Expertise and Knowledge in the Age of Personalized Media:

The Case of @anysports.faceonline Blog in the Period from 2018 to 2019

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ABSTRACT

Digital age, that we are living in, enables us to instantly access great volumes of various information. The way we acquire, create and distribute knowledge is a subject to continuous transformation caused by the rapid growth of digital content and tools. Nowadays, more and more people give their own contribution in digital knowledge environment by producing and sharing their digital content. This thesis considers the impact that digital culture has put on the way we consume and create knowledge and establish the image of trustworthy expert in a certain field.

This research is a case study of the Instagram account @anysports.faceonline. It represents a qualitative research aiming to analyze visual rhetoric and knowledge representation in the @anysports.faceonline blog in order to examine the mechanics of impression management, concerning the establishment and gaining acknowledgement of professionalism / expertise within online environment. By *visual rhetoric* is meant, in the first place, a form of visual communication the influencer uses. It involves the visual structure, displaying of information, color usage and designing of self-representation. Moreover, this research is not constrained in cultural history only, it refers to other fields such as psychology, sociology, marketing, media and gender studies. However, in order to explain the chosen visual strategies, the object of the research is, firstly, put into a broad cultural context.

KEYWORDS: Instagram, popular culture, expertise, knowledge, digital culture, beauty

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and research questions

Most of the communities have been showing a continuous need in designating an expert who adopts the role of a leader by acquiring a specific knowledge about something. Ancient civilizations relied upon esoteric knowledge of religious figures, whose authority was based upon a strong, unquestioning belief in their privileged initiation into the nature of higher knowledge. Later, to be considered as an expert an individual had to provide evidence by demonstrating careful examination of a subject. Traditionally, the recognition and acknowledgement of expertise had to be formally credited within an institution. Since the notion of professionalism has been based upon a certain number of conventional standards and values (Paquette, 2012), one had to complete all of the required training and to obtain necessary credentials and certifications in order to be recognized as a source of trustworthy knowledge by non-experts (Takseva, 2013).

While storytelling has not been necessarily observed from the point of view of authentic expertise, narratives have been playing an important role in defining a certain moral path for a society, contributed in social cohesion and provided an opportunity to produce and distribute knowledge. With the invention of printing technology and the adoption of mass media tools, storytelling has become mass industry, varying from traditional printing to television and, finally, digital media. Each particular institution has developed its own forms and norms of narration. The modes of collecting, collating and providing information were critical for getting authority and reputation. Therefore, there has always been an invisible distance between unidirectional, traditional media and its audience.

With digitalization increasing the situation has dramatically changed, user-generated content has become dominant. Keen (2007) describes Web 2.0 movement as a certain ideology that reveres *the creative amateur* and encourages self-realization through the use of digital media. Thus, according to Keen, the empowerment of citizen media has led to radical democratization of media, in particular and culture, in general, which could end up in destruction of notion of talent and competence. The patterns of opinion leadership and expertise have radically changed due to the technological progress and

the appearance of huge variety of communication channels such as email, messengers and social nets. A new type of opinion leader, *'mediatized'* one, which is able to use a broader variety of media sources for information and communication with others has emerged (Schäffer, Taddicken, 2015).

The endless flood of information we are nowadays facing and experiencing (Hemp, 2009) has resulted in a battle for attention, acknowledgement and recognition. This need drives people to increase the level of their self-expression by using social media. Even though, the advent of social media has introduced a new promising opportunity for entrepreneurs and experts from different fields to assert themselves, not everyone is capable to stand out from the crowd. In order to do it, one needs a certain strategy to demonstrate their skills and highlight their unique know-hows in the most efficient way. The ideological and technological structure of social media enables individuals to promote themselves as brands very effectively and relatively cheap in case they know *how* to do it.

In my research I am going to analyze the visual structure of the Instagram account / blog of Anastasia Burdyug, face gymnastics and beauty coach. Regarding female representations and beauty practices, the major break in Russian culture took place in the post-Soviet era. In 1990s, a lot of diverse talk shows and women's magazines dedicated to beauty have emerged and the new beauty ideals were introduced to Russian women. The rapid increase of the number of beauty services and products and their persistent advertising has resulted in the intense pursuing of the new dominant beauty ideal. Russia's shift from communism to capitalism, with the following consequences of the increase of conspicuous consumption and the switch in gender roles, has strongly affected female self-perception and female identity (Davidenko, 2013). The main research question of my thesis is the following: *How an expert can arrange the visual data in order to gain acknowledgement and authority?*

First of all, I am going to discuss the meaning of knowledge in the context of contemporary digital culture. In the first chapter of my thesis, the types of knowledge, their particularities and the ways they are created and spread will be introduced to the reader. In addition to that, I will provide the detailed characteristic of digital culture that affects the dynamics of knowledge distribution, creation and consumption. Secondly, I

am going to examine the notion of beauty and beauty ideals' representations in media; the special accent is made on the idea of facial beauty and anti-aging propaganda. Finally, in the second chapter of my thesis, I am going to provide the analysis of the @anysports.faceonline account with the special focus on visual constituent of it.

1.2 Source material and methods

In order to examine the mechanics of impression management, concerning the establishment and gaining acknowledgement of professionalism / expertise within online environment, I am going to analyze the visual rhetoric of @anysports.faceonline Instagram account. Regarding the ethical side of the issue, the selected Instagram account is publicly accessible and the copyright law is fully respected. In addition, in terms of textual filling, I will provide my own translation to English, since the language of the account is Russian.

The profile to be analyzed belongs to a Russian face fitness and beauty coach Anastasia Burdyug and at the time of writing is followed by one million Instagram users and occurs to have 1219 publications. Anastasia's specialization is face fitness, or *facercize,* a complex of synergistic facial exercises designed to rejuvenate a face by developing and strengthening facial muscles. This series of exercises and techniques was developed by American esthetician Carole Maggio and is believed to be a natural alternative to plastic surgery. The examined period from 2018 to 2019 has been chosen in order to represent the latest and the most relevant tendencies in the visual representations within personalized media.

Methodologically, this thesis represents a qualitative research aiming to analyze visual rhetoric and knowledge representation in the @anysports.faceonline blog. By *visual rhetoric* I mean in the first place a form of visual communication Anastasia uses in her blog. It involves the visual structure, displaying of information, color usage and designing of self-representation. In my thesis, I am using the Instagram photo classification introduced and developed by Dr. Lev Manovich, one of the leading media theorists, professor of Computer Science and a pioneer in application of computational

methods for visual culture analysis. Moreover, this research is not constrained in cultural history only, it refers to other fields such as psychology, sociology, marketing, media and gender studies. However, in order to explain the chosen visual strategies, the object of the research is put into a broad cultural context in the first place.

1.3 Theoretical framework and key concepts

Managing self-representation and controlling the information circulating in the online environment is especially crucial for individuals who identify themselves as influencers. In order to explore how and why a specific self-branding strategy is defined by one in a specific medium, I am going to take the concept of impression management (also called *self-presentation*) as the theoretical foundation for my research.

Impression management refers to overt and subconscious processes in which individuals create and shape outward images of themselves in an attempt to stimulate the generation of desirable decoding from others. The pioneer in conceptualizing the impression management and defining its principles is a Canadian-American sociologist Erving Goffman. In order to explain the mechanics of social interactions and one's impression management within their framework, Goffman uses the metaphor of theatre and regards an individual as an actor who performs a role in a play (Goffman, 1959). According to his theory, people use various techniques to *perform* themselves in different situations intending to convey certain signs to the audience which will be subsequently interpreted by it. The ultimate purpose of each performance is to achieve impression management.

The variety of spectators having a different relation towards the represented *self* explain the complexity of performing shown in the social networking sites. It is not surprising that online impression management is more complicated issue than 'offline' one; multiple social and cultural contexts are collapsed by technologies which unite distinctly different audiences. This " context collapse" (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p. 123) provokes difficulties in people's engagement in multiplex negotiations required to perform impression management within various social interactions.

When the citizen media emerged, blogging as a new way of online communication entered our culture with a remarkable speed and has become a part of popular

consciousness. It has become one of the most exciting online activities in recent years, has been adopted by other cultural products and has received different reflection in each specific case. As Livingstone claims (2008), the creation and networking of content tends to become an essential means of managing individual identity, lifestyle and social relationships. Self-publication has been examined from the perspective of self-presentation and traditional impression management strategies such as competence, criticism and praise have been adopted by influential bloggers in order to present themselves as likable experts (Trammel & Keshalashvili, 2005). Abidin (2015) emphasizes that fact that influencers (bloggers) are ordinary people with the only difference from other ordinary Internet users - their activity is monetized. They designate certain manipulations (e.g., the usage of emotions, intimate messages) that will have stronger effects on the impression construction in order to build lasting relationships with their audience (Lövheim, 2013) which will consequently increase their money-making potential and influence. In addition, Marwick (2013) assumes that social media encourages users to promote themselves as brands. My research is intended to examine this personal branding and strategies used within the context of one particular social media platform.

1.4 Earlier research

There is a large volume of published studies describing women not only as active social media users, but also as active cultural and media producers. Previously, researchers have focused on the effectiveness and credibility of influencers (Uzonoglu, Kip, 2014; Carr, Hayes, 2014; Pang, Tan, Lim, Kwan, Lakhanpal, 2016), evaluating the level of influence mainly in terms of followers' number (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). At the moment, a growing body of literature on female social media influencers presents an outline of strategies pursued in order to maintain and extend celebrity and microcelebrity, adapted to image-centric structure of Instagram. The ways that social media entertainment, frequently consumed by individuals on mobile devices, address to traditional media have been established by a number of scholars (Cunningham & Craig, 2017).

It is suggested that the main distinction between traditional celebrity and microcelebrity is their performative domain. While traditional celebrities gain acknowledgement and audience by demonstrating their talents without any space limits, the term microcelebrity (Senft, 2013) refers only to those individuals who use online environment as the key source for attracting followers (Hurley, 2019). Their self-presentation practices can include the share of personal information as a part of a marketing strategy and the mobilization of online identity as a brand itself (Marwick, 2015; Senft, 2013). Marwick (2015) claims that visually oriented architecture of Instagram and arising self-presentation strategies define the difference between approaches to microcelebrity in Instagram and other blogging platforms, such as YouTube and Twitter. The study conducted by Abidin (2018) has shown that Internet celebrities have managed to transform online fame into a self-brand. This concept is different from a definition suggested by business scholars, since it is focusing on the cultural role influencers play in the society. In my research I am aiming to go further and bring together the concepts of self-branding and expertise establishment in order to start filling in the gap in studies concerning professional image management in social media.

2. CULTURAL CONTEXT

2.1 Knowledge and digital culture

People have always considered knowledge as one of the main strategic resources enabling to build a sustainable abiding advantage, since knowledge empowers people with the top level of effectiveness and knowledge leads to the establishment of new competences (Choo, 1998). The locations of knowledge may vary. The knowledge located in the minds of individuals is defined as *tacit knowledge* (Polanyi, 1966). Tacit knowledge is difficult to shift to another individual by the means of verbalization or writing, since tacit knowledge does not represent itself data or information. Tacit knowledge cannot be articulated; it is conceived through a concrete action. Two types of tacit knowledge can be identified: *individual tacit knowledge* and *team tacit knowledge*
(Ryan & Connor, 2013). Individual tacit knowledge refers to skills, while team tacit knowledge is related to knowledge connected to group activities, obtained through the experience of cooperating together and, thereby creating shared cognitions (Polanyi, 1969).

Another type of knowledge, opposing above mentioned, *explicit* one, is codified in digital devices, documents, books etc. or inserted in the daily routines and norms of organizations (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). In other words, this type of knowledge is easily identified, transferred and employed. It is a fixed documentation of information, representing well structured, objective and technical knowledge. The aforementioned scholars (Nonaka & Takeuchi) have also proposed the systematization for knowledge creation and have distinguished four processes for it. The first process is socialization which refers to the process of experience exchange during which tacit knowledge, such as technical skills and mental models, is created. Obtaining tacit knowledge does not require the use of language. It is acquired through observing, imitating and then practicing. The second, externalization, is the process of revealing tacit knowledge through explicit notions such as paradigms, analogies, metaphors and hypotheses. The third, combination, is the process of combining different forms of explicit knowledge and, thereby arranging concepts into a knowledge system. Explicit knowledge is conveyed through media channels such as phone conversations, e-mail, appointments

and documents. And, finally, the fourth, internalization, is the process that implies explicit knowledge conversion to tacit knowledge and relates to learning while doing.

These four processes of knowledge creation and transfer demonstrate that the knowledge transfer correlates with a common understanding transfer from the knowledge holder to the knowledge user. The fundamental pillars of the common understanding are the context (the background of the knowledge, the situations and circumstances that make a certain knowledge comprehensible) and the experience (activities that generate mental models of how the knowledge should be applied) communicated within a cultural framework (Murray & Zakharova, 2006).

The processes of knowledge sharing have also been classified and, thus, three generations of knowledge sharing have been defined (Bellefroid, 2012). The first generation implies that traditionally, knowledge sharing is codified and stored. This type of knowledge sharing can be easily adapted by information technologies (Hansen et al., 1999). In the second generation the social element is a key determinant. This generation accentuates personalization, individuals' communication and cooperation. In the third generation social networks are used here as the main source of acquiring knowledge. Social media does not require physical contact between knowledge producers and knowledge consumers.

Along the same line of thought, it is possible to identify three key aspects of knowledge sharing. In the first place, knowledge sharing is a process and, consequently, necessitates a series of actions, events and activities that develop throughout time. In the second place, knowledge sharing presupposes at least two participants and distinguishes two main roles: the role of giver (demonstrating, mentoring, directing) and the role of receiver (accepting, learning, acquiring). Knowledge sharing becomes possible only in the case if both parties recognize knowledge as important and valuable. Finally, knowledge sharing embodies the particular characteristics of the shared knowledge.

Digital age, that we are living in, enables us to instantly access great volumes of various information. The way we acquire, create and distribute knowledge is a subject to continuous transformation caused by the rapid growth of digital content and tools. Nowadays, more and more people give their own contribution in digital knowledge

environment by producing and sharing their digital content. These changes in social knowledge engagement have positive results and deep and significant implications. In addition to that fact that different types of information are becoming available and the scale of accessibility is increasing, our relationship towards knowledge is modifying - we are becoming more familiar with the source of knowledge, evaluating and filtering it. However, there is a dark side of active knowledge circulation. The concerns about what kind of knowledge is presented, who has shared this knowledge and whose knowledge one can trust.

Sterling (2002) described this trend of digital knowledge the following way: *"The Internet has no curriculum, no moral values, and no philosophy. It just brings on the data, railroad cars of it, data by the ton. The Internet is scholarship that is electronically supercharged, decentralized, disorganized, multicultural, and out of control"* (Sterling, 2002, p. 51).

The significance of culture in the sphere of knowledge management remains undoubtful (De Long, 1997; Gold et al., 2001; Kayworth & Leidner, 2003). Culture features prominently in the narrative of knowledge management and knowledge economy. It is suggested that culture, in some cases might act as a barrier for knowledge development and sharing (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). However, a number of researchers also claim that culture might serve as a perfect agent in terms of knowledge importance creation and valuing it. Such concepts as *the knowledge centered culture* (Janz & Prasarnphanich, 2003), *the sharing culture* (Davenport, De Long & Beers, 1998; Neef, 1999; Comeau-Kirchner, 2000) and *the knowledge-friendly culture* (Davenport et al., 1998) refer to outspokenness, open mindedness, flexibility and trust. This kind of cultures encourage new experiences and tend to appreciate and respect knowledge and expertise more than hierarchy. Digital technologies have strongly affected the dynamics of knowledge distribution and creation and it is important to take into account the specific features of digital culture and to use it as a lens while examining the object of this research. The relationship between culture and knowledge sharing is widely recognizable. These relationships are both internal and external. Regarding internal, or conceptual, side knowledge is considered to be an integral component of culture's definition construction. It is also true the other way round - when defining knowledge we have to take into consideration cultural context. Concerning the external, or

influencing, area of the culture-knowledge relationship, this type addresses the question - how much knowledge is appreciated within a group.

Digital culture, being a part of traditional culture, can be recognized as an entirety of all cultural artifacts and their meanings that exist on a digital platform in case they were created by digital means or digitalized. Digital culture includes the following key sub-areas: 1) the technical equipment required to access digital culture: the history of its development, the changes it underwent and the consequences of its emergence. This sub-area includes all sorts of equipment related to digital culture; 2) the ability to create value by means of digital culture, i.e. information literacy. This term is used to describe the capability to recognize the missing information, to search for it and to process the information found. The information literacy implies a number of skills. First of all, one should be able to define tasks by disentangling missing information. Secondly, the appropriate strategy has to be pursued, meaning that an individual needs to be able to use various sources in order to find relevant data. Thirdly, the use of information should be efficient and the sources trustworthy. Finally, the information needs to be synthesized and evaluated; 3) digitalization; 4) cultural artifacts produced on a digital platform or digitally.

The fundamental aspect, defining and affecting many characteristics of digital culture, is its immaterial nature. Contemporary culture is frequently described as fast-paced and instant. Digital elements are produced in different ways: for the most part, by means of computer, however, digital cameras have equipped people with alternative computer independent devices, enabling them to record videos and sounds and capture images. Computers have expanded the sphere of their influence and from instruments helping people to acquire information digitally in their private lives have transformed into tools determining our public lives through various electronic services. The emergence of Internet involving rapid and profound changes in a short period of time has resulted in a lot of cultural shocks.

Digital media incorporates images, texts, sounds and a huge variety of data and, thus, the recipients interpret these compound messages in a more composite way. Because of digital culture our general knowledge transforms into multi complex of collective intermedia-type experiences that can be accessed everywhere at one's convenience.

Below, I will provide an overview on some of the specific features of digital world. Even though none of them is caused by technology, they all are consequences of cultural changes, it is still possible to detect a two-way process: cultural changes persuade changes in the field of technology and these changes, for their part, have a certain impact on culture.

The first feature to define is *complexity*. Devices that we are using routinely have the ability to execute complex process with just one click of a button. At every single system level complexity is presented.

The second distinctive feature is *speed.* All technological modifications are intended to increase speed. Nowadays, the most important trend is the enhancement of information exchange. Mobile phones enable us to search for information independently and to access any sort of data anywhere immediately. Moreover, business and administration related information spreads with colossal speed providing rapid connection between global stock markets.

The third one is *multitasking.* Multitasking implies the ability to do couple of things concurrently. Online presence enable individuals to perform several interactions simultaneously in several communication channels that are running parallely. This leads to inescapable blurring the borders between personal, mass and group intercourse.

The fourth feature is *convergence.* Within the framework of the information society the concept of convergence can be regarded as a capacity of different network channels to supply users with similar services and, looking at it the other way, the term convergence is applied to describe the process of merging of consumer goods such as the personal computer, the telephone and the television. Convergence, being a complex phenomenon, is also used in political, service and market contexts. If summing it up, convergence relates to this kind of situation where products, areas and channels, that were originally separated one from another, are consolidating together. Technological convergence refers to the tendency that at the same time technology changes, various technological systems unite and start performing similar tasks.

The fifth - *consolidation of written and oral communication.* Most cultures have used written records in order to preserve and store information. Digital technologies have added their own value to the written communication; it obtained some features of oral

communication. For instance, the process of *chatting,* where individuals can exchange not only textual information, but also sounds, videos and images, is formally written, but occurs to be closer to oral conversation. And, thereby, again we are facing the merging caused by specificities of digital environment.

The next hallmark of digital culture is *interactivity.* Within the digital environment, an opportunity to perform interactions is increasing. Partial or complete modification of a digital object (e.g. music, image, video) is natural and typical for digital world.

The seventh trait to be distinguished is *interconnectivity.* The feeling of permanent connection is also one of the traits on information society. We can reach people instantly anytime from any place through various digital channels. Therefore, many traditional cultural patterns are changing.

The digital culture also refers to *intangibility.* In a digital environment exists the distance between users and objects and actual sources of information, hence, trust, credibility and reliability are becoming crucial.

And, finally, *unpredictability.* It is impossible to be absolutely certain about the direction of technological evolution and predict the degree of the influence of new devices on our lives (Rab, 2007).

Many parts of our lives that seemed to be constant and stable are undergoing changes due to the occurence of digital culture. The notions of privacy, publicity, occupation, community, value and personal rights are becoming the subjects of constant modification and renovation. Foundations, that gave the impression of firmness and solidity, and affected the ways communities were forming and developing, are vanishing from sight in digital environment. Digital platforms, however, have broadened the opportunities for self-expression. A wide range of publicity has become accessible for individuals, since the ruling regime there is democracy. There is a negative side of the free information circulation also, however, such as the feeling of anxiety. The reason for that is the uncertainty about the credibility of informational source. The first and the main task of the online influencer is to establish this confidence in his trustworthiness.

This is the point where information literacy occupies the key role. One has to be aware of the credibility of the source.

Another distinctive feature of digital environment is permanence of information stored there. People cannot act within its framework without leaving a trace, that is why it is important for an expert to carefully manage all the manipulations and information distributed.

To conclude, it is important to note that Internet exerts its influence not only on the amount of research available, but also on the very nature of knowledge (Gregson et al., 2015). The first, pace-setting trend in digital knowledge is the elimination of borders between information producers and information consumers; the Web 2.0 has provided an opportunity for individuals to produce, share and manage their own content. The term *Web 2.0* was coined by O'Reilly (2005) and refers to the new type of technologies that enabled users to actively interact with information and other individuals and create networks according to personal interests and goals.

Another crucial trend is the growth of variety of channels, a range of networks and social platforms, that allow users to distribute their content and go beyond traditional knowledge sharing practices. Social media encourages individuals to create, socialize, be open, maintain conversations and participate in discussions. In terms of problem solving, group of people is more effective than an individual alone, Surowiecki (2005) has noted that using social media is very much alike addressing "wisdom of the crowd".

2.2 Beauty

Inquiries concerning beauty and the politics of appearance have always been crucial to gender, sociological and cultural studies. The concept of beauty, being a dominant ethical ideal and moral matter, determines meaning and identity, forms the self and constructs daily practices through which individuals are valued and recognized. It immensely frames our shared culture and becomes particularly indispensable when it comes to visual and virtual culture (Widdows, 2018). Beauty is a metaphorical currency and in a way a channel through which personal satisfaction and social acceptance might

be achieved. Moreover, most of cultures especially value female beauty and it is argued to be of the greatest significance for women (Robinson & Ward, 1995). For the object of my research, the Instagram blog @anysports.faceonline, beauty and youthfulness are fundamental and determining concepts. In this particular case, beauty (and youth) is the final product the expert intends to introduce, spread and eventually sell, while the appearance standards imposed by society turn out to be "leverage" for attracting consumers and establishing authority and acknowledgement. A number of studies have shown that entertainment media in Western countries tends to be one of the main sources of beauty ideals representations (Fouts & Burggraf, 2000; Yan & Bissell, 2014). We are routinely bombarded with imposed ideas of appearance standards, which results in constant pursuit for beauty and the need to improve our appearance. More recent attention has focused on the body image concerns among women caused by social media. For instance, studies have demonstrated that women who follow appearance-focused Instagram accounts and contemplate idealised images of women are more likely to have negative state of mind and suffer from dissatisfaction (Meier & Gray, 2014; Cohen & Blaszczynski, 2015; McLean et al., 2015; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015; Brown & Tiggemann, 2016; Betz & Ramsey, 2017; Robinson et al., 2017). Moreover, the process of social comparison triggered by social media has resulted in the increase of requests for plastic surgery; a 31% increase in cosmetic surgery related to eagerness to look better on social media accounts have been reported by surgeons (Sifferlin, 2013).

Both female and male appearance ideals, introduced in the media, contain messages, explaining why the represented appearance is considered as perfect, and instructions how to achieve this particular ideal (Labre & Walsh-Childers, 2003; Dill & Thill, 2007; Dallesasse & Kluck, 2013). Literature surrounding body image claims that media consumers perceive portrayed beauty ideals as their own personal appearance standards (Grabe, Hyde & Ward, 2008). Since the ideal promoted in media is recognized as desirable achievement, media users incline to continuously make a comparison between themselves and the alluring image. This tendency results in a global burst of objectification, unhealthy obsession with plastic surgery and other methods of appearance modification, body and face shaming and related psychological and physical disorders (Zeilinger, 2015). However, the common feature of the beauty ideal elements

represented in the popular media is the tangible discrepancy between anticipated and actual appearance of the population (Vandenbosch, 2017).

Vandenbosch (2017) has defined four contextual characteristics of representations of appearance standards in popular media.

The first characteristic claims that an ideal appearance beholders are young. Recently investigators have examined the effects of ideal appearance representations on young adults and adolescents (Greenberg et al., 2003). For instance, studies such as that conducted by Northup and Liebler (2010) showed that on European and American youth oriented television shows and programs the interdependence between a character's weight and age is more than visible. The connotation is negative; the younger the character, the thinner its body. Furthermore, a number of authors have reported analyses of trends in beauty ideal representation in media that demonstrated that the target audience for these standards are adolescents and young adults, physically and emotionally unstable group, just beginning to form sexual identity.

Secondly, media characters representing beauty ideal are depicted as generally prosperous in life. It has been argued that physical attractiveness has a strong impact on people's lives (Jackson, Hunter & Hodge, 1995; Langlois et al., 2000; Hosoda, Eugene & Coat, 2003). Additionally to their perfect looks, ideal appearance representers are in favourable positions in other spheres. The advantages they have appear as natural attributes of the media character, fulfilling current beauty standards. The first characteristic relates to sexuality. Characters, embodying beauty ideal, are portrayed as sexually attractive (Vandenbosch et al., 2013; Yan & Bissell, 2014) and this attractiveness is often emphasized by revealing clothing, which is intended to encourage media users to evaluate the perfect proportions of their bodies (Vandenbosch et al., 2013). In addition to that, the sexuality of characters with an ideal appearance has been intensified by demonstrating that characters not complying with beauty standards are less sexually attractive (Greenberg et al., 2003).

Besides the sexual attractiveness, a number of scholars have also argued that individuals beholding an ideal appearance are more successful at a professional level, more socially

adapted and possess certain qualities and skills that are commonly define a "good person" (Greenberg et al., 2003; Herbozo, Tantleff-Dunn, Gokee-Larose, & Thompson, 2004). For instance, evil characters in popular American children's books and movies usually have faces with some sort of irregularities that do not correspond to ideal standards (Herbozo et al., 2004). Furthermore, in popular American fiction individuals with larger bodies are more likely to be unemployed or to be uninvolved in social interaction (Greenberg et al., 2003).

Thirdly, the ideal appearance is introduced as achievable. The third significant issue, concerning media messages about beauty standards, is considered attainment of ideal appearance. Different types of media, including television, magazines and social media suggest that idealized appearance features can be achieved by actual population. To be more precise, in order to acquire them, media users have to either follow "professional" advice on certain beauty products usage (Labre & Walsh-Childers, 2003), or recommendations on body shape management, musculatory building and weight correction (Ricciardelli et al., 2010). Frequently, it is declared that adhering to these guidelines will contribute into life quality improvement and one's physical health, in particular (Labre & Walsh-Childers, 2003; Ricciardelli et al., 2010; Yan & Bissell, 2014).

Finally, media representations of beauty ideals correlate with stereotypes on ethnicity and gender. Beauty ideals and appearance standards are not only strongly connected to gender and ethnic stereotypes, they are determined by them. Concerning gender, beauty standards in European and American sexual media content are defined by stereotypical gender roles (Conrad et al., 2009; Vandenbosch et al., 2013). Sexual stereotypes referring to women attribute them the role of submissive whose primary goal is to attract male partners with the help of their appearance. At the same time, men play dominant role towards women and are represented as more active, being mainly interested in women for their sexual attractiveness. These stereotypical heterosexual roles are linked with female and male representations in two ways.

To begin with, the prevalence of ideal female portrayals towards male ones, accompanied by certain contextual features, support the sexual role stereotype where appearance is more crucial for women, since it is the only way to attract a sexual

partner. The research on appearance standards has demonstrated that women are more likely to match with proclaimed beauty standards (Conrad et al., 2009; Dill & Thill, 2007; Vandenbosch et al., 2013) and because of this prevalence of female media characters corresponding to appearance standards (Greenberg et al., 2001; Conrad et al., 2009), the idea of greater importance of these standards to women may appear among media users.

Regarding ethnicity, the tendency has been the following - White individuals have been portrayed as more successful than individuals from different origins and Whiteness, in general, has been recently glamorized in media content (Baker, 2005; Northup & Liebler, 2010; Yan & Bissell, 2014). Moreover, even in terms of propagandized beauty standards for non-White individuals, Eurocentric, "Westernized" features still remain more preferable (Baker, 2005; Conrad et al., 2009; Yan & Bissell, 2014).

Much of the current literature on the ideal appearance construction in media demonstrates a diversity of aspects forming and affecting it, varying from weight and skin tone to haircut and nail shape. Apparently, weight particularly can be considered as the most prevalent indication of the unrealistic appearance expectations in popular media. Data from several media sources has shown that the portrayal of men and women with low body fat level is prevailing (Fouts & Burggraf, 2000; Greenberg et al., 2003; Dallesasse & Kluck, 2013; Vandenbosch, Vervloessem, & Eggermont, 2013; Yan & Bissell, 2014). However, the weight and the body shape, in general, does not solo on the popular media stage. For example, skin tone preference used to vary depending on the context. While White individuals appraised a sun tanned skin as an ideal (Chapman, Marks & King, 1992), Black individuals considered a lighter tone as perfect skin color (Baker, 2005; Conrad, Dixon & Zhang, 2009).

A number of scholars have suggested that even face features in media content are placed in an identifiable framework. A good example is a flawless, spotless face, with no acne or other possible imperfections, poeticized in early adolescent oriented channels, such as Nickelodeon and Disney (Northup & Liebler, 2010). Facial attractiveness plays a remarkable role in evaluation of beauty of women (Tucker, 1985; Jones, 2001; Confer, Perilloux, & Buss, 2010).

Face that characterized as beautiful is a face that enables non cognitive experience of satisfaction, pleasure and meaning (Feng, 2002). Previous research has indicated that predilection for beautiful faces develops in early childhood, and that beauty (attractiveness) standards are homogeneous across different cultures and genders (Jefferson, 2004; Rhodes, 2006; Kun, Chang & Hettie, 2011). For instance, harmonious proportions, face symmetry smooth skin and youthfulness are equated to beauty cross-culturally (Feng, 2002; Hunter, 2002; De Casanova, 2004; Jefferson, 2004; Rhodes, 2006). Furthermore, a number of previous studies have found that individuals beholding well-proportioned faces and bodies are considered to be more attractive (including sexual way) and healthier (Rikowski & Grammer, 1999; Scheib, Gangestad & Thornhill, 1999; Erwing, Rhodes & Pellicano, 2010; Lie, Simmons & Rhodes, 2010). From the point of biology, our brain perceives symmetrical and well-proportioned faces and bodies as a potential set of genes of a high standard that will enable us to get healthy offspring with this individual (Lie et al., 2010). Same scholars also suggest that symmetrical face features may be regarded as the indicator of healthy environment while growing and the absence of diseases, genetic mutations or toxins.

In the context of appearance discourse, the focal point of my research, as well as the central metaphorical figure and advertised product of @anysports.faceonline blog, is face and facial attractiveness, in particular. Anastasia's area of expertise, facial gymnastics, represent daily exercises, involving muscle training, strengthening and conditioning s. Many people tend to choose easier and quicker way to achieve desired appearance. Different types of correction of aging symptoms, including botox injections, eyelid surgery, face lifting, laser peeling etc.for a long time have been an exclusive prerogative of plastic surgeons and dermatologists. However, there is an increasing interest in alternative approaches to reduce facial aging, such as facial gymnastics, that are less expensive and less invasive. This area occurs to be quite relevant among the online audience, for example, google search shows almost one million results for *face gymnastics*.

Since beauty is often seen being synonymous with youthfulness, the notion of aging and the ageism obstacle are becoming crucial for this research. Golombisky (2018) claims that modern "antiaging" advertisements occur within cultural hostility towards aging, in general, and aging women, in particular. The focus on studying ageism in media,

however, is relatively new. The research has been conducted on systematic age-related discrimination and stereotyping analysing the sharing of these stereotypes and their later interpretations (Palmore, 2001; Nelson, 2004). In the heart of previous studies in the field of media was the frequency with which different minority groups are described in advertising and television content. In media studies, ageism, the same as other types of stereotypes has been defined as *"a coherent set of shared ideas and beliefs that constitutes a particular justification of the interests of dominant groups: the state, employers, hospitals, media"* (Bytheway, 1994, p. 130). Visual media represents an ongoing reflection of social practices. Everyday interactions, including our perception of older people and the way we identify ourselves being old, are influenced by it. Media representations can be reflected from the point of the social construction of ageing, the way it is created and maintained (Minichiello et al., 2000).

The @anysports.faceonline blog is placed in the successful aging discourse, representing ageing not as an integral part of human nature, but as a controllable process (Vincent et al., 2008). Since the signs of aging remind us of our impermanence, it causes natural fear of mortality which results in constant attempts to get rid of these signs (Martens et al., 2004, 2005). The narrative of eternal beauty and youth is profoundly rooted back to history and taps into the global pursuit of everlasting youth and long and healthy life (Loos, 2013). The anti-ageing trend carries with it a message that we are responsible for our bodies and well-being and only if we take this responsibility, we will be able to avoid social exclusion (Vincent et al., 2008).

3. THE VISUAL DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 Types of photos

While the primary motive of Facebook usage, for example, is establishing relationships with others, Instagram users, on the contrary, attach less importance to connecting with other people. In addition to knowledge gathering about others and visual documentation of life events, Instagram users place more emphasis on self-promotion, personal identity construction and demonstration of creativity (e.g. photography skills) (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

Since the object of my research functions and develops within the particular social media platform and is affected by its terms of the use and certain digital tools to operate; in the first place, I will take into account the specifics of the platform itself. Even though, Instagram is constantly technically modifying and updating, frequently adopting new features from different competitors, it is still, to a large extent, a visual content platform. It is visual content that boosts users to click, to consume information and to interact with it, while textual filling remains secondary.

The Instagram's visual anatomy is straightforward and simple to navigate. The most distinguished feature shaping Instagram's structure is its dependence on geo-temporal tagging: the geographical and temporal recognition of a media product. In Instagram's interface vertical, temporal constructions are suppressed, while spatial connectivity is dominating. The application interface is locus-oriented and foregrounds a physical place of a user. This space dominance over time is strengthened by the way photos are organized within the application. Visual data is mainly consumed by viewing a main page with a "flow" of the latest publications from your subscriptions listed in reverse chronological order. The distorted temporal structure leads to coexistence of photos and videos of different styles, places and times transforming temporal images into atemporal (Hochman and Manovich, 2013). Since a user is not limited by strictly arranged categories, multiple contexts and patterns become prominent (Treske, 2015). This form of visual data organization implies that an influencer / expert will be constantly maintaining online presence through personal narrative contributions. Visual cultures

flourishing around digital media are determined not only by technologies themselves, but also by the complex of cultural conventions and approaches that define various image characteristics, such as compositions, subjects, editing and narratives. Regarding visual language specifically, it represents consistent choices made on every visual element identified as relevant for observers and creators.

As the number of Instagram users continued to grow, and as both brands and independent authors discovered the potential of increasing their income and recognition through the platform, the number of photos and feeds that are strategically planned has immediately raised. Multiple observations indicate that this switch took place during 2014-2015 (Manovich, 2016).

Manovich (2016) has distinguished three photo types that are the most common on Instagram: *casual, professional* and *designed* (also *styled*). *Casual* photos relate to that type of images that represent visual documentation of an event, a situation or a particular experience sharing, or a person's / group's of people portrayal; these purposes are often combined. The documentation role is fundamental for the photography since the beginning of it in the 1830s, however, Instagram is making it even more intense. The key factor occurs to be Instagram's interface which accompanies each image with the date and time and shows the exact location of it, including longitude and latitude numbers. In terms of visual aesthetics, casual photography is characterized by the lack of careful control of photo composition, focus, tones and colors and visual contrast. This type of photos is to a large extent a documentation records, they are not intended to display aesthetic objects. Otherwise speaking, the essential constituent of *casual* photo is its content; in this case, it is not necessarily to correspond to characteristics of "good" photography. Concerning Instagram, platform's *casual* photography is mainly influenced by the human world.

Casual photography is defined and guided by different social and popular photo making protocol that determines what is worth to be documented and the way different subjects should be captured. Nearly all of these conventions are dated back to the 19th and 20th century and relate to vernacular photography, but some of them have unfolded with Instagram appearing. For instance, this protocol requires individuals to be in the centre of a photograph and, regarding selfies and portraits, faces should be shown fully. In

terms of landscapes, the key factor is a proper horizon line that has to be horizontal, while inaccurate angles should be avoided. And food, on the contrary, should be displayed from an angle.

The protocol of vernacular photography sets up certain directives for both *how* things should be photographed and *what* objects are worth documenting (e.g. tourist attractions, sunsets). These conventions, thus, function as a peculiar filter for the visible world.

It is important to take into account that fact that not all *casual* photos are taken by amateurs. Some authors possessing professional photography skills create *casual* photos intentionally and include them in their photofeed. A lot of influencers from various backgrounds on Instagram practise the usage of casual aesthetics in their galleries contrasting with well-retouched and carefully planned photos (commercial photography). In examined Instagram account @anysports.faceonline examples of *casual* photography are absent. Thus, casual aesthetics cannot be considered as a part of blog's visual strategy.

The second widespread photo type is *professional.* The term *professional* is used referring to the set of principles and rules of photography developed in the second half of the 20th century. These rules imply properly constructed composition, attentiveness to shadows, highlights and tones, line orientation and color balance (rule of thirds). Even though a lot of contemporary photographers go counter to these rules in order to establish their own exclusive styles and recognizable voices, we need to take into consideration that this contravention, in the first place, demands deep understanding of these principles and proficiency in them. Technological progress has enabled to implement professional photography standards in algorithms of digital cameras, including cameras of smartphones. These algorithms equip cameras with possibilities of face detection, image stabilization, focus and grey scale balance setting etc. Therefore, many of the principles of professional photography are nowadays automatically applied by cameras. However, other rules (e.g. light establishment, composition) have to be customized manually. The opportunities modern digital cameras provide us contribute into the increase of *professional* photos appearing on Instagram.

Some authors on Instagram tend to follow all the rules of *professional* photography, but majority of users prefer to adhere to only some of them. In the matter of aesthetics, the distinctive features of *professional* photography are immense open spaces, profound perspective and definite focus on details. Regarding dominant genre of *professional* photography, it occurs to be landscape or cityscape. The silver medal is awarded to a person's portrayal against exotic natural background. The third prevailing genre is a detailed micro depiction of an animal's part or insect. Even though the thematic filling of Anastasia's blog does not correspond to before mentioned genres, some indicators of *professional* photography such as composition and color balance can be noted.

Finally, the third type of photos common on Instagram - *designed* photos. By *designed* images Manovich (2016) means the category of photos that are organized and edited in a certain way in order to have a distinguishable stylised look. In addition to the principal features of present-time photography, *designed* photos possess attributes of contemporary graphic design. The aesthetics of *designed* photography can be characterized by the lack or total absence of details, big mono colored areas, close-ups and simplistic spaces.

Contemporary *design* images act in accordance with different principles. For the first time, these canons were developed during 1909-1914 in abstract art created in Europe. In the beginning of 1920s these principles were exerted to all areas of design, including architecture, printed products (books, magazines and posters), furniture, interiors and industrial products. Visible contrast (in terms of shapes, colors, sizes etc.), asymmetrical composition, repeated elements, finite color scheme, simple and big empty white spaces geometry lie at the heart of these principles (Manovich, 1999). Hence, the general concept is the following - distinct hierarchy of elements implying a remarkably restricted choices concerning all visual constituents, including color palettes, patterns, fonts, lightning, shape types and chosen objects.

The aesthetics of original modern design have altered throughout the 20th and early 21st century and other styles that give prominence to some principles over others or don't apply some of the principles at all, have emerged. During the 1990's and early 2000s the minimal version of modern design was introduced and the attributes of it could be seen in architecture, space design, web sites and print publications. Worldwide, this new

minimalist aesthetics was recognized as cool, contemporary and sophisticated. Moreover, the principles of this aesthetics were determining for the self-identification of the generation of young urbanites from 2000s and 2010s. Different countries have their own interpretations of contemporary design basing upon cultural particularities and traditional aesthetics.

Possessing a *style* implies adaptation of specific choices, careful management and coordination of them in order to achieve a distinguishable look and consistency. This can be applied to any kind of design including Instagram photos. The type of photos that represents particular lifestyles using at the same time the visual language of modern design is called *designed* (Manovich, 2016). Instead of visual "chaos" of casual photos or resemblance and rigid conventions of professional photos, designed photography is oriented on creativity and originality as regards to the way subjects are depicted. In addition, the strict control of the elements of a photo is shown and a clear organization of them can be seen. Therefore, strong visual contrast and rhythm are achieved. Two directions of designed photos can be clearly distinguished: the first one is to have less control and move towards realism, while the second one is to use more abstract shapes, colors, textures and patterns reducing the visible reality to minimum in order to achieve certain aesthetic effects. This aesthetic strategy of in-between photos is widely spread on Instagram. Hereinafter, I am going to describe visual and content strategies used in designed photography in more detail since the type of photography represented in the analyzed blog corresponds to the traits / requirements of designed photos (according to the classification developed by Manovich 2016). This approach might be considered as relevant, since Manovich's objects of observation were Instagram galleries of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian users and cultural specificities (such as a particular focus on fashion and style) were taken into account.

The list offered by Manovich (2016) includes: *«Increased brightness; Increased contrast; Increased saturation, or its opposite; Decreased saturation to create almost a monochrome photo; Large proportion of light areas, and small proportion of dark areas; White backgrounds* (fig. 1)*; "Negative space" (i.e., large empty monochrome areas), with no gradations or details; Detailed and textured parts confined to clearly differentiated parts of an image juxtaposed with other empty parts; Compositions*

arranged around diagonal rather than vertical and horizontal lines; Use of the point of view looking down from above" (Manovich, 2016, p. 22)

Authors of designed photos tend to follow three principal rules of the styled photography. The first decisive rule of designed photography adepts is the use of one particular visual style for all images represented in the photo gallery; a few styles might be reserved for particular topics or subjects, however, otherwise, all photos need to be edited similarly. Following this rule helps to maintain consistent branding and common aesthetic, since a strong visual style is a key element of the designed photography.

The second rule states that there should be a clear visual separation between subjects, meaning that in a sequence of photos no two photos can repeat one another (for example, photos from the same photo shoot cannot be posted one after another). And, finally, every single photo published has to be well retouched and polished, casual photos cannot be included in the feed. In @anysports.faceonline blog all of three rules are followed (fig. 2).

Despite the differences between professional and designed photography, discussed above, both types of photos share analogous goals. For instance, they are both intended to create visually enjoyable aesthetics. Another similar aim is to overcome informational excess by filtering captured information. The conformity to these criteria helps Anastasia to stand out from other specialists from the similar field and to attract new followers; the @anysports.faceonline blog's aesthetic is very visually pleasing and information published is carefully planned, so that the audience can easily differentiate the subjects. Professional and designed photos also have similarities in terms of composition. Objects or people are often positioned against flat background.

Concerning subjects of designed photos, Manovich (2016) has also provided the list of them:
"Spreads" or "flat lays" (i.e., careful arrangements of a number of objects, photographed from above; Photos of separate objects showing one or a few objects from an angle such as coffee cups, fashion and design magazines, laptops, phones, bags, and other accessories of a hip / cool / urban lifestyle; Parts of a body arranged with the object spreads or separate objects; Parts of a body (such as hands holding

objects or pointing) with landscapes or cityscapes; Full body positioned towards the edge or corner in a scene in ways different from traditional posing for camera (standing straight, facing camera and smiling) and normal compositions where figure(s) or face(s) occupy most of the image; Avoidance of stereotypical subject / style combinations popular in commercial photography such as portrait with blurred background (i.e., portraits with bokeh effect)". (Manovich, 2016, p. 25)

It is important to take into consideration that original designed photography has been modified by Instagram authors in order to correspond to the specific features of the platform like application's interface and smartphones screens. Instagram adepts of designed photography give their preference to compositions that arrange the content into a few well defined figures that are separated by texture, color or tone. This kind of photos resembling icons make communication possible even at a very small size of a phone screen; reducing effects positively affects visual effectiveness. In a wider context, it can be claimed that Instagram designed photos make their own adjustments to global aesthetics of minimalism in order to accommodate to the particularities and needs of small screens. For instance, the most widely used color in minimalist space design and architecture is grey, while in designed photos white areas are used in order to create high contrast suitable for small screens.

Finally, the last question I am going to address in this paragraph is the purpose of designed photography which will make it possible to give some suggestions why Anastasia might have chosen this particular style for her account. As claimed by Manovich (2016) most of them are made on business purposes. Anastasia's Instagram profile includes contact details, enabling users to get in touch with her easily and receive more detailed information about promoted face gymnastics system. Her gallery demonstrates a refined visual image, making the viewers interested and curious.
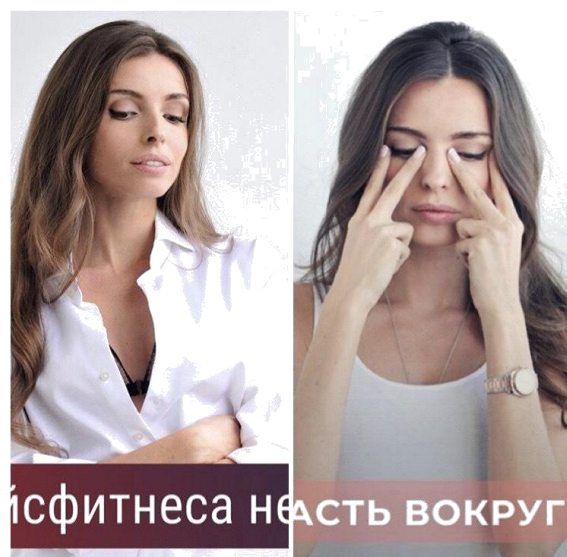
Figure 1.

An example of white background principle in @anysports.faceonline account, as of 04/14/19.
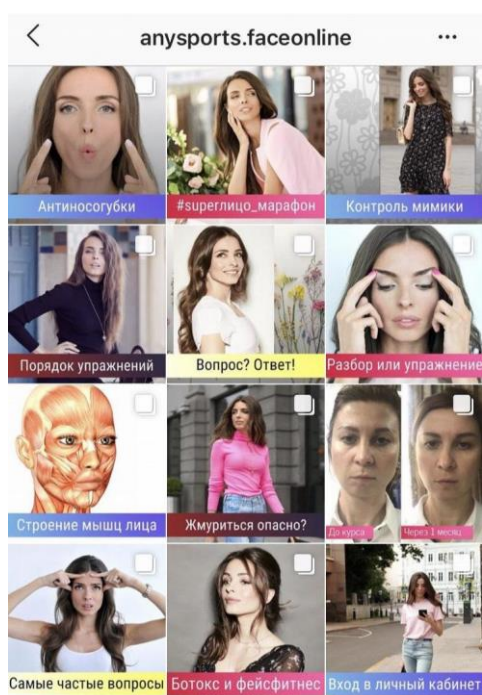

Figure 2.

Anastasia's photo gallery, as of 04/14/19.

3.2 Color scheme and brand identity

Color is frequently used as a marketing tool assisting in brand identity creation. The strategic color placement enables to attract consumers and determine their perceptions of a product. By means of color, a brand is able to construct a distinct and powerful visual identity, take an active position within the market and build strong relationships with a core market. Color, as a brand differentiation marker, not only affects product sales, but also increases awareness of it. In addition, colors are frequently used by brands in mass customization strategies. With regard to color usage, the focal point of my research is color as an implement applied in order to create a specific brand identity.

The research conducted on the symbolic nature of brands (Levy, 1959) has ultimately induced the brand personality conception (Plummer, 1984; Aaker, 1997; Aaker et al., 2001). While elaborating this concept, market researchers have introduced reliable scales (Aaker, 1997), scrutinized the consequences and assets of brand personality (Batra et al., 1993; Freling & Forbes, 2005; Freling et al., 2010) and discovered the ways in which brand personality fosters association and self-expression (Malhotra, 1981; Belk, 1988; Kleine et al., 1993).

Metaphorically, the distinctive features of brands can be compared with the unique traits of people (Stern, 2006). Aaker (1997) has defined brand personality as a complex of human characteristics connected with a brand. Basing upon this definition, Aaker (1997) has suggested a brand personality scale, which applies 42 items to describe competence, excitement and sincerity, ruggedness and sophistication.

Brand personality is able to impact on consumer inclinations and behaviour (Biel, 1993), modify user experiences (Aaker & Stayman, 1992) and contribute into relationships development, maintaining loyalty and trust (Fournier, 1998). The empirical research has demonstrated that impressions of a brand personality are determined by brand-related engagement (Wentzel, 2009), they serve as a key factor within service environment (Baker & Cameron, 1996), increase brand equity and purchase intentions (Batra & Homer, 2004; Freling et al., 2010), and reorientate consumer opinions (Freling & Forbes, 2005). Scholars claim that advertising, package design, product attributes, logo, brand name are just a part of many factors that form brand personality (Batra et

al., 1993; Orth & Malkewitz, 2008; Grohmann, 2009). The case of @anysports.faceonline blog occurs to be slightly different since it represents a personal or self brand. Moreover, we have to take into consideration the social media context where the term *influencer* is also appropriate.

Eight type of influencers have been distinguished, while only three of them are representative ones: narrative experts, top influentials and superspreads (Wiedmann, Hennings & Langner, 2010). The main differentiating factor is their individual and social capital. Individual capital includes knowledge and expertise, satisfaction, innovativeness, demographics, Machiavellism and risk aversion. Social capital, for its part, concerns personality strength, integration, empathy and gregariousness (Wiedmann et al., 2010).

Narrative experts are characterized by the high level of individual capital and poor, or average, rates in social capital dimension. Even though narrative experts turn out to be the most competent and skilled, they do not have many followers.

The second representative type, top influential refers to those individuals who have a high level of both social and individual capital. They have some knowledge in a certain field and a lot of followers. They tend to maintain interaction with the audience and update information due to new knowledge acquisition on a regular basis.

The last type, superspreads, relates to those who having enough social capital lack of individual one in comparison to other types. This type of influencers might demonstrate superiority in one or few field(s) of knowledge, however, lack of professional expertise in the given subject. According to this classification, @anysports.faceonline blog, having one million subscribers, refers to top influentials.

The term personal branding was coined by Tom Peters and was first introduced in his essay *The Brand Called You* (Peters, 1997). Nowadays, the term is widely used referring to one's self-representation and status in the context of goal-oriented online communication. Personal branding is a process of marking people and their careers / fields of expertise as brands and it is designed to build an asset and create brand equity relating to a particular individual. The fundamental factors shaping personal brand are

chosen channels, appearance / image, actions and presence. Efficient personal branding results in a creation of a memorable and well recognizable impression. The personal branding as a concept suggests that people and their careers might act as brands with all concomitant attributes such as unique designs, performance level and taglines for success (Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2012). The common idea of studies surrounding brand management is that the exclusiveness and uniqueness and essential idea are fundamental for brand identity construction (Aaker, 1997; De Chernatony, 1999; Kapferer, 2008).

A personal brand, on the whole, equals to the sum of all accessible digital documentations related to one's personality. The type of information surrounding personal brand defines one's occupation, interests and the way he or she can be contacted. In order to create and maintain online presence and successfully operate within online environment, the individual concerned needs a certain entity identifying him or her and enabling others to communicate with one's networks. Before launching the actual process of a personal brand creation, the brand creator needs to generate a certain form of digital being which operates whenever one performs online. This entity, being fundamental and determining for individual's online life, is entitled as online identity. The number of online identities is not restricted and depends only on one's personal goals and motives. Different online identities are often meant to separate personal life from professional. For instance, Anastasia has another Instagram profile @superlitso where she publishes only *casual* photos (fig. 3).
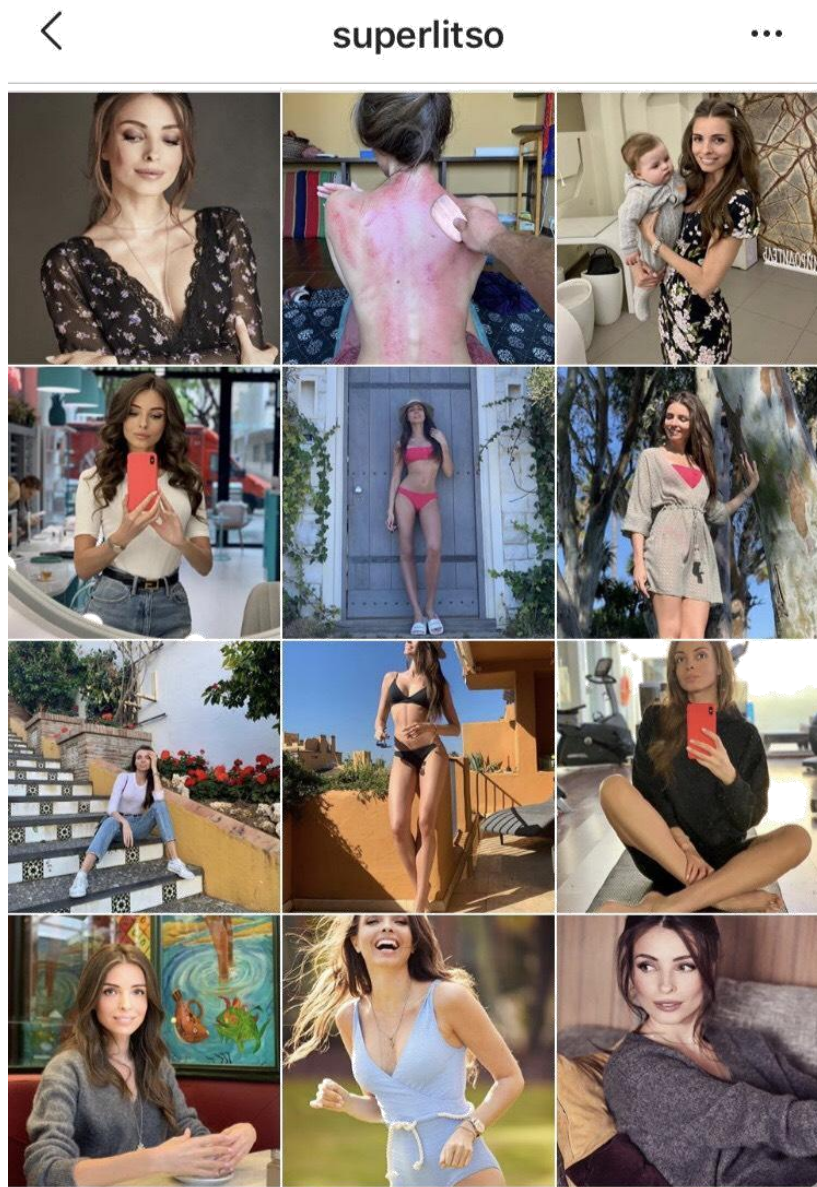
Figure 3.

Anastasia's personal account, as of 04/12/19.

In Anastasia's profile the main goal of the blog, as well as her occupation are stated right away (fig. X): Face Gymnastics, Online Course. In addition to the textual feeling, the profile picture, depicting expert's face while doing certain manipulations, places the additional emphasis on the face of the brand and accentuates the core topic of the blog. Moreover, Anastasia provides an additional link to the site, thus, making her blog more visible on search engines. Aalto & Uusisaari (2015), for example, claim that the number of links related to a site plays a crucial role in the significance evaluation of search

engines. In other words, more links one leaves, more chances one gets for his/her site to appear in the top of results list.

Figure 4.

Anastasia's Instagram profile picture, as of 04/11/19. The text from top to bottom: Face Gymnastics, Online Course; SUPERFACE beauty and youth with your own hands; Only 15 minutes a day; Expert support; 50000 participants, 17th of April (start of the new course); 70% discount.

In brand personality construction strategies the sensory elements such as soundtrack, scent and, certainly, color play a crucial role. In this paragraph, in more detail, I am going to speak about color, its meaning and function in @anysports.faceonline blog. As well as a brand name, color selection, conveying an instinct meaning, contributes in brand awareness and becomes salient to the brand's identity (Abril et al, 2009) and transmits the coveted image (Bottomley & Doyle, 2006). Therefore, especially loyal brand followers, being attached to a specific visual identity of a brand may react negatively if a familiar color scheme changes (Kahney, 2003). In the marketing research color has been considered as a significant element affecting audience perceptions of advertisements (Gorn et al., 1997) and product positioning among competitors (Bottomley & Doyle, 2006).

One of the central notions referring to color interpretation is *aesthetic stimulus;* it has the capacity to form our perceptions and stimulate them via both referential and embodied meanings (Zeltner, 1975). As claimed by aesthetic philosophers, referential meaning varies depending on a nexus of associations triggered by an exposure to the stimulus, while embodied meaning is identified instinctively (Zeltner, 1975). Scholars have introduced a two-dimensional constructure (Crowley, 1993) which implies that one dimension activates the process of arousal increasing heart rate and brain activity, while the second dimension triggers estimative responses and affects attitudes towards color.

Within the field of psychology the color associations have always played a remarkable role (Bellizzi et al., 1983), since the contact with different colors leads to psychological changes (Elliot, 2015). For example, colors can cause a stimulus effect, excitement, anxiety, frustration etc. Moreover, the examination of individuals color preferences provides an adequate basis for a specialist to recognize mental disorders and identify the state of mental health in general. The studies scrutinizing the correlations between mood and color have demonstrated that mentally healthy individuals are more likely to give their preferences to brighter colors, while dark colors are associated with negative mood (Boyatzis & Varghese, 1994; Hemphill, 1996; Barrick et al., 2002; Carruthers et al., 2010).

It has been claimed that the associative network theory (Bower, 1981) is a model of semantic memory through which the genesis and activation of color associations can be understood and interpreted (Elliot et al., 2007; Schlack & Albright, 2007; Elliot & Niesta, 2008). Even though the number of tested colors is restricted, the effects of colors and associations they evoke persist in being relatively stable across different studies. Thus, some empirical evidence of consistent correlation between color and emotion (Levy, 1984) and psychological functioning (Elliot et al., 2007) can be provided. For instance, people are inclined to choose consistent color-emotion matches (e.g. red and passionate; Levy, 1984; Collier, 1996) and these associations are cross-culturally consistent (D'Andrade & Egan, 1974). The neuroscientific research reveals that during initial phases of visual processing develops the associative learning of visual information which occurs to be a central mechanism for survival and instant decision-making (Schlack & Albright, 2007).

Regarding virtual environment, colors may exert influence on the duration of time spent on the social media site and memorized products (Bonnardel et al., 2011). A cohesive color scheme of one's Instagram feed is one of the determining factors affecting followers', (both existing and potential), impressions about an account. The ultimate goal of every influencer is to inspire real engagement and carefully chosen color palette may play a crucial role in this process. Although not each individual post matches the following or preceding one (fig. 2), Anastasia's account @anysports.faceonline has a distinctive voice and style and the blog's information is easy to navigate due to clear color usage.
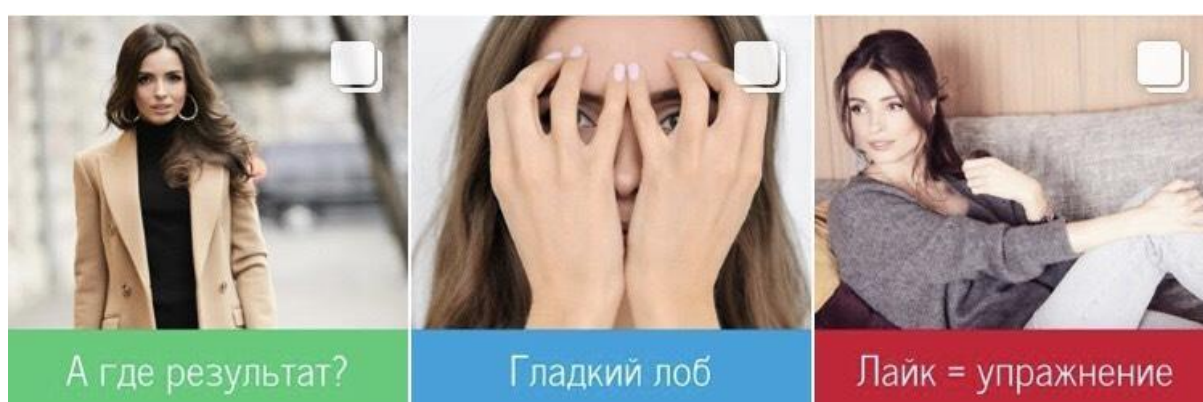

Figure 5.

An example of Anastasia's @anysports.faceonline feed (as of 04/11/2019). The text written from left to right: "Where is the result?"; "Smooth forehead"; "Like=Exercise".

As regards to color application, the main strategy of the examined blog is color-coding. The research in the field of perception has shown that we subconsciously process colors into codes (Galbraith, Hohmann & Creutzfeldt, 1975). In a wider context, color as a coding agent is an effective tool to improve memory and information acquisition.

Color-coding functions as a tool to distinguish different sections of data and, thus, establishes clear boundaries. In other words, colors here serve as organizational systems. For example, in the profile description the highlights with a distinct and user-friendly color-coding are situated (fig. 6). In addition to color marking, the information is accompanied by other visual signals, icons. The use of infographic (see fig. 6) is not

typical for personal amateur blogs, and this way to introduce information can be considered as a marker of a professional blogger.

The first highlight is green and is intended to help new users to find the answers to the frequently asked questions and guide them over the blog right away. Green is primarily associated with nature and the natural world and creates the feeling of safety and comfort (Kaya & Epps, 2004), as well as the connection to the natural world (Clarke & Costall, 2007).

Furthermore, green increases the level of concentration and efficiency. Other highlights containing feedback, price, before-after photos, the base, the PRO course and discount information are all orange, thus providing focus on the general guidelines and instructions for new followers.

Figure 6.

The highlights field of @anysports.faceonline, as of 04/12/19. The text written from left to right: *To New Ones, Feedback, Price, Before/After.*

This type of data visualization provides an illustrative representation enabling users to gain insights into the blog's structure and to manipulate facets of this structure effectively. Encoding information by the means of color allows to advance the user's understanding of the information outlined by image and the observer's ability to remember it.

Anastasia applies color mark to every image she publishes in her account in order to increase engagement and performance of her blog. This color tagging differentiate sections of information and, thus, enables users to categorize it and choose the relevant post. When users familiarize themselves with this particular color usage, they are able to

develop a mental map that will help them to navigate through different sections of the represented content.

In Anastasia's blog the color does not function as an aesthetic element, it is a part of instructional design strategy helping her audience to categorize instructional stimuli they are dealing with. The audience derives meaning from colors and, hence, the cognitive effort required to interpret them is reduced. In the next paragraph the photos subjects are going to be discussed.

3.3 "Before" and "After"

I will begin with the most transparent and widely used advertising tactic in beauty product ads - the use of before/after images that demonstrate significant results caused by promoted product; in this case, face fitness program. The focus on side-by-side photos also fits into the context of general narratives of Western societies that have a tendency to perceive body as a long-term project requiring continuous investments.

A search for *#beforeandafter* hashtag on Instagram consists of more than 13 million results (accessed 03/05/19), varying from makeup applying to weight loss and plastic surgery modifications. It is suggested that audience is affected by visual contrast and visual complexity and, on grounds of it, the perception of a product, attitudes towards risks, as well as purchase intention may vary (Park, 2018). This type of photos is intended to encourage potential consumers to buy the offered product in order to achieve the same result.

Transformation pictures demonstrate a positive outcome that people receive after using the suggested system. These photos contain the following message - the appearance enhancement, not involving plastic surgery or special cosmetic products, is real (fig. 7). Seeing "ordinary people" achieving a significant result, triggers the interest, inspires and increases motivation to use it. For Anastasia, in addition, it occurs to be one of the ways to make her work and professional expertise visible. The social cognitive theory suggests that individuals acquire knowledge through observing others, where visible outcomes play a crucial role. Hence, people are more likely to adopt a behaviour that

demonstrates a positive outcome and is considered to be achievable. Transformation photos serve as a visible proof that certain after-effects are possible.

Media psychologist Pamela Rutledge in her interview for Wischhover (2019) claims that there are three factors that make side-by-side photos so convincing. The first factor is an allied conflict concealed in them: an individual aiming to enhance his appearance in a certain way. Secondly, a curiosity gap left after observing transformation photos that keeps one interested and enthusiastic and makes an individual wondering: *how did this person achieve this result?* And, finally, it becomes psychologically rewarding since these photos represent a solution; individuals feel inspired by the positive results. Before-and-after photos are making the degree of one's change clearly visible and tangible. Therefore, before-and-after photos occur to be an impressive marketing manoeuvre. Progress pictures are considered to be the most popular and viewed posts in social media and Anastasia's active use of this type of photos allows her to gain new followers, her potential clients and facercise's adepts.
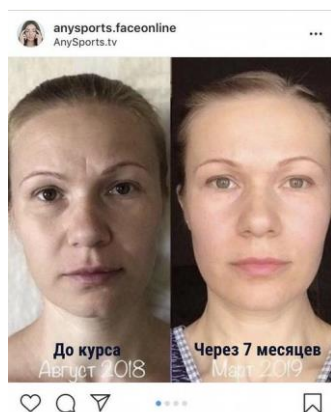

Fig. 7

An example of before-after photos from @anysports.faceonline account, as of 04/12/19. The text written from left to right: *Before course; After 7 months.*

However, before-and-after pictures are reinforcing the importance of physical attractiveness and popularize anti aging movement and appearance-orientation amongst women.

3.4 Facercise

Successful creation of influential and reliable personal brand is established on the basis of deep knowledge and authentic expertise. In order to gain the reputation of the trustworthy and authoritative expert, Anastasia makes her work visible by publishing short video lessons of face gymnastics with the detailed explanation of the right techniques. These lessons are free of charge and provide potential consumers an opportunity to try the advertised system and make their own conclusions.

Since Anastasia is accredited as a certified trainer by the system's inventor Carole Maggio, she might be perceived as a trustworthy expert. The term frequently used in order to illustrate positive characteristics of a communicator that influence observer's positive perception of a message is *the credibility source.*

People have a tendency to classify individuals they meet relying on stereotypes; this is an unconscious and automatic cognitive process (Goncalves et al., 2014). According to Fiske et al. (2002), the dimensions of competence and warmth are applied to classify people and countries. The following conclusions correspond to four categories: admiration, envious prejudice, contemptuous prejudice and paternalistic prejudice. Although this is an automatic process, it affects a source perception. It is claimed that credibility has a positive impact (Sternthal et al., 1978) on the forcefulness of a message (Harmon & Kenneth, 1982).

Ohanian (1991) has identified three factors affecting the credibility of the source. The first factor is reliability that can be identified as audience's messages valuing. The second crucial factor is *expertise,* one has to be perceived as an expert, professional or, at least, qualified. The third factor is attractiveness of a source referring to conveyed message and the way it is perceived by the audience. The concept of source attractiveness can be better clarified if we distinguish three key elements: likeability, familiarity and similarity. Likeability relates to the source perception and implies physical attractiveness and behaviour (McGuire, 1985).

Anastasia is the one and only person representing her brand, she demonstrates all the exercises by herself and always keeps up standards appearing on photos and videos neat and well-dressed (fig. 8).
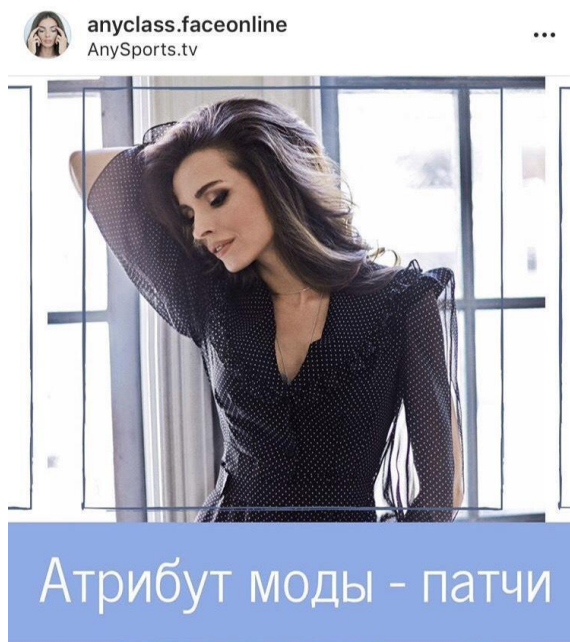

Figure 7.

Anastasia's usual style, as of 04/17/19.

3.5 Q&A + theoretical Information and beauty tips

One of the most crucial factors affecting online impression management is one's *presence.* The content publishing on a routine basis may play a key role in developing strong relationships with the audience, improve their engagement and maintain their interest in this particular blog. Thus, in order to obtain benefits from the use of social media channels, one has to carefully manage and enact his presence regularly, since the credible and influential communication requires a constant presence from an expert.

Anastasia's blog is updated everyday, often new posts are published several times per day, which arouses the feeling of her presence among her audience. In terms of communication, the type of communication used in her blog is two-way. This type of communication is, undoubtedly, positively affects her image and the audience's impression of her personal brand. First of all, since the narrative is not dominated by

her, the direct connection between Anastasia as an expert and her followers is established. A two-way conversation being a dialogue, or in this case, even a polylogue, allows the expert to respond directly to the needs and wants of the audience and receive an essential feedback. Blog's strategy is the following: the type of information adding value and strengthening the trust (e. g. questions to the expert, beauty advice, exercises demonstration, examination of face muscles etc.; in other words, information that helps (fig. 9, 9a, 9b) prevails product promotion and endorsement. The general trajectory that she is following is distributing knowledge, educating and informing her audience. This tactic is intended to show that this expert is an active listener who cares about her audience's concerns and is truly engaged into conversation and, therefore, encourages her audience to actively participate in discussions.
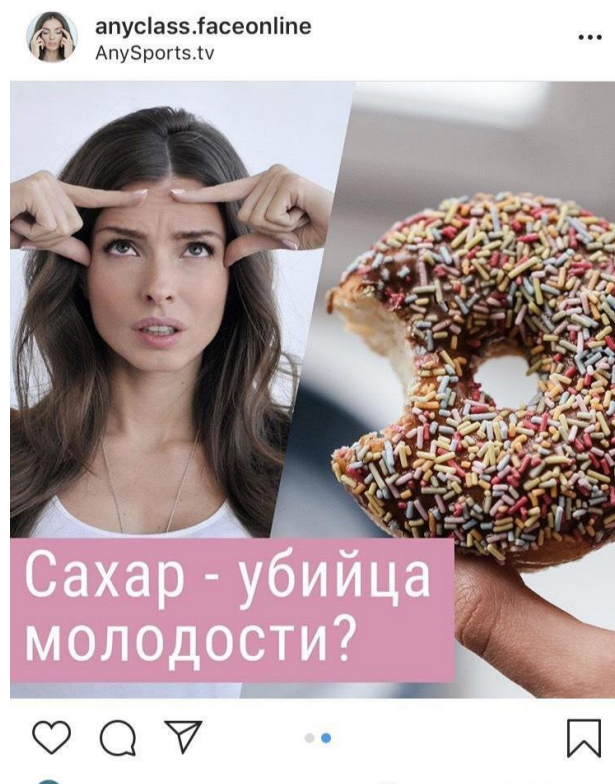

Figure 8.

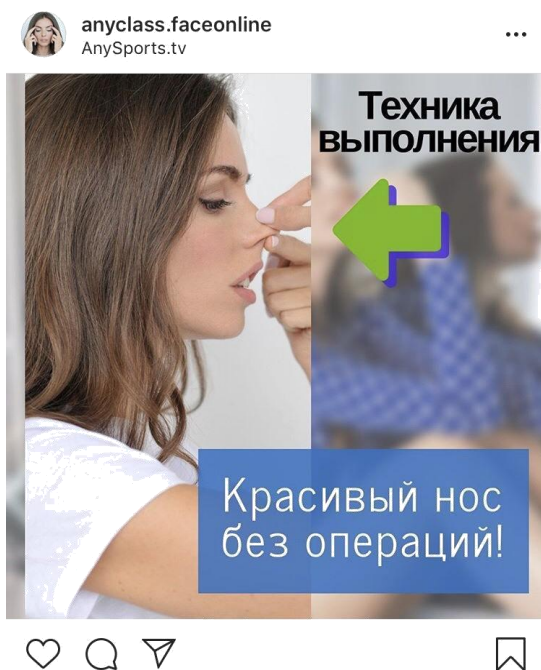An example of informational post. Text written: *Sugar - is it killing beauty? As of 04/17/19.*

Figure 8a.

An example of technique demonstration post, text written: *The technique - Beautiful nose without surgery!* As of 04/17/19.

Figure 8b.

An example of Anastasia's face-to-face interaction with the audience. As of 04/17/19.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Russian culture possesses a long-lasting patriarchal heritage, echoes of which can be heard even nowadays. Despite a large number of women achieving great success in their careers and significantly contributing to their families as regards to finances, there is still a tendency to portray a man as the main sole provider and the one who is in control. Simultaneously, the media along with marketers are constantly intensifying the idea of beauty being an essential female attribute. Beauty is represented as the main female resource that can be converted into economic and social capital; women are encouraged to contribute their energetic and time resources to the preservation of their attractiveness and youth.

The ideal appearance standard, promoted and glamorized in the media, negatively affects women's satisfaction with their own faces and bodies and results in continuous pursuit for beauty and youth, new products, practices, systems that will enable them to stay attractive. Since Russian culture willingly accepts the beauty myth, Russian women tend to actively observe not only themselves, but also other women perceiving this monitoring as a potential asset. The analysis of female and male media representations has demonstrated the inequality in gender relations implying existing dominant (male) and subordinate (female) roles.

In an environment where the beauty myth proliferates on the societal level and women are expected to adhere to a subordinate position, beauty occurs to be the primary asset allowing women to reach their aims.

The Instagram account @anysports.faceonline that has been analyzed in this thesis is a vivid illustration of how women can contribute in this female beautification, being eventually cultural producers themselves. Her blog is situated within the framework of successful aging discourse where ageing is pictured as a process we are not only able but we *need* to control. The popularity of this particular blog and other blogs with a similar content arises concerns about ongoing social practices of misrepresenting the natural process of aging and the following encouragement of ageism. The before-and-

after type of photos that Anastasia uses in her blog, in order to promote and sacralize the knowledge she possesses, are intend to underrepresent the signs of aging and encourage women to continious pursuing of youthfulness.

The examined blog also fits into discussion about new professional paradigm that has appeared due to digitalization.

Contemporary working life is mainly knowledge-based and successful networking and quick adaptation to technological changes, as well as strategic and competent operations in the field of digital, are obtaining more and more importance. In other words, the main requirement, nowadays, is an ability to acquire and apply knowledge. Since the labor market is extremely competitive, a personal brand creation within online environment can be very profitable, becoming a major asset for one's future career and professional image. Online visibility is highly beneficial.

The social media, enabling users to produce and distribute their own content, has reshaped the professional and communication culture. The entrepreneurship based on social media channels is the worth-studying phenomenon, since it has radically changed the narrative of expertise and authority and is predicted to keep evolving and modify the notion of knowledge and expertise. Blogs, being one of the most popular channels to introduce one's online identity and manage impressions, are especially effective sources that allow to follow this trajectory.

Anastasia, having a specific knowledge in the field of beauty, represents a new type of influencer that has emerged due to the appearance of Web 2.0 - top influential. At the moment of writing, her Instagram account counts one million followers and she successfully shapes and maintains her personal brand.

Since the social media channel where she creates and distrubes knowledge is image-centric, the dominant strategy of managing an impression of an expert is visually oriented. In my thesis I have distinguished the certain means by which an individual can create an impression of an expert.

First of all, the influencer applies the style of designed photography in order to demonstrate the entrepreneurial, business status of her account.

Secondly, Anastasia uses color-coding as an instrument to distinguish different sections of information and establish distinct boundaries enabling her followers to navigate through data. In addition to that, the use of infographics demonstrates her level of professionalism as a blogger and a content manager.

Finally, the expert arranges her photo feed according to certain topics. I have determined three main topics introduced in the blog. The first topic is the demonstration of results by using before-and-after, or transformation photos. This sort of pictures, showing a positive outcome, is intended to inspire potential consumers and encourage them to buy the product.

The second topic I have discussed in my thesis is the method itself. The free demonstration of lessons makes Anastasia's work visible and help her to gain the reputation of trustworthy expert.

The third topic that I have define while conducting my research is Q&A. This type of information she is sharing with her audince allows her to maintain the feeling of her presence and interaction with the audience.

In my research I was aiming to introduce one of the many possible strategies to create the impression of a trustworthy expert within digital environment with my special research's accent on the visual rhetoric of @anysports.faceonline blog.

It was also crucial for my research to place the examined object into the cultural paradigm that could explain and justify tactics this blogger is using. That is why I have provided the detailed overview on the notion of beauty in contemporary culture, the media representation of ideal appearance with a special accent on female facial beauty and aging perception. In addition to that, I have discussed the concept of knowledge and the way it has altered when the digitalization process has emerged.

This thesis contibutes to the gap in research concerning new generation of knowledge creators and distributes who perform and construct their professional identities within online environment. Nowadays, the mutual influence of culture and knowledge on technologies and technologies on culture and knowledge, the other way round, can be traced.

Due to the lack of studies on the field, for further discussion I would suggest to explore the changes in expertise establishement that have emerged due to digitalization, since it essentially changes the way we create and perceive knowledge.

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