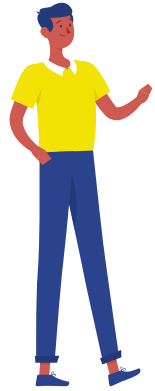




Sexual expressions on social media: *from Instagram to Reddit*

Michaela Lebedíková
ZURb1614





Rules for nice lecture

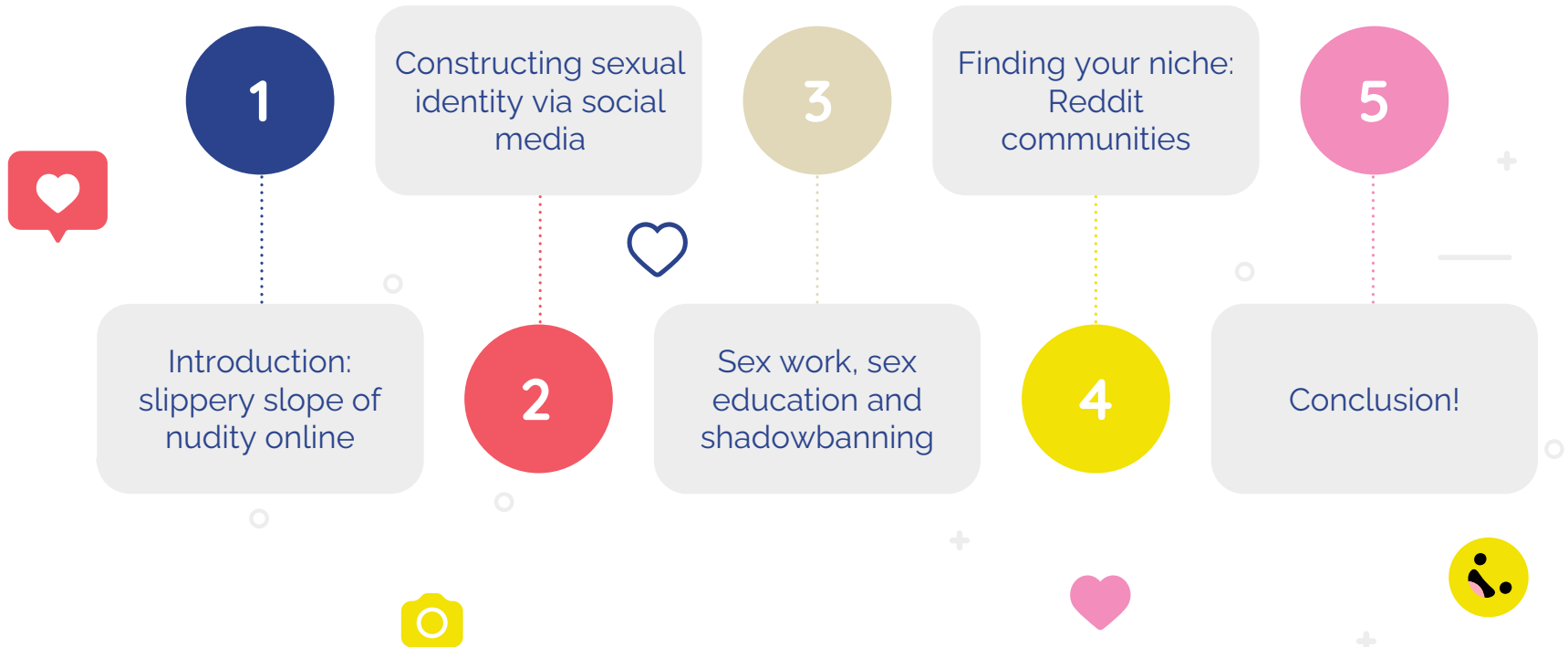
.....

- This is a safe space. Everyone is welcome. We value different opinions but respect each other. I invite you to use inclusive language.
- We will discuss sexual themes, but nothing graphic will be shown.
- Be considerate when sharing experiences with the class.



- Resources available at the end of lecture.

Table of contents





01

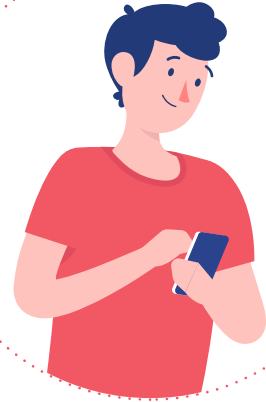
Introduction: the slippery
slope of nudity online

If Kim K can do it, I can too, right?

Sexuality went digital

„The accessibility and relative anonymity afforded by digital media have also created a unique environment in which adolescents can explore their emerging sexualities, including consuming sexual media and constructing their own online sexual experiences.“
(Widman et al., 2021)

„Sexualities are expressed, constructed, and negotiated in digital contexts.“ (...) The current research focuses „on three recurring strands: (a) sexual selfhood projects; (b) intimacy and online dating; and (c) sexual communities.“ (Adams-Santos, 2020)





Social media



.....

a set of **mobile** and **web-based** platforms built on Web 2.0 technologies, and allowing users at the **micro-, meso- and macro-levels** to **share** and **geo-tag user-generated content** (images, text, audio, video and games), to **collaborate**, and to **build networks** and **communities**, with the **possibility of reaching and involving large audiences**



(Ouirdi et al., 2014)





Ok, so what about sex and social media?





Social media

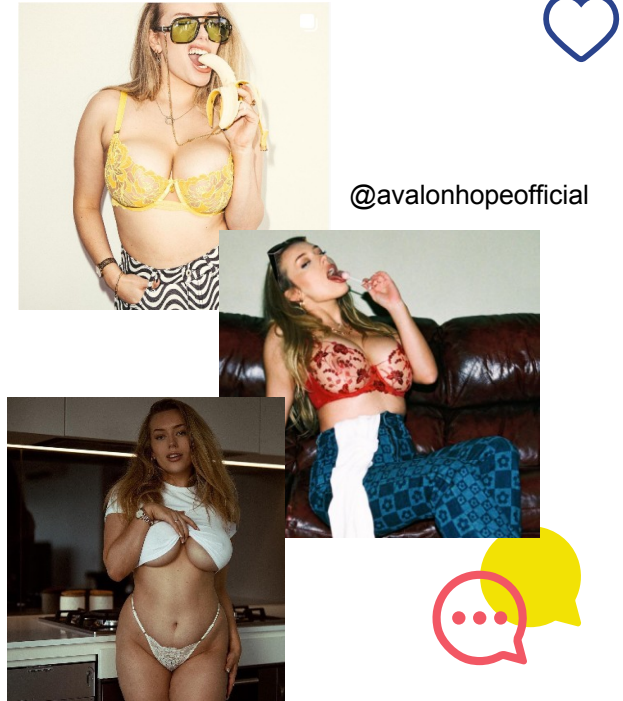
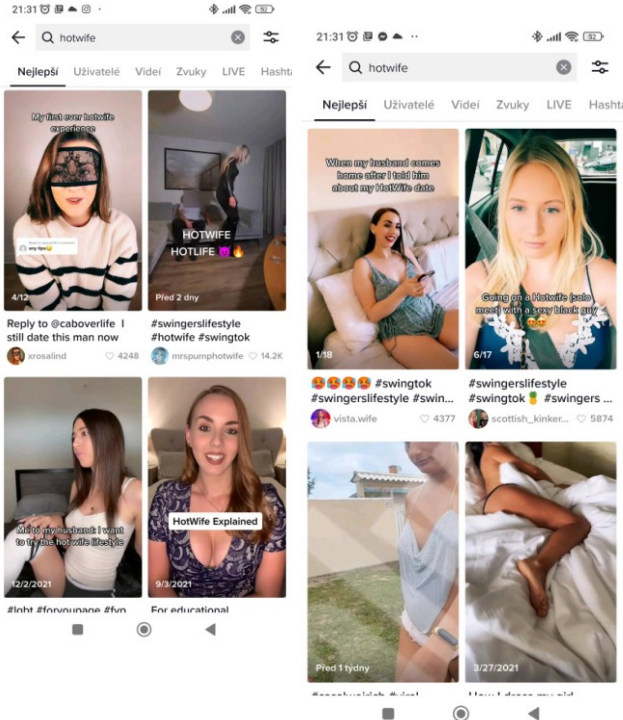


We know that there are times when people might want to share nude images that are artistic or creative in nature, but for a variety of reasons, **we don't allow nudity on Instagram.**

We don't allow nudity on Instagram, with some exceptions, like photos of post-mastectomy scarring and women actively breastfeeding. Nudity in photos of paintings and sculptures is OK, too.



What can we see on different social media?





Social Networks

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Google+
- Pinterest
- Tumblr
- LinkedIn
- WhatsApp
- Messenger



**OK what?
How do the
algorithms
work?**



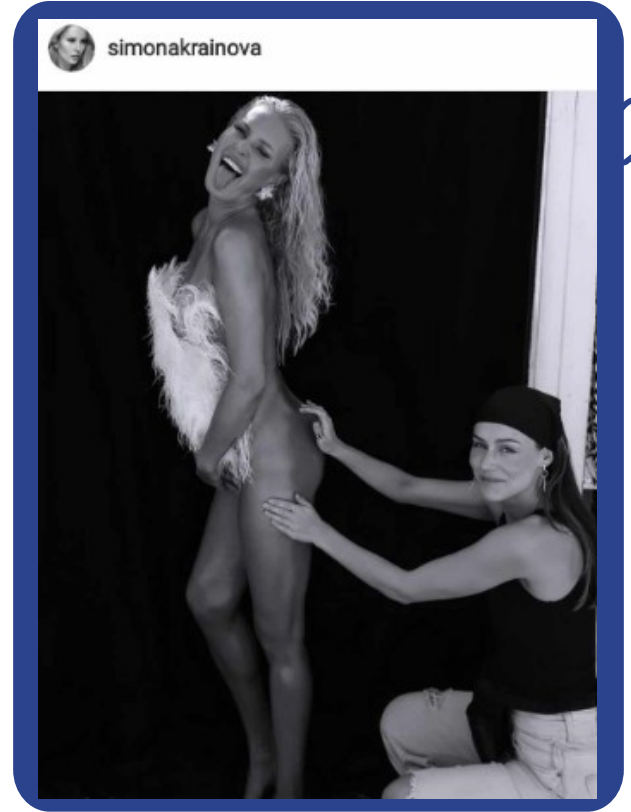
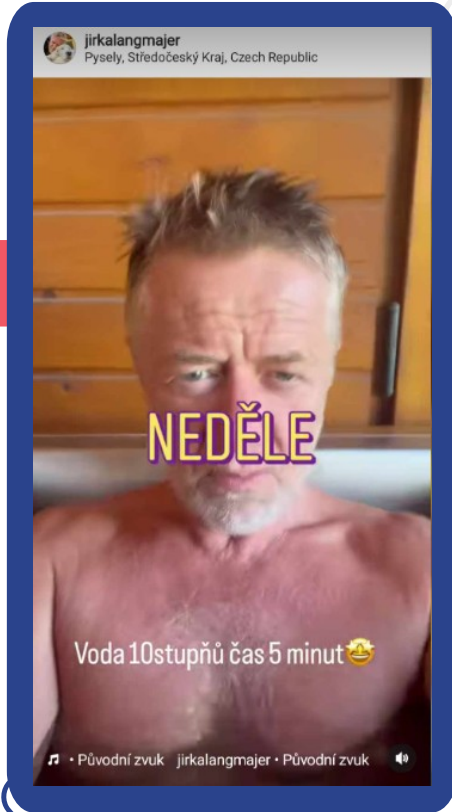


„Nude selfies
`til I die!“

- Kim Kardashian in a speech
at Webby awards 2016 after she
received the Break the Internet award



But really?



But really?

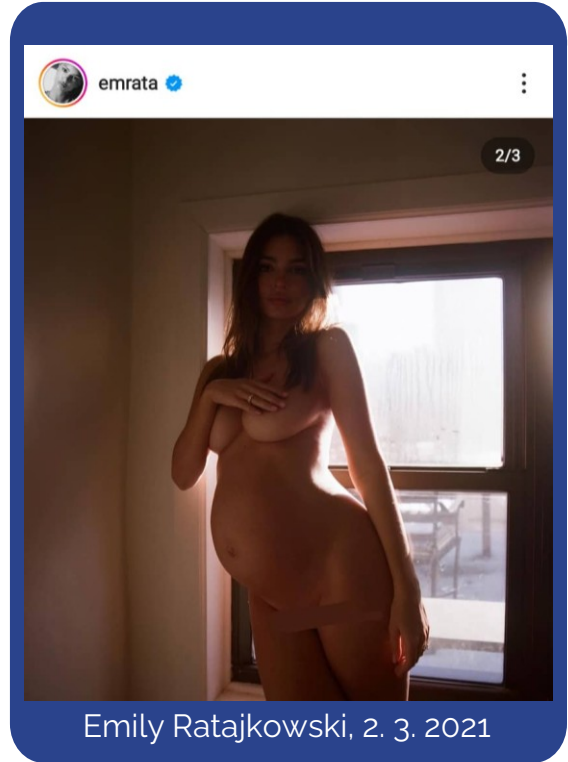
#freethenipple

According to Instagram, apparently not all nipples are equal

.....

celebrities vs. ,regular people‘

It may seem that regulations are enforced equally – but nope.



But really?



eroticwatercolor



1/3

You're close to losing access to your account

You have repeatedly posted content that has been removed by our technology for going against our **Community Guidelines**. Next time, you may lose access to your account, and your posts, followers, messages and archive will be permanently removed.

What's been removed

You can ask us to review our decision if you think that we've made a mistake.



Your post goes against our guidelines
2 hours ago · [In review](#)



Your post goes against our guidelines



What's been removed

You can ask us to review our decision if you think that we've made a mistake.



Your post goes against our guidelines
2 hours ago · [In review](#)



Your post goes against our guidelines
2 hours ago · [In review](#)



Your post goes against our guidelines
4 hours ago · [In review](#)



Your post goes against our guidelines
9 August · Reviewed



Will/should Instagram ever Free the Nipple?

Try to come up with pro/cons!





Real research

Tukachinsky, R., Inaba, H., Kraus, K., Stewart, D., & Williams, M. (2019). Sex, likes and Instagram: Celebrity self-presentation on Instagram images. In C. Madere, Star power: The media effects created by celebrities, (pp. 165-179). Rowman & Littlefield.

Main findings

- Social media platforms have revolutionized the relationship between celebrities and their fanbase
- Self-sexualization on social media has been assumed to be driven by attempts to gain attention and approval from followers.
- In the case of celebrities, women are not only exposed to media-generated sexual standards, but they are actively participating in creating and maintaining them, and thus are even more likely to conform to these sexual norms.



02

Identity

Constructing sexual
identity on social
media: how we build
our presence?





Sexual identity

Identity consists of a stable sense of one's goals, beliefs, values, and life roles (Erikson, 1950; Marcia, 1987).
.....

Sexual identity refers to dimensions attributed **to sexual orientation identity** (i. e. sexual behavior and emotional attachment to other genders), and **dimensions of human sexuality** (e.g., sexual needs, sexual values, modes of sexual expression, preferred characteristics of sexual partners, preferred sexual activities and behaviors) as well as **group membership identity** (e.g., a sexual orientation identity, or considering oneself as a member of sexuality-related social groups) and **attitudes** toward sexual minority individuals. (Dillon et al., 2011)



How social media contribute to our identities?

Identity work

Identity construction and realization, challenging stereotypes

Sexual exploration

Finding what is possible, available, exploring it and discussing it

Facilitating conversation

Finding other people, sharing content, images, selfies, nudes, etc.

Safe space

A space to talk about sex while staying (pseudo)anonymous

Sexual education

Finding valuable information about sexual health and sexuality

???

People find new ways how to do „sex“ and „sexuality“ on social media every day!

Male and female gaze

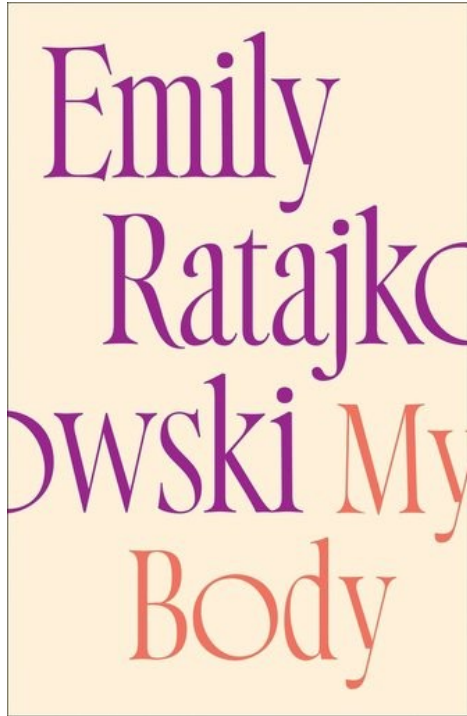
- Some platforms allow for sharing one's nude body – such as Reddit (not talking about OnlyFans here – imagine „regular“ people)
- Male gaze = depicting women as sexual object (sexual objectification) for the pleasure of heterosexual male viewer (c. f. Laura Mulvey!)
- Female/feminine gaze = depicting women from the point of other women (e. g. Fleabag or The Devil Wears Prada)
- Men are not exempt from sexual objectification!
- Different feminist standpoints: free sexuality vs. catering to male gaze -> similar to arguments of feminist „Sex Wars“
- Going beyond heterosexuality: queering the gaze
 - Body (dis)satisfaction among gay men > gay male gaze





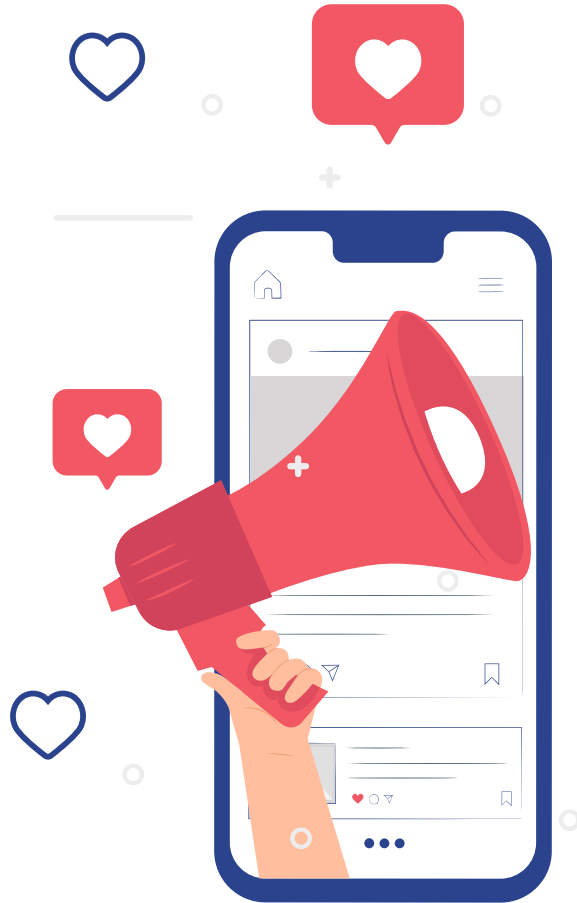
Is sharing your nude
body emancipatory?
Why yes/why not?





Rocketing to world fame at age twenty-one, Ratajkowski sparked both praise and furor with the provocative display of her body as an unapologetic statement of feminist empowerment. The subsequent evolution in her thinking about our culture's commodification of women is the subject of this book. My Body is a profoundly personal exploration of feminism, sexuality, and power, of men's treatment of women and women's rationalizations for accepting that treatment. These essays chronicle moments from Ratajkowski's life while investigating the culture's fetishization of girls and female beauty, its obsession with and contempt for women's sexuality, the perverse dynamics of the fashion and film industries, and the grey area between consent and abuse.





Real research

Duguay, S. (2016). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer Visibility Through Selfies: Comparing Platform Mediators Across Ruby Rose's Instagram and Vine Presence. *Social Media + Society*, 2(2), 205630511664197. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116641975>

Main points

- Visibility of non-normative identities in mixed spaces of public discourse can give rise to "queer publics" ([Berlant & Warner, 1995](#), p. 344) that open possibilities for new understandings around sexuality and gender.
- Beyond sexual conversations, LGBTQ people have employed staged self-reflections on social media to engage in identity development and circulate new understandings across publics.

+ the importance of TikTok! 😊



03

Sex work, sex education and the war with Instagram

Shadowbanning & „S€GGS“

It is increasingly hard for
sex educational platforms
and sex workers to
promote their work online



What are the stakes?

Shadowban

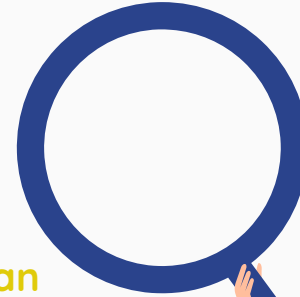
.....
the account exists, but becomes unsearchable / not favored by algorithm

Demonetization

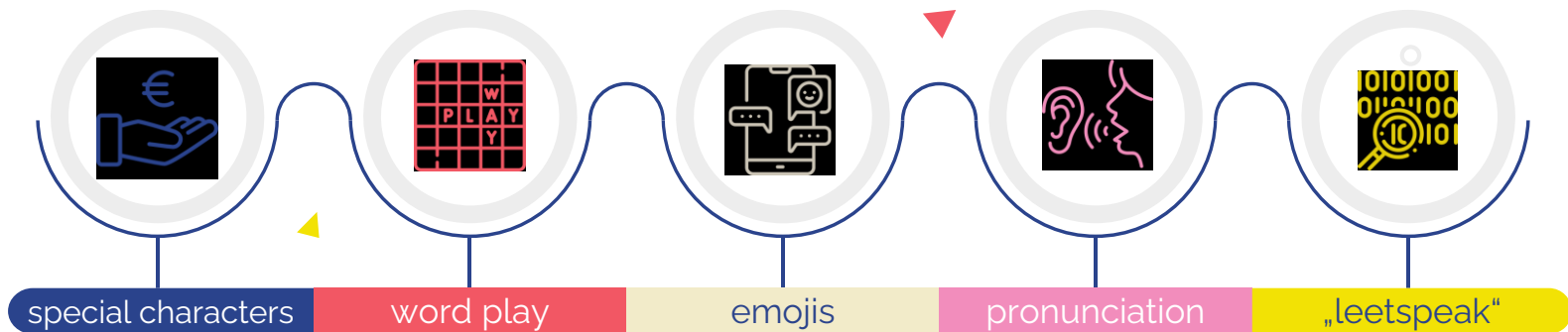
.....
e. g. YouTube – you can still upload, but not earn money

Permanent ban

.....
a.k.a. losing account forever



Techniques to prevent shadowbans



special characters

S€ggs, S€X

.....
and other variations that are meant to fool the algorithm

word play

Lonely Clams

.....
stands for „Only Fans,“ site for selling content

emojis

👉 👈 👉 👈 👉👈

.....
generally understood as erotic emojis

pronunciation

.👈 DSM

.....
stands for „BDSM“

„leetspeak“

L1NK 1N B10

.....
...and usually, there is more in the link



Mission of OnlyFans

OnlyFans is the social platform revolutionizing creator and fan connections. The site is inclusive of artists and content creators from all genres and allows them to monetize their content while developing authentic relationships with their fanbase.



OnlyFans controversy

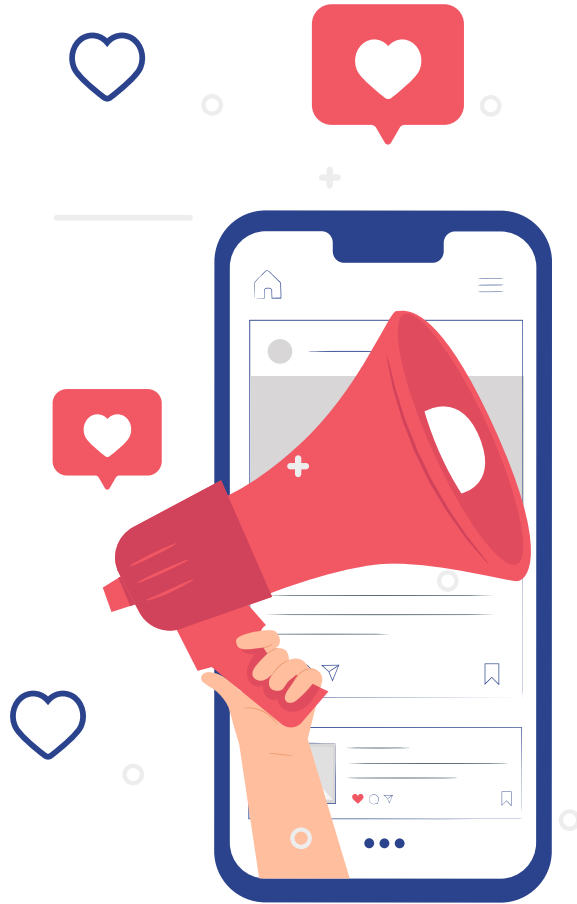
OnlyFans is a website for creators to share and monetize their content. In reality, most of these „creators“ are sex workers.

.....

Bella Thorne: good (?) intentions and consequences

- In 2020, Thorne joined OF and promoted widely her site
- She made 2m USD in a week by charging 200 USD for nudes – that turned out to be pics in lingerie
- People demanded refund -> OF changed payments – capped tips at 100 USD, exclusive content to 50 USD and people now get paid monthly instead of weekly





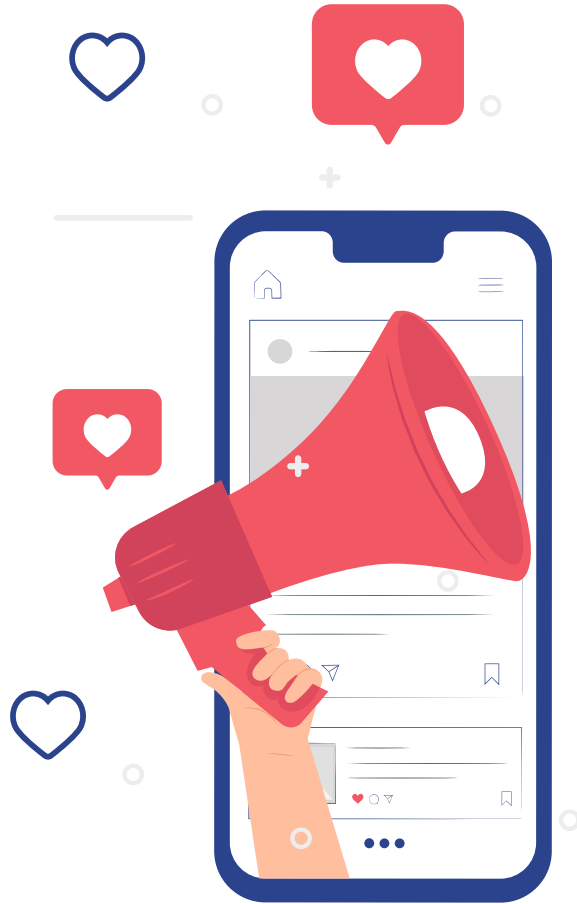
Real research

Are, C., & Paasonen, S. (2021). Sex in the shadows of celebrity. *Porn Studies*, 8(4), 411–419. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23268743.2021.1974311>

Main findings

- Since the 2010s, sexually suggestive, semi-nude and nude photographs shared on social media have become standard in the making and maintenance of celebrity image
- Bodily displays on social media are nevertheless not moderated equally. Sex workers and pole dancers in particular are often affected by account deletions and/or shadowbanning, with platforms demoting, instead of promoting, the visibility and accessibility of their content





Real research

Are, C., & Paasonen, S. (2021). Sex in the shadows of celebrity. *Porn Studies*, 8(4), 411–419. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23268743.2021.1974311>

- The shadowbanning of sex is partly an effect of the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act and the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (FOSTA/SESTA). (...) Reversing the principle with regards to content related to sex work, FOSTA/SESTA has effectively rendered platforms liable for the content posted on them (Constine [2019](#); Tripp [2020](#)). In order to comply with FOSTA/SESTA, social media platforms have been censoring an increasing amount of content to avoid being seen as facilitating sex work, while also reworking their community standards to ban sexual communication and depictions of nudity and sexual activity.
- However, naked celebrities are lucrative, and draw traffic! \$\$\$

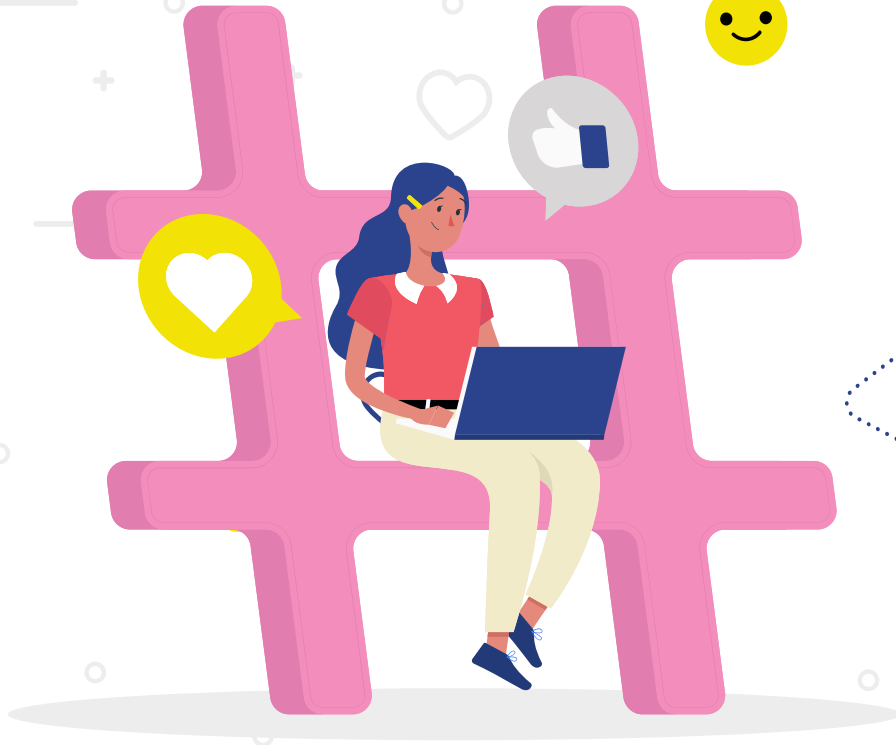
04

Reddit



Finding your niche
with Reddit
communities

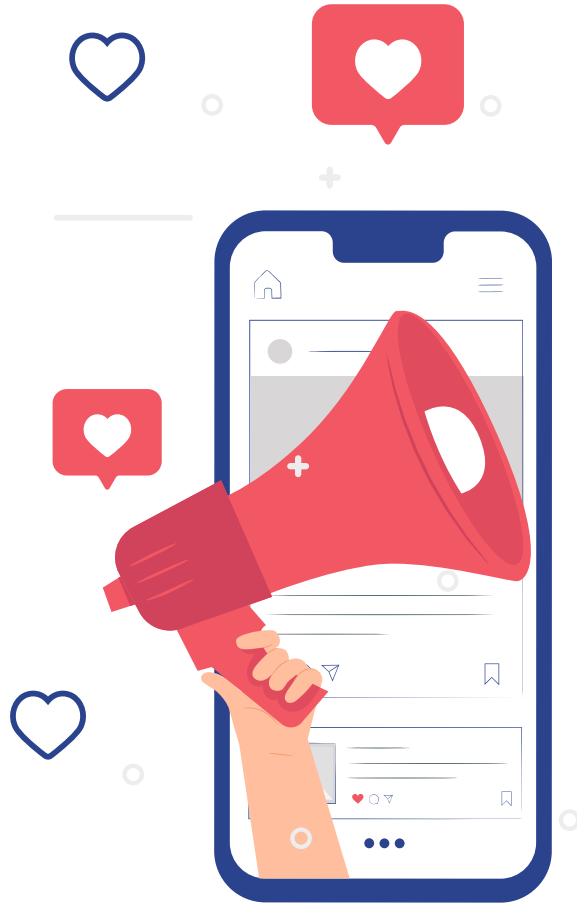




What is Reddit?

- Social media to create communities, share content, discuss and message with others
- 7th most popular in the US
- More than 52 million daily users across 100 000+ communities

Miller, 2022



Real research

Tiidenberg, K., & van der Nagel, E. (2020). WHAT'S AT STAKE WHEN SEX IS DEPLATFORMED?. AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.5210/spir.v2020i0.11348>

Main points

- Sex is also worried about, moralized over, and increasingly regulated by social media platforms through a combination of human and automated means.
- Taking away platform for sex means: loss of support and self-actualization for queer people; less diverse content and lack of spaces to discuss sex as an everyday part of life; loss of safe spaces; inability to construct sexual self online



Conclusion



05

Now... a task!

Please take 5 minutes to write down things that surprised you / got you thinking / found inspirational. Use your phone, computer, paper, whatever.

Let's share them!



Resources

Have you encountered inappropriate sexual behavior as a victim or as a witness and you are not sure how to deal with the whole thing? Here are some suggestions on how to proceed and contacts. Masaryk University shall not tolerate any forms of sexual harassment.

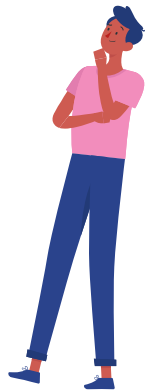
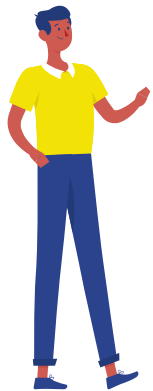
What to do if you are a victim of sexual harassment?

What to do if you are a witness to sexual harassment or someone confides to you that they are a victim?

Who can you contact at MU in case of sexual harassment?



<https://www.muni.cz/en/students/sexual-harassment>



Thank you!

.....

Liked my lecture? Let me know
and let's stay in touch!



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m.lebedikova@mail.muni.cz



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