SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND THE RISING POPULARITY OF INTUITIVE EATING

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ABSTRACT

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Gülelçin, Aslı

Master's Program in Media and Communication Studies

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This thesis investigates the relationship between increasing social media usage and growing interest in intuitive eating practices. To gather as detailed information as possible, a combination of qualitative research methods have been used such as content analysis, purposeful sampling and online ethnography. For the analysis, videos about intuitive eating have been chosen according to their view counts, and the results have been deducted from both the content of the videos and the viewer comments. Because there were no specific research on the exact subject of the thesis, studies from a variety of fields such as psychology, nutrition science, media studies and sociology, have been used to build a framework. The results of the study indicate an indirect but strong relationship with social media use and intuitive eating. Even if the viewers learn about what intuitive eating is from the social media platform or not, it is evident that the platform is a beneficial source of gaining knowledge and receiving emotional and/or social support for the viewers. Considering that these two subjects have never been worked in accordance before, the study aims to contribute to the literature in this sense.

ÖZET

SOSYAL MEDYA KULLANIMI VE SEZGİSEL YEMENİN POPÜLERLİĞİNİN YÜKSELİŞİ

Gülelçin, Aslı

Medya ve İletişim Çalışmaları Yüksek Lisans Programı

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Y. Gökçen KARANFİL

Temmuz, 2022

Bu tezde, artan sosyal medya kullanımı ile sezgisel yeme pratiklerine yönelik yükselişte olan ilgi arasındaki ilişki incelenmiştir. Mümkün olduğunca ayrıntılı bilgi toplamak amacıyla içerik analizi, amaçlı örnekleme ve çevrimiçi etnografi gibi nitel araştırma yöntemlerinin bir kombinasyonu kullanılmıştır. Analiz için sezgisel yeme ile ilgili videolar izlenme sayılarına göre seçilmiş ve sonuçları hem videoların içerikleri hem de izleyici yorumları belirlemiştir. Tezin tam konusuna ilişkin daha önce yapılmış spesifik bir araştırma olmadığı için, kuramsal bir çerçeve oluşturmak amacıyla psikoloji, beslenme bilimi, medya çalışmaları ve sosyoloji gibi çeşitli alanlarda yapılan çalışmalar kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, sosyal medya kullanımı ve sezgisel yeme arasında dolaylı ama güçlü bir ilişki olduğunu göstermektedir. İzleyiciler sezgisel yemenin ne olduğunu sosyal medya platformundan öğrenseler de öğrenmeseler de platformun izleyiciler için faydalı bir bilgi edinme ve duygusal ve/veya sosyal destek alma kaynağı olduğu ortadadır. Bu iki konunun daha

önce beraber çalışılmadığı göz önüne alındığında, çalışma bu anlamda literatüre katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: sezgisel yeme, sosyal medya, YouTube, sezgisel yeme, çevrimiçi topluluklar, yeme bozuklukları, diyet kültürü

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I would also like to thank my former boyfriend, current husband Oğuz, for his endless support. He encouraged me for every decision I have made, not only with this thesis but for anything I dream of really. I couldn't ask for a better husband/best friend.

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ADHD: Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

BMI: Body mass index

DSM-5: The diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, fifth edition

ED: Eating disorder

HAES: Health at Every Size

IE: Intuitive eating

ON: Orthorexia nervosa

SNSs: Social Networking Sites

TV: Television

UGC: User generated content

US: United States (of America)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Eating habits and social media usage are mentioned together in the literature often to indicate a negative relationship. There are countless papers on these two main subjects that prove the harms of social media usage on people's eating habits and body perception. Even before social media, society's relationship with food and body image were already being distorted by the media on a daily basis, and the target was quite often focused on women. Today, the target of these media messages which offer and sometimes even dictate the audience to be 'in their best shape' is widened, although women being the most effected group still.

The main culprit of this negative connotation between both media and social media usage and disordered eating is diet culture discourse, which is the product of an industry so big that it is hard to comprehend. According to IBISWorld (2022), the worth of weight-loss services alone in the US is worth about 3.8 billion dollars. The vastness of the industry, combining its long time presence, concludes in a society that is obsessed with their looks over their health. Today, even the health discourse is used in favor of weight-loss ideal and resulting in new types of disordered eating behaviors such as orthorexia nervosa[1](Dictionary.com, 2022). The unrealistic and constantly changing body ideals dictated by diet culture is causing an excessive amount of harm on people both psychologically and physiologically.

Meanwhile, it would be irrational to overlook the effect of media and social media in this problem. Over representation of 'ideal' bodies in media while there are little to no representation of different shapes and sizes are causing people to feel left out. Therefore, it would be more probable for an ordinary audience to feel unworthy, lazy, insufficient because of how they look. The widespread use of social media has enhanced this effect with over-exposure to media images that are either altered, or selected accordingly to the diet culture norms. Overly restrictive diets of the traditional media era such as the Atkins diet, grapefruit diet, Zone diet and blood type diet (Rocketto, 2019) have gone through a makeover phase in the social media era. Keto diet, carnivore diet, paleo diet, juice cleanses, detoxes and restrictive eating windows

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[1] an obsession with eating foods that are considered healthy, especially when accompanied by an obsessive aversion to, or even fear of, foods that are considered unhealthy.

like intermittent fasting are the new forms that these fad diets of the past decades have evolved into. Now, the alleged focus of these diets have shifted from being only weight-loss based to offering people a 'healthy' life. Clean eating blogs are a representation of that new discourse, which have been proven to do more harm than good (that will be discussed in the following chapters). Now, even though the discourse has shift to a health-oriented one, the overly-represented body shapes and sizes are still the ones which are looking fit and slim (for women, more muscular bodies for man).

After mentioning all the harms done by social media, it appears unreasonable to support a point of view where social media is not harming people's body image perceptions or their eating habits. Although the massively represented bodies are the 'ideal' ones and the content being consumed the most on these topics are still diet-culture dominated, there are new and different types of approaches to nutrition today, like intuitive eating.

Social media use and eating habits do not have to be negatively related for every possible scenario. Counter-ideas such as intuitive eating, health at every size, anti-diet movement, body positivity and body neutrality, are growing more and more each day. Social media platforms are the places these ideas are usually shared. People who have been body shamed, have made felt like they are worthless because of how they look, are finding solidarity in social media through those platforms like YouTube. My hypothesis is that there is a reason behind the fact that these kinds of counter-movements are dominantly disseminating through social media because of social media's multi-directional nature.

In this thesis, I will try to present a different take on these two main subjects of social media usage and eating habits, with shifting the focus on intuitive eating. It is seemingly a different approach to nutrition comparing to diet culture mentality that I've mentioned above. Combining it with the changing dynamics of social media usage will construct the base of this thesis.

1.1. *Aims, objectives and research questions*

It is an undeniable fact that the dominant discourse on social media is still based on diet culture norms. However, the content on comprehensive approaches like intuitive eating are becoming more and more popular. The aim of this thesis is to show a relationship between increasing social media usage and the growing popularity of

movements like intuitive eating. The naturally various structure of social media allows ideas like intuitive eating to reach a broad amount of audience.

Because this is a new field in terms of combination of the two phenomenon of intuitive eating and social media, the research is expected to have exploratory results. However, relying on preliminary research and personal experiences, the following questions will act as leading points to this research:

- How are social media use and intuitive eating related?
- What are the dynamics between social media users and content creators?
- Why are the viewers interested in intuitive eating content?
- How do the viewers find out about intuitive eating?
- What is the degree of participation on the platform? How do people communicate with each other and in what terms?
- Do the viewers have an impact on the content they are consuming?

1.2. *Importance of the thesis*

There are a lot of studies conducted on social media effects, eating disorders, social media's effect on nutrition and intuitive eating's effects on people with eating disorders in the field. Almost all studies which investigates the relationship between social media usage and eating habits/body image perception are resulted in a negative correlation. Meaning that in the academia, social media's harm on people regarding nutrition and body perception is shown for most of the time. There are research investigating possible beneficial outcomes in terms of nutrition education but the number is limited. However, there are little to no research in the field regarding a beneficial outcome from social media with people's eating habits.

Also, it is important to state that there are no research combining intuitive eating and social media, as handled in this thesis. The prior studies on intuitive eating are mostly from nutrition science and psychology, but there are no research from media studies or sociology.

I think a topic like this, where people's eating habits are the subject, it is important to consider things from a multidisciplinary perspective. No individual is separate from the society they are living in. Likewise, no one is immune to the content they consume from any form of media. So, I think it is essential to examine these topics with a holistic view. I hope to provide a new viewpoint to the subject in the academia with this thesis.

1.3.   Limitations

The fact that this research is conducted on the data from YouTube videos, there are both advantages and disadvantages to it. Because there is an abundance of data on the platform, it is very fruitful for conducting a research like this. However, this abundance is also a limitation because the selection must be handled carefully. Because there were over 8 thousand comments to analyze, coming from the search results, it was a challenging task to handle without any help from colleagues or a software. Also, there is the possibility of the data source vanishing or changing (like the video being deleted, viewer editing their comment later, etc.). Not only that, but also the algorithm of the site is regularly updated so there might be different results to the same research a few years later.

1.4.   Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of a total of four chapters, first of it being the introduction chapter where the thesis is presented with its aims, objectives and its importance in the field. Second and third chapters are where theoretical background of this thesis is presented. Since there were no directly related research on the thesis subject, I have analyzed studies from a variety of fields. In the first chapter, I explain what intuitive eating is with also mentioning diet culture. Some recent studies on intuitive eating are also presented in this chapter. On the second chapter, first, the change in the media structure is explained starting from the shift from traditional media to web based media and then the changes within the social media era. Then, I move on to the research conducted on social media in relation with nutrition and eating habits. Lastly, I briefly mention some research on online communities. On the fourth chapter, I first present the relationship between intuitive eating and social media, then explain the methodology of the research. After that, I analyze the selected videos on the topic from YouTube, as well as their comments sections. Then, I conclude the chapter with mentioning the main findings of the research in the form of presenting common themes and additional findings.

CHAPTER 2: TRADITIONAL DIETS AND INTUITIVE EATING

This thesis aims at showing the relationship between the increasing popularity of intuitive eating and how it coincides with the rise of social media platforms. In order to make a meaningful connection between the two phenomenon, it is necessary to establish a strong foundation including what intuitive eating is and what is its scope, and how does the rise of social media effected the daily lives of its audience, including their eating habits. Although intuitive eating was present as a new approach to nutrition since 1995, its impact has just gain momentum in the recent 3-5 years mainly on social media. Similarly, the scope of effect that social media has, also keeps getting bigger. While social media platforms gained their popularity with the rise of Facebook, today, different platforms like TikTok, are increasing the competition in the field.

Unlike mainstream diet culture discourse, intuitive eating derives its foundations from multidisciplinary approaches, rather than only relying on nutritional facts. It includes societal aspects, individual differences, psychological variables, daily habits of the individual, different likes/dislikes/preferences and so on. With the further description below, we can see that it is a much more individualistic approach to dietary habits. However, the former understanding in diet industry (which is still the mainstream approach mostly), namely the 'fad diets' promise individuals magic formulas, describe only one true way of nutrition which usually contains generic information that is expected to fit everyone. With the introduction of what intuitive eating is and what are its principles, I aim to show the similarities of it with the social media's horizontal power dynamics.

The following subsections describe what intuitive eating is according to the original theory developed by Tribole and Resch on 1995. After the description, recent studies on Intuitive eating, including its relation with social media will be explained.

2.1. What is Intuitive Eating?

Intuitive eating (IE) has been introduced first as a new approach to nutrition by Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch in 1995 with the book "*Intuitive Eating: A Revolutionary Concept That Works*". In this book, they describe what intuitive eating is, why is it important, where did the need to develop this method has emerged and ten principles of intuitive eating, which I will mention briefly later on the chapter.

Tribole and Resch, explain what intuitive eating is by describing what an intuitive eater is like. According to that, being in sync with one's internal signals like when you are hungry or satiated, thinking on what you want to eat, knowing how will the food you chose effect you, are features that are highlighted. They also point out that this style of eating is very similar to how a toddler approaches food. So, they highlight the innateness of this approach for everyone. Therefore, in its very essence, intuitive eating can be described as *relying on one's inner cues -regarding hunger and satiety- when regulating the food that is being consumed*. This definition will become clearer with the explanation of the ten principles that Tribole and Resch described. From this short definition, it is evident that IE is an extremely individualized way of approaching nutrition. Personal likes and dislikes, wants and needs and preferences in general, are quite effective in IE. This resemblance is also present in the process of the shift from mainstream media to social media era. Social media platforms are much more customizable in terms of individual preferences comparing them to mainstream media channels. It is so customizable that even the audience can contribute to it or lead their own audience using the same platforms. The resemblance will be more clear after the description of this process of shift in media is explained in the second chapter of this thesis.

2.1.1. Origins of Intuitive Eating

Before going into detail of the principles of intuitive eating, it is important to understand where it derives from. Among all the factors, diet culture comes in first place. Contemporary society is well occupied with diet trends for a long time. The starting point to the dangerous side of it can be observed with the start of the rising popularity of the fad diets. These are short-termed extreme weight loss diets that become trending for short periods of time. Their common features are that they promise people one 'magic formula' in order to lose weight; they promise it to happen quickly like within a month, and the same diet is offered to everyone regardless to their individual wants or needs. The fad diets as we know today, which contain heavy caloric restrictions, started to appear in the beginning of 20th century and the first fad diet similar to current ones appeared in 1930s, originating from Hollywood (Addison, 2003). From then on, these diets continued to appear in various forms and content and still live on today. These diets may appear in the form of caloric restriction plans, juice

cleanses, detox programs, or may revolve around one ingredient like grapefruit or zucchini. Recent examples can be named as the Keto diet, Paleo diet, and maybe even intermittent fasting to some extent. In short, these kinds of diets continue to preserve their popularity today.

Tribole and Resch point the attention to how those fad diets consistently fail, and turn into a vicious cycle where people start restricting themselves extremely and after a while, due to the unsustainable nature of these diets, failing, and starting over again. Therefore, even if the individual loses the weight, they gain it back and they fall into a cycle of constantly gaining and losing weight.

Other than gaining and losing weight in a short time span, these diets have other negative outcomes such as labeling foods as good and bad, and feeling guilty and shameful after consuming 'bad 'foods. The failure to follow a diet also harms individual's self- confidence. Withdrawing from social life, weakened metabolism and possible emergence of eating disorders are also mentioned as a result of quitting and starting those diets (Tribole and Resch, 2003). This cycle of constantly being on and off a diet is called yo-yo dieting.

The constant urge to diet comes from the societal thin ideal that is frequently being represented in the mass media, according to Tribole and Resch. Today, we can observe the continuation of it on social media as well, and maybe even being worse with the use of different filters and effects that those platforms offer people to use. This thin ideal not only encourage people to start dieting over and over again, but it also leads to the emergence of eating disorders as well. The relationship between IE and eating disorders have been a topic of discussion in the recent past as well, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

In short, we can say that fad diets and their failure lead the way in the search for an alternative or a solution. These types of diets resulting in constant failure, not being sustainable and even leading to eating disorders, are seen to be the main driving factors in search for the alternative.

2.1.2. *Ten principles of Intuitive Eating*

Tribole and Resch describe ten main principles to follow, in order to have an intuitive approach in eating, which follows:

1. *Reject the diet mentality*

2. *Honor your hunger*

3. *Make peace with food*

4. *Challenge the food police*

5. *Feel your fullness*

6. *Discover the satisfaction factor*

7. *Cope with your emotions without using food*

8. *Respect your body*

9. *Exercise – feel the difference*

10. *Honor your health – gentle nutrition*

To explain each one shortly, rejecting diet mentality simply means being critical about diets and 'not being fooled 'by them, especially the ones that promise to make one lose a lot of weight in a short time span.

Second, *honor your hunger*, suggests being aware of biological signs of hunger and not ignoring them. On the contrary, *honoring* them.

Make peace with food, includes one of the key principles of intuitive eating that has been a research topic to later researchers as well, which is giving oneself unconditional permission to eat. This means not labelling foods as good or bad, or simply allowing oneself to eat whenever.

Fourth, fifth and sixth principles are similar to the first three, including not labelling foods, not caring the rules set by the diet culture, and being aware of the feelings of hunger and satiety.

Seventh principle is highlighting the difference between eating when hungry and emotional eating. According to that, coping with difficult emotions such as anxiety, boredom and anger with food is just a short term solution and will not make the problem go away on the long run. Also, coping with emotions using foods, may disrupt one's relationship with food. Authors suggest the contrary.

Eighth principle is offering to make peace with one's body shape and genetics, generally accepting and being at peace with oneself no matter what shape and size.

Ninth, *exercise*, suggests shifting the focus of exercise being solely to lose weight, to exercising the way how one feel good instead.

Last principle highlights the claim of perfection in nutrition and suggest that one should eat foods that both appeal to their health and taste. Furthermore, acknowledging that eating 'badly' once in a while won't ruin one's health altogether.

When we examine these principles as a whole, we can see that some common themes are forming. For instance, principles like honoring your hunger, feeling your fullness, discovering the satisfaction factor and exercising according to your preference are all very personal topics. Not every person likes the same kind of activities in terms of exercise, or everyone has different taste in which foods they like and which they don't like.

Another theme is revolving around having a critical approach towards information circulating about food and nutrition. Challenging the food police and rejecting diet mentality are two of them. With doing this, it is aimed to make the individual more analytical in these topics, meaning that not accepting every single piece of information they may encounter without questioning it first.

Themes like these, are very similar to how social media environment works today. It is very customizable, just like IE offers individuals to do. Social media users are able to pick and choose the content they want to consume and they can even add to it by themselves due to its fluid nature. Also, being critical is an essential skill a social media user must have in terms of protecting themselves from the false information online. The last part will be clearer when I later mention social media literacy on the third chapter.

Overall, the principles of IE alone are already showing the resemblances IE has with the changed media environment that has come with the changes of social media.

2.2. *Further research on Intuitive Eating/Recent studies on Intuitive Eating*

2.2.1. *(Physical)Health Indicators and Eating Disorders*

Physical health indicators are among the popular topics regarding research on intuitive eating, as well as mental health. More specifically, obesity and being overweight draw more attention, frequently those two being referred as an 'epidemic' (Hawks et al., 2005). Respectively, intuitive eating is also researched in the scope of eating disorders as well. To distinguish disordered eating from 'normal' eating behavior, Tylka (2006) suggests that:

> "*[i]ndividuals who eat adaptively often use physiological hunger and satiety cues to guide their eating behaviors, whereas individuals with clinical eating disorders often use emotional cues to guide their eating behaviors*" (p.226).

Setting up restrictions around food is considered to be a leading cause of eating disorders. Tylka and Wilcox (2006) mention previous research which found out people who eat unconditionally has less tendency to binge eat or overeat, whereas people who has restrictions end up overindulging. Their research revealed that two of the principles of IE (eating for physical hunger not emotional reasons and relying on hunger ad satiety cues) contributed greatly to well-being measures. Also, 'unconditional permission to eat' principle of IE had overlapping features with lower levels of eating disorder symptoms.

Related to disordered eating behaviors, orthorexia nervosa is a topic of discussion in the field. Theorized first by Bratman in 1997, orthorexia nervosa (ON) is a term used for defining the obsession with consuming only healthy foods. Although it is not included in the internationally used diagnostic manual DSM-5 (The diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, fifth edition) yet, it is a popular topic of research (Coimbra and Ferreira, 2021). In ON, individual is not focused on losing weight, comparing to Anorexia nervosa. It is rather the effort to eat the healthiest. So, the quantity of food that is consumed is not an issue. ON has many imbricate symptoms with anorexia nervosa and obsessive-compulsive disorder, such as strict dietary rules, obsessive thoughts about food, extreme restriction and feelings of guilt (Coimbra and Ferreira, 2021). Intuitive eating on the contrary, advises the opposite with no limits on the amount and content of the food consumed, basically relying on one's own internal cues. The study revealed that as one's diet become more inflexible, orthorexic behaviors increased as well. Meanwhile, intuitive eating was negatively correlated with both orthorexic behavior and disorder eating (Coimbra and Ferreira, 2021). In short, the study indicates that as strict and inflexible as the diet becomes, the risk of disordered eating and orthorexic behavior increases. Intuitive eating however, does the opposite and could be used as a prevention technique against these disordered eating behaviors.

Hawks et al. (2005) evaluated a research on the relationship between IE and health indicators, deriving from the point of increasing obesity numbers, so, their starting point includes more of a public health concern. They state how common has obesity become in the US, and highlight the unsustainable strategies such as dietary restrictions. They say that there are findings which points at the contrary, meaning dietary restrictions might lead up to obesity. The initial results show that IE is a good

approach to manage weight individually. To measure the health indicators, they analyze blood samples and check some indicators such as blood cholesterol. They also measure how intuitively the participants are eating with Intuitive Eating Scale. The result showed that the higher the intuitive eating levels, participants had healthier measures. In short, their hypothesis stating "intuitive eaters are healthier" is mostly valid. The strongest correlation they found between IE scale and health indicators was about BMI (body mass index). As IE increased, participants' BMI lowered. In short, the study concludes that intuitive eating might be a better approach to treat obesity compared to government policies like high taxes on junk food or conventional diet or exercise programs.

A similar study to Hawks et al. (2005), was conducted by Denny et al. (2013) 8 years later. They have studied the relationship between IE and disordered eating. The results are similar to Hawks et al. (2005); The more intuitively participants ate, they had lower chances to encounter eating disorders, they had healthier measurements and so on. Additionally they found that men are more prone to intuitive eating. In this study, men reported they found it easier to trust their bodily signals for when and how much to eat. Results also show that young adults who stated that they trust their body when and how much to eat were in the low risk group of potential eating disorders. The study has another important point explaining the process that might lead to disordered eating. They suggest when parents interrupt with children's eating habits, such as insisting on cleaning their plate, is contributing to the corruption in their trust to their internal cues, which is introduced as essential in IE principles. This disconnection with internal cues lead to weight gain, emotional eating, dieting and so on. In short, the study finds negative correlation with intuitive eating and disordered eating practices.

Another research on IE and health indicators was conducted by Van Dyke and Drinkwater (2013). Their work is an overview of the literature on the topic, stating the highlighting points related to IE's effect on health in general.

According to their investigation, firstly regarding physical health indicators, intuitive eaters have found to have lower BMI. Although IE has little to no effect on weight loss, it is effective in eliminating weight cycling (gaining and losing weight constantly). Some studies have found positive effect of IE on physical health, but did not have follow up points that are long enough to be exact. More research is needed on the topic. No connection was found with IE and increase in physical activity levels.

Another point related to physical health was the food choices expected from intuitive eaters, predicting more nutritious food consumption. Not enough research has confirmed this point. Overall, impacts of IE on physical health was vague.

Moving on to the impact of IE on mental health, Van Dyke and Drinkwater have observed the most obvious results in this category. Studies on psychological health and IE indicate that there is a significant improvement of mental health in IE group, compared to diet group. These improvements include improved self-esteem, positive body image, body acceptance, satisfaction with life and social problem solving.

In support of the point that intuitive eating was significantly related with psychological health improvement, Bacon et al. (2005) have found that:

"the health at every size[2] group [used interchangeably as intuitive eating in this paper[3]] demonstrated a significant improvement in self-esteem at follow-up; the diet group demonstrated a significant worsening" (p.935).

Further about IE's relation with psychological well-being, Tylka et al. (2015) conducted a study on IE's impact on well-being, compared to flexible dietary control. Flexible dietary control can be explained in regard to rigid dietary control which includes strict calorie control, avoiding certain food types, avoiding weight gain and even skipping meals. Flexible control on the other hand, treated as a more balanced approach, including practices like eating less of the desired food, considering carefully one's food choice, taking weight into account when making that choice and focusing on compensations (i.e.; eating less/healthier if the previous meal was bigger) (Tylka et al, 2015). Intuitive eating and flexible control are both approaches that are presented as healthier alternatives to strict dietary control and it's stressful side-effects. This study investigates their effect on psychological well-being in comparison to one another. Between the two, there are conflicting/inconsistent results about flexible control's association with psychological well-being. In fact, findings reveal that IE and flexible control are inversely related. In short, IE was found out to be different than flexible control and flexible control was closer to dietary restraint between the two.

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[2] Explained in the next part
[3] Thesis author note

2.2.2. *Sustainability, diet culture and mindfulness*

As described in the first part of this chapter, one of the main arguments in favor of intuitive eating was the fact that conventional diets not being sustainable. Meaning that although they served their purpose in short term with weight loss, the individuals gains the weight back after going back to their 'normal' eating habits. Following articles evaluate on the topic and investigating if IE can be a better solution to this problem.

The 'failure 'of conventional weight loss programs, in which almost all of the patients (95-98%) gaining back the weight in 3 to 4 years, has been highlighted multiple times in the research by Cadena-Schlam and Lopez-Guimera's research (2015).

Similar to what Tribole and Resch mentioned in the IE book, Cadena-Schlam and Lopez-Guimera also state the possible negative outcomes of restrictive diets. According to that, restrictive diets may result in increased preoccupation with food, depression, weight fluctuations, decreased self-esteem, eating disorders and more. They also highlight that the increased focus on weight may result in weight stigmatization, therefore leading to more dangerous eating behaviors like binge eating. (Cadena-Schlam and Lopez-Guimera, 2015)

The article reaches the conclusion that it is highly likely that intuitive eating would be a more down to earth approach in overweight and obesity treatment in terms of sustainability.

Health at Every Size (HAES) movement is mentioned frequently in the field. It has some similarities with intuitive eating principles, while being a more narrowed down approach. According to Bacon et al. (2005), the following are key aspects to HAES mentality:

• Accepting the diverse range of body shapes and sizes

• Acknowledging that health is not equal to size or weight

• Embarking on an individualistic approach on nutrition

• Adopting an inclusive and various take on exercise.

All of the above show similarities to intuitive eating principles. Constant emphasis on individuality and individual needs is an important point to consider, which is also one of the main discourses that IE repeats. What they both want to emphasize is every person have different needs, likes and dislikes, parallel to their unique individual features. They also mention multidimensionality, which is also related to the topic.

There is no magic formula that works on everyone in the same way. So it is unreasonable to expect everyone to eat the same, exercise the same and get the same results. What they try to explain is that the process and the outcomes are unique to every individual.

Similar to Cadena-Schlam and Lopez-Guimera (2015), it is proven that HAES method (or IE) is a more sustainable approach in the long run. The diet group have reported lower self-esteem and gained some of the weight back at the end. There is also a significant number of dropouts in the diet group due to feeling of failure and disappointment with the program. However, in HAES group, improvements are stable, both physically and mentally. There are almost no dropouts, no significant change in weight and compelling increase in self-esteem.

Bacon et al. (2005) uses intuitive eating interchangeably with *Health at Every Size* (HAES) movement. Their aim was similar with Cadena-Schlam and Lopez-Guimera (2015), searching for a more sustainable way in the process of weight loss. Similar to other research in the field, this one also starts with focusing the attention on rising obesity levels as well as the rise in the number of dieters, also highlighting the fact that diet programs mostly failing in the long run. Their finding were similar, showing that cognitive restraint was higher in diet group and lowered in HAES group. The diet group lost the weight and maintained it for a year, but gained it back in 2 years, while HAES group sustained both their physical and psychological improvements. Both Cadena - Lopez and Bacon research on similar topics, related to IE, but the papers are 10 years apart. During those 10 years, IE is yet to become popular in the media

Definition of IE as the process of attunement of mind, body and food (Cadena-Schlam and Lopez-Guimera, 2015) hints at the relationship between IE and mindful eating. It was even mentioned as "conscious eating" by Tribole and Resch, before mindful eating was a research topic. Considering the principles of IE and how they require the individual to be in sync with their physical and mental needs, we can say that mindfulness is an important component of IE.

As mentioned earlier, approaches like intuitive eating, as well as mindfulness and/or mindful eating, are proven to be affective while coping with disordered eating behaviors such as binge eating, emotional eating and eating according to external cues in general. (Warren, Smith and Ashwell, 2017)

Based on Warren, Smith and Ashwell's article (2017), when IE and mindful eating are compared, it is seen that They are essentially similar, but not interchangeable terms, although it is often the case. Intuitive eating's ten basic principles, described firstly by Tribole and Resch in 1995, involves not labelling foods as good or bad, unconditional allowance to eat, rejecting the diet mentality and so on. Like mindful eating, it is also based on internal cues of hunger and satiety, whereas in mindful eating, it has more like a meditation-based approach. So, they derive from same core principle of relying on one's own intuition.

According to Warren, Smith and Ashwell (2017), a brief description of mindful eating would be making conscious food choices, being aware of the difference between mental and physical hunger, basically being present while eating, just like when one's meditating. Therefore, it is clearer to understand how a food makes one feel, both physically and emotionally.

Warren, Smith and Ashwell (2017) have studied the role of mindfulness, mindful eating and IE in implementing change in eating behavior. As a result, authors found:

"strong evidence for the efficacy of mindfulness in reducing the frequency and intensity of binge eating symptoms" (p.277).

Overall, the most significant results that mindfulness and mindful eating had were on reducing binge eating symptoms. They are also effective in reducing emotional eating behavior which may lead to obesity.

In terms of affecting and/or leading to problems such as eating disorders and body dissatisfaction, diet culture is often found in the spotlight. Cultural ideals that assert thinness as well as controlling what you should and should not eat, encouraging restrictive eating behavior and exercise in order to be thin are some of the defining aspects of diet culture (Foodpsych, 2017).

There are three important aspects of diet culture that contributes to eating disorders, body dissatisfaction and corumination[4](APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2022). First is the false belief that health is equated with weight; second is that with weight loss, one's social status increases. Third and last one when people falsely attribute some foods to

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[4] **Corumination**: in conversations between friends or other individuals in a dyadic relationship, an excessive focus on personal problems and negative affect to the exclusion of any other topic of conversation.

some body shapes; like salad being referred as 'good' and ice cream as 'bad' foods' (Faw et al., 2020).

2.3. Body image

The studies on body image, or the distortion of body image perception, is the field where the dynamics of social media and intuitive eating start to play an important part. Research in both medicine and social sciences indicate that eating disorders are a genuine threat to public health; both with the overweight and underweight individuals. The problem being this much widespread indicates that there is something seriously wrong with both what people understand (or do not understand) from food and nutrition, as well as how they perceive their bodies.

The masses - women being often in the target- have been told that there is something inherently wrong with how they look, with their bodies. Previous one-way flow of traditional media has put some particular body types on the spotlight, one decade this being a curvier body and on the next decade, this evolving into a skinnier body. People have idealized these bodies as the 'goal' and tried everything to achieve the trend look, in order to be considered beautiful, and more importantly, to be considered worthwhile. The contrary of this belief is much more dangerous, because the people, especially women, who did not look up to those standards felt worthless, unimportant. Because there were no platforms that allowed people to speak their opinion or even ask questions, those ideal body types were the only truth that people know. This lead the way to diets with extreme caloric restriction, set the foundation for the rise of fitness and well-being industry, and paved the way for plastic surgery becoming something 'necessary'. Otherwise people were made to be felt that they are worthless. Something that sets up the stage for these feelings of worthlessness and unimportance is the act that is called corumination. Faw et al. (2020) have studied this topic in the context of diet culture, intuitive eating and body dissatisfaction. The term corumination stands for the conversations between friends focusing extremely on negative experiences such as personal problems, excluding any other topic. The research discusses this term in relation to body dissatisfaction, more specifically focusing on body related corumination.

Body related corumination among women consists talking about the desire to be thinner, how they want to lose weight, talking negatively about the look and the shape of their own body and so on. Although it is an intense act of negative talk, Faw et al.

(2020) suggests that it also brings social benefits to the women who participate in it. It is also related with the impact of diet culture on women. Diet culture appears to be most effective on women in times of serious change, such as the transition to adulthood. Basically prior research suggest that corumination is paradoxical in itself because while it increases the value of friendship between the dyad, it also tends to increase the risk of eating disorders and even depression.

The research is based on interviews. From the participant quotes we see that dieting, exercise and not being confident/satisfied how one's body looks is a very common topic among friend groups. They all state their dissatisfaction with their bodies, how badly they eat. The important common point in these quotes is that none of them are taking action to their complaints. Some even state that they wish there was someone who would encourage them to make changes. Also there are conversations, or to be more exact, mean comments on one's body from relatives and friends. All of those quotes depict the memory as a comment on their body (either positive or negative) they didn't actually asked for. And all of those memories end with the participant feeling bad about themselves. The fact that they are in this vicious cycle and some stating the need the advice or help of someone, consolidates the argument that intuitive eating getting more attention after the rise of social media. Because at least some of these women could find the information and community they are longing for from social media platforms. However, the fact that they gain social benefits from such conversations/body related corumination is also a variable. Because if they refuse to participate, they might face exclusion or judgement from the friend group. It is also stated in the paper that although the participants gain social acceptance with corumination, their relationship quality does not increase, and they feel dissatisfied with their bodies.

According to Faw et al (2020):

> "*Given the pressures to participate in fat talk and corumination, individuals who adopt intuitive eating may receive social sanctions for refusing to engage in these conversations*" (p.421).

It is an extremely important point to consider. Both in individuals' social life and their interactions in social media contain messages and interactions about body talk/corumination intensely. Refusing to participate and even defending the contrary

results in serious social consequences. People are not up to change their minds about topics like this in an instant. Diet culture is deeply encrypted in social norms and practices. So this is a sentence that we have to consider throughout this discussion. Faw et al. Verifies this idea in their research, revealing that if the friend group's norm is to coruminate only, they face a serious risk of exclusion from the group if they don't. If the contrary is valid, they face positive outcomes. According to these findings, social interaction/ relationships play a significant role in effecting one's eating habits (in this case, eating intuitively). Social media also is a form of social interaction (either actively or passively, people are interacting with one another). So it might mean that being exposed to this kind of content (IE) constantly, increases the chances of the individual to eat intuitively.

CHAPTER 3 : RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND IT'S RELATION TO NUTRITIONAL PRACTICES

Before the internet use has become available to masses, mass media outlets like television, newspaper and radio were the dominating source of mass communication. It was also the time, which was mentioned in the second chapter, that the fad diets and extreme weight-loss programs were on the rise. Celebrity diets and magic formulas to lose x amount of weight in y amount of time -x being higher and y being lower- was the norm. Magazines were racing each other to display the 'sinful' bodies of celebrities who were 'caught' on camera with unacceptable bodies. This might be on the beach, or on a regular day where the celebrity is running errands or maybe even after childbirth. Following that, magic weight-loss diets were shared in those media outlets, enabling the audience to avoid the mistakes of that unfortunate celebrity. TV shows like 'Extreme Makeover' (2002-2007) and 'Biggest Loser' (2004-2016) focused on the flaws of ordinary people and worked on correcting their 'mistakes' no matter how humiliating it is. While *Biggest Loser*, as it name suggests, aimed the participants who are overweight or obese to lose the most amount of weight for the winning price, *Extreme Makeover*, offered the participant an entire change from their clothes and hair to their bodies, including weight loss, as well as plastic surgery.

Today, it is still common for traditional media as well as social media platforms to dictate bodily ideals to their audience, those ideals almost exclusively consisting of thin and toned shapes. However, with the emergence of web 2.0, the counter argument to the diet culture has become much more visible over the internet, spreading through traditional media.

Before going into detail on the topic of the change in media outlets and nutritional habits of the audience, it is necessary to elaborate on the changes within media and its consumption first. This chapter will first explain the relevant changes that have taken place in the process of the shift from mass media to web 2.0 and onwards. Then, it will move on to the relation of the subject with the nutritional practices of the consumer. After briefly addressing the online communities that has been flourished with the spreading of social networks, the chapter will be concluded with the connection of all of the named subjects with intuitive eating discourse today and it's increasing popularity.

3.1. Changes in the media from mass media to web 2.0 and onwards

Changes in media can be evaluated as a three step process. First step is the shift from traditional media to the web based platforms. In this timespan, web based media have not become mainstream as much as it is today. It was mostly an extension of existing traditional media outlets and the contribution of the audience is limited to non-existent. Then, it is followed by the rise of social networking sites (SNSs) like YouTube, Myspace and Tumblr where people are actively contributing, or merely creating the content they are consuming. This period of the internet -which we are still experiencing today- will later be named as web 2.0 after its appearance. The third step consist of the changes that has happened and still continuing to occur today during the web 2.0 period.

3.1.1.   Traditional media to web 1.0

Starting from the shift from traditional media to the internet era, this is where the shift from vertical communication networks start to shift to horizontal ones, as Castells (2007) explains. He defines this new era of communication as *mass self-communication* which is powered by the internet and wireless networks of communication in general. Castells claims that this new form of communication shifts the public sphere, which is in the institutional realm, to a new space of communication which can be anywhere in these circumstances.

Before going into detail in the shift in power dynamics, it is important to note this first stage of web, which was named as web 1.0 retroactively (Anderson, 2007) taken place between 1991 to 2004. According to the data presented by the World Bank (2022), while the internet usage statistics of the world ranged between below 1% to 16% between 1990 and 2005, the percentage rises up to 60 in 2020. In this time span, before web 2.0, the web was much more static compared to today. It mainly consisted of personal web pages rather than platforms. These websites were not as user-friendly as today and operating them required advanced knowledge on the subject.

It is important to note that the internet's mere existence is also a huge impact on the course of information technologies. Therefore, it has a considerable impact on how social, economic and political life works worldwide today. McLuhan explains a similar, in fact a former shift in world order with the usage of electricity in a chapter called '*Medium is the Message*' in his book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (*1964). In this chapter, he describes how everything in the world has changed

with the mainstream use of electricity. He defines it, the electric light, as pure information and adds that it is a medium without message (Durham and Kellner, 2005). Throughout the chapter, he wants to emphasize the fact that the message and the medium are so intertwined that their interaction has a great impact on what the meaning is, in fact McLuhan argues that the meaning of the message is solely dependent on the medium. McLuhan adds on to the impact of electricity, stating that it reached even the remotest places on earth where one would never imagine, like the desert or a tribe in the forest. In that sense, what he mentions sounds a lot like the internet spreading all around the world.

 Related to the discussion of the medium having an impact on the message itself, on the first step in the shift from mass media to the internet, hardware technology and its availability played an important role in the course of the evolution of web technologies. Few people could access and afford the mediums such as a computer and internet connection, in order to use the internet effectively. The percentage of adults who were using computers in United States around 1990's were 42 percent, while the internet usage statistics for the same group was limited to only 14 percent (Fox and Rainie, 2014). Therefore, people who had access to these technologies and had the ability to use these affectively, had the chance to create their own content on the internet. Luders (2008) mentions this problem under the concept of multimodal literacy which includes internet usage skills. Without the ability to comprehend all of the contents of these web based communication tools, it was not possible to participate fully on the internet.

Both Luders and McLuhan states the importance of the medium in the process of disseminating information. However, the medium-based approach to communication is often criticized by being too reductionist, being too deterministic. For this thesis, both sides should be considered. It is obvious that changes in technology (both in terms of hardware and software) has made a huge impact on how we communicate, socialize, teach, learn and so on. In short, transition to a web based society has effected every aspect of the world, just like electricity did, like McLuhan's suggestion. So, while considering the effects of this, technology or 'the medium' itself should not be the only factor when evaluating the phenomenon.

To sum up, while the web was considered more of a publishing medium in the 1990's, it has started to become more popular for its communication feature in the 2000's (Manovich, 2009).

3.1.2. Web 1.0 to Web 2.0

The term web 2.0 was coined first by Darcy DiNucci in 1990's, signaling the more interactive shape it will soon to take. This term has become more popular after the Web 2.0 conference which took place in 2004 (O'Reilly, 2005). While it is hard to define what web 2.0 really is with just a sentence, in its core, we see the fundamentality of platforms and the wisdom of crowds (O'Reilly, 2009). In the book "*What is Web 2.0?*" O'Reilly lists the key features of web 2.0 companies listed as:

- *Services, not packaged software, with cost-effective scalability*
- *Control over unique, hard-to-recreate data sources that get richer as more people use them*
- *Trusting users as co-developers*
- *Harnessing collective intelligence*
- *Leveraging the long tail through customer self-service*
- *Software above the level of a single device*
- *Lightweight user interfaces, development models, AND business models* (p.44)

With that list, it is clear that in the essence of web 2.0 lies platforms, user- orientation, collectivity and participatory culture.

With the internet becoming more and more widespread through the improving technologies of mobile phones, portable laptops and tablets, it has become easier to access the internet anywhere and anytime. Concurrently, the web has started to take the shape of platforms which people can easily contribute to, instead of static singular websites. User generated content (UGC) and social networking sites (SNSs) has become popular in this era as well. In short, while web 1.0 offered single channels of communication, web 2.0 enabled a more interactive, multiple flow of communication (Van Dijck, 2013) as conceptualized by Castells (2007) as *networked society*.

Among the factors which made this shift from web 1.0 to web 2.0 remarkably effective, social media platforms are at the top. According to Van Dijck (2013);

> " *...a platform is a mediator rather than an intermediary: it shapes the performance of social acts instead of merely facilitating them. Technologically speaking, platforms are the providers of software, (sometimes) hardware, and services that help code social activities into a computational architecture; they*

process (meta)data through algorithms and formatted protocols before presenting their interpreted logic in the form of user-friendly interfaces with default settings that reflect the platform owner's strategic choices." (p.29)

Van Dijck also states that users of these platforms use them to express themselves and see it as a tool to present themselves online. They have the power to enable users to connect with existing friends, as well as meeting new ones. In this way, it resembles a traditional community in sociological sense. (Van Dijck, 2013). While some of these platforms require their users to user their real identity like Facebook, some on the contrary, inspire them to use nicknames and avatars, as in the example of Tumblr. The case of anonymity is also a point to consider in this matter, which will be examined later in the online communities subsection.

While the ability of the users to contribute to the content online changed the whole power dynamics of these media, it does not mean that all users are contributing to these content online. Manovich (2009) had a similar point stating that not all users are putting out their original content on these platforms. According to 2007 statistics he's referring to, only 0.5 to 1.5 percent of the social media users were sharing their original content on these platforms.

Although a small percentage of the social media users are content creators, Manovich thinks that it is considerably effective. He builds up an analogy pointing that the culture industry which Adorno and Horkheimer described, is still valid today through social media mediums. However, this time the consumer is not completely passive about the consumption about those culture industry products but in fact they are the ones who create or co-create it often (Manovich, 2009).

Other than being original content creators, social media users can actively participate in discussion under the comments section of a post or a video, can vote on polls designed by creators and also can interchange information on forum-like platforms like reddit. The conversations taken place in those shapes can be very informative and, those conversations may even resemble fruitful social exchange in an academic environment. Conversations between the audience and the narrator (video host, YouTube channel, influencer etc.) under the comments section of a video (or an Instagram post, a twitter thread…) is a new form of communication according to Manovich. According to his example, those conversations are similar to a discussion in a college lecture that is specified on one topic. In the context of the web, this lecture

atmosphere is mimicked with a difference, the conversation is open to anyone who would like to participate, anytime and anywhere. Also, according to the statistics he presents, this commenting behavior is actually quite widespread among social media users (Manovich, 2009).

Considering the ever-increasing popularity of social media platforms, their financial outcomes have been a discussion point as well. Since blogging and sharing your life on social media is mostly ego-centric, so it is very open for people to make a brand out of their selves online and gain an income out of it. So, it raises the question, how social is social media really? The 'social' interactions are based on a financial and/or social capital outcome for most of the time. This financial outcome often raises questions such as; how are the information and the content on these platforms reliable, what position does this fact place social media considering 'real' social relations in real life (Fuchs, 2013). These questions will also be valid during the discussion of the reliability of the YouTube videos which will be examined that I'll discuss in the analysis part. Almost all YouTube channels which are used in order to generate income are a part of sponsorship deal and/or they promote their merchandise/products. So, the question of how will this fact effect our judgement when evaluating data from social media platforms, should remain on the back of our minds.

Corporate imperialism is another critique point. Facebook consuming every up-and-coming platform like Instagram or WhatsApp, might be an example. Recently, not only corporations, but also extremely wealthy individuals are included in this problem as well, with Elon Musk buying out twitter for 43 billion dollars. Therefore, it makes sense to rethink the autonomy of these platforms.

In addition to the discussion of the financial positions of these platforms, the content creators on these platforms are able to gain income from them, too. Visvanath, Ramanadhan and Kontos (2007) mention the two main income sources of mass media, which are subscriptions and advertisements. These income sources are basically what essentially social media income is based on as well (we can add sponsorships too, for social media). In fact, the subscription part was non-existent in terms of a way of income. Platforms like *Patreon* enabled the creators to gain direct income from their audience. It is both similar to what mass media has been doing but also different because the audience is not paying to an organization but directly to the content creator/s they enjoy. Advertising is also still present in different forms and shapes through social media. In case of YouTube, creators are both able to generate income

through advertisements that appear in their videos and also they can get sponsorship deals which are short segments of sponsored content within the video. Recently, a subscription feature similar to Patreon has been added which enables creators to make exclusive content for their paid subscribers. These kinds of income outlets were not available at the start of the web 2.0 era, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.1.3. *Change within web 2.0 era and social media*

Within the web 2.0 era, rise of social media and the change within these platforms, namely Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and so on, has defined the dynamics of this period. Their constantly changing structure still continue to influence the changes within this age of media.

To define social media, Kaplan and Hanlein (2010) highlight the importance of the unique content contributed by the users, defining it as:

> *"a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content"* (p.61).

According to Van Dijck (2013), what made these applications originally very appealing to the audience is the fact that they are offering the connectedness feeling that people long for. This feeling of connectedness is in the essence of what this thesis is investigating. With this incentive, people exchange information on their eating habits and experiences, inspiring and supporting other people who suffer from similar problems anywhere in the world.

At the beginning of the social media era, these platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter were much more user-oriented, and the chance to convey one's ideas to other users were much more easier than today, considering the user count of these platforms. Today, according to Auxier and Anderson (2021), 81 percent of Americans state that they use YouTube, while the following platforms' rates are respectively 69 percent for Facebook, 40 percent for Instagram and 31 for Pinterest.

Van Dijck furthers the discussion of whether social media is still social, with an example from the evolution of YouTube. According to that, YouTube was a much more social platform than it is now today. Users can comment, like, share videos on the platform, still. But before the change in interface of the site on December 2011,

user comments were found on the first page of the site and videos were listed as most viewed or top favorited. Today, it is more like a television mentality on the site, as Van Dijck describes. Instead of comments and videos, the first thing a normal user encounters on the site is an ad that takes up a big part of the page (if they are not a *YouTube Premium*[5] member). After that, the site shows you the latest videos of the channels you are subscribed to. More like television, it is organized in a way that there are channels that the user should pick and choose. Still, different than TV, the audience has a say in the content in the form of comments under the video. Also, channels can put up polls and small posts in order to get the audience's opinion on any topic possible. Furthermore, starting your own channels is still an option, but due to the highly increased competition on the platform, it is not as easy as before to establish a considerable number of audience. What Van Dijck wants to emphasize with this discussion is the fact that YouTube used to be a very social platform in its early years. However today:

> *"[a] far cry from its original design, YouTube is no longer an alternative to television, but a full-fledged player in the media entertainment industry"* (p.127).

Going back to the discussion of public and private sphere stated by Castells, the fact that social media has changed the way media operates, has also affected the public and private sphere perception of its users and consumers as well. About this discussion, Van Dijck (2013) thinks that the rise of social media changed the way we communicate both privately and publicly and adds, referring to Zizi Papacharissi (2010), social media offers a space where the lines between private and public space become blurry. She also claims that this new blurry space might lead to new possibilities in identity building.

Returning to Castells (2007), in his view, the media are not the power holder but the media is:

> *"the place where power is decided"* (p. 242).

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[5] …a subscription service offered by the video platform YouTube. The service provides ad-free access to content across the service, as well as access to premium YouTube Originals programming produced in collaboration with the site's creators, downloading videos and background playback of videos on mobile devices, and access to the YouTube Music music streaming service.

He also thinks that the reality of anything on the public mind is dependent on its visibility on media. From that, we can evaluate that the media has tremendous impact on decision making both on political and public sphere. It makes sense to infer that this has been affected with the shift from mass media to social media. Although the consumers have more power on what is consumed on the media, there are still power inequalities regarding the algorithms of these constantly changing platforms, similar to the example with the changing dynamics within YouTube.

On the effect of these social media platforms, Luders (2008) uses *medium theory*, which is used in order to understand the effects of the change that media technologies bring on the society. She uses the term *personal media* to refer to the web 2.0 media outlets. The term '*prosumer*' gets the attention under this subject, meaning the consumers are also becoming the producers of the content. (Luders, 2008)

To conclude, before internet usage and social media tools became easily accessible, the previous features of traditional media showed a vertical dynamic where the information had a one-way flow: from media companies to the audience. With the proliferation of the social media apps, social networking tools and user generated content, this power dynamic had a considerable shift where the audience had the opportunity to be the creators themselves. In sum:

> "*web 1.0 is a computer-based networked system of human cognition, web 2.0 a computer-based networked system of human communication, web 3.0 a computer-based networked system of human co-operation*" (Fuchs, 2013, p.46)

3.2. *Social Media and Nutrition – Relationship between increasing social media consumption and nutrition*

Changes in the media not only effected how we consume it, but also affected the way we approach cultural phenomenon, both as consumers and creators. Also by change, both social and technological change should be taken into consideration in this process. Based on the medium theory which examines social change dependent on the change in media technologies, Luders (2008) mentions how the old mediums like television and newspaper restricted the information flow in which a small group of associates disseminate knowledge to a mass audience. This order created a considerable power

asymmetry in the field. Fuchs(2013) evaluates this asymmetric dynamic in terms of the relationship between technological change and society:

> *"The Internet consists of a technological system and a social subsystem that both have a networked character. Together these two parts form a techno-social system. The technological structure is a network that produces and reproduces human actions and social networks and is itself produced and reproduced by such practices."* (p.41).

So, while the changes in technology occur, it feed into the social change as well. Popular culture is one massive field that we can observe this change. An example of this can be seen in music industry. Although it is still mostly dominated by big record companies, it is now possible to build an audience online with platforms like Spotify, Soundcloud and YouTube and have a career in music. Electronic tools and the increasing availability of those are also an important aspect. Especially in indie "bands", although they are presented as a band, there are examples that only one person is performing all of the music. Social platforms in this scenario, provide the grounds for these musicians to reach their specific audience.

A similar outline exist in visual art industry as well. The usual flow of events used to be for the artists to go to art school, build up their skills and networks there and move to the industry from there. Now, with the help of online tools and improved technologies like drawing tablets, it is possible to both learn basic skills from platforms like YouTube or Skillshare and build an audience with social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter. So, it is much more easier for people to participate in this industry.

Although it seems irrelevant at first thought, the effect of changing technology and communication tools is present in health and nutrition field, too. Medical authorities are of course the safest and most reliable way to gain information, still. However, increasing use of social platforms makes it easier to have access to these kinds of information but also enables misinformation to circulate, too. While useful information includes helpful advice from professionals and social and emotional support of other people; misinformation includes triggering content for eating disorders and harmful nutritional advice and so on. Both of these scenarios will be explained later on the chapter.

3.2.1. Clean eating and healthism

Starting with the rather 'negative' side of the research done on the subject of nutrition of social media, we see clean eating is one of the most researched topics.

> *"Instagram is a platform that maximizes food's symbolism"* (Baker and Walsh, 2020a, p.57).

It is inevitable to be exposed to clean eating content if you are looking for fitness and/or nutrition advice on any form of social media. This concept of clean eating sometimes offer the audience healthy and nourishing meals. However, there are serious issues with its use most of the time, as it is used in order to objectify some food groups while declaring some others as 'sinful' and 'bad', resulting in producing triggering or leading affects for eating disorders.

First, to define what clean eating is, we can start with what it isn't. Clean foods in this context, does not define non-contaminated, germ-free foods. It is rather used for raw, unprocessed, whole foods like fruits, vegetables and leafy greens. So, it has evolved into a symbolic meaning (Baker and Walsh, 2020a). Although there is no one single term that defines what clean eating is, in the context that it is used in social media, we can define it as consuming as much whole, unprocessed foods as possible. But, in this definition, these whole foods are not limited to fruits and vegetables but super foods like acai berries, quinoa, coconut oil and such (McCartney, 2016). Taken into consideration the fact that these clean eating posts are overly symbolic, it is important to understand what they symbolize. Baker and Walsh (2020a, 2020b) often highlight the resemblances of these clean eating content online with what Goffman was describing with his theory of presentation of self (1959). According to Goffman, people act in certain ways (intendedly or unintendedly) to paint a perception in their 'audience's minds, in this case, the audience being the social media audience. Goffman often uses the analogy of a 'stage' to describe social life, when describing the dynamics of people acting in the ways to reflect their desired selves and other people reacting accordingly to it. If we consider this analogy from today's circumstances, what Goffman defines as the "*front*" would be social media platform. He explains:

> *"It will be convenient to label as "front" that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define*

the situation for those who observe the performance. Front, then, is the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance." (p.22)

What Baker and Walsh (2020b) detected on Instagram posts about clean eating is the fact that they are used as a depiction of ideal self in order to present the content creators themselves as 'clean, healthy, successful' people to their social network and/or audience. Also, they highlight the fact that more than the contents and nutritional value of the shared food images, content creators focus more on the visual presentation of the named foods (Baker and Walsh, 2020a). The appearance and visual representations of both food and body images will be further explained later on following subsections. One of the problems with clean eating content on social media sites is related with their credibility. Allen, Dickinson and Prichard (2018) mention that in the US, the clean eating discourse is so effective that it changes the food supply chain, resulting in manufacturers to change the ingredients according to the principles of clean eating. Further, they spotted that people exclude certain food groups such as dairy, to follow the so called rules. Later, they highlight that these kinds of arbitrary exclusions in nutrition in the absence of any health problems, might lead to nutrition deficiencies and chronic diseases in the long run.

The source of the credibility problem above mainly derives from nutritional advice coming from unqualified people, namely, social media influencers/gurus, under the premise of 'clean eating'. Baker and Rojek (2019) mention this problem in one article with a real life example. According to the article, former wellness influencer/guru Belle Gibson attracted public attention after her claim that she cured her terminal cancer with only 'clean eating', referring to healthy eating and healthy lifestyle changes. She went as far as claiming that she rejected any form of medicine treatment in this process. She documented all the process in blog posts over social media and made profit out of selling it as an app and a book. Later on it is revealed that she faked the illness and in fact, is a fraud.

Baker and Rojeck explain as one of the reasons why people chose to trust those online figures with the decreasing credibility and trust towards professionals and institutions in general. Because both the right and wrong information is in constant flow available to masses, it is easy to encounter them. Also, those figures appearing more like a 'friend' rather than an authority, makes is easier for the audience to trust them.

Going back to the topic of identity formation, practices like clean eating becomes so central in one's identity (or presented self) that it appears as if following a religion. Therefore not following those practices might appear 'sinful', leaving the individual with a sense of guilt. Bordo (2003) focuses on a similar feeling, which is nothingness, often felt by young girls and women when they do not confirm to societal beauty ideals. She mentions the harsh feeling of unimportance and nothingness, rising within those people unless they are fit and lean like the images they see all the time. (Bordo, 2003).

Diet culture discourse, which includes clean eating, depicts being thin and fit as the only way that one (mostly women and girls) can feel happy and content. Contois (2015) states that the contemporary diet culture discourse constructs a kind of modern day weight-loss theology in which being thin is the only way of salvation. She describe the rituals of this religion as follows:

"Dieting theology possesses its own practices, rites, and rituals, such as counting calories (or in low-carb diets, grams of carbohydrate), tracking minutes of exercise, and weighing oneself on a scale." (p.114)

Similarly, clean eating discourse has a moral scale as well, by depicting certain foods as healthy/good and others as unhealthy/bad. Therefore, if the 'follower' choses good foods they are a saint. Otherwise, they are a sinner.

Other than being good or bad, consuming these foods are also a matter of financial class. Although clean eating supports foods like fresh produce which is somewhat more within reach to anyone, it also encourages 'superfoods' like quinoa, chia, etc. as mentioned earlier. Considering even the fresh produce step is hard to reach for a great number of people, superfoods are out of reach for anyone other than a upper-middle or upper class member of society, based on their income. Markula and Pringle (2006) refer to these activities like following certain diets and seeking fitness activities (i.e. lifting weight, going to the gym, aerobics, etc.) as:

"neoliberal practices implicated in the everyday exercise of power over the self" (p.765).

These religious connotations also has similarities with the claim of healthism, which leaves the individual alone with the responsibility of their own health and no one else (Crawford, 1980), as mentioned in the previous chapter. Returning to the discussion of impurity of foods that are not considered 'clean' such as fast foods, non-organic, processed foods etc., the alternatives to these conventional foods, such as organic, certified or local foods, are either not available to every socioeconomic group because they are more expensive; or their reliability to be 'clean' and 'organic' is questionable. Doing the research and deciding on the purity of those foods then, is left to the consumer in that case.

This point brings us to the term *biopedagogies*, deriving from the same source of Foucault's biopower. Wright (2009) describes biopedagogies as:

> *"...disciplinary and regulatory strategies that enable the governing of bodies in the name of health and life"* (p.8).

These strategies makes the individual responsible of their own health and body shape by being under constant surveillance both by themselves and outside sources. Jong and Drommond (2016) mentions this constant surveillance in their paper in which they examine online fitness culture. One example from their research summarizes the topic word by word:

> *"You, and only you, are responsibility for shaping your health and your body. You decide what your goals are and how hard you fight to stay on track. The decision, the determination and the choice lies within yourself, no one else can do it or want it for you. You create your own destiny. (Posted on Instagram by a 'fitspo' page, seen 19 March 2014)"* (p.763)

The paper also mentions the term fitspiration (amalgamation of the words fit and inspiration), which is an online hashtag, that will be discussed in the next section. Jong and Drommond says that these content under the fitspiration hashtag serves as a series of instructions in order to stay healthy and fit, meaning, regulating one's body, which creates biopedagogy. In sum, their results indicate that social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram creates required foundations to build biopedagogies, in order to make people regulate themselves on the topics of health and fitness.

3.2.2. Presentation, Fitness Culture and Body image issues

Social media, especially platforms like Instagram, can be very visual-oriented, which make them appeal more to the audience. Therefore, the usage of the platform is increased. This visual-oriented nature of some platforms sets the ground for debates on how people present themselves or products/objects online; questioning whether or not they are presented realistically, or if realism is an issue or not.

In order to make the algorithm work in favor of the creator and to make the consumer spend more time on the platform, the solution in common with these factors is to make the content as attention grabbing as possible. Social media platforms are built that way. In fact, they encourage the user to use the platform to pursue validation of other users in the form of likes and comments (Baker and Walsh, 2020b). This scenario contains double- interest, both for the platform itself -because they can actually measure the usage rates- and the content creator -because they can see the level of engagement, therefore, the affirmation they are receiving. Baker and Walsh (2020b) explain the concern to gain likes and comments like this:

> *"The act of liking or commenting on a post represents a process of affirmation whereby an image is recognised and validated by others. When these metrics occur on those posts using a particular hashtag, they reveal more than status; they function as an online affirmation ritual"* (p.6)

So, getting more views, more comments and likes means more than just gaining more income from the content. It also means that the content creator is liked and appraised by the audience as well.

To reach that engagement level, content creators may choose to use clickbait [6] (Dictionary.com, 2022) titles or images considering YouTube videos. For heavily-visualized platforms like Instagram, creating content about fitness and nutrition becomes more complicated because of this issue, because everything in one's content (including the face and body of the creator) must be appealing to the viewer. This is where body image related problems start to appear. For the health, nutrition and fitness blogs, the term 'fitspiration' can be considered as an example for the body image topic.

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[6] a sensationalized headline or piece of text on the internet designed to entice people to follow a link to an article on another web page.

Fitness culture and/or diet culture effects mostly the younger generation. According to Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko (2019) the younger generation use the internet in order to get information and share their experiences the most. They are also heavily affected by influencers in their purchases. Moorman et al. (2020) state that:

> *"young adolescents are more likely to consume content from fitspiration and detox social media pages compared to older adolescents and young adults"* (p.5).

Which makes them the target audience for the influencers. In Germany, 84 percent of the fitness, health and nutrition content online is produces by female influencers (Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko, 2019). Considering that most of the research on this topic is run on women, it is safe to say that women and young girls are the ones who are affected by these content the most.

Fitspiration is a term which is an amalgamation of the words fitness and inspiration. It is often used as a hashtag online, in social networking sites, in order to present images that are aimed at motivating people to be healthy and exercise more (Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2018). Although it seems to have a good intention, research shows that it does not live up to the expectations most of the time. Meaning, it does more harm than good.

Like most of the fitness and health content, fitspiration is a field that is dominated by women as well. Before explaining further on this, it is important to acknowledge it's former, thinspiration, which is similarly made up of the words thin and inspiration. This term mostly stood for young women aspiring to be thin at all costs. Predictably, these content not only encourage people to keep their disordered eating mentality, but also caused some people to have eating disorders as well. According to Jong and Drummond (2018), pro-ana sites (meaning pro- anorexia, which supports being anorexic) made people without eating disorders to develop eating disorders after consuming such content. Authors also state that the problem is mostly caused by the social interactions of the users of these sites. Based on Jong and Drummond's article, it is seen that the problem with these online hashtag trends like fitspiration, thinspiration and so on, are completely about the false conception of their understanding of health, which equates it with thinness.

Regarding nutrition and fitness content online, this debate, whether or not promoting to be fit is healthy, has a more serious outcome because presentation of bodies and food can lead to serious issues such as body dysmorphia and orthorexia nervosa, which are concerns related to body image and eating habits. Visuals are highly effective in gaining the trust of the followers on social media. Influencers do it by focusing on body shapes. Especially with wearing tight fitted active wear, which is almost always branded. Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko (2019) claim that these influencers promote that a beautiful body will bring happiness. Having a muscular, fit shaped body is seen as a status symbol. Success in fitness is in background compared to one's visual appearance.

According to Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2018), the hashtag fitspiration contains mostly images of people, which are 68% women and 28% men. The rest contains both genders. According to the results, among these images, women were presented mostly as thin(75%) or having visible muscles; whereas men were either build (98%) or highly muscular. From these results, we can see that the trend does not include various body types and as the authors state, this kind of representation of thin body ideal results in objectification for the audience. Because these people who share under the hashtag fitspiration are not models or athletes, the audience tends to compare themselves to these individuals more and end up being disappointed in themselves potentially. Another important point to consider is that this movement is supposed to promote a healthier lifestyle which includes exercise. However, only a quarter of the images they have analyzed includes people engaging in physical activity. To sum up, this movement seems to have good intentions at first sight, and still, might lead up to inspiring people. However, certain elements of it still reproduces the unhealthy mindset of idealizing certain body types as desirable and certain foods as 'healthy' while labelling the contrary as undesirable and unhealthy.

Former research by Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2015) also point that exposure to fitspiration images resulted in greater body dissatisfaction and lower state appearance self-esteem. While mentioning body dissatisfaction, it is important to note the effect of social comparison under the topic of fitspiration. Marks, De Foe and Collett talk about this issue in the article *"The pursuit of wellness: Social media, body image and eating disorders"* (2020). As stated by the authors, social comparison theory in this contexts, refers to the circumstances where individuals make upward comparisons of themselves to others and ending up feeling dissatisfied when fallen short. They state

that spending time on social media and not participating in it increases the negative effect of social comparison. On top of ending up feeling dissatisfied with oneself, self-objectification is another result of the wellness content on social media. Self-objectification refers to perceiving oneself as an object and not a person, according to Marks, De Foe and Collett (2020). Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2018)'s research where they examined these fitspiration images, point to a similar outcome:

> "*In terms of objectification, the majority of images (56.0%) featured at least one of the specified aspects of objectification.(…) a body part (e.g. the abdominal muscles) was the focus of most of the images, and the face/head was not clearly visible in a number. A 'sexy' pose was adopted by a quarter (25.7%) of women in the images, compared to just over 10 per cent of men*" (p.1007)

In short, the data from this section shows that fitspiration images online mostly contains women showing that they are fit with their clothes and poses. As Baker and Walsh(2020b) suggested, people in these images were mostly in tight active-wear with nice poses and make up, rather than engaging in actual physical activities. This, with all the facts stated above, shows the symbolism of the concept. Although there are examples where these images actually motivate the audience to take action for a healthier lifestyle, most of the time they cause the audience to make upward social comparisons and ending up feeling dissatisfied.

3.2.3. *Nutritional information on social media, social media literacy and Eating disorders*

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are becoming an informal source of health education (Marks, De Foe and Collett, 2020). Many research has been done on the subject, including the relation between social media use and nutrition information. Moorman et al. states that among the most search topics online for teenagers, nutritional information and fitness content are at top places. This increase in the use of internet for nutrition and health information can be explained with some theories. One is the fact that young adolescent not thinking that they are being taken seriously with their health problems by medical professionals (Moorman et al., 2020). This can also be explained with the declining trust towards authorities and professionals as stated by Baker and Rojeck (2019). Legitimate information sources like medical and

government websites are not as easily accessible as SNSs, because they tend to appear later on the google search (Moorman et al., 2020). Another reason why people might chose to trust celebrities more in this topic can be related by their visibility. Online celebrities (like influencers and content creators) can have a large following. Because people are exposed to their content on a regular basis, they end up appearing as authorities to the audience, even though they have no qualification in the field (Turner and Lefevre, 2017).

This increased use of social media for health information is associated with disordered eating behavior by many research conducted in this area, effecting mostly young adolescents and women. Moorman et al. (2020) states that although the information about nutrition and health on social media sites are not reliable, and they may cause serious health problems, many teenagers say they trust this information. Moorman et al. also adds that:

> *"[as] internet research about fitness and nutritional information increases, disordered eating behavior increases as well."* (p.6).

A similar result have been reached by Wilksch et al. (2019), indicating that the more social media platforms the teenagers have participate in resulted with more likelihood to develop disordered eating.

The effect of media on nutrition was always present. Sidani et al. (2015) suggest that media content such as magazines and TV shows have been associated with eating disorders before, and with the emerging technologies, same effect might be present with social media as well. They have investigated the effects of social media use on eating concerns, focusing mostly on Facebook and YouTube. The results indicated a strong association between the two variables, on the sample of young adults. Later on, they also mention other social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat. They state that Instagram is aware of the problem with eating disorders and give this example:

> *"Some social media platforms have attempted to mitigate this issue, such as Instagram banning the hashtags "thinspiration" and "thinspo."However, users have easily been able to circumvent these barriers by spelling the words slightly incorrectly (eg, "th1nspo")"* (p.1471)

According to the authors, the reason why these platforms being so effective on people might be explained with the features of the content that is being shared. People post their best selves, which are more suitable for social ideals. Because of that, the degree of social comparison increases.

Sidani et al. (2015) also state that people with eating disorders use social media more. They may reach out to other people with eating disorders for comfort and support. However, authors say that this might be also problematic because these kinds of eating disorder oriented groups may lead them to define themselves with their ED and create a whole identity with that.

One of the eating disorders that has been diagnosed increasingly since the popularity of social media is orthorexia nervosa, which can be briefly explained as the obsession with eating healthy. According to Turner and Lefevre's (2017) research, Instagram use was associated strongly with orthorexia nervosa and they did not find an association like this for any other social media platform. They mention an effect of social media use which is called 'the echo chamber effect:

"*where users perceive their values and world-views to be more common than they actually are, due to selectively viewing contributions of other, similarly minded people*" (Turner and Lefevre, 2017, p.277).

So, consumers of the fitness and clean eating content are stuck in a cycle of content which leads them to orthorexia behavior.

The fact that consumers of social media have the choice to select which accounts to follow, can both be a blessing and a curse. In these cases where the effect of fitness and health related content is investigated, it apparently has a negative effect on the audience. However, these researched content is generally the ones where diet culture norms and thin ideal is appreciated and disseminated over and over again. In fact, people chose to follow accounts where diet culture norms are disseminated more, over the content where there are alternatives presented (Jong and Drummond, 2018). The reason for that might be similar to Turner and Lefevre's (2017) research, meaning that the high popularity of these content results in the audience being exposed to it more. Still, more variable research is needed in the field, such as a research on people who chose to consume alternative voices in the nutrition field, which is similar with what this thesis is aimed at.

The point made by Jong and Drummond points to a field that investigates the positive effects of nutrition information presented online. Jong and Drummond (2016) state that the internet is not entirely replacing health professionals but it offers a platform to disseminate health information. Alongside with it, use of online sources might provide the information required to understand what these health information seekers actually need.

Tobey and Manore (2014) examined a related topic where they evaluated an online marketing project called "Food Hero". The project aimed to encourage people to eat more and varied fruits and vegetables. Authors have explored the effectiveness of the project and developed some measures for similar online projects to be successful. The results of the study indicates that social media is a potentially useful tool for spreading useful nutrition information. In order to do that successfully, authors describe some suggestions, such as determining the needs for the project, selecting the appropriate social media platform, consistently measuring the outcomes and so on. Although the project is describing a pathway for useful nutrition information to disseminate on social media, it might also be pointing to the ways in which social media influencers are spreading their views on the subject. For example, one of their suggestions suggest that the content creator should regularly assess the data from their account. This is also applied by fitness/clean eating blogs as well. On the other hand, the suggestions might be a leading way to understand how intuitive eating content travels around these platforms as well.

Similar to Tobey and Manore's research, Klassen et al. (2018) also investigated the beneficial outcomes of social media use on nutrition information. According to the authors, young adults, who are aged between 18 to 35, are the riskiest group for being overweight and obese, because of the transitions they go through in life at that age gap. Between that age group, people tend to choose more sugary foods and drinks and less fruits and vegetables. Authors' concern is the risk that this temporary habits induced by the changes they are going through, becoming permanent. They acknowledge that social media influencers and lifestyle gurus online are getting more attention, and stating the possibility of health professionals to:

"appear boring and unattractive in this contested space" (p.2).

As a result, they also find hints for the usefulness of social media use in nutrition information. However, they have failed to detect any particular outcome from the experiment. So, it is safe to say that social media is potentially influential to reduce BMI and initiate healthy eating but it has not yet proven how.

Lastly on this topic, going back to Jong and Drummond, there is the issue that is gaining information from social media platforms about health and nutrition considered as a leisure activity or not. Although definition of leisure time contains being free, we see that people chose to fill it with nutrition and fitness information nowadays, with the help of SNSs. So, this can be interpreted as a change in the definition of leisure, now involving the need to work on one's body (Jong and Drummond, 2016). However, there is research confirming that consumers of these content are actually pleased with it and see it as a part of their identity (Jong and Drummond, 2016). The accessibility of health, nutrition and fitness content is proved by a participant comment in Jong and Drummond's research, stating:

"back in the day if you wanted a gym program you couldn't just jump online and have a look at people's pages and see what the best thing to do is, you actually had to go and speak to a trainer. Whereas these days you can jump onto any social media and get a whole list of anything you can do.[7]" (p.763)

Alongside with the possible positive outcomes of online health and nutrition information, Jong and Drummond (2016) add the fact that some of the information on these sites are backed by private groups that might be misleading. Their solution is for the audience to be critical about the information they consume online. Especially on the source of information and for what purpose it is being told. This point should be a general concern of a social media user regarding any kind of information they receive on these platforms. However, it is evident that most of the users are far from this ideal situation considering that countless amount of false health information is still circulating online and being performed by the audience.

Therefore, it is evident that there are both useful information and misleading/incorrect information in circulation online. Therefore, why the audience keep relying on the misinformation online? One answer to that might be the popularity and exposure

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[7] *participant comment*

discussion mentioned above, referring to Turner and Lefevre (2017). A different approach is stated by Penders (2018), with this research on why the public is not relying on nutrition science. He highlights that refusing or questioning science is in fact, not about the content of the scientific knowledge, but about a political stance. On nutrition science specifically, Penders points that the funding for nutrition science research is coming from the food industry itself. So, the main concern would be on the food products that these companies are producing and not the health of the consumer. Penders adds,

> *"The more reductionist the science and the more standardised the context, the less it corresponds to society and the less citizens recognise its relevance"* (p.1959).

Combining these information with the fact that people start to see the fitness influencers as authorities, it is not a surprise that false information about nutrition is disseminating rapidly.

Setting political stance aside, for differing true information from the incorrect ones, McLean et al. (2017) questions the effectiveness of social media literacy. Accepting the fact that increasing use of social media outlets has a high risk factor in terms of triggering disordered eating behaviors, social media literacy is a debated method to prevent these negative outcomes of social media consumption. In terms of what social media literacy stands for, like what media literacy approach aims for with a skeptical approach to media, a critical view is aimed. Meaning, focusing on the intentions and sources of the content posted by friends or celebrities (McLean et al., 2017). In Mclean et al.'s study, participants were shown three lessons which lasted 50 minutes each. These were aimed at increasing participants' media literacy, meaning, to critique manipulated images, being careful about online advertisements, building resilience towards upward social comparison, and so on. Results of the study indicate that social media literacy is potentially a useful method in order to prevent social media induced disordered eating behavior in young girls.

3.3. Online Communities

One of the defining characteristics of web 2.0 era from its counterpart is the fact that it enables connectivity between users. Online communities present the exemplification of that feature of web 2.0.

What an online community is, is usually defined in relation with a traditional community. Referring to Robert Park's original definition of community in 1936, Driskell and Lyon (2002) state the common characteristics of a community as being territorially organized, being rooted in the soil that they occupy, and having multiple units of individuals who are dependent on each other.

> "*The virtual community does not include identification with place, but it does require common ties and social interaction*" (p. 375)

continues Driskell and Lyon. In relation with that description, DiRose (2021) defines an online community as

> "*a group of people coming together for a common purpose, interest, or vision, and doing so via the internet*".

These communities can appear using forums, chat rooms or mailing lists and so on. Reddit, can be a popular example. It is a site that contains both information and entertainment content which consists of many little forum-like pages where users can both start a topic of discussion and contribute to the already existing ones.

Research about online communities are scattered around multiple sides of the phenomenon. Where some researchers focused on the legitimacy of these communities compared to the traditional communities; others have been interested in topics like the reasons why people share their knowledge online, limitations of contribution, credibility and so on.

Starting with the discussion whether or not these online communities would substitute for traditional ones; the key element here is the fact that with the changing social dynamics, traditional community ties are losing effect and importance. Driskell and Lyon (2002) have questioned the idea that if online communities can be a substitute for the traditional ones. A considerable amount of the discussion consisted of whether or not being locally together matters for being a community. Community that exists in

cyberspace is the most pronounced counter argument against the need to having local ties. People who support this opinion claim that for a community to exists, a local place or a shared space is not necessary. Even face to face contact is not required. Driskell and Lyon reach the conclusion that virtual communities fail to fulfill all the requirements of a traditional community has, so the members of those virtual communities feel limited liability towards them. So, they conclude that most of the virtual communities they have examined do not meet the requirements to be a true community, which is a traditional one in this context.

Although Driskel and Lyon's study concluded that online communities are not a replacement for the traditional ones, the scope and impact of online communities have increased a lot since their research. In fact, these interactive platforms such as social media sites, forums and so on, consist up to a third of all web content (Finnin et al., 2008). Now, it is true that they did not replace the traditional sense of community, but created an original new branch.

Interchange of knowledge appears as one of the top reasons for people to use online communities, but not the only one. The easy to find and easy to use nature of these community platforms make them accessible to a vast number of internet users (Bateman, Gray and Butler, 2011). The variety of these communities enable people to both share their knowledge, and seek needs like emotional and social support (Hajli et al., 2015) and even grow psychological bonds to these communities based on their needs, affects and obligations (Bateman, Gray and Butler, 2011). Also, high accessibility of these platforms make it possible for niche groups to exist online. Although they may seem small in numbers, their impact on the users might be extensive (Finnin et al., 2008). For example, even though IE content is consumed less in comparison to diet culture-normative content, the fact that niche groups have considerable impact for their audience points a possibility where the IE content can be more effective on consumers' lives. It also depends on the intentions of the users as well. A person who wants to lose weight in a short amount of time would find IE content useless, but someone who are recovering from an eating disorder or wanting to improve their relationship with food would find it useful.

Bateman, Gray and Butler (2011) collected some reasons why people might be committing their time to these online communities. The reasons can be categorized as individual and collective motivations. Individuals motivations include reasons like

gaining more contacts, improving self-image, and getting the opinions of others. Some collective motivations are wanting to build a community, altruism and empathy.

Hajli et al. (2015) have investigated the reasons why people participate in information sharing on online communities, and they specifically chose health information communities for the focus of their research. The initial results indicated that although the consumers have concerns about the credibility of the information they reach online about health, they are consulting online resources more and more, both for information and support. They highlight that people prefer to rely less on the information they receive from advertisements, promotions and brochures, and more on online alternatives such as social networks. This points to a reality where people trust more on people they interact with online whom they did not meet in real life, over legitimate resources. Among the categories of people who might need the online information and support more, they list people with chronic diseases and long-term patients. Recovering eating disorder patients might be included in this group in my opinion, because eating disorders do not disappear immediately. They state that because these kinds of long-term illnesses require more frequent instructions, people who are in need of this kind of knowledge and support can benefit from them more. Hajli et al. claim that these communities might offer more quality support, both emotionally and socially, even more than one's own family. Lastly, authors mention the use of these online communities in order to receive information on sensitive topics such as sexual problems, mental problems, addictions and so on. Topics like these are sometimes hard to ask help for in person, and in some cases considered as a taboo in society. But in online communities, thanks to anonymity, it is easier to ask for help. So, while the results of the study show the effectiveness of online health conversation, authors highlight the fact that these information must be provided by credible sources because although the audience is willing to seek information online no matter what, they tend to use credible sources more when having the option to do so.

Going back to the point made by Driskel and Lyon (2002) on the fact that online communities not being a replacement for traditional ones, Hwang, Sing and Argote (2015) have a similar starting point to their research where they claim that the boundaries to social interaction would affect the quality of information exchange online as well. Their point is, although it seems like there are no limits to social exchange online in the sense that there are no geographical boundaries due to its cyber nature; and no social boundaries thanks to the anonymity, there would be no

limits to online interaction. Contrary to this expectation, authors' assumption is that people who share their knowledge online prefer to do it with people they have common grounds with. They claim;

> *"When a knowledge seeker and a knowledge provider share common ground, the provider can craft his or her response according to what the seeker does and does not know and thereby increase the response's effectiveness."* (p.3)

Based on this information, online knowledge sharing is higher when both the people who provide the knowledge and who seek it have similar levels of information on the topic. This explains why people with eating disorders or body image issues comment more on videos related to IE because they are all going through similar processes in their journey. On the contrary, if the provider and seeker have different levels of knowledge, misunderstandings tend to appear more.

Authors mention interpersonal similarity which is about the likelihood of people to have social interactions. Social interaction in physical settings are effected by variables like the distance, location, age group, social status and so on. On an online setting, none of those variables exist. Therefore, it is predicted that there should be no boundaries between knowledge providers and seekers. However, authors support the idea that in an online setting, people would be more likely to interact with others who are similar to them, and not respond to anyone and everyone.

As a result, they discover that people tend to share more knowledge with people similar to them. Geographical boundaries are also effective online as well. However, it is more likely to lose its importance once the individuals get to know each other, gain experience online.

The effect of familiarity might also be related to what Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko (2019) claimed:

> *"Followers reveal very intimate details about their personal circumstances and express trust and perceived familiarity. They deliberately ask influencers who are perceived as friends for advice, react promptly to the incentives used by influencers and take their recommendations seriously"* (p.5)

Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko say that the influencers are building this sense of familiarity with advanced techniques like planning out the images they share, measuring the community statistics and so on. With that, influencers are perceived as one of their friends by the followers. Although it can be used as a deception method to sell more products and content to the audience, based on Hwang, Singh and Argote's (2015) findings, it can also be used as a method of knowledge dissemination.

All of the above information on social media and nutrition paints a picture where social media does more harm than good on the audience's nutrition habits and body image. Where it is partially true, the aim of this paper is to show that there are in fact communities in various shapes and sizes that are working against this top-down approach on food and nutrition. Intuitive eating community appears to be one of them. Although there are little to no research on intuitive eating on social media, relying on my own experience and observations online, the content and the interaction between users -both between the audience and the content creators- seem to be a relatively more positive and intimate one comparing to diet culture-normative, massively popular content. However, this might be a result of multiple reasons including the way YouTube organizes the top comments and maybe even an echo chamber effect. The lack of research on intuitive eating including both from health/nutrition science and social sciences might be another reason. Making a claim about diet culture is easier comparing to intuitive eating because there are a lot of research on dieting and its effects from a variety of fields.

Although the previous results indicate a high correlation with social media use and disordered eating behaviors in young adults for most research, the problem with them is the fact that they are not thorough. There is no detailed information about how these people are actually using the social media platforms, who they follow and why do they follow their content, what interactions they are doing on those platforms and so on. It is evident that social media use is strongly related with eating disorders, but this fields needs more detailed research. Also, there seems to be no research on content like health at every size or ant-diet movement, let alone intuitive eating content, from the perspective of social media interactions.

So, while taking into consideration all of the information above on the harms of social media on people's eating habits and body perception, this research aims to show a different scenario where people seem to be able to identify their problems. Because of

the scarcity of research about intuitive eating in relation to social media, the analysis part of this research will hopefully provide the evidence needed to show the correlation between those two.

On next chapter, I will evaluate the content on social media, more specifically YouTube, on nutrition, focusing on IE content. Because it is more of an alternative take on nutrition, and not as mainstream as popular diet culture content, the phenomenon of 'shift in direction of the information flow' will be more visible. Therefore, with the analysis of the videos and comments of these IE themed videos, I aim to find the relationship with social media (and online communities within) and intuitive eating.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS: INTUITIVE EATING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In this chapter, I will first explain the close relationship between the rising popularity of intuitive eating and social media. After describing the methodology, I will analyze some YouTube videos on the topic of intuitive eating, as well as their comments sections and conclude with the common themes from the analysis.

4.1. Intuitive Eating and Social Media

The aim of this research is to show the correlation between the increasing use of social media and rising popularity of intuitive eating. Intuitive eating is not a recent addition to nutrition. The book that is still to this day, used as a main guide on the subject was first published on 1994. However, further research on it has become more prevalent rather recently. This thesis assumes that the new-found popularity of the subject, both academically and among general public, has a relation with the ever-increasing popularity of social media and/or social networking sites.

Up until this point, I have discussed what intuitive eating is, how it emerged, what it is aimed at and what are its principles. I have also discussed in detail how social media become as widespread as it is today and showed the research that has been done on the relationship with social media and nutrition practices. Almost all research that I have examined shows a negative correlation with social media use and a healthy relationship with food and nutrition. There are papers aiming at finding a method to disseminate useful health information on social media, but there are none that I can find that discuss intuitive eating from social media perspective.

 Although my personal experience have been a similar one to those that are described in all of those papers, meaning I have mostly encountered the harmful side of social media in terms of health and fitness, two and a half years ago I have stumbled upon a YouTube video from a Turkish YouTuber about intuitive eating. Up until that day, I have never heard of anything related to that topic, nor that I have known what it was. I also did not know the fact that diets do not work have been proven this much by scientific research either. Because mainstream media, even social media most of the time, do not mention this. I will have to rely on personal experience and observations

for the beginning of this chapter because this is still a very new topic for Turkish society, like it is globally, and it is not discussed very often, if not discussed at all.

The time I have found out about intuitive eating was after my last diet attempt. I thought I was not a yo-yo dieter because I did not followed a specific diet for a long period of time. But the attempt that I talk about was a diet which was prescribed by a dietician. That was the time that I personally realized diets could not possibly work for a long period of time, because I felt miserable throughout the experience. Exact time I realized this was the time when the dietician that I was seeing at that time said that they were prescribing just a couple hundred more calories for their patients who are going to the gym regularly. The prescription she gave me was around 1500 calories. Needless to say, I have gained all the weight back in a short time after I quit the diet. Also, while I was doing the preliminary research for this thesis, I have seen that the formula these people with eating disorders followed such as anorexia nervosa, was looking very similar with what I have experienced with the dietician. One last thing I'd like to disclose here is that when I went for consultation to this dietician, I was asking for a weight which would make me almost underweight and she had no problem with that.

All this new found information and unfortunate past experiences, have lead me to research more on the subject of intuitive eating. When comparing intuitive eating content with other nutrition advice like diet culture focused information, intuitive eating content appears to have a rather different approach. While traditional nutrition advice revolves around the individual's weight and appearance, intuitive eating content generally is more concerned about the individual's relationship with food and nutrition in general. From what I've seen up until this point from both academic resources and social media, it aims towards a point for the individual to be self-sufficient for the rest of their lives; which is very unusual comparing to diet culture discourse where people are constantly encouraged to consume more diet-related products and media. People's daily routines, likes and dislikes, their occupation and hobbies are all considered in the intuitive eating approach, which we will see in the video/comment analysis section. So, it is possible to predict that IE content will include more individual-based content rather than offering one-fits-all kinds of solutions.

After I have read the main resource of intuitive eating by Tribole and Resch (because it was also recommended heavily by Turkish Youtubers as well), I have continued to research on the topic by watching YouTube videos from all over the world. Some of

the channels I will examine in this analysis part have also been recommended to me by YouTube in this process, so it has been a lucky coincidence. What I have seen from this unintentional pre-research that all the things that are told in the intuitive eating book can be applied to real life, because there are people who are already doing it, they are documenting it day by day on YouTube. Reading comments under those videos and seeing the supportive attitude the viewers had for each other have been a surprise as well. Because generally, comments sections for any kind of social media outlet are seen as a source of negativity and hate.

As I have experienced myself as well, it is known that traditional diets work like a 'prescription'. The dietician or the diet program tells the individual what foods they can and cannot eat, with exact numbers of calories/portions, being carefully scheduled throughout the day, even for the whole week or a month. There is little to no room for modification in this type of nutrition model. Patients texting their dieticians about what foods they can eat, or reporting their day of eating from WhatsApp, is not an uncommon scenario, at least in Turkish society's context. Also, as I know from both personal experience and other people's experiences I have encountered online, when the patient fails to follow the diet, they are likely to being scolded by the dietician, or being labelled as a failure by the diet program. From all those information, diet culture discourse in real life, traditional media and social media appear as a very top-down one. Meaning that under that discourse, there are definite truths, clearly defined paths by professionals and/or celebrities to be followed by ordinary people. So, it is very probable that encountering content on intuitive eating for people who have experienced a 'traditional' approach to diet for their whole lives would come as a shock. As we will see from the comments in the following sections, some viewers feel skeptical about it at first, and others find it very enlightening.

This differentiation between those seemingly distinct approaches to nutrition could only appear in an environment where ideas on the internet are abundant in my opinion, just like we are experiencing it with the emergence of social media. Before the horizontal nature of social media dynamics, it would be very unlikely for a professional to appear on a talk show, advising the audience to stop purchasing weight loss products, diet programs/books, and so on. It wouldn't be beneficial for both the TV channel and the professional because there is no income to generate from that conversation. However, with social media, there are more ways to incorporate this

kind of content like intuitive eating, with these new ways to gain income form social media.

Examining of the videos were the part where research on intuitive eating, that I have mentioned on the theoretical chapter, were the most present. As I will explain in detail about the common themes of the videos, they mostly consisted of the YouTuber sharing their experience with the audience on the topic of intuitive eating. Each YouTuber had a different style of applying intuitive eating principles to their routines. Because there were plenty examples of these content creators showing us their daily habits that revolve around IE mentality, there are many real life examples to the papers I have read.

One example is from Stephanie Buttermore, who was mainly a fitness and lifestyle focused content creator. Now, her content leans more on the nutrition side due to her eating disorder recovery process. In her video where she goes through her journey leading up to intuitive eating, she mentions that the more she had gained her hunger and satiety cues back to normal, the more she could listen to her body's needs. Her excessive weight gain plummeted back and her body weight come to a normal set weight.

There are similar stories so Stephanie's in the videos I have analyzed, but most importantly, there are thousands of stories like those in the comments section, by their viewers.

For all these years, people have been told that they have to work on their appearance in terms of weight loss in many different forms. They have been told to look a certain way. To achieve that goal, some magic formulas in the form of diets, weight loss products and exercise programs have been offered to them in countless different ways. And this 'ideal body' has changed every so often. One year, a skinny looking body is 'in' and the next year, we see curvier bodies in trend. Diet culture mentality have been telling this story for decades through media, and it continues today with social media as well. It is no lie that this mentality is still the dominant one comparing to other movements like body positivity, body neutrality, health at every size and so on.

The point this thesis tries to show is that with social media, people are not doomed for one type of content. It is true that the dominant content on social media platforms still resemble the traditional media era. However, there are other choices, other opinions which they can consume, and also contribute to, thanks to the multi-directional nature of social media. Intuitive eating is one of them. Usually in this sort of content, it is

aimed to show the audience alternative ways that they can pick and choose according to their life styles and personal preferences. The difference that this flexible approach is offering will be visible in both the content and the comments by the viewers.

In this analysis section, we will see the resemblances of the individualistic nature of intuitive eating on YouTube videos and comments. Intuitive eating offers a nutrition style where personal preference, daily habits, personal differences are highlighted, rather than offering nearly the same solutions to different problems. The videos and audience experiences will show a similar story, where they find their own path through those social media platforms. Every particular story we will see here are different, although they have similar outcomes. The nature of social media is also like that. There are clusters of grand narratives, similar to traditional media. But, there are also countless other smaller stories available within the reach of masses which create communities like intuitive eating, as we will see from the analysis.

4.2. Methodology

In line with this study's aim to show a relationship between people's increasing consumption of social media tools with the rising popularity of intuitive eating, I have used a combination of qualitative research methods. Qualitative analysis was the most suitable method for this research, in order to offer a contribution to the gap in the field. Because many research that have been conducted about intuitive eating is from fields of psychology or health sciences, studies are usually conducted with quantitative methods which offer limited results. Because this study's focus is on mainly the user experience, a combination of content analysis, purposeful sampling and online ethnography were more suitable.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define qualitative content analysis as :

"a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns." (p.1278).

According to this definition, for the analysis of the videos and comments this method was the most suitable.

Purposeful sampling is a method which is used to carefully select the most related content to the research in cases where the research cases are rich in information

(Palinkas et al., 2013) It was used in the selection of comments because there were an abundance of data in that portion of the research. YouTube's default comment order setting was helpful in this sampling process because it showed the most interacted comments first.

One of the points this thesis is trying to highlight is the changing dynamics of communication with internet based communication. The tools that come with this way of communication such as social media platforms, paved a new way for social research. Online ethnography is one method that has emerged from this development. Constant circulation of text through the internet and these text being available at any time to anyone, has created a new way of creating an identity in the society. Therefore, it gave rise to countless opportunities and mysteries in terms of social research (Markham, 2005).

I can say that online ethnography has been used in this research as a complimentary method. Both before and during the research process, I have been exposed to the intuitive eating content online either intentionally and unintentionally. The overall knowledge that these content have provided for me was extremely useful when evaluating the data I have collected in the analysis process.

Gathering the data directly from the social media platform made the most sense for this research, since both the content creators and the viewers can express themselves publicly on there.

I chose to conduct the analysis on YouTube videos for multiple reasons. First, is the fact that I have found out about intuitive eating from YouTube. Secondly, it is a platform that I am familiar with, so it makes it much easier to comprehend the dynamics of the platform and reach meaningful results. Third, it is very rich both in terms of content (content format being videos make it easier to disseminate information to the audience, like television) and in terms of the community aspect. Viewers can interact with both other viewers and the content creators on the same platform. As a result, it makes is a very rich data source.

To have a meaningful analysis, I have searched the term 'Intuitive eating' on the search bar, and listed the results in order of view counts. That way, the results have been more objective comparing to 'most related' results which is different for each users in terms of their interests. From the search results, I have chosen 11 videos in order of appearance, meaning, they were the most viewed 11 videos on the platform. 11th video was chosen to add variety to the data source, because 5 of those videos were from the

same channel[8]. After that first search, I have dialed the video count to 6, taking only one video from each channel. The reason for that was to eliminate repetition.

The variety of the videos that have been examined can be categorized in two main sections as;

1) What I Eat videos (divided in itself as what I eat in a day and what I eat in a week) (4 videos)

2) Informative videos (2 videos)

In the first category, the content creator basically shows what they are eating on a regular basis to the audience. The style of these videos vary according to the editing/shooting style of the YouTuber, target audience, YouTuber's age/gender and so on. The content is usually in a vlog format where the audience follows the YouTuber through a day/week of theirs. Sometimes the content is focused more on food and the experience of the YouTuber with the food, and sometimes it is more focused on the vlog aspect, food part being a slightly more focused side of the video. Other than food, we usually see content like exercise, socializing and running errands the most.

The videos on the second category are mainly aimed at informing the audience on intuitive eating. One video is more of an introductory one and the other is based more on body building content, with intuitive eating information given on the side.

The YouTube shorts videos which appeared in the search (total of 3 shorts videos) have been excluded from the analysis, due to the fact that their structure being entirely different than the usual video format.

On the analysis of comments, I have left the default listing setting by YouTube where it orders the comments according to their popularity. Again, it is same for every user, which will lead to more objective results. As it is disclosed on the table below, there were a total of 8971 comments, coming from those 6 videos. It would be very time consuming to go through all of them by myself without the help of any external software. So, relying on the default order of YouTube, I have gone through couple of pages of comments for every video and noted down the common themes they have indicated. My aim in doing this was to mimic a regular viewer's actions.

I have excluded the nicks and/or names of the commenters for their privacy.

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[8] There were 5 videos from Natacha Océane and 2 from Stephanie Buttermore in the initial search.

Table 1. Statistical information about the channels that have been analyzed [9]

Channel name	Appearance order[10]	Views	Subscribers	Likes	Comments	Upload Year
Natacha Océane	1	992.881	1.48 Million	32K	1030	2019
Will Tennyson	2	950.187	1.21 Million	36K	2010	2020
Stephanie Buttermore	3	875.209	1.24 Million	37K	1713	2020
Linda Sun	5	780.728	835 K	39K	1526	2021
Pick Up Limes	7	694.133	3.84 Million	42K	1822	2020
Jeff Nippard	11	352.775	3.19 Million	10K	870	2016

The table above shows some statistics from the channels which I will analyze in the next section. As we can see from those statistics, the oldest video that appeared in the "intuitive eating" YouTube search is by Jeff Nippard, uploaded in 2016. Newest video is from Linda Sun's channel, being uploaded in 2021. There were more recent videos in the search -as in being published this year- but they were excluded due to the reasons I have stated above about the video selection criteria. We can also see from the table that 2020 was a very fruitful year for intuitive eating videos, with half of the videos in this analysis being published that year.

Moving on with the subscriber count, with 3.84 million subscribers, Pick Up Limes was the most popular channel. Except from Linda Sun, who has over 800 thousands subscribers by the time this research was conducted, all channels had over a million subscribers, which means they have a considerable amount of audience.

Lastly, among all videos, Will Tennyson's video had the most comments with over 2 thousand comments. Pick Up Limes had the most likes on their video among others, with 42 thousand likes.

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[9] Video titles are excluded from this table. All video titles and the links to the videos can be found in the references section.
[10] Order of appearance on the initial "intuitive eating" search on YouTube, listed according to popularity in terms of views.

4.3. Analysis of the videos and comments

4.3.1. "I Tracked my Intuitive Eating for a Week: What I Eat in a Week" - Natacha Océane

Natacha Océane usually covers science-based nutrition and exercise content in her YouTube channel with various kinds of content like vlogs. This video, which is the most popular in the intuitive eating search, is a weekly vlog where Natacha shows how much and how variable foods she consumes throughout the week. She underlines that one's appetite can change daily according to their health, sleep quality, hormones, activity levels and so on. Right through the start of the video she particularly states that IE is not suitable for everyone and refers to a video which she explains what IE is with a nutrition scientist. We see her working out at the gym with weights, doing various exercises.

Like she has stated in the beginning of the video, she eats various foods including home cooked meals, snacks on the go and eating out at the restaurant. Like the food, her exercise is various as well with gym sessions, jogging, ballet lessons and so on.

At the end of the video, she explains the statistics of how much she ate during the week. We see that her appetite varied throughout the week, sometimes ate less and sometimes ate more.

There are also some shorter segments in the video where she asks the opinion of the audience about the new video format she is trying (filming an entire week of eating instead of one day), which will be addressed in the comments section. And, there is a part in which she mentions her workout programs that are available for purchase in her website. In the description box we see a link to her workout programs that she mentioned in the video. We also see that she had another sponsor which is *Gymshark*, an athletic clothing brand. She does not mention the brand in the video but based on the disclaimer in the description box, it is safe to assume that she has been wearing their athleisure clothes. It is an important point that this info is found in the description box only, because people who have seen this on their phone or on their TV may have never realized it, due to the fact that those apps do not show the description box if the user does not look for it specifically.

Overall, the video was aimed at showing how flexible and sustainable her eating and exercise routine is. An important point in this video is that Natacha underlines the fact that intuitive eating approach is not suitable for everyone, depending on multiple sets

of reasons including mental health, physical health, hormonal balance and so on. This point alone shows the difference of the approach compared to traditional fad diets in which everyone is offered the same magic formula that will make them lose weight. There are many points which shows the flexibility and sustainability claims of the IE approach. For example, she underlines that one's appetite can change daily according to their health, sleep quality, hormones, activity levels and so on. She also adds that IE is not suitable for everyone and refers to a video which she explains what IE is with a nutrition scientist. In line with the flexibility approach, she shows that her exercise routine is also up to change with a ballet lesson she chose to swap her regular exercise with.
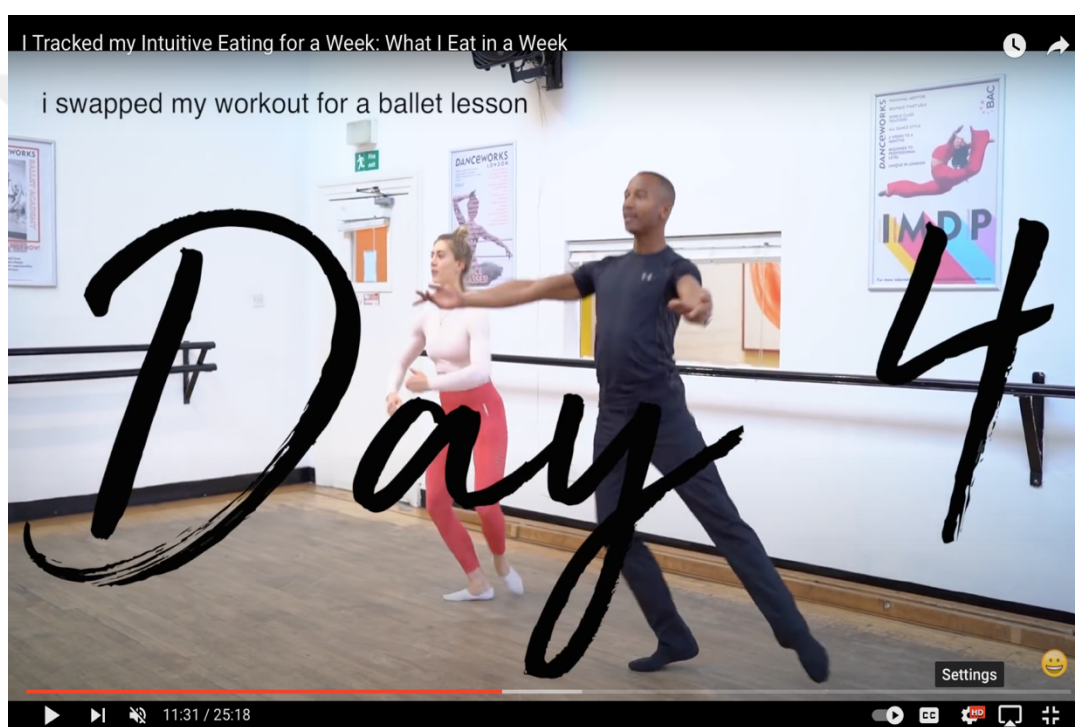

Figure 1. Natacha taking a ballet lesson instead of going to the gym

Moving on to the comments section, most of the replies were directed towards Natacha's question about the state of the content. The comment that she asks about the new format has 54 replies and 998 likes. Unfortunately, we cannot see the amount of dislikes because of a change in policy by YouTube. The audience can still dislike the video but the statistics are no longer available for the other audience. The replies for the stated comment of Natacha's are mostly people stating their preference and some stating their love for Natacha and her content. One viewer asked for more content on IE because in her words:

"*It's helping me a lot in my relationship with food, and to understand that maybe some days we can be more hungry than others and that it's normal cause I would feel so guilty in the past for eating more in one day then would try not to eat in the next one and it was making a lot anxious and insecure and this was leading me into a really bad cycle psychologically and physically.*"[11]

Here, we see that the viewer is stating the appeal of those videos based on the benefit they got from them. There are other viewers who have similar thoughts and experiences to this viewer, too.

"*I did this little test over the summer as I've never tracked and I was intrigued as to what I was eating. I was surprised to see some days I was eating 2,700 and others just 2000 - but every day I ate to being full and had my sweets when I wanted them. Your videos are fab and I love watching you loving food. All your meals looked excellent* 😍😋"

"*Love this type of content! I used to be the person who always judged intuitive eating. Having counted macros and eaten clean for the past year , I thought that if stopped, I would get overweight. However, I haven't counted macros the past month and I now understand how pointless and time consuming it was. I also practice a more flexible diet and I finally feel like I'm in the healthy mindset I always wanted to be. I'm never going back for sure!*"

"*I have never seen a "what I eat in a..." video that didn't focus on food. This is such a healthy outlook & I thank you so much for it. I'm excited to learn more about intuitive eating!*"

For the comments above, we can see numerous themes that all revolve around intuitive eating. The first viewer shares an experience similar to what Natacha did in this video and announce similar results with her. Second one states their former skepticism around IE and how it changed after they gave it a try. Last viewer is giving their feedback on the video format while exclaiming their appreciation.

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[11] All quoted comments are copied and pasted directly from YouTube without any alteration. For some comments, the software did not show the emojis properly, so I had to exclude them.

From those three comments, we see that through this YouTube video, people have been introduced to a different approach to nutrition. While two of them report actual positive results, one state their excitement to try it. Here, we see both examples of the multi-directional nature of the platform where viewers state their opinion on the content and we also see the community aspect of the platform where the viewers can have some kind of effect on other viewers through their shared experience.

We can also see conversations among viewers, as well as viewers interacting with Natacha.

"*You're my inspiration to be "in it for the long haul" You're videos have taught me that in order to build muscle and seriously change your physique, you have to be patient, constantly challenge yourself, and, most importantly, not be afraid to EAT Thanks for inspiring me to drop the low calorie diets and go for a sustained fat loss approach instead. Thanks to you, I'm excited to become strong and look toned, but also content to enjoy the journey*"

This comment got 463 likes and 2 Replies. The replies are as follows:

> "*Omg that's literally how I feel! She's the only youtuber I will take nutrition advice from because of the message she promotes and the study she does!*"

> "*Consistency is key. Even small changes that are practiced every day, are bound to create some good results.*"

Here, both in replies and the original comment, we see people willing to or have already changed their habits in the opposite direction of diet culture. They say that they learned evidence-based information and changed their habits accordingly. Their claims are in line with IE principles and they are using these principles to communicate via social media.

Another example from a viewer who states that they are thinking of purchasing a workout guide from Natacha:

"*Never considered purchasing a workout guide from anyone before, as I was a collegiate athlete and consider myself to be pretty "fit". But after watching how much*

work you put into your guides, videos, etc. I want to support and express my appreciation for you! Much love, beautiful! Thank you for being such a light 😊💕 "

This comment got 345 likes and a heart from Natacha, as well as a response

> Natacha: "*ahh wow Elizabeth that's super kind of you and I really appreciate it so much. I really put a lot of work into them and take them very seriously, trying to ground them in sports science and bring elite dieticians in whenever we address nutrition. I'd love to see how you like the programme given your ability as an elite athlete! All my love xxx*"

Here, it is important to note the "coincidence" that the channel host is replying specifically under a user comment which mentions that they have purchased a guide for them. Although Natacha was one of the most active channel hosts in terms of replying comments, it is possible that replying to this kind of a comment specifically was a deliberate choice. Like I have mentioned earlier, the new ways to gain income that content creation on social media have created looks a lot like this. Meaning that gaining an audience base and considering them as your customer basis. This can be anything like sponsorship deals with gym wear, workout guides, books, merchandise and so on. So here, we see that the viewer is specifically stating that they have purchased the guide to support the channel owner, even though they do not need the guide itself specifically. The difference here comparing to diet culture content might be the emphasis that have been put on the scientific basis of the named workout guide. Where fad diets have promised results in short amount of time, this one seems to be promising science-based workouts which do not specifically promise weight-loss.

The other replies are either people who have done the workout programs and enjoyed them, or people like the original viewer who want to purchase the programs. There are other viewers who state their interest with the workout guides, too. The appreciation of the viewers toward Natacha and the work she puts in the scientific-based content is appreciated by a lot of viewers. On the Tobey and Manore (2014) paper, they have stated a concern in which scientific content may appear boring to the viewers. Here, we see an opposite example where the viewers are enjoying the content especially for the credible information given in it.

4.3.2. I Tried Intuitive Eating For 7 Days… - Will Tennyson

The second most viewed video that appeared in the search is from Will Tennyson, who has a YouTube channel which focuses on fitness, body building and entertainment. In this video, he breaks his habit of counting calories and macros and tries intuitive eating for a week. Although Will's video is built around him trying to eat intuitively, we can also see his usual eating habits, which are planned and restrictive. So, his normal eating habits resemble more features from the other side of the equilibrium comparing to IE. For example, we see him struggling with putting on dressing on his salad because he is so used to measuring and weighing ingredients. Another example is where he says he does not cook dinner for his family or eat dinner with them, although they live together. The reason is related to his eating habits in which he measures every ingredient to reach his calorie and macro goals.

Compared to the YouTubers who regularly create IE content like Natacha Océane or Stephanie Buttermore, his discourse is much more different. He labels foods as healthy or unhealthy quite often. Right at the beginning of the video, we see him weighing himself and posing for body checking on the mirror. He says he is usually doing intermittent fasting and we also understand from the context that he weighs himself every morning. His meals shown in the video are mostly home cooked, but he occasionally eats junk food and has take-out.

Even his eating style is different compared to other channels. He mostly eats his food instantly on the kitchen counter where he just cooked it. A similar habit is present in Jeff Nippard's video as well, who is also a body builder. His video will be mentioned later on. On contrast, except from the video from the channel Pick Up Limes (in which there are not enough data due to the video format), all other YouTubers perform this behavior very rarely. On the contrary, we see others eating either on a table or with friends and family.

At the end of the video, he states his opinion on who should and who shouldn't try IE, and says that if you have any specific fitness goals like gaining muscle or losing fat, it is not suitable. For the ones who are suitable, he says if you are not so serious or just want to maintain, it is fine.

He concludes by saying he is definitely seeing himself using this approach more in the future, but for now because he wants to build more muscle, he will continue counting. Lastly, he shows his physique again as he started and says he put on 0.4 pounds during the week.

This video have shown relatively different results than others, because Will's channel does not regularly cover intuitive eating content. His approach is more on the restrictive side comparing to IE and he has specific body goals as he states in the video. The video also is a possible example of how someone whose eating habits have been restrictive for a long time would have react when switching to IE. We see him struggling a lot throughout the video. He is anxious about not measuring his food, he regularly stops to think if his hunger is physical or emotional. After he weighs himself, we can see that he is stressed about not having "enough" food the past day and so on. Overall, it is a good representation of someone trying to eat more intuitively.

On the comments section, we see viewers who are struggling with their eating habits. Some have similar problems as Will's and some have different issues:

"The eating disorder struggle is real. Congratulations on progressively healing your relationship with food. I'm getting there too, and allowing myself to enjoy food without the guilt, but with balance. One day we'll get it right bud."

"Hey Will, this will probably get lost in the abundance of comments BUT
I'm really proud of you for trying intuitive eating. As a person who has dealt with an eating disorder myself, I know that it's SO hard to feel as if you're losing control of the amount you're eating. Tracking calories is the alleged safety net that you've established for yourself. Because it seems to work so well for your balanced eating after the ED you're gonna fear that nothing else will "work". But in my opinion tracking calories and avoiding family dinners due to macro imbalance is still slightly ed-ish. So it's a tremendously brave step to let go of that automated behavior for a whole week. (...)"

"I have lost 37 pounds over 3 months, the first 2 and a half months I was starving myself, going way too hard on my body and just not being healthy. Intuitive eating ended up helping me greatly and even though I'm losing weight a bit slower I'm always satisfied and still getting results."

From these examples above, we can see that the audience is in a sense of solidarity with Will. They can see that he is having a hard time and sharing their similar experiences almost as if they are consoling him. A reoccurring theme with Natacha

Océane's video is the emphasis on viewers getting slower but more consistent results for their goals. Those viewers also felt a sense of closeness to Will and tried to share their related struggle. Some even pointed out possible problems of Will. The sense of closeness here, resembles one within a traditional community, and we are able to witness it thanks to the social media platform.

A distinguishing feature of this video is that it contains more comments either doubts or refutations against the IE approach. We can say that it is not exactly in the "echo-chamber effect" zone, there are more 'outsider' viewers to the topic. Back to back answers and discussion are more dense on this comment section. An example can be found below:

"*inuitive eating is everyones favourite type of eating and then saying they're not losing any weight for some reason*"

A popular comment with 3.1 K likes and a heart from Will. He replied :

"*So true*"

Among 48 replies, there are ones sharing negative experience with IE:

> "*Intuitive eating got me to 120 kilos. I'm now at 85 thanks to tracking.*"
>
> "*I keep losing weight because of it, now I'm worried*"
>
> "*To me is the opposite, if I don't track how much I eat, I easily lose weight.*"
>
> "*Not really, my favorite type of eating is not stopping when I'm full.*"

Also a discussion about having an emotional relationship with food have started under it with this user's comment:

> "*(Referring to a comment stating they have lost around 2 pounds with IE) theirs no such thing as relationship with food. Food isn't human their is no emotional attachment. Theirs a mindset yes, but no relationship. You lost pounds because your eating less than what you normally ate. Your loosing weight because your probably exercising now and eating moderately.*"

After that, other viewers explained how IE can be used as a recovery method, to increase relationship with food, etc. Some defending comment examples are like these:

" If you say there is no such thing as relationship with food you never struggled with disordered eating habits. Great for you man. Not everyone is like that. Some people destoryed their hunger and fullness cues because of exessive dieting and binging. There is defently a reltionship with food when you are literally scaered to eat things or stuff yourself with everything you can see. Im very happy that you are mentally stable and never had an eating disorder."

"(The original viewer that criticizing viewer referred to) There is such a thing as a relationship with food. And if you had any idea what you were talking about, you'd know that there is A LOT of emotional attachment to food, for someone with a history of different eating disorders. I'm not exercising, I never said I wasn't eating in a calorie deficit, obviously I am, since I'm losing weight. However, I'm not counting calories, but I'm not restricting them either. By eating when I'm hungry, and stopping when I'm full, I avoid binge eating."

"It's more about being more in tune with your body. People usually use it to build a healthier relationship with food and to heal psychologically"

And, there are some counter arguments as well, mostly coming from the viewer who started the discussion:

"Yuewah I used to have an eating disorder🧑‍🦰🟫♂ i simply learned control and researched dieting well before I began dieting. Now I see food as an enjoyments substanance and nothing more or less. Do I love food? Yes I do, but I don't treat it like it's a friends or a partner, it's a simple substance to keep my body running."

"I've never liked intuitive eating because it simply does so little, like I agree on the eating when your actually hungry cause I do it, I eat when I'm hungry and I always go for an Apple or some sort of fruit to test the hunger. Most of the time is I'm just bored so I simply drink water to satiate it."

Here, with the discussion and different opinions being stated, we can see the multi-directional side of social media clearly. Even though Will is not promoting his viewers

to pick up intuitive eating, he is opening up a discussion with this chosen topic. With that, we can see some viewers having heard of it for the first time, some are being critical about it and stating their concerns about it. There are even some saying that they have tried it but they didn't like it and found their own way that works for them. These examples are spot on considering the information flow and conversations happening among the comments section. This would not be possible without a tool like social media.

In sum, for this video, considering the fact that the channel do not cover content like this very often, the audience is more varied compared to the other IE videos. There are more discussion for and against IE approach. There are comments who both say that they have been using and IE based approach with their nutrition and there are some who say they tried it and did not find it suitable for them. But still, we see people who are recovering from ED(eating disorder)'s say that IE has been helpful for them, which is a repeating theme around the comments for all videos.

Although this video is relatively different than rest of the videos I will examine, it still has the themes of solidarity, exchanging experience and showing appreciation for the YouTuber doing something different than most fitness YouTubers do.

4.3.3. What I Eat In A Day (Full Day Of Intuitive Eating) - Stephanie Buttermore

Stephanie Buttermore is the second most popular YouTube channel according to the video count on the search (5 videos from Natacha Oceane, 2 from Stephanie Buttermore, the rest is different channels for each video). In the preliminary research process, I have found out about both Natacha and Stephanie's channels and have been following their content regularly. As Stephanie briefly mentions in this video, she has been in a recovery process from an eating disorder. She has been following extremely restrictive diets and have been contesting for bikini competitions. She has lost her period and her sense of fullness. She has been severely under eating and over exercising before her recovery process. For the last three years, she has been recording her recovery process. To sum up, she has started with a diet she called 'all in' in which she ate until she felt full. She gained a lot of weight as a side effect. But as her sense of fullness have come back, her extreme hunger calmed down and she has lost the excess weight in the process. Now, as we can see from the video, she is following an intuitive approach.

In the video, Stephanie is showing what she eats in a day with a vlog style of content. She is mentioning that she is writing a book at the moment and viewers are reacting to that in the comments. A while after breakfast she goes to the gym to work out. We see some footage from the gym, and a disclaimer saying that her workout programs are linked in the description. So, she too, is selling workout plans like Natacha.
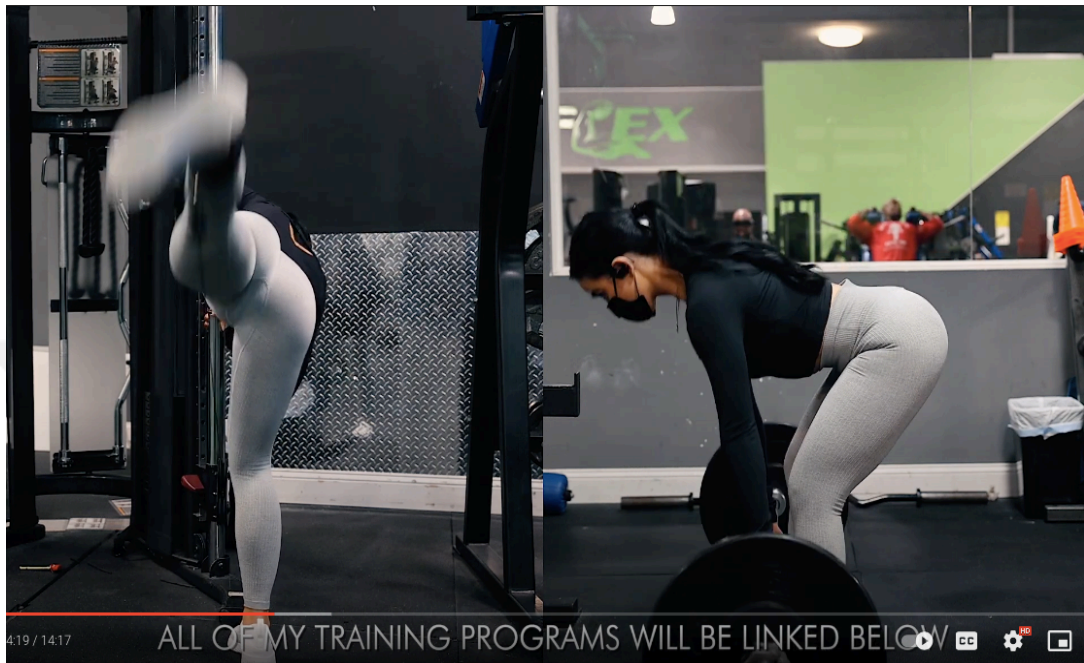

Figure 2. Stephanie Buttermore promoting her training programs

After that, she eats sandwich as her lunch and drinks a green juice with it and says *"I know this is healthy for me or something like that, but they're just actually really good(referring to the taste)".* This point in the video indicates a *tactic* (in the sense of DeCertau's tactics) that Stephanie uses. She takes a product that is originally made for promoting 'healthy' living, appealing to a different customer profile and uses it for her enjoyment.

In the video, we also see Stephanie open up about her recent struggles related to her low appetite, and also her stress and anxiety overall. She mentions in the video about the fear she had around her body because she looked much leaner before and adds that she feared she would lost all support due to her changed looks. However, she states in the video that she saw on the comments that the audience did not care about how she looks, they are interested in her personality. Here, it is also important to note that her old videos before her recovery journey are still up on her channel and this means that she is probably still gaining ad revenue from those videos.

Moving on to the comments section, we see that the predominate theme of the comments is the viewers stating their gratitude towards Stephanie. They state that her

content helped them with their own eating disorder struggles. Some examples are as follows:

"*I did went "all in" about two years ago. I was a college athlete and was eating nothing for how much I was working out. I can really attest that food is boring now. I get excited for meals that I like but the drive to eat insane amounts of food is gone. So grateful for my body and Its ability to recover*"

This comment got 441 likes and 3 replies. Replying viewers share similar experiences as well. There are some other viewers who state their gratitude towards Stephanie and her content, an example is given below:

"*I just want to say that as someone who has struggled with an eating disorder, you are one of the reasons I have managed to begin loving my body and giving it the nutrients it needs. You are such a huge inspiration and have had such a positive effect on me and my eating habits. I have been in recovery for a while now and you are a huge part of it. Thank you for recording this entire process, it has been extremely helpful. <3*"

One last comment example from this theme, answered by Stephanie is like this:

"*you are SUCH an inspiration girl, i found your channel a couple days ago and have been binge watching all your videos since, i struggle with eating enough and your all in journey has DEFINITELY helped so much, THANK YOU!!❤️*"

Stephanie: "*Oh that makes me so happy!!! Welcome to the family!!!! 😘💕*"

Here we see Stephanie creating a bond with the viewers saying that they are family, increases the credibility of the channel for the viewer. The other comments who thanked Stephanie for the content, are examples which directly indicate the positive effect of this particular social media content on their lives. Also, given the fact that these comments are open for access of any other viewer who watches this video, elevates the effectiveness of the content itself and maybe even encourage other people with similar struggles to seek help. This environment of seeking and giving out advice is built around the themes of gratitude, solidarity and a sense of closeness for this comments section.

The amount of discussion for this comments section is lower compared to Will Tennyson's video. One example of a discussion can be found in the image below.
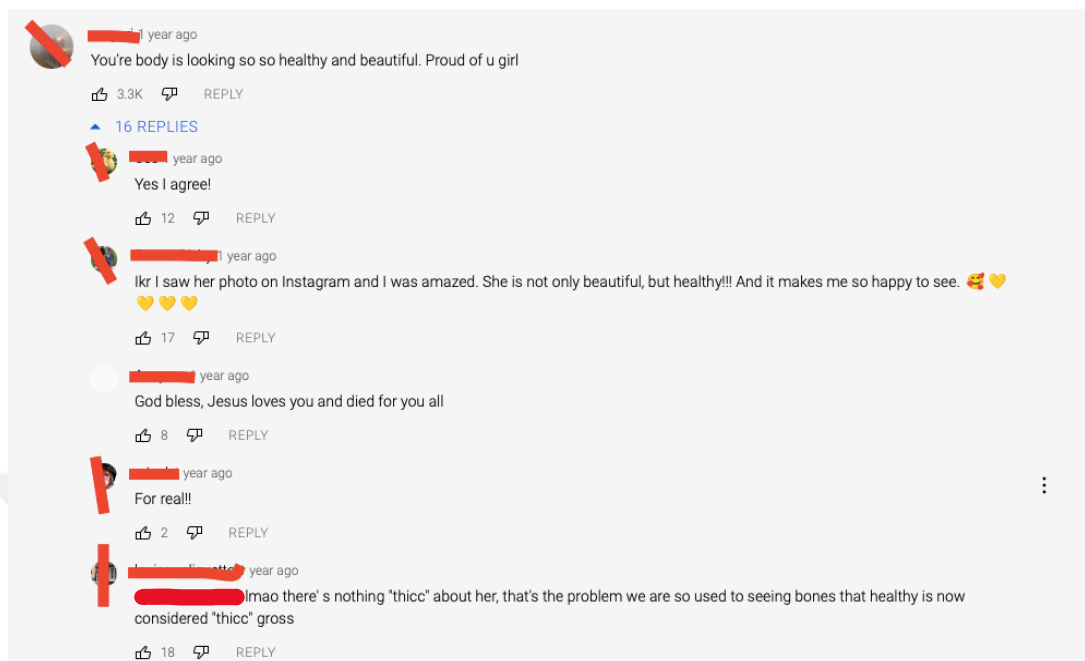

Figure 3. An example of a discussion from the comments section of Stephanie Buttermore's video

We can see the start of the discussion with the last reply shown in the image. Another viewer says she is not 'thicc' society is just used to seeing lots of bones on women.

"l*mao there' s nothing "thicc" about her, that's the problem we are so used to seeing bones that healthy is now considered "thicc" gross*"

Discussion goes on like this:
"*« so used to seeing bones » that's kinda rude, plus they said slim thicc, not just thicc*"

"*what's kind of rude? it's true. the media always shows underweight women, sorry you don't like that but it's true and "thicc" of any kind is insulting to a lot of women especially ones with eating disorders, doesn't matter if it's meant as a compliment. if someone said that to me, i'd restrict for weeks*"

"*let's not comment on peoples body full stop. This goes for everyone. We never know what the person we are commenting on's mindset is at the moment x*"

Here, we see a mix of vulnerability and awareness. No one is insulting anyone else but the language they used might be triggering for some viewers. That is what the discussion is essentially about. Last viewer tries to reach a meeting point in which no one will be offended. Overall, there are many positive feedback about the content and Stephanie in general. Lots of comments stating that Stephanie's journey has been an inspiration to them in their journey. Also, there are a few comments on the book she is writing, about how excited they are for it. I have not encountered any comments addressing the training programs. Amount of heated discussion is very low.

In sum, we can see that the sense of community for this channel is expressed mostly as gratitude under this video. Viewers actively participated through the comments saying that the content has been helpful for them, which is possible via the platform.

4.3.4. A Week of Eating ALL MY CRAVINGS (Intuitive & No Restrictions) | Loving My Body at Every Size - Linda Sun

Linda Sun's channel have been regularly recommended to me by YouTube since I started this research. I have checked other videos from her and saw that she have experienced body issues and hospitalized because of being underweight. She is younger compared to other YouTubers that appeared in the search and we can see the resemblance of her age in the video.

The video starts with a disclaimer stating the fact that Linda is not a doctor or a nutritionist. She is stating her own opinions and experiences and she aims to spread a positive message. I haven't encountered with any similar message as this on the other videos. Related with this point, that Linda not being an expert, is reflected on the comments as the absence of referring to her qualification. For the content creators who have either qualification in the field or have been doing research from academic journals for the video, viewers stated their appreciation of the work they are putting into their videos.

Compared to other channels, Linda's editing style is much more crowded, using texts and effects here and there for the entire video. She uses voice over technique mostly, meaning she speaks on the footage she caught, commenting on it. Sometimes the video and the Voiceover is non-related, sometimes they are. She usually shares the struggles she went through based on body image issues, lack of confidence, missed opportunities because of calorie counting and so on.

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We see her eating various foods like packaged ones, takeout, homemade meals, junk food and so on.

There are links to some products she shows in the video which are not stated as affiliate links but not stated as contrary either. She also has a sponsorship deal with Gymshark, like Natacha Océane. There are also multiple shots of a protein bar product called "build bar" being enjoyed by Linda. Although there are no disclaimers about a sponsorship deal with that particular product, the constant appearance of it with deliberately showing the label builds up suspicions of hidden advertisement.

Through the video, we see her eating, exercising, socializing with her family and friends, journaling and so on. Overall, we see fragments from her life during the week. Some quotes from her voiceovers:

"*Body acceptance comes with time. So, don't beat yourself up if sometimes or most times it feels hard. You just have to keep going. Learning to love your body when you just don't is not easy and it's not simple as some influencers and instagram quotes can make it seem.*"

"*I don't wanna waste my life always thinking I'm never enough*"

"*I forgot that loving my body means also taking care of my health because your body is so much more complex than what's on the surface*"

"*Confidence doesn't have a size*" (both stated it in the script and written on the video)

Compared to rest of the videos, she shows her workouts much more often (and works out every day) and eats much more processed foods and takeout.

Continuing with the comments, the most distinguishing feature of the channel, meaning the editing style, is praised loads of times by the viewers. Image 4 shows an example of this appraisal. The viewer who originally commented on the editing style got over 2 thousand likes and all the replies are agreeing with them.

It is important to note that Linda has not replied to any of the comments for this video.
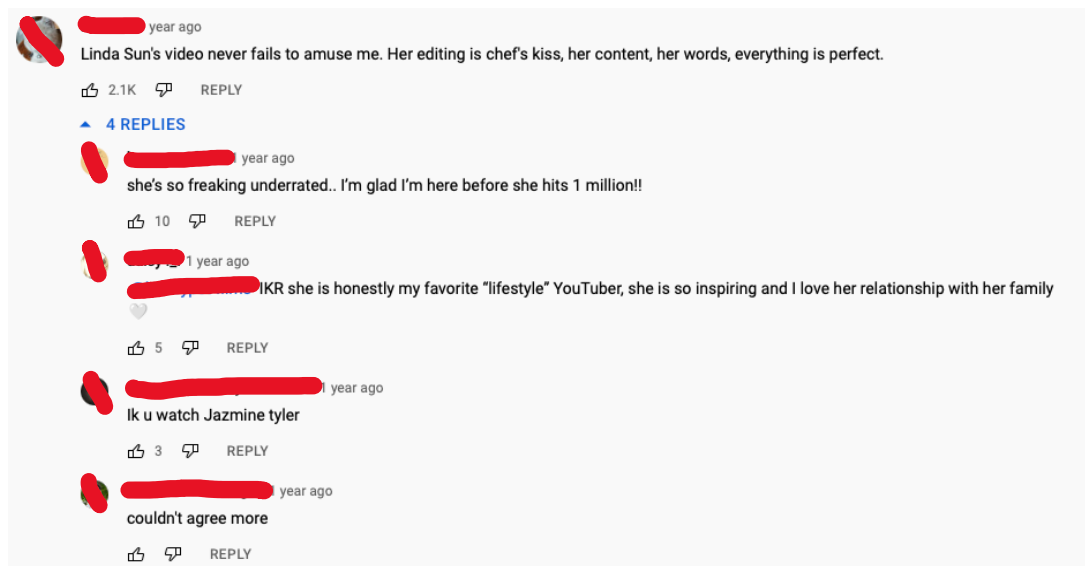
Figure 4. Conversation between Linda Sun's viewers about her editing style

From the comments which appear on the first few pages, we can say that people who are seeking IE content specifically are not visiting this channel. Most of the top comments contain good words and appreciation towards Linda, her channel and her attitude of life in general. The comments highlight the fact that she is representing a healthier relationship with one's body and nutrition, and comparing Linda's content to other influencers who advice their audience to love their body but the content lacks information. One viewer addresses that issue:

"*i feel like a lot of fitness influencers say similar things about "loving your body" and healthy relationships with food but linda is the only one i truly believe bc she's so genuine*" (1.4 K likes,6 replies)

Here, the viewer explains the reason for finding the channel useful and/or credible with the sincerity side of the content. For the science-based channels, sincerity was pronounced less and scientific background was pointed out more by the viewers.

Similar to other video comments, there are also people who say they are recovering from an eating disorder and finding the content useful in this process. One example is like this:

"Hey Linda, i know you would probably never see this, but thank you. When i first discovered your channel while developing an ed, my first thought was 'damn i could never lose weight eating that much' But now, one year later, this exact same channel is what made me stop restricting and start taking care of my body. You have taught me so many things and crucial information that i otherwise wouldn't have known. You taught me to take time off to exercise, not to get the ideal or perfect body, but to relieve stress and take care of yourself. So keep being you linda, because your existence is one of the best things that has occured in not only my life, but the lives of many others as well:)"

Although there are comments like this one, the number and the detail given in the comments are much lower compared to other channels. Especially the ones that usually cover content about intuitive eating. Besides this subject, the form of discussion under this video is also different comparing to other channels. For example, while it was easier to find viewers getting advice from each other on Natacha or Stephanie's channels, here, the discussion is directed towards Linda herself. The discussion here starts with a viewer exclaiming the benefit they have gained from Linda's channel:

"Anyone else just immensely grateful to Linda for promoting such a healthy relationship with food, exercise & ourselves? She's probably the best thing to have come out during this really tough time ('̣:"

The comment got 3.9K likes and 25 replies. It is also the most liked comment of the video. One viewer left a comment stating covertly that they disagree:

"*She's just making videos…*"

After that, other viewers accuse him as being a hate commenter and discussion elaborates. Rest of the replies shift between the criticizing viewer and other viewers who enjoy Linda's content. The discussion leads to no certain point, but the spotlight for the viewers who defend Linda is on Linda's personality rather than the content.

There is another discussion thread that discusses whether or not Linda's success comes from being born into a wealthy family or not. Rest of the comments are mostly referring to scenes from the video, or shorter comments that appreciate Linda and her content.

The fact that the most stated subject in the comments was the like for the style of editing, and viewers sharing less detail about their personal experiences indicate a result where the content creator is not qualified on the subject, viewers tend to share less. This is also related with the fact that Linda is very young and her audience is probably a closer age with her. Linda's lack of replies to the comments might be another point that sets the ground for this. It is also important to keep in mind that the audience mostly commented on the personality of the YouTuber and their editing style, so it also gives a hint about the specific interests of Linda's audience base.

Another point to consider is the form of the discussions. While in other channels, people were mostly discussing about the topic of intuitive eating, here it is focused mostly on Linda's personality. So, although the content of the video contains intuitive eating, the audience chose not to focus on it predominantly. They have still benefitted the content, but this channel is not where knowledge about intuitive eating is introduced to the audience. It is rather one where people with similar issues gather inspiration, or feel connected.

4.3.5. Making peace with food » + printable guide - Pick Up Limes

The video is from a channel where Sadia, the host of the channel, talks about food and wellness in general. There are no content on fitness as I have seen from a quick glance from their uploaded videos. But the focus on food related content seems to be increased in the recent years.

We learn in the video that Sadia was formerly a nutritionist. In the video, she talks about what intuitive eating is and elaborates on 5 main principles of it, with reference to the book from Tribole and Resch (1995). The reference part is related to a sponsorship deal which I will explain shortly.

The editing style is similar to Linda Sun's video, being dominantly voice-over. It is mostly an arrangement of shots either shot by the YouTuber or from stock video sources. The editing is much calmer than Linda's video. There are less flashing filters and images, and much less writings on the video.

On the Voiceover, Sadia is talking about main principles of intuitive eating, with describing what diet mentality is first. Which includes labelling foods, gives examples such as the thought of 'carbs are bad'. She states some statistics about weight loss with dieting which I can confirm from my previous research. However, there are no sources addressed about this information neither within the video nor in the description box.

Sadia sums up the aim of all of these processes that people go through via intuitive eating with this sentence:

"*I think this practice is what over the long term brings us to a healthy and optimal weight, but just as a side effect not as the primary focus.*"

Sadia mentions the claimed innateness of this approach as well, saying that everyone had the mentioned healthy connection with food from their childhood. She then refers to the book by Tribole and Resch as the primary source. However, we see that she also has a sponsor for this video which is Audible. It is an online audiobook subscription service and the book mention is related to the sponsorship.

There is an emphasis on the fact that this approach is not a quick fix, but a long-term process, like we have seen before from Natacha Océane and Stephanie Buttermore.

Sadia talks about external measuring tools like counting calories and macros and add that they are not solely reliable. Instead, she offers following hunger and satiety cues and gives the example of hunger-fullness scale. On the mentioned scale, 0 represents a completely empty stomach and 10 stands for extreme fullness. Later on, we will see that she'll ask a question on that topic to her community on the comments.

The video continues with some points from the book as well as Sadia's personal experiences. These are all mentioned in the Intuitive Eating book by Tribole and Resch. But, the fact that Sadia is rearranging the information and presenting it to a much larger audience in a different format, creates an opportunity for ones who have never heard of the book or have no access to it. Another benefit might be for people who are struggling to read like people with ADHD or people who cannot understand English (YouTube has auto-translated subtitles option). This does not mean that people who have seen this video will learn everything to know about IE. But it means that this gives the viewer the opportunity to do their own research on the subject and evaluate whether or not it is a suitable approach for them. It basically informs over 600 thousand viewers on the subject and makes them think about it at the slightest.

Moving on with the comments section, we see some clusters of themes. Main ones are the emphasis on Sadia's qualification on the topic, appreciating the information in the video, viewers sharing their personal experience and some degree of discussion on the topic.

One of the most pronounced topics among the comments is the content being science based, and Sadia being proficient in the field:

"*I love how you're an actual certified dietician yet still have such a holistic approach towards health and wellness which you're able to explain to a huge audience so beautifully* ❤️" (486 likes)

One viewer states that they find the information in the video essential:

"*This video should be shown to all teenagers in school, I feel like that's the time food struggles begin and peak for most people*" (886 likes, 14 replies)

There are viewers who are in their teens and agree with this statement on the replies, and the rest state their agreement as well. Like the other YouTubers who base the information in the video on scientific knowledge, viewers tend to appreciate that here as well. Like I mentioned in the video analysis part, this finding indicates the effectiveness of social media (when used in accordance with science) in information dissemination. Although it is usually valid for the contrary, where false information goes into circulation, we see a different example here in these videos.

Viewers also shared their personal experiences on the topic, as well as their appreciation for the channel:

"*This is the first time I've watched a video on intuitive eating that just speaks to me. I have to say this video made me emotional. I've struggled with food and body image for so long. I loved this video so much.*"

We see on the above comment a viewer stating their excitement about the way the topic is discussed. In fact, the video changed their mind about intuitive eating. Similarly, the comment below also states an effective result for them, directly through the content given from this YouTube channel. These two comments strengthen the hypothesis that social media can be an effective tool for people to reconsider their habits, eating habits in particular for this case.

"*Hi Sadia! Just wanted to say I started using the PDF this past week and I'm already feeling so much more comfortable around food. I found the hunger scale really effective and as I start to relearn my hunger/fullness cues. I also love the idea of*

nourishing your body and your mind, instead of labelling food as good/bad. Really enjoy your videos and approach to a healthy lifestyle!"

"This is so well timed. I've recently realized that I don't actually have a healthy relationship with food and that I don't really know how to genuinely get that, so this video was posted at the best possible time! Thank you for explaining, it's incredibly helpful"

This viewer above exclaim that they have realized a problematic approach with their eating habits, and pointing that the video showed them a leading way. The comment below verifies a statement in the video about the innateness claim of intuitive eating, by the follower's experience:

"What you say about children is so true, I have an active toddler and he eats very intuitively. Once he is full, he is not going to reach for another cookie even if it's offered to him (unlike his mom). This was much needed. Thank you!"

There are ones who state they are recovering from an ED in this video, too:

"*I have been recovering from an eating disorder for over half a year now and I'm so glad you decided to create this video! It's really perfectly timed. Thank you, Sadia! You bring love into everything you do and remind me of my own ability to do so*." (223 likes, 3 replies including Sadia)

> Sadia: "*Thank YOU, Anna - wishing you continued strength in your journey* 🌻"

> "*I have been recovering as well and seeing this video on my feed today gave me the comfort and motivation I needed <3 Thank you Sadia!*"

Most replied comment is the one I mentioned before, which is by the channel owner. Sadia asks:

"*On the hunger - fullness scale, where do you usually start eating?* 😊"

610 likes and 107 replies were given. Under the replies section, there are both short and straightforward answers stating their situation   and also longer comments

suggesting their dissatisfaction with their habits. Some longer examples from both categories are given below:

1: *"Definitely Yo-Yo between 0 and 10. This video was a helpful reminder to eat more regularly"*

2: *"I eat whenever food is available. I love to eat and unfortunately I don´t let hunger dictate it. I´m watching this video for guidance."*

3: *"I eat when i am hungry but i eat to much and anything i don't consider whither it a healthy or not i have to chang this"*

4: *"That depends on the workday ahead either I know I´ll not eat for a long time so i start at a 5 but on other days i wait because I know food is availiable any time so that might be a 3. Other days when i come home from work I sometimes am at a 1 or 2. I don´t yet know how to move about that."*

First and second viewers exclaimed their dissatisfaction with their eating habits and said that the video will act as a guiding tool for them. Third viewer simply described their eating habits which according to their indication, do not feel right. Fourth viewer had a more complex explanation compared to the first three. Their explanation is a great example for people who have follow an external schedule, such as work.

There is a very long comment mentioning a negative personal experience with intuitive eating. Some parts from it is given below:

"Hey - I love your videos, they've really helped me to take control over my eating habits and introduced me to some incredible recipes and ideas, so thanks so much! :)

I also wanted to say that INTUITIVE EATING IS NOT FOR EVERYONE. I read Intuitive Eating and at first I thought that my life had been totally changed. I started paying more attention to my levels of hunger and fullness which was great. Then I filled my cupboards with the foods I had been bingeing on for years and I ate as much as I could. (…) To be honest the part about intuitive eating that tells you there's no difference between an apple and a donut is how a lot of people with morbid obesity

treat food. (...) There are absolutely no health benefits to the processed crap I was bingeing on, it was just my choice of drug to help me cope with my feelings of depression/inadequacy rather than cocaine or alcohol. (...)I just don't think it's a good idea for everyone, certainly not those who deal with food/sugar addiction and those who are very overweight."

This comment above not only represents the downsides of intuitive eating but also any nutrition advice on the internet as well. Without further research and the guidance of professionals, any kind of nutritional advice can be harmful. The fact that this person chose to share their story, also represents the 'tactics' that DeCertau theorized, in multiple points of view.

First, we see them taking different advice which is intuitive eating, over the popular content on both social media and traditional media, which is dieting. Then, we see them realizing it is not suitable for them and taking their time to write a long and detailed comment to warn anyone who might be in a similar situation.

I think this example is a very good one in terms of showing the multi-directional structure of social media. Audience can both access various information and also create their own content/info using the same platform to inform others.

To sum up this video, in line with it being an informative video, the comments under the video contain people who discovered or reconsidered intuitive eating. Although there are not much objection against the approach, there are ones who have tried it an not found it suitable. There are also viewers who said the video have provided an answer for their problems. And there were some viewers who have actually tried some of the principles that Sadia mentioned in the video, and find those helpful. So here, we can directly observe the possible outcomes for both people who just met intuitive eating and people who have tried it before. The video and the comments section together, provides a good example for introductory feature of social media. We can see that people both discover new ideas and people who enhance their knowledge, with experience exchange via comments.

4.3.6. The Science Behind Intuitive Eating (6 Studies) | Full Day of Bulking | 315x7 Bench - Jeff Nippard

The last video for this research is by Jeff Nippard, who has a science-based fitness and body building channel. Although this video from him is a little bit older, we can see

him in later videos from Stephanie Buttermore as well, due to their romantic relationship. The video present a different approach to intuitive eating which Jeff arranged for his specific needs.

Like Will Tennyson's video, Jeff's video also starts with him weighing himself and showing it to the audience. Then, he explains his eating situation as he told in the description box. While he is explaining what he chose for breakfast, which is eggs, he shows the nutritional information for them, including calorie information.

He does a voice-over on the gym footage, in which he elaborates on the science of intuitive bulking which is given in the title of the video. He also asks the audience opinion on these type of voice-overs (and it is addressed in the comments by the viewers). Jeff tells that he has participated in contests before and used cookie-cutter types of diets both for bulking and fat loss when he first started weight lifting. He says that he has followed these diets for about three years but for the last 1-2 years, he has been following a less rigid approach which he names as intuitive eating.

After he quickly explains what IE is, he mentions three core principles of it: unconditional permission to eat, eat for physical rather than emotional reasons and relying on internal cues when it comes to hunger and satiety. And then he adds two more principles in accordance with his own goals: aim for 4-6 meals with certain amount of protein and keeping an eye on his monthly/weekly change in weight. These two principles are where his approach differentiates from the classic IE approach, which is related with the customizability/personalization finding of this thesis. Then he mentions the importance of meditation and mindful eating in this process. He also talks about not suppressing cravings and trying to accept them since we have limited control over them. He then indicates that while some people can be more prone to intuitive eating due to their high sensitivity towards food cues, others might have a harder time (similar to what Natacha explains about who is more suitable for IE and who are not).

In terms of what he eats, how he presents it, the way he edits the video, these are all in very different styles compared to Natacha, Linda, Stephanie and Pick Up Limes. It is somewhat similar to Will Tennyson but Will's content was much more entertainment based comparing to Jeff's science-first-entertainment-second style.

From his explanations and his meals, we understand that Jeff's approach to intuitive eating is related more with not tracking calories and macros but trying to incorporate more protein to his diet due to his goal of bulking.

Speaking for the video itself, the highlighting content in there is the use of science-based knowledge when introducing intuitive eating and Jeff's way of implementing the principles of IE to his life with some additions. As we will see from the comments section, the way he uses credible knowledge is appreciated densely by his viewers. Also the way he shapes intuitive eating according to his needs and goals is a very fundamental point to underline. Because both the intuitive eating approach itself and the nature of social media allows what exactly Jeff is doing. IE says everyone has different needs, so offering everyone the same formula is not sustainable. Also, the nature of social media as it is now, allows the consumer to discover any topic possible, in accordance with their needs and interests, which is exactly the opposite approach of traditional media. The combination of those two are presented in this video. On top of that, because Jeff's choice of medium to express these ideas is situated in a social media platform, it grows its effect even more, thanks to social media's various and multi-directional nature.

The most prominent theme of this video's comments is the scientific base of the channel. Viewers have exclaimed their appreciation towards this fact many times. Some examples are given below.

"Hands down my favorite YouTube channel right now, the information is always 🔥 *congrats on the continuous growth bro"*

> Jeff *: "much appreciated bro"*
>
> - *"for information quality This channel and vitruvian physique are the best!"*
> - *"I agree him and Vitruvian are top notch."*

"Jeff, you are seriously killing the YT game right now. Your content is ace. Perfect, perfect, PERFECT mix of personality and education and it looks like the numbers agree ;) Keep up the great work!" (75 likes, 3 replies)

> Jeff*: "So nice of you to say that! Thank you […]"*
> - *"couldn't have said it better just getting back into lifting myself and this dude is amazing! Great content, obviously does his research and seems like a great person in general. Definitely worth our time as viewers. Way too much click bait out there this guy is the real deal"*
> - *"Absolutely agree, hands down favorite fitness channel!"*

From these two comment threads above, we can see that viewers of this channel care the most about the quality of the content. They acknowledge that Jeff does his research before presenting the video, and they are watching his videos for this feature. Especially the reply under the second comment, where the viewer points out their like towards the personality of Jeff, shows that the community of this channel is looking for both credible information and entertaining content. Where the replier highlight that there is "*too much click bait over there*" it shows that these viewers are tired of wasting their time on unreliable content.

The most liked comment is also focusing on the science side of the content:

"*thank you for being muscular with brains.*" (448 likes)

Viewers sharing their eating disorder stories is also present in this comments section, too:

"*I think you just saved my life a little bit. I have always had problems with binge eating and obesity.*

Since last year, I started to exercise consistently and eating a lot more vegetables. I have lost a lot of weight, but tracking calories made me obsessed with food instead of allowing me any peace of mind. Cheat meals/days feel like I'm cheating myself, tracking calories and eliminating whole food groups make me obsessive and just plain miserable. This seems like a great way to live healthily without having an emotional breakdown"
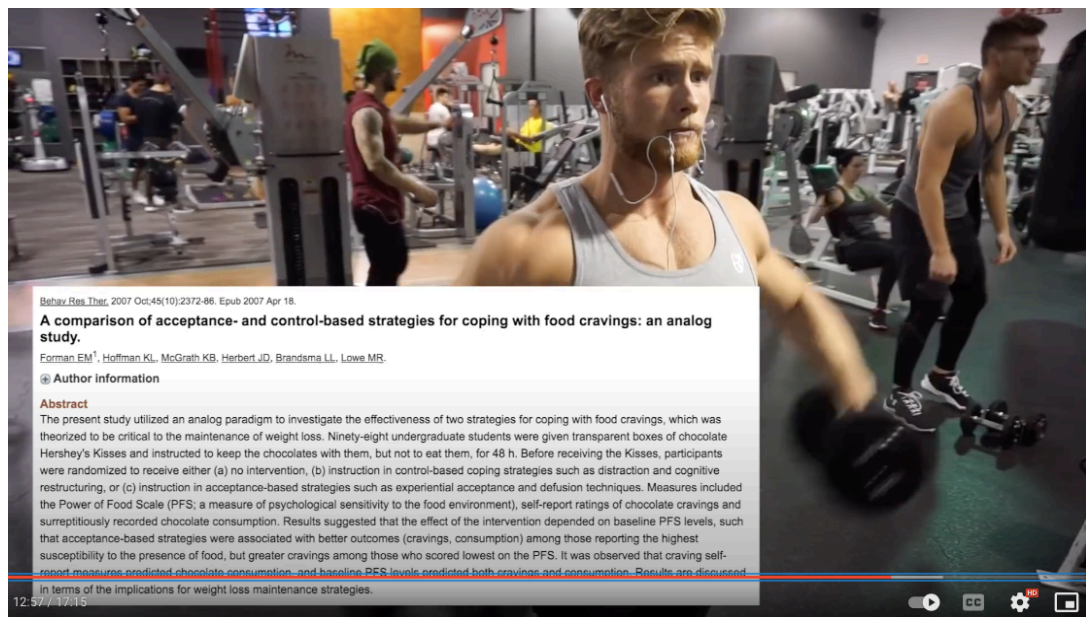
Figure 5. Jeff Nippard displaying the research he used for the video on the screen

There is one viewer who discovered a similar approach to Jeff's by themselves without noticing:

"I've actually been intuitive eating for a few months now, I had no idea there were studies backing this approach. Personally, I love it and have been seeing results that are more than satisfactory."

Appreciation/feedback towards the content was given, in response to Jeff's question of whether they like the format or not:

"I'm really enjoying the science based voice overs. By combining it with the vlog style, you're creating something really unique and informative. Thank you!"

"I've been contemplating intuitive eating and this helped me realize some things. Also I like how you overlaid the workout bit with informative voice-over. Great video."

This viewer below states that they are also thinking about incorporating IE to their lifestyle in the future thanks to Jeff :

"Always appreciate your take on current research! Will def be watching this again when I'm ready to shift over to intuitive eating!"

Looking through all the comments under this video, we see that the comments on IE is divided amongst other topics like comments on the content on the video, appreciation, sharing stories of ED and so on.

The sense of solidarity and sincerity that we have seen on other channels' comments sections such as Natacha, Stephanie and Linda's are also present on this channel as well. However, the interactions and the comments are much shorter and straightforward compared to the other channels. In sum, we can say that the most appreciated feature of the content for Jeff's viewers is the scientific base. The effort he put through his content strengthened the bounds between him and his viewers. This is reflected on the comments for some viewers to reconsider intuitive eating in their eating habits. Some have discovered that they have been already acting accordingly to the research Jeff has presented. It is also possible to see an overall positive atmosphere in the comments section. Viewers who state that the content they have seen from Jeff have helped them with their eating disorder related problems are also present in this video, too.

4.4. Summary of the common themes

4.4.1 Personalization

This is a very common theme with both the comments and the videos. YouTuber's in the videos constantly underline the fact that every individual has different needs and preferences, so their nutrition should be flexible in accordance with that. We see how Natacha's appetite changes throughout the week. Will is trying to be more gentle with his nutrition so he tries intuitive eating for the first time. For Stephanie, removing restrictions all together works the best for her eating disorder recovery process. Also on the comments, we see viewer's experiences with intuitive eating. Some say they tried it and loved it, some say it wasn't suitable for them. Some share the ways they have come up with to make it more suitable for them, like tracking their calories but not having restrictions. So, we can directly observe the individualistic side of the approach, how it works differently for every individual which is exactly the opposite of one-size-fits-all approach. This pattern is very similar to how social media works, too. Even though the algorithm of the platform recommends content that are popular,

it also shows content like what the user is interested in. So, the users can pick and choose what they like to see, and even contribute to the content.

The direct example of this ability to have various kinds of content available to the audience can be seen in the comments where the viewer states that they have found out about intuitive eating from the video/channel.

4.4.2. Economy politics

All of the channels that have been examined through their intuitive eating videos in this research included some kind of sponsored content/and or merchandise in their videos. For some of them, it was in the form of promoting a service or a product (like workout clothes, audiobook services) and for others, they have promoted their own products or services. For example, while Will Tennyson wore his merchandise hat on the video, Natacha Océane promoted her workout programs.

This part is especially important to elaborate on because these YouTubers are putting these videos out for their own interests primarily. Meaning that they are gaining income out of these. Considering the subscriber numbers and view counts are high, they must be earning a large amount of income out of this occupation. Almost no internet personality is putting their time and effort on the platform just for "the greater good". With the new ways to generate income out of these platforms, like selling merchandise/products, having sponsorship deals etc., the variety of the content itself have changed as well, like in the IE example. Instead of selling the audience a diet program or a weight loss product, they are now selling workout clothes, exercise programs, and sponsored content.

4.4.3. Multi-directional flow

The non-linear structure of social media platforms is the most visible in the comments section. There, the viewers and the content creator can interact with each other. In some examples we have seen that the YouTubers asking the viewers' opinion on the content, and in some, viewers suggested some topics to the channels host. It is also seen in the conversations between the viewers, as well as with the YouTubers. Discussions are a good example of this, resembling the lecture-like environment that Manovich (2009) has mentioned.

The occasions where the content on the channel is negotiated can be summarized like this:

a) Viewers request some specific content from the YouTuber and the YouTuber generates a similar concept in the direction of the requests.

b) The YouTuber asks the viewer's opinion on what kind of content they like, whether or not they liked the new style of videos/content, etc.

c) Viewers interact between each other related to the subject of the video. They exchange information and/or consolidate each other

d) Viewers interact with the YouTuber either by sharing their life experience in relation to the topic, or referring to the content in the video. (these are relatively shorter interactions compared to the ones in between the viewers)

4.4.4. Sense of community

Maybe the most unexpected result from this study was to find a resemblance of a community, because as Van Dijck (2013) mentioned, the community based structure of YouTube has diminished a lot today. In spite of that, there were some reflections of a community aspect on the comments. The most visible example was the viewers sharing their personal experiences on the subject, mostly being related with their eating disorders. Likewise, both parties (content creators and viewers) share their struggles, common problems, seek or give advice. In that process, we can observe a different style of social comparison which is among peers. In diet culture related research, it was stated that one of the reasons people are effected negatively by social media posts were upward social comparison. Here, both due to the interactive nature of the platform and the discussed topics, people are able to see similar stories to theirs. That way, a sense of trust and intimacy is built between the viewer and the YouTuber. It is visible in the many comments where viewers state their appreciations to the YouTuber. A parallel scenario with the findings on the online communities part in the theory chapter is present. It was stated that although a vast number of people reach the content online, very few of those viewers chose to leave a comment and/or engage in any kind of interaction. However, the quality of the comments are quite dense (at least in the way of YouTube's default order). People who commented on these videos usually share very personal stories, opening up about their vulnerabilities to complete strangers and they are doing it in a public environment. They sometimes share a couple of paragraphs and sometimes even a couple of pages long comments.

They engage in sincere interactions with people they do not know, spare their time for it.

4.4.5. Credibility

This was stated (the importance of the qualification/scientific background) in the online communities section by Hajli et al. (2015). Even though people are willing to take any health advice from online communities, when the source is qualified enough, their trust increases. We can see the direct exemplification of it from the comments. People who have commented on Natacha's, Stephanie's, Sadia's (Pick up Limes) and Jeff's videos all have stated the fact that they enjoy the content being science based. For will Tennyson and Linda Sun, we do not see this kind of comment since they are not qualified in the topic. In fact Linda Sun's video included a disclaimer about her unproficiency on the subject and warned the viewer about taking advice from the video. Therefore, as expected, their comments sections look different than the qualified group overall.

An important point under this theme is the fact that even the YouTuber's who are seen as qualified in the topic by the audience (except from Pick Up Limes who is a registered dietician) are not exactly "qualified" in conventional ways. For example, Natacha Océane has a PhD in biophysics, Stephanie Buttermore has a PhD in biomedical sciences and Jeff Nippard is a biochemistry graduate. The aspect of the content that make them credible for the audience is that they are using the skills they have from their scientific background and combining it with their interest in fitness, body building and nutrition. They may have not been considered as qualified professionals before the social media era but they can earn that title in a way with the tools of social media.

4.5. Additional concluding notes

In this section, I will disclose some important findings which are worth mentioning in terms of evaluating the results of the study, but not directly related to the research topic.

Among 6 channels that have appeared on the research, 4 of them are run by women and 2 of them are by men. Except from Will Tennyson, all of the channels cover intuitive eating in their regular content to some degree. I have looked for similar

content on Will Tennyson's channel but there weren't any, or at least it did not appear when I searched within his channel for intuitive eating.

Although the possible effects of IE on anorexia nervosa, bulimia, orthorexia nervosa, binge eating and amenorrhea have been covered by almost all qualified YouTubers and their guests, there is little to none information about whether IE is suitable for overweight and/or obese people. The issue is addressed by some viewers through the videos by asking questions about their conditions (or sharing their experience with IE being an overweight/obese individual). However, there were no answers by content creators to these questions.

Another point to consider is the issue with body image. Looking through the comments, there were two popular comments for Natacha Océane and Stephanie Buttermore's channels. They are given in order below:

"I will never get over your arms/shoulders. They are on point " (2.6 K Likes, 6 replies)
"You're body is looking so so healthy and beautiful. Proud of u girl"

Last comments has over 3 thousand likes and 16 replies. Both of the comments were the most liked ones for their videos. It is interesting to see that the comments which got most likes being about the body of the YouTubers. For the second comment for Stephanie's video, there is also a discussion about her body that I have mentioned in the video and comment analysis section.

These comments being liked thousands of times raises the question that if those YouTubers had the same content, doing the exact same activities and looked overweight, were they be supported and appreciated this much? To answer that question, I have checked Stephanie Buttermore's channel for older videos because in my preliminary research, I have encountered with her all in journey and there was a period of time she had gained weight. So, I have quickly scanned her channel again for related content.

According to her uploaded videos list, the date she uploaded the announcement video on her recovery journey is dated May 23rd, 2019. After that video, there are four videos directly addressing her weight gain starting from August 17th, 2019 to March 9th, 2020. On March 2022, she uploaded another related video opening up about her fear of gaining the weight back. By the time she uploaded the last video, her weight was set to a stable one. I have checked the comments sections for all those videos, which I will

list below with the dates and titles. The results were the same level of support by the viewers, if not more. So, this shows a hint of an answer for the question of body image. However, it is important to acknowledge that Stephanie uploaded all those videos being formerly underweight and disclosing her recovery process in detail, on a regular basis. For someone who is already overweight, or not disclosing their intentions, the reaction from the viewers might have been different.

List of the mentioned additional videos from Stephanie Buttermore's channel:

- *How Gaining 30 lbs Changed My Physique (Boobs, Glutes, Stretch Marks) + Training Update*
- *After Gaining Weight: How Has My Training Changed? (My New "All In" Split)*
- *All In Aftermath: Did It Work? Before/After Physique, Hormones, Body Image, Loneliness*
- *How To Deal With Weight Gain (Family, Friends, BF, Doctors, etc.)*
- *My Recent Weight Loss and Fears About Regaining Weight (Explaining My Mistakes)*

Another point related with the body image issue, all of these YouTubers are within the range of being thin/fit and/or muscular. None of them are either too thin or overweight. They also use their physique in their video thumbnails often. In that sense, how are they any different than the diet culture content that they are criticizing? As someone who spends a lot of time on YouTube both for research and personal reasons, I can tell that the main reason for that choice is to gain more views. For YouTube to recommend your video to a lot of people, it should be gaining the attention of the audience. That's why people often chose to use clickbait titles or exaggerated thumbnails on their videos. However, in this case, it should have been a criticized topic among the IE community in my opinion. The channels I have examined all have around a million subscribers, meaning that they have a considerable amount of impact both on the audience and on the platform. They might have tried to overcome that hurdle, but they chose not to. In one of her videos, Natacha Océane[12] actually mentioned this topic

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[12] The named video is listed in the references with the title "*Everything I Eat in a Day: No More 'Intuitive Eating'*"

saying that she knows that she would get even ten times more views if she used titles like "get abs in 2 weeks" or "lose 5 kg in 10 days" but she chooses not to do it because it is "*a cheap and easy way*" to get view in her opinion.

There were some changing aspects about the content in general (both editing and script-wise) based on the content creator. The named changes are reflected on the comments sections of those videos, too. For example, while content creator who are older chose calmer style of editing, younger ones had much more complex styles. For example, while the channel Pick Up Limes is focused more on the script, by leaving the visual part of the video simple and straightforward, Linda Sun used a lot of texts, images, livelier songs and more complex editing in her video. Both of the videos were similar in style, in terms of using a montage of videos dominantly and having a voice-over.

Consequently, Linda Sun's audience have commented more on the editing style of hers and their like for her personality, while Pick Up Limes' audience have commented more on the scripted content of the video.

There is a drastic difference between the channels which include IE content regularly and those who don't, all in terms of language, video style, and audience profile. The ones who include IE as a regular content are much more careful about triggering content such as labeling foods, showing weight information, body checking, etc. Both the channel owners and the audience is dominated by women in this category and most of them have sometime in their past struggled with eating disorders and/or body image issues.

The channels which are not normally covering IE content are very different. Speaking for Will Tennyson's videos, the only IE video is the one that appeared in the search bar (if there are any other content on it, it is not stated in the title).

On channels where IE is a much more regular content, the comments have more detail, both in terms of length and detail. However, on channels in which IE is mentioned little to none among other content, comments are shorter and contain less detail about the viewer's experience and/or opinion.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

What this research initially aimed was to find a relationship between increasing social media usage and rising popularity of intuitive eating. Although we cannot say that intuitive eating certainly become more sought-after because of social media, it is clear that there is a strong connection, relying on the finding that it is a frequently discussed topic. There are considerable amount of social media users who left a comment saying they have found out about intuitive eating thanks to the YouTube video or the YouTube channel in general. Also, it was evident that many users have enhanced their knowledge around the topic even though there were no statement about the initial source of discovery.

The people that we see in those videos (the Youtubers) are the ones who are the subjects to the research papers on all the diet culture, clean eating, fitspration etc. They have lived the results of these struggles to be fit enough, skinny enough, good enough for the sake of acceptance. Some still struggle with that, and some have overcome that. Or, they are at least on the journey to leave the misery they have lived behind. The fact that all those videos are on YouTube, available to anyone who has an internet connection in the world (and can understand English) have a chance to re-evaluate their relationship with food, nutrition, body image and so on. It does not mean that they have to take a different approach in their life and everyone should stop dieting. But the availability of different choices creates an alternative to the formerly dominant understanding to nutrition, in this case being diet mentality. These channels offer the chance for people to make a decision for themselves, which they did not have before the social media era. Now, they can reach communities like the one we have seen in the analysis, and discuss their problems. Not only that, but they can contribute to content by themselves as well.

The book that Tribole and Resch wrote back in 1995 had a limited zone of reach; the book had to be available to the reader, they had to encounter it somehow, it must be translated into their language etc. The Turkish translation of the Intuitive Eating book has just been released this year in 2022. However, with the amenities that the internet and social media have provided in the past decades, it is much more accessible to this kind of knowledge, or any kind of knowledge to be honest. What I want to emphasize is, if the rich communication tools that the internet and social networking sites that

have provided people did not exist today, even I might never heard of intuitive eating. The book might have never been translated into Turkish.

People who are making content on IE and the viewers who are engaging with them, are giving out a battle almost every single day. The diet culture norms are being bombarded on them. Even the content creators themselves are aware of the fact that if they were making content on mainstream diet culture topics, they would get 10-15 times more views. And these channels that I have examined are not unpopular. Almost every one of them has over a million subscribers. Their view counts are very high as well as their engagement including comments and likes. Still, they could achieve more with making videos such as "loose 5 kilos in 2 weeks" or "get shredded in seconds" etc. The important point is, they chose not to participate in that norm because they are usually the ones who have become hurt by it, who have experienced the negative consequences by it. Also, their efforts are not unanswered.

The fact that they are able to generate income from producing the content they want to emphasize about, ties the equation together, making it possible for different voices and opinions to be present on the same platform. The audiences can pick and choose what they would like to consume, and apparently audience preferences are shifting towards content like IE because the view and subscription counts to these videos and channels are getting more and more popular.

There are thousands of comments for each video, filled with viewers saying how much they have benefited from the information in the video, or the channel in general.

In sum, it is safe to say that social media platforms -in this research's case, YouTube- provide an efficient environment for the audience to learn and elaborate on the intuitive eating approach. Though there are some criteria for this environment to appear; for example, the channel owner being qualified in the field, basing their videos on scientific knowledge, presenting the information in an engaging way and covering the topic regularly; I have spotted other outcomes from the analysis as well.

First, the sense of community was strong for most of the comments sections. It is evident that the viewers are building a bond with the channel host through shared experiences, shared pain, and through a similar perspective towards life in general. That way, contrary to the celebrities on traditional media, they feel a sense of familiarity and closeness towards the YouTuber and show it in form of comments containing love and appreciation. Also, the mentioned bond could not be established without the features that the social media platform offers. Meaning, the tools for liking

and commenting on the content, with a chance to have a conversation with the content creator.

The comments section is also a place where users seek and give advice. Because the audience of those videos have been through similar struggles, they understand each other and they can console and uplift each other. This creates a sense of social comparison where peers see each other's similarities, instead of an upward type of social comparison where they would feel inferior. However, it is important to note that the upward social comparison have also been spotted in the comments in the form of complementing the YouTuber's body. Although there were only two of them, the engagement on those comments were relatively high, so it should be a point of consideration.

Lastly, the credibility of the content that is presented to the audience was also very important for them according to the results. On channels where scientific knowledge was highlighted, the audience repeatedly exclaimed their gratification towards it. The referred content is also verifiable for the interested users because the references were usually given either on the video screen and/or on the description box.

Because social media is an ever-changing sphere, it would be hard to predict the future of the platform. In case of YouTube, it already has changed since its establishment, moving further from being a community based platform. Despite that change, people are still able to use the community aspect in their favor, as in this research's findings. In a setting where this level of interactivity wasn't present, the audience most probably could not relate with the content in this intensity.

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