Several contents (14,8%) of the third class, like the second one, are posted on *Instagram* ($X^2 = 46,513$, p -value < 0.0001) and use a lot of emoticons in their captions *symbols* ($X^2 = 6,408$, p -value = 0.0113). The positive value dimension includes: *love* ($X^2 = 98,391$, p -value < 0.0001) *positive* ($X^2 = 71,276$, p -value < 0.0001) *acceptance* ($X^2 = 54,6$, p -value < 0.0001) *confidence* ($X^2 = 47,229$, p -value = < 0.0001) *empowerment* ($X^2 = 39,509$, p -value < 0.0001). In this class, the body flaws aren't imperfections that should be cancelled but elements that make people unique and special. There is a message of acceptance, body positivity (Leboeuf, 2019; Sastre, 2014), selfcare (*care* $X^2 = 32,345$, p -value < 0.0001 , *wellness* $X^2 = 11,525$, p -value = 0.0007 e *health* $X^2 = 10,324$, p -value = 0.0013) and authentic and real beauty ($X^2 = reality$ 75,619, p -value < 0.0001). The verb *normalize* ($X^2 = 23,156$, p -value < 0.0001) is used to make clear that imperfections exist and that people don't have to hide them. The parts of the body that are more involved in this message are: *acne* ($X^2 = 22,116$, p -value < 0.0001) *scar* ($X^2 = 19,357$, p -value = < 0.0001) *bloat* ($X^2 = 16,919$, p -value < 0.0001) and *curve* ($X^2 = 11,525$, p -value = 0.0007). *Fitness* ($X^2 = 81,751$, p -value < 0.0001) *workout* ($X^2 = 28,896$, p -value < 0.0001) *gym* ($X^2 = 10,009$, p -value = 0.0015) and *run* ($X^2 = 8,129$, p -value = 0.0043) suggest healthy ways to change the body, against diets or surgical operations.

This class, dedicated to a positive value dimension and a body positivity message (Leboeuf, 2019; Sastre, 2014) verifies the third hypothesis, promoting an acceptance message of imperfections (H3)^{g, h, i}.

Class number 4: beauty stereotypes

The contents of the class number 4 reach 14,9%. The posts, that have a *low number of likes* ($X^2 = 16,159$, p -value < 0.0001) and *zero comments* ($X^2 = 30,721$, p -value < 0.0001) are mostly *written posts* ($X^2 = 7,588$, p -value = 0.0059) and are published on *Twitter* ($X^2 = 28,172$, p -value < 0.0001).

This class is about ideal beauty (*beauty* $X^2 = 139,549$, p -value < 0.0001) which is promoted by *culture* ($X^2 = 30,836$, p -value < 0.0001) *industry* ($X^2 = 15,722$, p -value < 0.0001) *fashion* ($X^2 = 14,374$, p -value = 0.0001) *society* ($X^2 = 12,49$, p -value = 0.0004) and *influencers* ($X^2 = 11,67$, p -value = 0.0006).

The features of ideal beauty are: *standard* ($X^2 = 202,697$, p -value < 0.0001) *unrealistic* ($X^2 = 85,489$, p -value < 0.0001) *white* ($X^2 = 9,787$, p -value = 0.0017) *youth* ($X^2 = 7,812$, p -value = 0.0052) *size* ($X^2 = 5,654$, p -value = 0.0174) and *plastic* ($X^2 = 4,895$, p -value = 0.0269). So, it's a beauty that doesn't want to promote and accept differences but wants to create stereotypes: a fake beauty characterised by fair skin, eternal youth, small size and surgery.

Lastly, *teenagers* ($X^2 = 17,723$, p -value < 0.0001) are the social group which is mostly influenced by this ideal of beauty (Rajanala, Maymone & Vashi, 2018) and which want to conform, resorting to *diet* ($X^2 = 11,409$, p -value = 0.0007) and *surgery* ($X^2 = 5,73$, p -value = 0.0167)^{j, k, l}.

Class number 5: Comparison between the own body and the others body

This class is the richest, with 28,9% of contents. The comparison with other bodies is part of the snapchat dysmorphia phenomenon as well: this comparison can be made towards *person* ($X^2 = 50,098$, p -value < 0.0001), that is normal people, and *celebrity* ($X^2 = 17,596$, p -value < 0.0001) *model* ($X^2 = 10,055$, p -value = 0.0015) *famous* ($X^2 = 8,704$, p -value = 0.0032). The comparison can happen through *social* ($X^2 = 44,227$, p -value < 0.0001) *Internet* ($X^2 = 14,90$, p -value = 0.0001) *magazine* ($X^2 = 4,006$, p -value = 0.0453).

The influence of comparison on users is explained by *impact* ($X^2 = 6,87$, p -value = 0.0088) *contribute* ($X^2 = 6,41$, p -value = 0.0113) *affect* ($X^2 = 6,386$, p -value = 0.0115).

The comparison (*ugly* $X^2 = 15,227$, p -value < 0.0001 ; *imperfection* $X^2 = 8,477$, p -value = 0.0036) causes actions like the one expressed by the verb *hide*.

Here there is the comparison between the own body and the others' body. So, the comparison is not only with themselves (class 1), like the hypothesis reported (H1), but also with other people (ordinary people and celebrities)^{m, n, o}.

Class number 6: Filter and body editing

The class number 6 is the poorest, with only 6% of contents and it's about the parts of the body and the face that are mostly edited by FaceApp, BodyEditor, Photoshop, ... The keywords are: *lip* ($X^2 = 126,224$, p -value < 0.0001) *eye* ($X^2 = 122,275$, p -value < 0.0001) *skin* ($X^2 = 96,803$, p -value < 0.0001) *nose* ($X^2 = 95,853$, p -value < 0.0001) *shape* ($X^2 = 58,434$, p -value < 0.0001) *butt* ($X^2 = 51,881$, p -value < 0.0001) *hair* ($X^2 = 39,479$, p -value < 0.0001) *waist* ($X^2 = 36,973$, p -value < 0.0001) *chin* ($X^2 = 36,973$, p -value < 0.0001) *thin* ($X^2 = 30,431$, p -value < 0.0001) *ear* ($X^2 = 22,133$, p -value < 0.0001) *boob* ($X^2 = 22,133$, p -value < 0.0001) *tan* ($X^2 = 22,133$, p -value < 0.0001) *cheek* ($X^2 = 22,133$, p -value < 0.0001) *wrinkle* ($X^2 = 22,081$, p -value < 0.0001) *cellulite* ($X^2 = 19,558$, p -value < 0.0001) *smile* ($X^2 = 11,078$, p -value = 0.0009) *abs* ($X^2 = 11,006$, p -value = 0.0009) *eyebrown* ($X^2 = 8,544$, p -value = 0.0035).

Big ($X^2 = 59,104$, p -value < 0.0001) and *small* ($X^2 = 37,362$, p -value < 0.0001) are about the increase of the curves and the reduction of the waistline, *whiten* ($X^2 = 5,514$, p -value = 0.0189) is about the teeth.

The body editing is expressed by the vocabulary *before* ($X^2 = 11,711$, p -value = 0.0006) *after* ($X^2 = 13,448$, p -value = 0.0002) and *result* ($X^2 = 10,179$, p -value = 0.0014)^{p, q, r}.

Discussion

Definition of Social Representations. In the snapchat dysmorphia research there are key elements of social representations (Moscovici 1961/1976, 1988): emotions, values, attitudes and stereotypes.

The emotional dimension is introduced by the term *feel* and the negative emotional dimension by *fear* (class number 2)

regarding the representation of the real body. The fear and the disdain show the relationship between the negative emotional dimension and the attitude-evaluative component.

The values dimension is composed of a positive connotation, expressed by *love* (class number 3) and a negative one, expressed by *hate* (class number 1).

Beauty stereotypes are in the class number 4: *unrealistic, standard, white, youth, size and plastic*.

Hot societal issues and polemical social representations. Our results highlight snapchat dysmorphia in terms of *polemical* representations (Moscovici, 1988), shedding light on the communicative dynamics between arguments and counter-arguments (see inter alia: de Rosa, Bocci, Salvati & Nubola, 2020; de Rosa, Bocci & Latini, 2021; de Rosa, Bocci, Bonito & Salvati, 2021) identified in the selected sources by the three social media chosen as the voice and identity expression of different point of views shown in the dendrogram.

- In the first and second classes the social debate is about the comparison between the real body and the edited one. The result is the will to shape the real body into the ideal one, through a fight with the own body which is considered defective and wrong. In the class number 5 the comparison is between the own body and the others' body.
- In the class number 3 the focus is on the elements that make people unique and special. There is a message of acceptance called body positivity (Leboeuf, 2019; Sastre, 2014).

Body, Social Representations and Practices. The close bond between social representations and practices (see inter alia: Abric, 1994; de Rosa, Bocci & Dryjanska, 2019; Flament, 1994; Guimelli, 1994; Jodelet, 1989; Wagner, 2015) is evident in different classes: regarding the negative social representations in the class number 5 there is the verb to *hide*, while in the class number 4 the change is reached with *diet* and *surgery*. In the class number 3 the change is achieved thanks to healthy solutions.

Impact of the work. The research, in its application value, supports the body positivity (Leboeuf, 2019; Sastre, 2014). In relation to the impact of the contribution, from a psychosocial perspective, the results, interpreted in key of SRT, support actions (social practices) aimed at reducing the development of snapchat dysmorphia. Let us recall some examples.

The #filterdrop campaign was promoted in 2020 by Sasha Pallari, English beauty activist and curvy model, with the aim of promoting the publication of unretouched selfies and, therefore, showing one's natural beauty, not falsifying it. Starting right from the publication of the skin without filters, the influencer invited the followers to do the same, learning to love and accept themselves for who they really are without resorting to external embellishments. This campaign also resulted in the ban, issued by the advertising standard authority of Great Britain, on the use of filters in advertisements (relating specifically to the skincare and cosmetics sector).

Norway, in the wake of the path taken by Great Britain, with the sentence of June 11, 2021, prohibited the use of retouched photographs to promote advertising products, unless the photo editing is explicitly declared through a special label to accompany the posts.

Starting from July 1, 2021, Pinterest has decided to ban all ads, images and texts focused on weight loss, nutrition advice, the promotion of slimming products and, finally, the derisive comparison between different body types. The objective that this social network sets itself, through the adoption of a policy characterized as follows, is to promote the health and physical and mental well-being (body positivity).

Our research supports the will, present within societies and media, to promote not a model of beauty that praises perfection and, therefore, consequently, unreal and unattainable, but real beauty and, as such, imperfect but not wrong or defective. The examples mentioned seem to show a positive contaminating effect that could be increased in collaboration with the experts in "psychology of communication"; they could promote targeted advertising campaigns, even making use of those channels that have already expressed interest in the social problem here investigated.

Conclusions

The contribution addresses the social problem of "Snapchat Dysmorphia" in the light of the Theory of Social Representations. It is therefore an "emerging" problem in the main social media that has been possible to analyse through the lens of an "ancient" theoretical approach. At this regard, it is important to underline that in key of Social Representations, although Serge Moscovici (Brăila, June 14, 1925 – Paris, November 16, 2014) only partially experienced the advent and diffusion of the Internet, he had already provided an anticipatory proposal: the social scientist underlined the importance of investigating new phenomena of online communication by studying "how common sense, the language exchanged, the groups themselves are shaped in this cyber-communication" (1995; 1997:7). For the close relationship that binds social representations to practices (Abric, 1994; de Rosa, Bocci & Dryjanska, 2019; Flament, 1994; Guimelli, 1994; Jodelet, 1989; Wagner, 2015), social psychologists applying the SRT do not remain at the window in front of the emerging online social problems, such as for example the "Snapchat Dysmorphia"...

Limitations and further directions

Our research is about a social problem that is important but not addressed enough in the scientific literature from a psychosocial perspective (SRT). However, our study is not without potential limitations. Main limitation could be represented by our amount of data. It will be interesting for us also to verify if the results here presented remain consistent also on a new data set including: extension of the data collection time window, extension of the social media considered, a new data collection on social developed ad hoc like BeReal.

Further research developments should focus on single social media analysed separately, taking into consideration a greater amount of posts for each social. The analysis should also take into account another important aspect: the close relation between the contents of the posts and their authors. Indeed, in light of the SRT, a salient aspect is the relationship between the

different sources and the messages. Specific hypotheses could be formulated regarding the contents posted by: individual private authors, product retailers or associations as we have found in this research, approaching the topic. Starting from this first work, it would be interesting, for example, to reconstruct, in key of social representations, the relationship between different types of sources and refusal/acceptance of the real body.

Finally, moving from research to its application value, specific promotional campaigns could be promoted by experts in psychology of communication, to combat “Snapchat Dysmorphia”.

Note Section

- ^a URL: <https://www.facebook.com/1344345571/posts/10225207457477220>
- ^b URL: https://www.instagram.com/p/CKL_NIlhatO/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D&fbclid=IwAR1oMFm-bdf4wIgrc6rYjYY4p8REbO2KaxDGkrlCxLPG3cElwJ86n9kFxo
- ^c URL: https://twitter.com/RuxandraCotrus/status/1350168096837926914?s=20&t=EGpdnBzFy_JnS5yGmTB6iw
- ^d URL: https://www.instagram.com/p/CWMqf_jhl-E/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D&fbclid=IwAR2TfMK8e-sDGykrm_aO-vwIBDqGfrafGiUDES3aD1SU3PJ-GtBKChKvipGG0
- ^e URL: https://www.instagram.com/p/CJf4_vjpwTG/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D&fbclid=IwAR0G7-tlaH-koqmA1ACeni1llgfjFkWCngWIPsj8wJb1K8L-DUXzmZU-TY
- ^f URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CUGG95hr-BUN/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D&fbclid=IwAR-0KWX9m7NGFrYx-6X0gYyxcnuXHOmppGVT9nOp-0qgxnmL1LgL8IveNFjQ>
- ^g URL: https://www.instagram.com/p/CS9sK1ZI-1BF/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMjY%3D&fbclid=IwAR3_H32fDaY5bQv5NQ-pb7S2qzPe56KNHYMhKHwkdZKmkwiqJ83yBlaGOYI
- ^h URL: https://www.instagram.com/p/CS7EEedIA_Uz/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMjY%3D&fbclid=IwAR3_H32fDaY5bQv5NQ-pb7S2qzPe56KNHYMhKHwkdZKmkwiqJ83yBlaGOYI
- ⁱ URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CYB06ofIM1h/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D&fbclid=IwAR39hye-o7-8FAYZBWetSjkn9-kmhJyBb8joRCIrfYf5YcOUM3YcA0NwJ083E>
- ^j URL: https://twitter.com/FeminismInIndia/status/1472529646214393864?s=20&t=EGpdnBzFy_JnS5yGmTB6iw
- ^k URL: https://twitter.com/IamLindaAshok/status/1470589292011347973?s=20&t=EGpdnBzFy_JnS5yGmTB6iw
- ^l URL: https://twitter.com/FeminismInIndia/status/1465916066672963585?s=20&t=EGpdnBzFy_JnS5yGmTB6iw

- ^m URL: https://twitter.com/FeminismInIndia/status/1470325119092289536?s=20&t=EGpdnBzFy_JnS5yGmTB6iw
- ⁿ URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CLWdxBJAwDZ/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMjY%3D&fbclid=IwAR25sYnrsuxhzyj33QXoTRrfq6TqF70qqxKUTIcd8AGKEjyNTWoFy-devA>
- ^o URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CL7DG4RDC60/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMjY%3D&fbclid=IwAR27jp-GC5pS4kNJHL3Dv4WP5OwaZdkgjVpCfsaFOL-NWL6j1Sp3MKnRm-gy4>
- ^p URL: https://www.instagram.com/p/CXwvts6h-hD/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D&fbclid=IwAR1xlJl-Tv00OwFNI3Kzv0rUYwJng_L5AiokBaTetSgmPL-vHW3tyoNboJpMA
- ^q URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CWAt6cMIA2j/>
- ^r URL: <https://www.facebook.com/545759601/posts/pfbid02huyHv5NhcVi1vdrqMahrWLTcAm94in-KcfcyUa9BLKsZa1GXMB81RfbGHMJ23jnFdl/>

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Conflict of interest

The Authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Author Contributions

The authors contributed equally to this manuscript.

Ethical Approval

The study was carried out according to Twitter, Instagram and Facebook Terms of Service and in line with the Ethical Guidelines 3.0 provided by the Association of Internet Researchers and only publicly available posts were included in the study.

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