

Instagram

To a certain point, emotions will drive the decisions you make today. In the article “Getting Likes, Going Viral, and the Intersections Between Popularity Metrics and Digital Composition”, Wuebben (2016) delineates the ways popularity and virality affects the ways shareable texts on social media, and consequently shape how you read, write, and constitute yourself in a particular social context. I felt driven to not just stay but to find appropriate reactions to the social phenomena, as Wuebben helped me to gain an in-depth understanding of the negative and/or undesirable effects of “popularity” and “viability”, pervasive in social media, that may obscure our consciousness and agency when it comes to dealing with spreadable and shared contents, both personal and academic.

As Wuebben brings up, digital phenomena, including “sharing,” “spreading”, or “participating”, relate to how we handle spreadable contents as well as how we react to these materials: The number of views, shares, likes, or downloads now does matter in academia, and it obscures decision-making process of online users who struggle to determine the validity of online content and the quality of scholarly works. Furthermore, it threatens readers’ accessibility to digital texts as the popularity metrics and its viral property influences assessment of digital texts to a great or small extent.

Another aspect that should be highlighted is that, visual impact does matter in social media networks, in particular Instagram more than any other social media platforms. While Instagram now allows its users to post live video and seems to open doors for serving as a communicative tool through which people become connected easily, it still seems limited to visual effect. The photo sharing application Instagram

supplanted Facebook and Twitter involves more serious engagement with photography: “only the more visually arresting images” gets uploaded on Instagram everyday. As Miller (2016) pointed out in the book “Social Media in an English Village”, images that look good will qualify as suitable for postings as well as those that conclude “an engagement with some other craft” (p. 71). In chapter 3 “Crafting the Look”, Miller demonstrates that the social media network exposes its users not only to possibilities of “crafting the look on this platform”, but also introduces them to traditional uses of photographs by taking photos, while Instagram is limited to “photographs taken on mobile phones” (p. 71). In this way, the genres of photography suitable for postings on Instagram show its possibilities to maximize the look of your engagement with photography, while they are limited to certain extent and certainly “filtered”. It is also worth the effort to mention that photographic genres that are filtered for postings on Instagram includes the common and traditional ones, such as birthday, rock concerts, weddings, or people’s pets (p. 76-77).

As “the appropriate Instagram visual” directly relates to the look of items, moments, and people, the platform seems to objectify those get posted to a certain extent. The social media platform may involve trajectories where visual maximization as craft sits at one end, and objectification of one gender exists at one another. It seems not a coincidence that you come across photos in which men mimic women’s Instagram photos. Ironically, while Instagram does place a huge emphasis on the appearance of crafts, it tends not to reveal the long process of preparation or those tools that involve “crafting beyond that of the posed object to the way in which the image has been constructed and altered” (p. 83). I feel like Instagram’s major strategy falls apart, when a

crafted perfect set of moments and people becomes objectified into commensurable entities and altered images.

Returning to the nature of popularity and virality on the social media platforms, Instagram is not an exception. The number of views, shares, likes, or downloads certainly influences how we create and even evaluate sharable contents on social medias, such as photos posted on Instagram as well as on other platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr. This link is significant because the effect appears in academic works, even though “academia is not a popularity contest”. As the ways shareable content on social media “go viral”, we are witnessing in our everyday lives that popularity metrics and viral texts and images are closely related. It will be our responsibility to make sure the mechanism of popularity and virality that exist in the process of image construction/text composition, circulation, and assessment, and to take the lead in answering to these social phenomena.