

ONLINE PRESENTATION OF SELF ON INSTAGRAM: A CASE STUDY
OF YOGA PRACTITIONERS IN TURKEY

A Master's Thesis

by

ALİME BİLGE GÖLGE

Department of
Communication and Design
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University
Ankara
January 2017

To my sister



ONLINE PRESENTATION OF SELF ON INSTAGRAM: A CASE STUDY
OF YOGA PRACTITIONERS IN TURKEY

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

of

İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

ALİME BİLGE GÖLGE

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF

COMMUNICATION AND DESIGN

İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY

ANKARA

January 2017

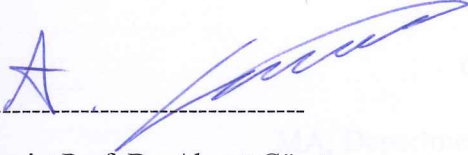
I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Visual Studies.



Assist.Prof. Dr. Özlem Savaş

Supervisor

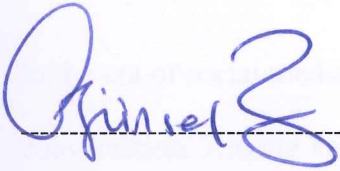
I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Visual Studies.



Assist.Prof. Dr. Ahmet Gürata

Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Visual Studies.



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Günseli Bayraktutan Sütçü

Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences



Prof. Dr. Halime Demirkan

Director

ABSTRACT

ONLINE PRESENTATION OF SELF ON INSTAGRAM: A CASE STUDY OF YOGA PRACTITIONERS IN TURKEY

Gölge, Alime Bilge

MA, Department of Communication and Design

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Özlem Savaş

January 2017

In the era of social media, Social Network Sites (SNSs) has become an essential part of social conversation. Among varied aspects of online communication, SNSs encourage the users to present their idealized self-identities in digital realm. This thesis explores social media practices and performances of Turkey's yoga community on Instagram, based on Goffman's dramaturgical perspective on self-presentation. With this aim, visual images, texts and hashtags of the Instagram posts by yogis and yoginis were analyzed while ethnographic research techniques were used with a consideration of both online and offline contexts. Conducted research showed that there are three main motivations for the yogi and yoginis of Turkey to use Instagram: to become visible, to exhibit creativity online and to offer a guidance to their followers for self-actualization. Furthermore, the findings provided an understanding about yoga body, gender roles and attitudes towards censorship. This thesis argues that even if they

were designed for global-scale interaction, the ways that SNSs are employed by the users to indicate different attitudes depend on local circumstances of the community. Therefore, instead of taking online platforms as homogenous constructs, considering them in their offline contexts is required for overall comprehension of the social meaning produced through the practices on SNSs.

KEYWORDS: Instagram, Online Self-Presentation, Social Network Sites, Yoga Community.



ÖZET

BENLİĞİN INSTAGRAM'DA ÇEVİRİMİÇİ SUNUMU: TÜRKİYE'DEKİ YOGA TOPLULUĞU ÖRNEĞİ

Gölge, Alime Bilge

Yüksek Lisans, İletişim ve Tasarım Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Özlem Savaş

January 2017

Sosyal medya çağında Sosyal Ağ Siteleri (SAS), toplumsal diyalogun temel bir parçası olmuştur. Çevrimiçi iletişimin ele alındığı çeşitli yönleri arasında SAS, kullanıcıları idealize edilmiş öz kimliklerini dijital ortamda sunmaya teşvik eder. Bu tez çalışması, Türkiye'deki yoga topluluğunda yer alan bireylerin sosyal medya pratiklerini ve performanslarını, Instagram özelinde ve Goffman'ın benliğin sunumu üzerine dramaturjik yaklaşımından yararlanarak inceler. Bu amaçla, görsel imajlar, metin ve “hashtag” olarak tabir edilen dijital etiketler analiz edilmiş; etnografik araştırma yöntemleri gerek çevrimiçi gerekse çevrimdışı bağlamlar gözetilerek kullanılmıştır. Yapılan araştırma, Türkiye'nin yogi ve yoginilerinin Instagram kullanımına yönelik üç temel motivasyona sahip olduklarını göstermiştir: Görünür olmak, yaratıcılıklarını çevrimiçi olarak sergilemek ve takipçilerine kendilerini gerçekleştirebilmeleri için kılavuzluk etmek. Ayrıca, araştırma sonucunda edinilen bulgular yoga bedeni, toplumsal

cinsiyet rolleri ve sansüre karşı yaklaşım hakkında bir anlayış sağlamıştır. Bu tez, her ne kadar global ölçekli bir etkileşim için tasarlanmış olsalar da, sosyal ağ sitelerinin farklı yaklaşımları işaret edecek şekilde nasıl kullanıldıklarının; topluluğunun yerel şartlarına bağlı olduğunu iddia eder. Bu nedenle, çevrimiçi platformları homojen yapılar olarak ele almak yerine, SAS pratikleri ile üretilen sosyal anlamın tümsel bir anlayış içinde ele alınması gerekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevrimiçi Benlik Sunumu, Instagram, Sosyal Ağ Siteleri, Yoga Topluluğu.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor Assist. Prof. Ozlem Savaş Savaş for her continuous support, feedback and patience throughout the thesis period. She provided me with her guidance, knowledge and invaluable advices.

I am also grateful to Assist. Prof. Emel Özdora Akşak for her support from the very beginning of my master education.

I would like to thank Gamze Kozanoğlu and Pınar Demirekler Burat for their great support and role-modelling in my post-grad crisis.

Special thanks to my friends from the department for their kind help, interest and feedbacks. My sincere thanks also goes to my friends of many years for their encouragement, patience and never-ending hope that one day, I would graduate and join them to socialize.

I thank my parents for their unconditionally support and love even if they are still confused about what I've studied, and to my grandmothers, their stories are helping me to find my path in life. Finally, the most important, thanks to my lovely sister Merve who is the greatest support of mine with her strong, warm-hearted and brilliant existence.

I would like to leave the remaining space in memory of my dearest cousin B. who had been proud of anything I wrote in my childhood and would be the happiest big brother if he could be with us now.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ÖZET	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II: YOGIC SELF ON INSTAGRAM	15
2.1. Social Networking Sites (SNSs)	15
2.1.1. The Environment of Polymedia	18
2.1.2. Instagram	21
2.2. Visual Culture, Photography and Social Media	25
2.3. Modern Postural Yoga: A Transnational Physical Culture	30
2.3.1. Yoga Body: From Post-Colonial Subject to Instagram Yogins	34
2.3.2. Yoga Community of Turkey on Instagram	35
2.4. Presenting Self on Instagram	37
2.5. Managing Public/Private Sharing on Digital Space	42
CHAPTER III: USES OF INSTAGRAM BY YOGA PRACTITIONERS	44
3.1. Visibility and Recognition	45
3.2. Guidance to People for Self-Actualization	51
3.3. Artistic Motives of Sharing: Creativity on the Stage	54
CHAPTER IV: YOGA BODY, GENDER ROLES AND CENSORSHIP ON INSTAGRAM	58

4.1. Representation of #yogabody on Instagram	58
4.2. Censorship, Nudity and Gender Roles on the Stage of Instagram	67
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION	73
REFERENCES.....	77



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Link Added to Instagram Post to Direct Followers to Facebook Account	20
Figure 2: A Part of the Blog Post on Instagram to Direct Followers to the Personal Blog	20
Figure 3: A Yogi Practising Yoga Pose in the Gym.....	33
Figure 4: “Turn on Notifications” Posts	45
Figure 5: Example Recommendation-Like Post on Instagram.....	53
Figure 6: Post from Yogini’s Mandala Art Workshop	56
Figure 7: A Yogini Practising Handstand Pose.....	63
Figure 8: A Yogi Practising Another Challenging Yoga Pose	63
Figure 9: Post from the Instagram Account of “Coconut Skins”.....	68
Figure 10: The Event Post for Yoga Cici	70

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Given the expeditious rise of new media technologies, contemporary society has been faced with a condition that online communication is now an inevitable part of our everyday.

Through the new components added to use of internet and World Wide Web, masses of the users started to produce their own digital spaces and subsequently, “diverse set of opportunities for linking these spaces together to form virtual social networks” (Obar & Wildman, 2015: 745). In accordance with their specific functionalities, proliferation of Social Network Sites (SNSs) has enabled varied aspects of communication to be conducted in online context. Since the progress of social media in the society is dynamic and rapidly changing, the number of its platforms have been increased drastically and the boundaries between different platforms have been blurred. Within this media environment, the ways of how people interact and communicate have been evolved and a need for analysing these varied practices arose.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate social media practices of yoga practitioners in Turkey and to explain their self-presentations on Instagram by utilizing Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective. Within today’s multimedia environment, the image-sharing application is utilized

for daily communication by yogi and yoginis while the highlighted points about their identities are communicated via photographs supported by text and hashtags, the digital labels specific to SNSs. By considering Instagram's features in relation with visual-dominant communication of contemporary society, the motives for the choice of Instagram will be demonstrated for yoga community of Turkey. It will be further highlighted the messages carried through self-performances regarding to gender roles emphasized in the society, instrumentalization of body regarding to the norm and values in local context as well as the implication of censorship offline.

Herein, it is also worth to clarify yoga community of Turkey which will be used throughout the thesis. Gathered around the interest of yoga and yogic lifestyle, we can certainly talk about a social group of yoga practitioners in Turkey. In addition to yoga events, there are yoga studios and few but active yoga associations like Anadolu Yoga Derneği to bring these people together. Besides, a notable part of this community is active on social media including Instagram. In their accounts, yoga is emphasized by both visuals and texts while their online existence becomes visible and traceable via specific hashtags which are #yogaturkey, #yogaturkiye, #birliktebir so on so forth.

From the viewpoint of the influences of social media on interpersonal dialogue, exploiting the platform for conveying messages on one's identity can be taken among the major attitudes for today's communication practices. Availability of multiple technologies for the individual has engendered the process in question. Regarding to user-generated content, the convergence of mobile phones, digital camera and internet has particularly influenced the production and dissemination of self-related messages of one's own. Preferences over self-identity are

presented through the possibilities of different SNSs on top of offline realm. This has brought along a transformation in social domain and also a change in the way of studying how social meaning is created in people's lives. Transition into more connected and at-present communication has transformed quotidian ways of "the patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols" (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952: 181) in the communities. As a consequence, "a fundamentally new cultural situation and a challenge to our normal ways of tracking and studying culture" has come out (Manovich, 2009: 1). For this reason, both contextualization of today's polymedia environment and the potential and drawbacks of online research are required to be considered. For the polymedia environment in question, agreed with Madianou and Miller (2012), the necessity of considering entire structure was regarded to reveal significance of the new media. Nevertheless, I prefer to approach to the subject by addressing one particular SNS, Instagram, since the choice of particular platform signalizes the motivation for online conversation in the conditions of the variety of SNSs today. In this way, I was able to interpret the role and significance of social media for social dialogue in the era of Web 2.0. The main interest of this thesis is to study on self-presentation on social media while considering Instagram as a platform in where influential role of visuality in contemporary communication can be witnessed. In addition, the choice of yoga for this examination is a result of a promise as a way of positioning oneself among others regarding to both individuality and belonging to a social group. How yogi and yogini's self is created and sustained through online performances in the social setting of Instagram has been appeared as a process which requires attention to globally-shaped structure of social media, local social norms as well as individualistic attitudes of late-modern subject. Turning back to social media practices themselves with this consideration, practices of Turkey's yoga community demonstrates both commonalities and differences on utilization of the social network site from other environments. The question to be raised here is, specific

to each platform, whether online practices are homogenized due to its existence as a global phenomenon or differences of the societies carry their own attributions with themselves. Looking through performances of a sub-community's members on a particular platform made it possible to contextualize my study around the questions of "Why Instagram?" and "What kind of aspects of self-identity are underlined on the stage of Instagram?", "What kind of motives we can observe both offline and online regarding to Instagram performances?". While I was searching for the answers of these questions, I took the media environment as a whole structure and considered connection of Instagram to other platforms. However, I also kept my focus on the image-sharing application in a specific manner. Consequently, I was able to reveal how an SNS designed for global-scale interaction can be employed to indicate different attitudes by local cultures.

In his well-known book *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman (1959) explains that, during social interaction, the individual acts for creating and sustaining a deliberate impression on people and presents his/her "idealized" self through "performances" which are all activities transmit a certain knowledge about who he/she is. According to him, we cannot talk about one true or fixed self, instead performances for the individual who adapts his/her behaviours in accordance with the situations in social life. With reference to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach, multiple facets of self-identity are performed beyond the boundaries of physical world through communication in today's world. Especially the rise of social media phenomenon has affected presentation of self-images in daily social interaction. Turning back to transformation of everyday life by way of continuous interaction of online and offline contexts, what kind of information the individual is externalized on personal blog, Facebook profile or Instagram gallery offers a research field for investigating the dynamics of contemporary society. In particular, how globally-shaped media is

instrumentalized in different societies and how communication patterns are shaped through social norms are needed to be questioned. At this point, even if his work depends on face-to-face communication and the essential features of the concepts such as “given/given off expression” or “impression management” has been changed in the case of social media, applying these concepts to online social interaction still promises on a deep understanding about the performances on the digital stage. Relevantly, Instagram might be suggested as a stage for its users in where the members of the platform display identity-relevant performances to a wide-public. Herein, identity management becomes a central issue for them while online interaction demands practices specific to the architecture of the platform. In general, it enables people to share their photos from the polished moments of quotidian lives. Combined with the filter function, linking to other SNSs and adding information about the place in where or with whom the photo was taken. Hence, it is important to instrumentalize visual material and to master technical skills on photo-manipulation for targeted impression to the followers. This leads us to think about the power and potential of Instagram on contemporary social contact. Accordingly, presentation of self on Instagram has a straightforward connection with the attributes of late-modern period as well as visually-driven society. As it will be explained in depth in Chapter 1, we are living in a world that image has a superiority over words since the production and consumption of the message in a fast cycle today. In that case, Instagram responds the need of communicating self-related information beyond the limits of the words. The practices observed here is also aligned with the continuous transformation of late-modern subject through lifestyle-related choices which is explained by Giddens (1991).

For investigating online communication practices of contemporary period, yoga offers a fruitful case since it is a flexible and open concept to adapt one’s self-narrativization to

convey a message reflecting “trajectory of the self” (Giddens, 1991). As a lifelong beginner level practitioner, my discovery of yoga as a research field has been initiated with an event one and a half year ago. On June 21 in 2015, International Day of Yoga was celebrated at METU Cultural and Convention Center in Ankara for the first time as such in İstanbul, İzmir and Bodrum. Organized by the Indian Embassy, the program included opening speeches, a film screening about yoga and an outdoor yoga session. I, an occasional practitioner of yoga, was among the guests who watched the video of the message from Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India who performed yoga in a public yoga class on that day. It was quite intriguing way for me to call people from all around the world in an attempt to embrace yoga for both physical and moral rewarding. On that day, I also thought that regardless of the differences on region, religion or nation, a certain level of tolerance in different societies became apparent to yoga. I was listening historical roots of the Indian-led solution including spiritual aspects in a country of a different social background and an American yogini was talking about her experience of yoga on the screen.

If we go back to the history of the day, a worldwide acceptance of the Indian-led discipline comes into view. As a physical discipline in the fitness culture of Western modernity, yoga has been welcomed all around the world and appreciated by the masses for its benefits on lives from the early nineteenth century to today. In connection with this augmenting popularity, in 2015 the UN General Assembly declared and International Day of Yoga has been adopted on June 21 with the co-sponsorship of 175 nations which is a record number of participation. Narendra Modi proposed the resolution for yoga which is now celebrated all over the world and United Nations responded this proposal by pointing out the discipline’s “global benefits” regarding to health and well-being of the individuals (*International Day of Yoga*, n.d.). Hereby, the wide embracement of yoga by different cultures regardless of

diversified traditions and customs, religions or geographic clusters makes the discipline worth to investigate as a transnational concept which is influenced by global flows of the knowledge and disseminated through visual technologies of the time. Analogue photography was starting point of the journey of yoga to Western world and initiation of modern postural yoga. It is also important to state that, although there are eight limbs of yoga according to Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, my study was based on asana which is basically bodily movement. With all my respect to other approaches to the discipline, I took into consideration only Western postural yoga during my research. There are two reason for my focus on asana, posture of body instead of other seven limbs of yoga. First of all, dominance of asana practice in West signals an important point and supports the claim of Singleton that modern postural yoga shows parallelism with global fitness culture instead of spiritual ancient tradition of India. In this regard, yogi and yoginis share similar experiences as a way of self-actualization that tie their bodily practices to non-physical attributes (but again by utilizing *tangible* or *visible* tools) apropos of a wholistic physical culture. Hence, my approach to yoga as a bodily discipline rather than a spiritual system. And secondly, since my analysis on social media and specifically Instagram, visibility is the main concern and asana is inherently what can be found on the platform. Herein, it is also worth to note that asana and pose are used interchangeably during this thesis. However, the interaction between the body and mind is still observable in postural yoga. Bodily practices of yoga, *asanas* communicates a self-identity and as Giddens states for the role of body for the social agency of the individual (1991: 57), modern yogin communicates his/her social-self agency during his/her daily life.

When we look at present-day perception about yoga, convergence of digital photography and internet at social media has enhanced popularity of the physical discipline and its stance related with a specific way of living. Furthermore, among many other Social Network Sites (SNSs), Instagram provides a stage to yogi and yoginis for presenting their self-identities in

digital realm. In this online stage, performances are shaped in accordance with the intention to utilize the SNS. My research shows that the members of Turkey's yoga community instrumentalize this platform for their self-communication under three major motives: The first motive, visibility, indicates the aim of increasing their recognizability and publicizing yoga to a wide audience. The second main drive to use Instagram is artistic expression via yogi/yogini's creative activities. After all, offering a guidance to their followers for self-actualization appears as another motive according to the findings in this study. My research also made me enable to gain certain social meanings regarding to perception on gender roles, body on digital stage and online censorship. Interpretation of these meanings points out the dependence of online activities on offline contexts and therefore, the necessity of considering social media through local circumstances for utilizing the communication channel for self-expression and social dialogue beyond the domination by the social pressure and corporate structures. Consequently, this thesis argues that pointing out varied practices which are shaped through different contexts may provide an awareness about social and corporate-level forces which shape online communication. In this way, instrumentalization of SNSs in social dialogue for diverse cases can be examined and the real potential of social media for self-communication can be discovered completely.

Methodology

Throughout the study, the data was gathered from three main sources which are Instagram posts, systematic participant observation and semi-structured interviews conducted whether face-to-face or via online conversation with the individuals in the sample. Combining different research tools made it possible to enquire into multilayered dialogue on social media. Receiving the help of ethnographic methodology with the aim of examination of the SNS's social milieu provides a context-sensitive approach to the researcher. It is used for

contextualization of social media as a research environment (Postill & Pink, 2012) while online practices are investigated in social and everyday frameworks. Close reading, on the other hand, was used for presenting an explanation for their online presentation along with the performances regarding to self-identities. Discursive practices around yoga and self-identity are interpreted in respects of how meanings are established, used, challenged and evolved in the routine of ordinary lives.

Since my qualitative inquiry has been centered upon a specific case rather than a large sample of quantitative research, I chose my sample purposefully. By creating @bilge_golge_ma which is an Instagram account specific to this study, I was able to follow them in order and without interruption of other contents. At the very beginning of my research, I talked with the yoga practitioners that I knew. For determining my sample to follow on Instagram, I asked them about the yogi and yoginis who are popular in this social network and then, started to follow them. After this stage, hashtags in addition to images and textual material were the tools for deciding the accounts to be analyzed. The selection for the followed accounts was an iterative process and reaching the final sample 2 months since the arguments were formed and some of them stayed out in terms of relevancy of the study. The variety regarding to gender and popularity has been considered at this phase of the research design. Instead of yogin Instagram stars from all over the world, I particularly followed the hashtags in Turkish such as #yogaheryerde, #yogaherzaman, #birliktebir, #zihnihafiflet since they are directly related with the yoga community in Turkey. In this way, 11 yogi and 25 yoginis were selected for the sample. Snowballing made me enable to reach the account owners who are both yoga practitioners from Turkey and the Instagram users usually post photos related to their yoga practices. At the end, 36 of the yogi and yoginis from Turkey were in the following list. The members of the sample were active users of Instagram in where prevailing message was

centered around yoga and the attributes of their self-identities as a yogi, yogini, yoga teacher or yoga enthusiast. Almost all of them have the certificate of Yoga Teacher Trainee while their professional occupations vary. There are engineers, students, housewives and yoga studio owners among them. They live in big cities but according to their sharings, rural areas seem to be preferred for their holidays or yoga retreats.

For obtaining meanings of online practices, social relationships were searched in digital space by systematic observation instead of open ended data gathering (Jannis, 2008). Besides, in search of the meaning of yoga-related sharings for my informants, I have conducted interviews in a semi-structured way like the protocol McCracken (1988) mentions consisting of a list of topics rather than a list of questions. The questions in our interviews were including, but not limited with, the topics below:

- Information about how they started to yoga
- Importance of yoga for their lives
- Reasons of using Instagram
- Explanations for the practices on Instagram (content of the sharings, employing hashtags, posting frequency etc.)
- Considerations regarding to their public accounts
- Comments on Instagram's structure and regulations

Starting with place of yoga in their lives, I deepened the questions about the role of social media in their everyday communication and then focused on yoga-dominant Instagram sharings. 5 of them were face-to-face while the other 5 were online. Even supposing face-to-face interviews would be more effective to gain information about the self-performances

regarding to catching non-verbal clues at the beginning, in practice, online communication became useful to set my research from geographical and time-dependent boundaries as well as to understand the conditions of communication in digital space. Since one part of my research included a close reading to put forth the social context of online performances, I analyzed yogi and yoginis' images for explaining how SNS-specific language, arrangement of visual material and also texts and hashtags were used for presenting self-identity on the stage of Instagram. Besides, the ethnographic research techniques including participant observation and interviews were utilized with this aim and the potential of online ethnography at least to some extent, was tried to be explored. Observation of the sample's practices both online and offline, semi-structured interviews by face-to-face communication and online conversation were included in this part of the research. In addition to my participation to International Yoga Day events in 2015 and 2016, I have attended to a yoga class in a yoga retreat camp and followed the yoga sessions in METU Campus while I have kept in touch with yoga practitioners as much as possible. By taking into consideration of representativeness of their cases, the interviewees were selected according to findings on prior observation and visual analysis of Instagram accounts. During my research, the aspects which are put on display by yogi and yoginis were sought carefully. while keeping in mind that what is not on the stage is often as informative as what is therein.

Since the claim and the logic of Instagram is connecting people via images which creates stories, the focus on visual discourse of the sharings was particularly reckoned for the analysis. That's why I dealt with the images by considering the creation of a specific language combined with texts and I took the body practices in a semiotic modality which communicates the message on identity by itself. Since in my online field images were used for conveying the performances via tools of multimedia, my data were varied from images

and videos to textual materials and hashtags for social media analysis. Looking through discursive practices and gaining ethnographic insight for the case of Instagram required an effort on exploring the potential of digital communication and bringing it into play. Despite the fact that it has advantages on access to data by eliminating physical location and time-dependent boundaries, social media research requires attention in certain aspects. Regarding to that, Coleman (2010) points out collecting and interpreting digital forms of data as challenging processes because of hypermobility, ephemerality, mutability. Therefore, I took some steps during my research for dealing with the challenges of online research. First of all, I created an Instagram account @bilge_golge_ma to choose and follow my sample and reach them if necessary. In this way, a systematic approach was employed and data collection became easier. Secondly, the material was archived in a file after screenshotted and saved as word document due to impermanent nature of online data and in this way, the validness of research was guaranteed. Since social media research is still a newly discovered agenda for the scholarly efforts, the ethical concerns were involved in the research design regarding to privacy, anonymity and consent of the individuals. Herein, although the observation in digital realm is still being discussed about whether there is a difference between public physical space and online platforms open to public (Moreno, Goni, Moreno, & Diekama, 2013), since the knowledge gained from Instagram re-contextualized for academic purposes, the followed accounts' owners are informed via direct message feature of the platform and informed about the study.

Triangulation and flexibility of the research design came in useful for asking right questions and moving back and forth during my investigation. As an example of how the process was fruitful in this way, the time when I used Direct Message (DM) function of the platform to ask yogins' permission for following their accounts for my research can be given.

Interestingly, a few of them went for more information, but many of them wrote “Sure, this is a public platform” or “My account is open to public already”. Even if, being followed for an academic research means the context is completely changed, they were not uncomfortable about it. That was the first time I thought about that people might be find a way to negotiate with public/private dichotomy. To sum up, both design of the research and the methodological considerations for social media investigation made it possible to reveal certain answers specified at the initial phase.

In chapter 2, a review is provided in relation with the former inquiries in the literature regarding to social media practices, formation of late-modern subject as well as the studies on modern postural yoga. Herein, the choice of Instagram in relation with the main characteristics of contemporary society and how yoga was contextualized during the study are explained while Goffman’s dramaturgical approach is adapted for Web 2.0 context.

In chapter 3, the main motives for Turkey’s yoga community to utilize Instagram in their self-communication are explained. In this chapter, choice of Instagram has been reasoned while visual-dominant feature of contemporary communication are emphasized. Besides, blurriness between the personal accounts and commercial language on social media and nonetheless, how the user find a place to declare her/himself are explained.

Finally, chapter 4 discusses how yoga body communicates messages on self-identity of yogi or yogini while presentation of the gender roles on Instagram as well as digital censorship for the online performances are scrutinized. This is the part in where both control over the subject and the potential of the SNS for self-expression are pointed out. It is also claimed that which side can be activated highly depends on the offline conditions in the society here. Following

the argumentation in these three chapters, conclusion includes a summary of the study as a whole, findings and the highlighted points whereas justfying the aim and the results of the thesis.



CHAPTER 2

YOGIC SELF ON INSTAGRAM

2.1. Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

With the emergence of internet and new digital devices, social media became an essential part of our daily lives to communicate with others, to generate online knowledge as well as to obtain and share information in the scene of Web 2.0. As Jean Burgess (2007: 127) states, Web 2.0 is the term used for reflecting “convergence of social networks, online communities, and ‘consumer-created’ creative content”. As a consequence, social media platforms have become increased and diversified regarding the expectations and activities of the users. Among them, Social Network Sites (SNSs) appear as online applications which take an important place in the scope of social media. Although varied practices through social media platforms may cause lacking in definition, an outline for SNSs still can be provided for a common ground to discuss the phenomenon. With this aim, Ellison and boyd (2007) identified some characteristics that might be subsumed under the phenomena of Social Network Sites (SNSs). Respectively, the user can create a profile according to the architecture of the specific platform, get in connected with a certain group or with the public and share certain messages for maintaining his/her computer-mediated communication (boyd & Ellison,

2007). In 2013, they updated this definition and overcome the deficiencies due to changes in the phenomenon within the context of Web 2.0. According to new definition provided by them:

A social network site is a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-level data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site. (2013: 1)

That is to say, Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are web based structures that enable people to construct profiles, to build networks, to contact with the members of these networks and to socialize (Aspling, 2011; Tüfekçi, 2008). In the past decade, the question of why people use social media has been studied extensively. Previous studies have confirmed that objectives such as establishing social ties, providing a ground for creativity and cultural activities, benefitting from participating in a network (Obar & Wildman, 2015), supporting commercial or professional activities or entertainment on digital space (van Dijk, 2013), telling stories about personal lives (Cheung, 2000), looking for an intimate relationship (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006) drive people to use SNSs.

Constructing online profiles enable the user to portray him/herself and to the self-portray to audience (De Vries & Peter, 2013) in an arguably interactive way. Alice Marwick's research conducted when SNSs are in an immature state might give an idea here. In her study, she reviewed users' self-presentations on Friendster, Orkut, and MySpace with a critical approach to limitations of the expression because of the structure of the online platforms enforce their own rules and put limitations to the user. As she rightly points, on the one hand, SNSs are driven by the commercial concerns and existing power relations in the society which is a

situation still valid for multiple social media tools today. On the other hand, the user can perform his/her self-identity through various ways against the imposition of the structure. These emancipatory ways vary from platform to platform depending on intention of the user by the choice of that specific platform such as ironic, sarcastic or parodic accounts, safe profiles (Marwick, 2005).

Some of the scholars studying on social media traces the history and development of SNSs from the initial phases to the era of Web 2.0 to highlight the changes during the past decade. Hereunder, in her “critical history of social media”, Jose van Dijk claimed that there is a coded and scripted path that directs the user to use a specific platform determined according to interest of the businesses (2013). In comparison with the early period of the phenomenon, corporations started to monetize the information generated in SNSs (van Dijk, 2007) and the platforms have become a source for the other services that are using “social graph” for serving to the markets (Ellison & boyd, 2013). Conversely, the society is exposed to the claims “to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected” (<https://www.facebook.com/pg/facebook/about/>), make the user “free to have fun and express themselves” for “self-expression” (<https://www.snap.com/en-US/news/>) and “a world more connected through photos” (<https://www.instagram.com/about/faq/>) of SNSs.

Although corporate discourse on SNSs are criticized because of hiding the intervention of commercial interests (Marwick, 2005; Van Dijk, 2007), the online practices are still worth to consider since they inform us about the self-identities of the users. As the findings of the research conducted for this thesis demonstrates, these platforms are used for conveying specific messages related to personal communication from the user’s side.

Looking at SNSs and the Context of Turkey, it is in many respects challenging country for studying communication patterns on social media. On the one hand, its penetration rate of SNSs such as Facebook is quite high, while especially urban population of the country uses online platforms in their daily lives for following hot topics on the agenda as well as entertainment, contacting with each others and maintaining social relationships online. Control on SNSs on the other hand, depicts another side of online communication in Turkey. Blocking social platforms, both legal and social censorship and rumours on unsecure or negative effects of them on people's lives and shape social dialogue in the society. As the most oppressive consequences of social media activities, legal actions are taken against the users who are accused by their sharings on online platforms. In comparison with the stigmatized platforms of the country, Twitter and Facebook that the shared content covers many topics of the agenda; Instagram is an arguably isolated platform from political content. Nonetheless, the isolation in question does not mean that photo-sharing application is emancipated from the power relations in the society. There is enough evidence to suggest that prevalent social norms are influential on Instagram practices. To put it another way, usage of the platform is influenced by societal background of Turkey.

2.1.1. The Environment of Polymedia

A deeper understanding of the communication on social media demands a framework of the media setting online. By grounding on their ethnographic studies, Madianou and Miller (2012) suggests polymedia theory to explain today's integrated media environment within the complexity of multiple media and their effects on communication patterns:

...polymedia is an emerging environment of communicative opportunities that functions as an 'integrated structure' within which each individual medium is defined in relational terms in the context of all other media. In conditions of polymedia the emphasis shifts from a focus on the qualities of each particular medium as a discrete

technology, to an understanding of new media as an environment of affordances. As a consequence the primary concern shifts from an emphasis on the constraints imposed by each medium (often cost-related, but also shaped by specific qualities) to an emphasis upon the social and emotional consequences of choosing between those different media. (2012: 170)

Integrated structure at issue has directed the authors to suggest investigating the medium's ties regarding the other media platforms by taking into consideration of whole environment instead of focusing on one specific medium. Accordingly, the researcher can reach cultural differences of online communication instead of global-scale generalizations. At that point, my approach was taking social media environment as a whole while inquiring about the choice of Instagram and the ways of using this SNS with its specific features. As Gershon (2010) states, specifying "media ideologies" behind the practices of the users on image-sharing application while considering older media's influences on their practices brings about an understanding of how a medium communicates and structures communication (Gershon, 2010, as cited in Coleman, 2010) regarding the both medium's potential and the media environment with all its channels.

A very palpable example of polymedia environment on Instagram is sharing the links of personal blogs or Facebook pages on Instagram. Adding the link to the post is usually combined with relating the content of the photo with the blog or Facebook post by, for example, visual composition or textual arrangement. For instance in a post about a vegan recipe, the account owner directs her followers to her Facebook page by writing "For the measurements and the recipe details, you can check my Facebook page...". One another example practice is sharing a part of the blog post on Instagram to direct interested audience to the personal blog (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). For the last example, applying different public/private settings to each SNS can be remarked. As explained in the next chapters, the yogi or yogini prefers to use Instagram for a wider audience, while they state that Facebook accounts are used for more private sharings. This is in line with the fact that one particular

message is transmitted through new media tools and each of them contribute to the communication with its own qualities.



Figure 1: Link Added to Instagram Post to Direct Followers to Facebook Account

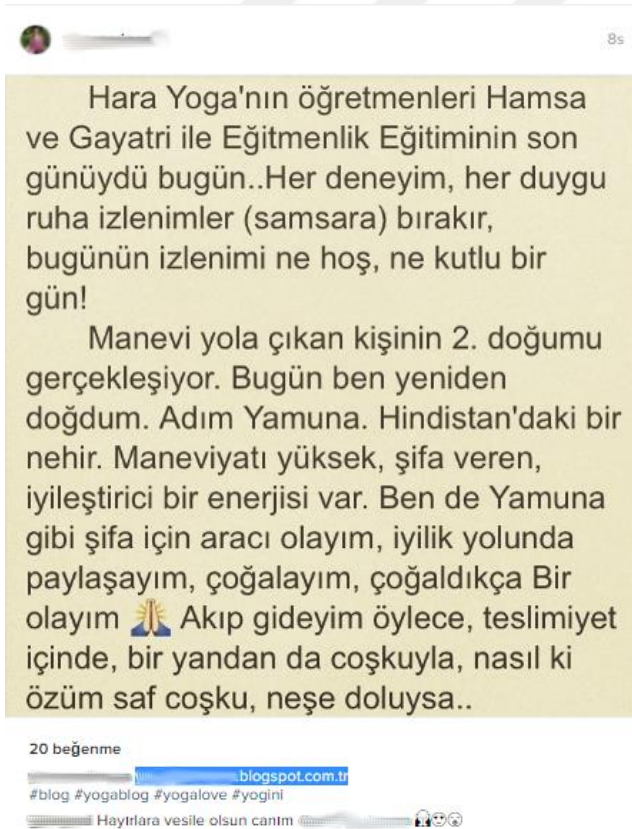


Figure 2: A Part of the Blog Post on Instagram to Direct Followers to the Personal Blog

2.1.2. Instagram

On July 21, 2016, Instagram team published a post on their blogs and announced that they have reached 500 million users that 300 million of them are on the platform everyday.

According to this post, % 80 of Instagrammers are from the outside of United States in where the application was developed in 2010 (<https://www.instagram.com/press/?hl=en>).

Consequently, the platform has become known globally and the its use has been diversified but the concept of connecting world through images endures unchanged and settles daily lives of people all around the world:

As you've captured and shared the moments happening around you, you've formed incredibly varied and diverse communities. Whether you're an illustrator, a sneakerhead or an astronaut on the International Space Station, every photo and video you share helps bring people closer to friends and interests, broadens perspectives and inspires a sense of wonder. You've made Instagram a place where the everyday and the epic are always within reach. (<https://www.instagram.com/p/BG6t6LphQeM/>)

Among various SNS of today's mobile technologies emerged environment, Instagram focuses on image/video sharing in an interactive way. Beyond its image-sharing function like Flickr, Instagram has its unique characteristics which make it one of the top 10 social networks with over 400 million users. It can be categorized in polymedia environment with its distinctive features on profile design, follower-based network, settings for comment, messaging and public/private settings.

The mobile photo-sharing application that offers its users a way to upload photos, apply different manipulation tools (filters) in order to transform the appearance of an image, and share them instantly with the users' friend or the public. It also enables the user to share short videos. In brief, capturing and sharing instant images from everyday life is the main logic of the online platform. By their *Instagramming* activities, the users utilize images with textual materials and hashtags all together and the mega data is created that way. Above all,

Instagram-specific language is constituted in digital realm. In their studies investigating the potential of hashtag in ethnographic research, Bonilla and Rosa (2015: 5) indicate uses of the symbol #, offering a system to designate the online dialogue, that “(hashtags) allow users to not simply ‘file’ their comments but to performatively frame what these comments are ‘really about’, thereby enabling users to indicate a meaning that might be otherwise apparent” for the case of Twitter. In a similar way, texts featuring the photos of Instagram are highlighted via hashtags and their searchability and visibility are increased; and similar contents and user groups are gathered under same hashtags.

In terms of community formation of Instagram users, it is suffice to affirm that they employ hashtags to establish collectiveness which is eventuated weak but coherent ties through the social network. In view of strong and weak ties in SNSs, it would be helpful to recall classification of Granovetter (1973, as cited in Granovetter, 1983) for the social ties in terms of frequency of the contact time, intimacy of the dialogue and density of the communication between the individuals. Granovetter (1983: 205) illustrates strong ties with one’s close friends while the weak ties with acquaintances and remarks the opportunities of weak ties and highlights the benefits of weak ties in spite of the negative perception about these flexible connections: “At a more mundane level, I argued that weak ties have a special role in a person's opportunity for mobility... Acquaintances, as compared to close friends, are more prone to move in different circles than oneself” . In the context of social media, Granovetter’s argument on mobility and disposal of geographical boundaries while the social ties get more loose can be used to explain the collective characteristics of Instagram community of yogi and yoginis. One of my interviewees, a yogi (personal communication, June 11, 2016) mentioned about this advantage with a case in point that thanks to Instagram, he contacted with European yoga communities and involved in a yoga event abroad. He said that “Here it is, in

unimaginable places, there are people who can advertise and boost my name, people who can attract people to my yoga classes. It is same for me, I would do these things for them if they request from me”. Although another yogini put an emphasis on “superficiality of the online friendship”, we can certainly talk about useful sides of social media practices.

For the reasons mentioned above, practices on Instagram offers promising findings on visual-dominated communication of contemporary society. Furthermore, it is an appropriate case to see the relation between the choice of the platform and “scaled/scalable sociality” (Miller et al., 2016) in the grand scheme of dependence of socio-technological developments’ for certain kind of communication in different local context.

Within the contemporary consumer culture, self-identity is communicated through lifestyle-related choices - clothing, appearance, leisure time activities, eating habits and bodily dispositions etc., that are made through plural options in everyday (Featherstone, 2007; Giddens, 1991). As a prevalent feature of this communication, the individual narrativizes his/her life by including, excluding or emphasizing choices in the quotidian set of circumstances. At this point, rather than static and solid narratives, life stories are created by reflecting late-modern attitudes, that are about perpetual change for identities. Consequently, by mixing different elements, auto-narratives of the individuals are re-created for maintaining the “reflexive project of the self” (Giddens, 1991) in a continuous manner. This condition corresponds to the characteristics of late-modernity which are everyday’s complexity due to plural choices of the individual, establishment of new lifestyles for sustaining identity construction consistently, strict connection with consumer culture and influences of globalism on cultural changes (Ferrell, Hayward, & Young, 2008, as cited in Jordan, 2014, April 22).

Among assorted lifestyle-related choices, sports which are not only activities for physical improvement but also systems led the participants to express their manner in life are the part of this era's social and cultural conversation. Late-modernity, while challenging the traditional norms, has propounded "non-mainstream athletic forms, identities, lifestyles and physical cultural practices that do not emulate or replicate hyper-competitive, hierarchical and patriarchal modernist sport" (Atkinson, 2010: 1250). In other words, what will be named as lifestyle sports in this study is a product of late-modernity. Lifestyle sports are distinguished from traditional sport types by their promotion of "alternative" practices regarding to physical cultures (Atkinson, 2010). This is why they are related with conveying certain messages about identity and besides, worth to study for investigating practices connected with positioning oneself among the others, and consequently presenting self in the society. Choosing a non-conventional sport for their leisure times enables people to representing their attitudes on both physical and social matters. Wheaton (2010: 3) shows how lifestyle sports practitioners position themselves against traditional and competition-based sports by:

Participants identify themselves through recognizable styles, bodily dispositions, expressions and attitudes, which they design into a distinctive lifestyle, and a particular social identity... Although commercialization and mainstreaming has lead to an erosion of their oppositional character, participants often denounces regulation and institutionalization, and are often critical of, or ambivalent to commercialism.

That's to say, these sports' connotations with certain ways of living reflect the characteristics of late-modern society and its forming to the subject which is flexible, fleeting and self-reflexive. Besides, the influence of the lifestyle-oriented disposition is seen for subject formation in question.

For the case of my dissertation, yoga corresponds to the explanation of lifestyle sports provided here. Even if it's spiritual aspects are underlined in the public eye, yoga's increased popularity and common practice in Western world are relevant with physical activity and enjoyment at the free time from the work. In a general manner, yoga is defined as not a religion but meant for individual growth and for physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual balance (Iyengar, 1989). As it can be found in this definition, yoga is a flexible discipline that every yogi/yogini adapt it in accordance with his/her own personal story. Therefore, the lifestyle sport, yoga which is aligned with the fleeting practices of late-modern subject, offers a fruitful example regarding the performances in both online and offline stages in a Goffmanian sense. It offers a field for observing both self-presentation and identity formation on Instagram as well.

2.2. Visual Culture, Photography and Social Media

Within the aforementioned polymedia environment, the choice of Instagram indicates certain aspects of today's interpersonal communication. In order to link Instagram's significance with the supremacy of visual conversation in contemporary society, the background of image-based communication is required to be briefly outlined. As a beginning, it is important to consider social and cultural formation of this communication through technological developments in history. As John Berger (1972) argues for social effects of images, visual representation incorporates societal meanings as well as cultural construction of the differences counting social inclusions and exclusions. Therefore, both social and cultural contexts of social media practices should be taken into consideration while digital technologies capabilities are analyzed.

At the present time, we can talk about a visual culture which is strengthened by the opportunities provided by new technologies since the images have overcome the supremacy of writing. Instead of leaving indelible impressions, this culture constitutes itself continually and in a present-oriented way (Lipovetsky, 2002, as cited in Çakır, 2014). For the age of social media, Instagram is an appropriate place to investigate the relation between the role of images on self-presentation and fast consumption of these images by way of its focus on instant production and sharing of photographs and videos in the context of the visual culture in question. Posting a new photo everyday and updating the front stage with emphasized details of everyday life of yogi and yoginis such as family, yoga practice, mindfulness or inner journey illustrate the expectations of aforementioned context. Beyond the capabilities of traditional mediums, social media demonstrates the importance of the image for the continuation of performance/self-presentation with almost limitless capacity of new media for image-production and –transmission.

Following to the influences of technological changes, photography became a part of mundane life of the society and online practices intersected with the images of self-narratives. Through the arrangement of Instagram gallery, the user started to communicate his/her identity whether to the friends, families, acquaintances or to the public. Herein, although the posts reflect various aspects of self-identity of yogins, the provenance and the main focus of sharing practices remain consistent with the targeted impression. Subsequent to impact of photography, emergence of the internet and digital photography reveals different subject positions related with yoga that has still some commonalities with the *show* in a Goffmanian understanding. For investigating this transformation and putting similarities and differences due to both technological changes and the dominance of seeing, Instagram is an appropriate platform with the claim of connecting people via images which creates stories.

According to Gillian Rose (2001), images cannot speak for themselves; they are needed to be analyzed in a specific context in order to be explanatory. Therefore it is important to set forth the function of photography on social networks to propound the context that we interpret content generation in Instagram and the presentation of self together. Starting with the statement for connecting world through photos (<http://blog.instagram.com/post/44078783561/100-million>), the design of visual communication here rebounds on the practice of sharing images from fleeting events of everyday. Besides, the new media technologies and their relation with image production process also have an impact on social process concerning communicational aspects. With the convergence of the smart phone cameras and SNSs, “a distinctive and diverse practice of imaging” came out and digital photography has been re-defined both functionally and discursively (Hand, 2012, as cited in Chalfen, 2016: 85). Pursuant thereto, Brook A. Knight (2013) points out the transformation of photography from analogue practices to the era of social media and indicates that image production extends into everyday of the ordinary people. As claimed by the author, with the integration of mobile phones, digital camera and the internet; the function of image making changes from documentation of important scenes to presenting daily performances of the individuals. In view of this, Knight claims that “quotidian images of the cell phone camera” are not for recording or the artistic aims, they are utilized for “declaring one’s existence” (2013: 165). For the existing practice of digital photography of Instagram, it can be asserted that the individual declares his/her existence as the one who both photographed and who capture the image by the camera.

Furthermore, dominance of seeing is a common condition on today's communication process which has considerable impact on shaping the individual's behaviours, attitudes and way of thinking, and creating a connection between visuality and performance. Paul Martin Lester (2006) explicate this process in Syntactillic Theory of Visual Communication:

There are strong indications that the status of images is improving. We live in a mediated blitz of images. They fill our newspapers, magazines, books, clothing, billboards, computer monitors and television screens as never before in the history of mass communications. Something is happening. We are becoming a visually mediated society.

Parallel to Lester's argument, social media offers a field to the community for mediating daily experiences as well as the self-concepts of people. In addition to the preference on Instagram, the content and the visual arrangement of the posted photos on their own convey the messages about yogic lifestyle and the information about how yogins want to highlight about who they are. General tendency for public appearance and the stylish sharings make the visual aspect of the online conversation particularly important here. This tendency suggests a relation between the presentation of the yogin subject and the spectacle which is suggested by Guy Debord. According to Debord (1970), in modern times the lived experience has been degraded into absolute representation and the images have become dominant for constituting and sustaining social interaction. Identified as the manipulation of visual world for enforcing late-capitalism's expectations from the individual, the spectacle can be observed in the late-modern period of yoga in particular for the case on digital stage. Like Debord's definition of spectacle, Instagram functions for constitution of social dialogue between the users instead of being a mere digital photo album. In this stage, "spectacular representations" (1970: 17) of the yogins intercommunicate with the mediated experiences which are commodified to maintain the one's self-actualization.

Debord mainly implies that there is no emancipation from spectacle. However when the concept of spectacle is employed for the social media all through, not only the correspondence between the commodity and the community shouldn't be noted; the counteractive standings within the same environment also carries critical sides of the online conversation. For a fact, the standings beyond the corporate and commercial structure are located within the spectacle and obey the same rules. Nevertheless, their impact and consequences of them should not be ignored in its entirety. Instead of taking a side, raising an awareness about the relation of the case taken in this study with Debord's spectacle might be worthy to look at.

In the light of my observations of the social network site, I can state that his argument has important points in term of image-driven and consumption-led facets of Instagram, or the genre of lifestyle media in general. Within the present media environment of the various types of SNSs, the sharings about yogi and yoginis clothing or food choices are the examples aligned with Debord's notion (1970: 7), "the obvious degradation of being into having... and from having into appearing". Accordingly, commodification process has been reflected into digital space and images in here have become important declaring one's self-identity. Herein, what is called as pessimist is indicating spectacle's passivating effect on individuals and heavily intervention of consumption into representation of the self. It is also worth to notice that commodification does not only occur in goods and services used as sign vehicles, but even in bodily practices it can be found.

But apart from the influence of spectacle which manipulates interaction between the members of the society, we can still talk about the patterns for reversing the power of images against the prevalent ways of online platforms' utilization. Actions of the Instagrammers advocating

body positivity or anti-censorship movement are the examples about this potential and explained further in detail. These cases support the claim that there are still empty rooms beyond the subjugation effect of the spectacle and the contemporary experience fed on consumables. However, discovering this potential of social media demands a process which is influenced by corporate structure of the platform as well as the cultural atmosphere of the societies even if it is perceived as homogeneous phenomenon incautiously. In the case of Instagram practices of Turkey's yoga community, my study propounds that this potential has not discovered enough yet.

2.3. Modern Postural Yoga: A Transnational Physical Culture

While a variety of yoga types have been originated throughout the history, in this dissertation modern postural yoga has been investigated for Instagram sharings. Apart from the mediation-based yoga branches, modern postural yoga is a popularized physical activity based on bodily practices, asanas, in a sequence synchronized with breathing exercises (Jain, 2012; Markula, 2014) and a consequence of Western interest to the Indian roots of the tradition (de Michelis, 2004: 2). In this respect, before continuing on performances of yogi and yoginis, giving a brief summary of the development of modern postural yoga in history .might be useful for drawing a frame for how the transnational phenomenon is issued in this study As opposed to prevalent understanding about yoga regarding to its ancient roots and spiritual references, modern postural yoga has a history around 150 years in point of fact (Singleton, 2010). In addition, based on the works of Mark Singleton, what is practiced outside of India today can be taken through its connection with global physical movements since the early waves of yoga sources presented to Western society.

In the historical process, nineteenth century appears as a breaking point with regards to transformation of yoga into a worldwide phenomenon. As several studies on the history of modern yoga suggest that what yoga was a male-dominant, spiritual and local discipline; and after that, it has been evolved into a physical practice which is appealing to both men and women, secular, and transnational phenomenon (see e.g. Singleton, 2010; Strauss, 2002; Jain, 2012). From colonial influences on Indian society to revival of nationalist ideals, yoga turned into a asana-based physical practice that took its place in health and fitness agenda of the West. In the modern era, national ideals have influenced the physical attributes to yoga to show strength and vigour of Indian man. Freeing from the past's pressure on how these outsiders, yogis diminished and a new wave of physical culture was appeared. In the intervening period, spiritual facet of the concept has strayed away from religious values of Indian tradition and non-religious system has been rooted. Although an appreciation of yoga's disembodied side can be found in the accent on such as inner peace or meditative practices, the main concern remains secular in a particular way. Fulya, a yogini who posted a photo in handstand pose in front of a Buddha statue said to me that this is actually an inappropriate act in a temple but since she "doesn't mind this kind of things" she didn't hesitate to share it.

Herein, it is also worth noting that mobility of both persons and of images were effective in that time course. Through both travels of yoga gurus to other parts of the world for introducing yoga and transmission of visual material via magazines, photographs and even films, transnational yoga became an issue to consider beyond the context of India. Especially mass production and distribution of the images from India to Europe and United States were highly influential on the entrance of the discipline of yoga to the West. That is to say, changed discourses around the dialogue in international realm re-contextualize what yoga signifies.

Concurrently with the foundation of yoga in the West, it has continued to interact with the practices international gym culture. At the end of this historical process, the society encountered with today's modern Western individuals who utilize yoga as a way of their self-presentations through the visual materials again but on digital space and with a different cultural context. However, rather than a linear way, formation and re-formation of postural yoga is influenced by the emphasis on mobility of modern world. R. Jain (2012: 30) explains this by: "... (Yoga) does not move from India to Europe and North America, but rather moves back and forth among a plurality of spaces, resulting in multifarious forms that are perpetually constructed and reconstructed anew to adapt to new discourses, demands, and trends in the modern yoga market".

In consideration of developments on transportation, image production and media technologies, the mobility here can be beheld in several conditions as it is stated in the paragraphs above. From the travels of yoga gurus to introduce yoga to Europe and United States, later on the visits of Westerners to India to *discover ancient roots of yoga*; English naming of poses, dissemination of yoga photography on printed media, foundation of centers dedicated to yoga research are all the examples for seeing how the formation was a multi-directional progress.



Figure 3: A Yogi Practising Yoga Pose in the Gym

In my study, with the aim of investigating bodily representations on Social Networking Sites(SNSs), postural yoga is taken as an extension of gymnasia of contemporary world and within the health and fitness system of the West. This approach might be seen as a consequence of the blurriness between gym activities and yoga practices scrutinized. Accordingly, the blurriness in question has been reflected to the Instagram galleries and yoga has taken its place on international physical culture. A post from a yogi can be taken as an illustration of the yoga's positioning in relation with *shape*- emphasized sport complex in Figure 3: Herein, asana body is presented in a setting including fitness equipment and pilates ball which shows yoga in relation with building muscles and having a strong body. However, its offering as a lifestyle sport which is also connected to reflexive constitution of the self moves yoga beyond the gym and transmits body's potential for self-actualization. This is in

line with the fact that as a transnational phenomenon, modern postural yoga is a product of late-modernity while it is also a part of identity construction of the individuals.

2.3.1. Yoga Body: From Post-Colonial Subject to Instagram Yogins

Social dialogue of Instagram mainly depends on photography and the visual discourse which is constituted through posts by Instagram users. In the same manner, the content and the arrangement of the photographs communicate specific messages about the user's self-concept. For the accounts in that predominantly yoga related content is shared, body appears as the center of the composition most of the time. Turning to Giddens' point on body as a projected instrument for the development of self-identity, Featherstone (2010) claims that appearance of one is correlated with "the inner narrative of what one feels one should be" and consumer culture feeds this narrative with mediated experiences by images in the public domain. That being said, imaged body communicates the message about individual's life, actions and perception about him/herself that s/he displays to other people.

Historically, visual narrativization of yoga body dates back to the very initial stages of the foundation of postural yoga in Western society. Especially mass production and distribution of the images from India to Europe allowed for the entrance of the discipline of yoga to the West. In the beginning, imaged body of Indian post-colonial subject has started to commune about his/her (mainly his) identity by development of photography (Singleton, 2010). Thereafter, mass distributed images enable the introduction of modern, transnational yoga to the contemporary society while *Indian showmanship* has been started to staged with the figure *strong Indian male body* and drew attention to the discipline which was supposed to be an ancient tradition (2010: 40, 154, 164).

At the age of social media, the medium has changed and transformed from photography to digital tools and visual signs transformed into Instagram's megadata which is constituted by still or moving images, text and hashtags. Western subject him/herself has become a figure for the spectacle. All the same, the body has remained central in visual communication; even if in a re-contextualized sense and in where publicly distributed images of yogins from different societies represent various narratives in their own contexts.

Regardless of the period of modern yoga, yoga body has been pictured within the bounds of the time's technologies and the instrumentality of body has become the center for visual narrativization of yogic-identity. By considering bodily practices of yoga, asanas and their connection with cultural trends on health and strength training in the rest of the world, it might be said that yogin body conveys certain aspects of the performer's identity from the aspect of yoga as a way of self-actualization of late-modern individual like it was yoga a way of self-representation of post-colonial subject once. Drawing from visual analysis on Instagram posts of selected account owners and comparison of the bodily practices of them with the photography of the first yogins in the West, there is an ample support for the claim that yoga body takes place as a mean for both sustaining a display for social interaction and communicating self-identity from past to today. On the setting of contemporary society, social media offers potential representations of the body of yogin which will be explained in detail later on.

2.3.2. Yoga Community of Turkey on Instagram

Among many other SNSs, Instagram provides a stage to display yogic performances to a wide-public through the flow of images which are the most effective way of today's

communication. Effectiveness of Instagram comes from the dominance of visuality in the culture and ceaseless feed for the circulation of snapshots from people's lives. Regarding to this matter, the choice for this thesis is an example of how social media takes role in presentation of self. Yoga community of Turkey offers a promising case here, in particular, on the stage of Instagram by making use of images.

In Turkey, we can talk about a yoga community with competent individuals in terms of using online platforms effectively. They employ multiple platforms for the aim of expressing their ideas on yoga, being a yogi or yogini and how a yogi or yogini must live. As we shall see, these yogi and yoginis have a common concern regarding social visibility, which is amplified by how they use social media. This was related to a specific lifestyle that combined social ties and self-expression within the community, with symbolic consumption and the demand for a stage for personal appearance in public which will be explained in detail further.

In a similar fashion with the cases of Usa and Europe, yoga has an increasing popularity in Turkey. There is a growing community interested in yoga whereas the individuals who stand for yogic lifestyle come into sight and provide a kind of expertise to this community. Before opening of Yoga Şala, Turkey's first yoga studio, there was no legally established center in Turkey. Afterwards, Cihangir Yoga and Yoga Time studios were opened, yoga became popular and widely spread. Zeynep Aksoy (personal communication, June 30, 2016), founder of Yoga Şala, explains the proliferation of yoga through yoga teachers' increasing numbers with the words: "... we're all trained by different 200-hours Teacher Trainings. These trainings are, for certain, American style approaches that are more compatible with capitalist system which made yoga spread in that way". As she said, yoga became popular in Turkey by

the activities of yogins who met with this discipline in American style trainings and the sources of Western yoga culture. Aksoy also refers to other yoga teacher who follows Indian approaches, but their existence in both offline and online remains rather run-down. Hence, for the case of Instagram, it wouldn't be wrong to say that yoga community of Turkey reflects the characteristics of Western yoga and the gym culture of modern society. That's why I use literature on Western Yoga, particularly on its representations in media for US and European cases. However, this doesn't mean that the practices remained exactly same with its Western original neither for the social front of yoga in Turkey for Instagram practices, nor the attitude towards to the discipline itself. To put it more simply, even if yoga in Turkey is in a continuation of European and North American schools, it would be misleading to take Turkish yoga community same as Western in every respects. Localities are effective in treatment to transnational concept as well as they are valid for Instagram performances of yogi and yoginis. At the same time, adaptable feature of the concept indicates specific aspects of late-modern society while provides a realm to self-presentation of yoga practitioners.

2.4. Presenting Self on Instagram

At the first glance, the concept self may cause a confusion since there is a divergence between how yogins take the self in their daily language and how I utilize the self concept of Goffman (1959) in this study. Therefore, it seems important to clarify the distinction between yogins' approach to self and Goffman's concept of self that I used for explaining how the user produces meanings about him/herself and the social context online. According to the first point of view, individuals tend to seek one true self, in this case, via yoga. Like Markula's (2014) study on the discourses on Yoga Journal cover pages, my analysis on Instagram posts reveals that the physical practices of yoga are taken as a means to reach one's authentic self. On the other hand, what I borrow from Goffman is a self concept which is related with

performances put into display in compliance with social dialogue with others. That is to say, self is made through dramatic expression pursuant to the expectations from the actor and adapted to the social setting and desired impression expected from the audience. In this case, yogi or yogini chooses Instagram to perform his or her role as a yoga practitioner among the multitude roles of their daily lives. Respectively, yogic-self is displayed to the wide-public while their accounts are tailored on the stage of Instagram.

Herein, another key attribute to take into consideration is the continuity of constitution of self-identity. Aligned with “trajectory of self” in late-modern period (Giddens, 1991), self-ing is an ongoing process in digital space withal, which is fed by various aspects of everyday. My interviewee Burcu (personal communication, August 1, 2016), for example, mentioned about her varying Instagram sharings on Instagram by saying that “While my (yoga) practice and interests are changing continuously, I am changing, too. And I’m trying to explain it as much as I can tell”. To that end, self is made and re-made through the activities shaped by the attempts for differentiating and also positioning the individual within the society, while it is presented on the profile-based SNS. Apart from the fact that social network sites have their own unique characteristics and digital media technologies make available to a new dimension for communication, online conversation between people can be expounded by the perspective of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism takes self as a dynamic product, constituted and negotiated/re-created in accordance with the social interaction. Herein, as Blumer defines, “meanings emerge from interactions with other individuals and with society; and meanings are continuously created and recreated through interpreting processes during interaction with others” (Blumer, as cited in Carter & Fuller, 2015: 2). From Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical standpoint, the self-presentational acts which are termed as performance are employed regarding to how people act, interact with each others and form relationships.

Appropriately, in the public realm of everyday life the multiple selves are performed on different stages to maintain a coherent identity of the one (Robinson, 2007). Furthermore, the actors adjust their performances according to audience and their feedbacks.

At this point, it's important to remember that Goffman's work is based on face-to-face communication – but still available for interpreting on-going online social dialogue. Besides, considering the relation between physical world and cyberspace regarding to self-presentation, Robinson (2007) argues that individuals do not emphasize essential elements of their offline selves in mediated interaction – basically they utilize the categorization of offline to constitute their online selves. Especially profile-based SNSs like Facebook or Instagram, the dialogue of online and offline becomes more valid. For the case of this study, my investigation on the accounts of yogi and yoginis supports this argument in the way of characterization of oneself in Instagram gallery. Their presented identities are not fabrication of imaginary ideal selves, rather an arrangement of personal stories with a stress upon ideal sides of their everyday.

Self-presentation is started with bio section of Instagram account in where the user defines him/herself with limited number of words and in this way, the account owner's qualities wanted to be stressed are conveyed to the followers. To the point role performances continue throughout the sharing activities on digital platform. The posted photos and arrangement of Instagram gallery refer to the choices regarding to constitution of the self-identity frequently and the visual content emphasizes the description provided in bio section. Consistently, yogi and yoginis manage their online performances with the intent of conveying an impression influenced by their offline concerns. Sharing photos about being a mother, defining

themselves as yoga teacher or adding their interests are all the parts of frequent Instagram performances for the yoga community of Turkey. In this respect, self-definitions such as “yogi”, “yogini”, “mother” or “traveller” appear as labels which are put on display for managing impression of others for them.

Goffman (1959) explains front stage performances by introducing the process of impression management. According to him, during the social interaction, people have a desire to make an impression on people about how the others perceive their identities. Therefore, they situate the sign vehicles, their “manner” and “appearances” appropriately. He also interprets how individuals maintain their performances with “expressions given” and “given off expressions”. Goffman (1959: 4-5) illustrates that expressions given are intended ones for continuing targeted impression, while the given off expressions are about perception of the audience even if the individual didn’t purpose to show them.

Herein, although the concepts of Goffman are useful and applicable to social media case; the unique characteristics of the online communication must be considered for avoiding misunderstandings. In this respect, Instagram communication differs from Goffman’s face-to-face dialogue and consequently, all aspects of dramaturgical approach cannot be applied. On the one hand, focusing on Instagram accounts of Turkey’s yoga community members promises on indicating how digital images are utilized by the user as to “given expressions” for their self-presentations and how “given off expressions” arise from online performances. On the other hand, it is important to realize that what is given off expression on face-to-face communication cannot be taken as the same for Instagram performances since the basic qualities of social interaction has been changed.

First of all, Goffman mentions about the cues beyond the verbal communication including gestures, facial and bodily expressions that are not correspond to Instagram performances. For instance, body language observed on Instagram is obtained from highly contemplated images and serves for given expressions of the yogi or yoginis. Similarly, “high signs” (Goffman, 1959: 181) cannot be observed here since “insta” feature is not instant as much as alive experience. Unlike using gestures or tones of voice, the photography of digital platform offers a more formal and planned impression for staged activities.

However, by keeping the limitation of the online, the work of Goffman can still be utilized for explaining performances within the context of mediated interaction. It offers a framework to investigate performances in digital stage. In the online context, the user arrange the sign vehicles pursuant to the platform’s capabilities, but the motive for building an expressive presentation remains same for all of them.

Over and above, danah boyd draws our attention to notable points about online impression management while she instrumentalizes dramaturgical approach for explicating online practices. According to her, “impression management online and off is not just an individual act; it’s a social process” and what is new in the online part of this communication is the added technical properties of the SNSs which enhance and develop social dialogue with the possibilities of the new communication technologies (boyd, 2014: 49). Therefore, specifying given off expressions for SNSs is a process which demands an understanding on the characteristics of the social conversation in question and contextualization of the online communication.

2.5. Managing Public/Private Sharing on Digital Space

One of the most studied concept related with the public/private dichotomy by the scholars who are interested in social networking practices is “context collapse”. danah boyd (2002) was the first who pointed at collapsed contexts in digital space and introduced the term when she was conducting her research on Friendsetter. Hereunder, while the contact lists turn into more complex connections that are more flexible and the profiles open to wide audiences, the user faces to difficulties to manage their online relationships. Unlike face-to-face communication, uncontrollable variety of the audience in the circumstances of mediated interaction disrupts the user’s performances since he/she cannot adjust his/her performances according to one particular audience group. The problem defined as “context collapse” arises from bringing many context at one point (Wesch, 2008).

Despite of the trouble caused by “context collapse”, in today’s networked society, the individual has to negotiate with them due to management of different contexts on digital space is one of the basic challenges in everyday communication between the individuals. To put it another way, connecting only with pre-defined and static groups is not as feasible as communicating with active networks updated continuously for staying currently informed and the other demands of today’s convention (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, as cited in Ellison & boyd, 2013). Because of that, the users find new solutions to manage their audiences. Public/private settings of the account is the most activated function with this aim. For instance, one of the yogins from my sample has two accounts: yoga_rockss which is public and therefore the one that I followed and @MamaOf2_Rocks, private but stated in information section of the other account. Further to that, my research shows that sharing publicly on Instagram is not counted something to be abstained from, instead, the members of the sample prefer to set their accounts for public audience and state that this is the way to

reach the targets for their Instagram activities. The drive for promoting the number of the followers is particularly centered social media practices according to both observations and the interviews which I conducted with yogi and yoginis.

This management of public/private preferences supports the claim that we are living and getting socialized in an environment of polymedia. Since this environment of SNSs provides many platforms for specific uses to people, choosing Instagram for public sharing reflects a specific way of communication. As a case in point, Ahmet stated in an e-mail questionnaire that he uses Instagram for the aims like inspiring people, sharing information with people, motivating people for yoga. The following question about why he prefers to open his Instagram account to the public, and Ahmet replied it by pointing out that he cannot reach those aims via a private account. Besides, “I have my Facebook as a private setting already” he added. This example supports the polymedia theory by showing how new media environment utilizes different platforms’ capabilities for transmitting several aspects of personal communication. Benefitting from the diversity of structures and potential results in a negotiation process for the user to deal with context collapse.

To conclude, Instagram appears as a social media which enables yogi and yoginis of Turkey to stage the performances related to their self-identities to the vast audience with a motivation for reaching people as much as possible. As a consequence of this aim, their Instagram activities and the content of the galleries are arranged in accordance with the public sharing and tailored profiles.

CHAPTER 3

USES OF INSTAGRAM BY YOGA PRACTITIONERS

The data obtained from the research offers insight into the motives for having an Instagram account and endeavouring to get in contact with other users. According to the research data, the most predominant causes for the members of Turkey's yoga community can be categorized under three main topics: The first one is visibility which reflects the aim of reaching as many people as possible. This motive has two aspects which are promotion of the yogin's yoga class and public recognition. The other motive is expressed as giving inspiration to the followers, in other words guidance to people for self-actualization. At this point, the yogi or yogini has a similar role with a self-help expert and, in a relevant manner, shares images and texts about a yogic way of living. In addition to visibility and guidance motives, creativity appears as a third motive among the patterns of Instagram practice. Image-sharing activities indicates a link with artistic self-expression.

3.1. Visibility and Recognition

While my research was continuing, Instagram announced a change in its timeline order that the posted will be sorted by an algorithm instead of chronological arrangement. According to new arrangement, the photo and videos in users' timeline will be ordered based on "user interest and interaction" rather than chronological order. That's to say, the algorithm enable the people to see firstly specific posts and accounts which they mostly interact with (Wright, 2016). Soon after, the feed of @bilge_golge_ma became abundant with "Turn on Notifications" posts (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: "Turn on Notifications" Posts

This case seems to be an appropriate starting point to shed light on the most apparent motivation to use Instagram; **becoming visible** or **increasing visibility**. The practices on

digital stage as well as emphasis of my interviewees indicates intended use of Instagram for creating an online prominent presence within the social network.

Before continuing on visibility, explaining commodification aspect of Instagram activities can be useful with regards to positioning social media practices in the consumer society. In addition to its function offering a ground for self-expression in everyday communication, Instagram is a platform which serves to marketing and PR-related purposes explicitly. To give a brief example, when the new algorithm was appointed, brands sought to adapt their strategies in accordance with this change. Since being followed does not correspond the need of advertising alone, the companies have taken steps for increasing their audience on Instagram (Laboon, 2016, September 6). This case shows that Instagram is actively used by marketing people and brand managers as well as individuals.

It goes without saying that marketing strategies of the brands have taken part in World Wide Web from the initial stages of internet, and fastened through the rise of social media. Relevant practices websites ads, special-to-online commercials and sponsorship activities are evolved through the dynamics of SNSs. Many companies created their own social media accounts and allocated human resources and capital for sustaining information flow through them. Social media marketers transformed “user centered social networking context” to communication platforms for advertising and brand communities (Chi, 2011).

Ordinary users like the yogi and yoginis in my sample, on the other hand, communicate with their contact lists by sharing lifestyle-related content frequently. These are the sharings which directly refer how individual construct his/her identity via consumption choices.

One main purpose of using social media is that not only corporate entities or brands, but the *ordinary users* of SNSs utilize these platforms for supporting their promotion. In this case, dilemma of the self between the personalized and commodified experience claimed by Giddens comes into the picture. According to Giddens (1991), “commodification influences the project of the self and the establishing of lifestyles” and “the project of the self becomes translated into one of the possession of desired goods and the pursuit of artificially framed styles of life”. However, the pressure of the system in terms of the market forces does not totally hegemonize the individual. Giddens (1991: 199) explain the reaction against it:

Even the most oppressed of individuals - perhaps in some ways particularly the most oppressed - react creatively and interpretatively to processes of commodification which impinge on their lives. This is true both within the realm of mediated experience and of direct consumption. Response to mediated experience cannot be assessed purely in terms of the content of what is disseminated: individuals actively discriminate among types of available information as well as interpreting it in their own terms.

Furthermore, while the personal account owners included directly brand names to their shared contents, the boundary between commercial and personal accounts became indistinct. The evidence of this convergence is seen in the case of lifestyle blogs in where specific lifestyle and consumption preferences manifests different parts of blogger’s life story, sense of aesthetics and gender roles (Sinanan, Graham & Jie, 2014).

Even if the blogs, belonged to earlier periods of social media, have started to melt in polymedia ecosystem, the patterns observed in this preceding genre continues in the practices on other platforms and indicates that individuals communicate their self-identities through certain consumption choices regarding their ways of living.

For the case of Instagram, this blurriness has become a more constant part of today's online communication patterns. Similar to lifestyle blogs, there are Instagram users who share the name of their sponsors, texts and hashtags about the particular brands under the photos they posted. Along with the other genres of Instagramming, yogi and yoginis practice similar strategies on Instagram. For instance, product placement in personal stories of the account owners appears as one of these practices. Using hashtags of yoga outfit or yoga mat brands, tagging sponsors to their sharing on Instagram and promoting their yoga studios illustrate that yoga community on Instagram shows a similar, if not stronger tendency with overall.

I had the chance to try this (name of the product) by @(name of the product's Instagram account) recently and i really liked it It boosts up your energy levels, heightens your mood and keeps your concentration high And it tastes good There are various herbal ingredients in (the product), including ginseng and green tea And it is organic and gluten free Thank you @(name of the product's Instagram account) @(the name of the distributor's Instagram account) for sending me this delicious tea! (hashtags related to the product and the brand)

The text of the post above illustrates how commercial language is being reflected in Instagram posts while private side of the account remains by adding personal messages. In the social platform, it becomes difficult to put rigid borders between the marketing discourse and the self-related messages.

From another perspective, it can be said that the blurriness between the commercial and personal aspects of Instagramming is a consequence of intermingling practices in social realm. And this is not specific to profile-based sharing practice but also present in the challenge of differentiating artwork from advertising materials. In his latest book, Lev Manovich (2016: 16) approach the issue of visual culture on social media in an astute way - and said that:

We can sometimes find lifestyle or fashion photography which is very, very close to poetic design on Instagram. The boundary is almost invisible, but I do believe that it exists. And the subtlety of this boundary itself is an important sign of how culture works today. “Independent” and “commercial” or “art” and “design” are not separated in clear ways like they were during the 20th century. But this does not mean that they have completely merged.

Both Manovich’s argument and the case of yoga community on Instagram signifies how contemporary society produces meaning in the era of social media. That is to say, instead of classifying social media practices as a personal or business activity, addressing interwoven condition of different genres assembled in one account as an indicator of the essence of today’s culture.

Turning back to visibility of yogi and yoginis beyond the commodification side of the communication, connote the relation between their performances on the stage of Instagram and the objective of social recognition. As a common practice, yogins add new posts to their galleries even if there aren’t any update or any special message for their daily online communication. For instance, they fill the time gap between two sequential posts by sharing a self-portrait by a photo usually taken while performing an asana, and write down just “Good Morning” or add solely emojis. In this way, their performances aren’t interrupted by many numbers of posts. That being so, they stay prominent in the front stage keep their social interaction sustained and, as Goffman suggests, they maintain managing impression of the audience about themselves.

It should be repeatedly noted that the motivation for using a social network is highly related with the intention of the community and its members. For example, Manovich claims that account owners use Instagram to document and communicate with “his/her friends, perhaps

family or expanded circle of acquaintances, as opposed to complete strangers” (2016: 7) for the case of U.S. However, for the instance of my sample, this argument does not seem to be valid. The yogi and yoginis on Instagram focus on reaching a wide audience as much as possible. The research data gathered for my study shows that having the maximum number of followers is important for yogi and yoginis to reach their targeted audience in an effort to announce their classes as well as to their opinions on yoga, life, health and other lifestyle-related topics connected with their idealized selves. This motive mirrors the emphasis on visibility both as an ultimate aim and dominant discourse of yoga community on Instagram. The practices particularly aiming to make yogis/yoginis visible are exemplified with update-and-keep up posts. Other techniques for the aim of expanding online audience can be listed as choice of sharing difficult and aesthetic poses, adding popular hashtags to their posts, using English in addition to Turkish in their texts. As a consequence, we can regard Instagram as a place in where the self-identity is continuously created and re-presented, instead of a digital photo album to record personal moments. To illustrate the fluid practices on Instagram, Burcu’s account offers a good case. As she stated in our interview (personal communication, August 1, 2016), the yogini doesn’t draw a line between the yoga-related photos and the other activities, instead she combines all of them in her Instagram gallery. While her sharings are predominantly about yoga events, challenging asanas and other physical practices that she commingled with yoga; images from wherever she is at that time, her wedding photos or a scene from a show which she participated in are also in the flow of her Instagram feed. There is also enough evidence to say that minimal intention is a matter of storing Instagram content to look at later, yet the user curates the gallery by deleting some of the posts while adding new photos everyday.

3.2. Guidance to People for Self-Actualization

Allied with the communication of social media, information flow from different resources has caused a dilution of the audience's attention. Within this media environment, online existence has become a central issue for recognition by public to connect with wider groups. Herein, like many others, publicity appears as an important issue for the yogi and yoginis that I followed on Instagram as well. In order to a deeper understanding of online social conversation, questioning this particular interest was necessary. Respectively, my study showed that yoga community's target of reaching as many people as possible arises from the intention of enhancing yoga's popularity and by doing this, increasing the number of people who practice yoga. My interviewee Ahmet expresses this intention with the statement of "to inspire people" (personal communication, July 21, 2016) which is related with the purpose of yoga's penetration in Turkey. He clarified his use of the platform by saying that he had started to share on Instagram because wanted to inspire other people, to share his knowledge and to motivate people for practising yoga.

At this point, analyzing what *inspiring people* means for my interviewees pointed at an attitude to advise others how to improve themselves. This improvement consists of physical as well as emotional betterment by the means of yoga. To the extent that, both interviews and texts of the posts underline that guiding people for their practices is also associated with an overall attitude beyond the physical practice. In one of the posts it is stated by the sentences of " 'Yoga is not about touching your toe, It is what you learn on the way down (Emoji) Hope to practice full of awareness and discovery of the self and the world (Emoji)' ". Accordingly, the process is valued and the progress of yoga body is attached to fulfill the one's potential. Herein, it is also important to note that the authority of the yogin user of Instagram comes

from his/her ability to accomplish difficult yoga poses. The physical strength and flexibility which are put on display on the stage of Instagram give them the power to have a voice in the audience's lives. Hence, during my research yogin photography appeared as a way of proofing competence of the yogin to guide people.

By reverberating self-help discourse in the expert-based system of contemporary society, yogic lifestyle offers a way of self-improvement and emancipation from the one's problems. Starting with the narrativization of yogins' own lives, yoga is considered as a way of means for self-actualization. The personal story of Dicle, a full-time yoga instructor who is also training yoga teachers and also organizing workshops about the topics in the intersection of yoga and art, offers a case in point here. In our interview, she mentioned about how she lost her aim in life and found a correct path by starting yoga. For example, a dialogue with her friend about quitting the job and changing her lifestyle clarifies how yoga is a life-changing experience in one's existence: "She said 'Dicle save yourself from here'. 'Okay, but what should I do?' 'Do whatever you want but save yourself.' So, I had chosen to kill myself first since I couldn't find enough courage to save myself and then, I had means (araç) to rebirth myself and that medium (araç) was yoga... So, I have started to yoga by doing so." (personal communication, June 4, 2016)

Along with self-narratives about the emancipation from the life's severest moments, another discourse on the subject of advising other people how to deal with their problems are also developed under the photos. To give a brief example, Figure 5 can be taken with its visual composition and the text message saying that "Maybe the only thing you need is opening your heart to every possibility. while your heart is opening, the life is also started to open to you

(Emoji)”. The physical posture of the yogini is also among the *heart-opening asanas* and the outdoor scene is reflecting general attitude to the world.



Figure 5: Example of Recommendation-Like Post on Instagram

The examples can be varied, but the main motivation for sharing remains in the neighbourhood of the same intention. By way of illustration, after analysing the discourses on the covers of Yoga Journal America, Markula states that yoga is considered as a “holistic arts of living” that is “evolved into a simple life of love, joy, and inner strength in the middle of the modern distractions” (2014: 1). Aligned with Markula’s findings, for the members of Turkey’s yoga community also postural yoga projects an art of living for its practitioners and followers on Instagram.

In this respect, creating an art for one’s life, doing this through the medium of a physical discipline evoke the function of lifestyle sport in late-modern society. Wheaton explains this

process with the relation between lifestyle sport and self-development: “The meaning of these lifestyle sport activities for the participants is found in their creative and self-actualization potential, through which the individuals loses him/herself in ‘transcendence of the self.’” (2010: 3)

As a platform for disseminating self-messages, Instagram is instrumentalized by the spokesperson of the lifestyle sport. In this communication, showing the audience how they manage to improve their life quality and supporting their yoga practices with inspirational sharings are observed. The discourse on maintenance of the balance in their life is represented via asanas required physical balance which are also taken as an indicator of inner balance.

3.3. Artistic Motives of Sharing: Creativity on the Stage

Actually, I found Instagram absurd, I mean, people were posting their yoga poses and it sounded crazy... Then... One of my friend insisted so much and said that people’re becoming so visible in there, people can see you and more students come to your classes so and so. She convinced me. After having an account, that time it has started to enjoy me. Because, it feels like that there is an artistic side of what you’ve done. You’re observing it by yourself; besides, showing to people.

As my interviewee Ogün (personal communication, June 11, 2016) explained, its potential for transmitting creativity appears as a reason for the choice of Instagram among the users.

Therefore, promoting the user-generated content is a reflection of artistic expression of yoga self is another motive for using Instagram. Before the user side, the corporate message of Instagram itself emphasize the creative role of the users on the platform and the potential for expressiveness: “Thank you for your creativity, your openness and your passion for sharing your worlds with one another. We can’t wait to see what you create next”

(<http://blog.instagram.com/post/146255204757/160621-news>).

When the sample's posted images are analyzed corresponding with discursive formation of Instagram sharing, two aspects for artistic motives are indicated. These two aspects can be labelled as artistic expression and creative practices. Accordingly, expressing themselves via aesthetic poses or compositions of *yogic items* in a specific setting, receiving support from texts authored by the yogins or quotations are one part of it, while linking up creative activities to their yoga-related posts in Instagram gallery is another side of it.

Creative practices become diversified from the platform's offerings to incorporation with other applications. In addition to filter function of Instagram, photo-manipulation applications motivate the yogins to stylize their galleries and share their photos with the audience. An illustration may be found in popularity of Prisma application which has a claim on turning photographs into modern art works by using artificial intelligence (Russon, 2016, July 18) on Instagram. Like many other Instagrammers, yoga community members have been also employed the photo-manipulation tool with an intention to creative production by reverberating the claim of co-founder Alexey Moiseenkov: "We draw something like a real artist would" (Levin, 2016, July 14).

Combining yoga with other fields like dance or acrobatics also reflects another dimension of self-expression via art (e.g. Figure 6). Yogins show an interest for mixing different disciplines since they find yoga as a creative zone and compatible with art. For instance, one of my interviewee (personal communication, August 1, 2016) said that dance and yoga are "two disciplines from one single source" and she doesn't draw a line between them. Mandala art, another immigrant of the East, was also welcomed by the yoga community of Turkey and especially drawings and quilted mandalas became a part of artistic activities observed on

Instagram. Although it has religious roots and an origin for meditative practice for Tibetan Buddhists (*What is a mandala*, n.d.); in contemporary Western context, mandala circles are applied to different materials for basically enjoying a creative activity and accelerating self-expression via crafting geometric patterns. To illustrate this, @aycaogus_daily account is quite rich regarding to mandala art examples which are made by herself or colored by children and parents and its benefit for child education and positive effects on their behaviour (*Mandala*, 2013, August 2).



Figure 6: Post from Yogini's Mandala Art Workshop

This secularized version of the spiritual tradition bears a resemblance to the rise of modern postural yoga and offers another case to indicate artistic expression in digital space. At the same time, yoga has its specific features about that creative and bodily practices are together observed as a motivation for social media sharing.

After all, it might be suggested that Instagram enables the users to articulate his/her creative side via image manipulation tools in addition to the pre-existing possibilities of photography. In addition, yoga-related posts provides a channel for artistic expression to them. After all, expressing themselves via body, image and words is one of the key motives of yoga community on Instagram which indicates an alternative potential of the digital platform.



CHAPTER 4

YOGA BODY, GENDER ROLES AND CENSORSHIP ON INSTAGRAM

Based on the findings in this study, online performances of Turkey's yoga community offers understanding about instrumentalization of the body through Instagram sharings, gendered aspects emphasized on the digital stage as well as restricted activities which restrain to utilize SNSs for self-communication throughly.

4.1. Representation of #yogabody on Instagram

In consequence of yoga's increasing popularity all around the world, presence of yoga communities on Instagram can be addressed in a multitude of countries and Turkey is not an exception among them. In these communities, SNSs are used by practitioner of yoga to present specific aspects of his/her self-identity. Like my sample does on Instagram, self-definitions of "yogini", "yogi", "traveller" or "mother" are took place in their posts and constitutes a visual conversation for conveying the attributes related to who the yogi or yogini is. When Instagram posts of yogins are investigated in terms of the capacity of the platform as

a way of self-expression or, in the other side, as a medium for exercising SNS's domination on the subject, the practice of the body in asana pose provides a field to debate on Foucault's (1988, 1993) notion of technologies and techniques of the self and the domination as well.

According to Foucault, instead of absolute pressure on one's acts, power must be taken as a more complex process in that these two kinds of techniques operate together. In this process, the individual's acts for constituting themselves as well as social relations come from the interaction between these two types of technologies (Foucault, 1993: 203-4). Foucault defines technologies of self as processes that "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and semis, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (1988: 17), while technologies of dominance are the mechanisms founded upon the structures' object to shape how people see themselves and the society. In the case of Instagram practices, on one hand, the corporate structure of Instagram applies a power on performances which is directed by the interests' of the platform regarding to enhancement of its popularity in the society. On the other hand, in comparison with the Indian showman of the analogue photography in early nineteenth century, yogi and yoginis have more possibilities for proving his/her autonomy in social media. They have a stage for expressing who they are in digital realm. As Dicle mentioned about how she met Instagram, "I saw that people were actually expressing themselves in there by posting photos and adding texts under them and realized, that was a place for it. It was invaluable for me..." Accordingly, when we looked at visual representation of yogin's self on digital platform, it can be said that a play, if not a negotiation process, between the mechanisms for subjugation and self-expression is possible in the scene of Web 2.0. Starting from this point of view, I focus on representation of yoga body on social media with an attempt to explain what an image of the body in asana pose stands for when considering the

dichotomy between Foucault's docile body controlled by the technology of dominance and "aestheticization of the subject" as a way of resistance (Seppä, 2004) in this part of my dissertation. In his seminal work "Discipline and Punish", Foucault (1994) traces the manipulations on body historically and draws our attention to how the current system makes invisible their control on subjectivity. On the one hand, power is exercised in a subtle way and create "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1994) that the bodily practices are formed in accordance with disciplinary forces. On the other hand, as Anita Seppä (2004) suggests, the individual can stand up to regularizing demands on his/her autonomy via several aesthetic experiences. In this respect, human body can be an effective tool for resisting normative expectations in the society.

As previously stated, dominance of seeing and the visual culture has remained central in late-modern society, while the socio-technological changes introduced a new context in contemporary era. Through the emergence of social media, construction of self-identity in relation with consumption, lifestyle and aesthetically presentation of the body (Giddens, 1991) continues on digital platforms. Herein, postural yoga offers a fruitful case to understand how power functions to arrange social dialogue and self-regulation of the individual in a Foucauldian sense by looking into asana practice's relation with self-identity. Based on this, drawing from analysis on the discourses of Instagram photos and interpreting the bodily practices of yogins, I have tried to interpret what happened to the controlled body in the context of new media.

Within this context, the subject faces with the new disciplinary forms of power which are operated via continuous regulations of the contemporary structures in the society. At this

juncture, by the help of Foucauldian understanding, the subtle domination on body can be founded out the expectations of neoliberal setting from the individuals. Hereunder, the power in question demands healthy bodies and minds from the population and an invisible force focuses on “life itself”, controls, even manipulates body for keeping human life both individually and collectively at optimal state (Rose, 2006). Following that, this request is replied by expert system for improving the quality of life and reverberated into the content of mass media and currently of social media. When the social media becomes the issue, the structure brings its own characteristics and expectations with it while the offline historical background impinges upon online setting. The sum and substance of it, embodiment of economic rationality of contemporary period drives people to become responsible from their mental and physical conditions and to enter a discursive structure that body has turned into a field for controlling subject. Aligned with the plural choices of late-modernity, the subject is usually unaware about the relevant power and has a tendency for accepting both yoga and SNS as if free from the societal and economic enforcement.

Before continuing with the body itself, entering more details about the shared style of the posts renders possible to form a frame. Yogins of Instagrams, having said that, declare a standing against gravity and assigned specific sign equipments to locate yogic lifestyle in this media environment. These sign equipments can be listed as:

- Yoga Outfit: Reference to Roland Barthes (2005) reveals that rather than its function of protecting or beautifying the body, dress is a regularizing phenomenon which reflects an aspect for the social acceptance by the style of covering body. Doing yoga in tight yoga pants, for example, is unique to yoga community and combining them with high heels imply as support for the strong feminine identity.

- Retreats in “Natural” and “Peaceful” Places: Maintaining bonds to the nature and ecological concerns are among the major themes of yogic lifestyle. Therefore, outdoor scenes from yoga retreats take place in Instagram galleries. Thereby *Yogic space* is presented on digital realm with the references of green and harmonized with the nature.
- Yoga Mat: Categorically, the mat of yogin draws the boundaries of bodily, and relatedly of self, practices which are defined by both visual and textual discourses. “Being on the mat” refers to yogic performance and especially for the indoor images, the mat and the yogin are the regular fixture.
- Vegan/Vegetarian/Healthy Food: Sharing the photos of what you eat is a kind of sign that the user is *Instagramming*. Typically, eating habits represented on SNSs reflects a certain way of living. In the case of yoga, the images and recipes of the foods are shared and the “alternative” food habits such as raw or vegan ones are introduced to the followers. In this context, “alternative” is used for the “unconventional” foods, in other words, the recipes that the yogi or yogini cannot ask to their mothers or grandmothers. Similarly, hashtags of #healthylifestyle, #nutritiouslife (#besleyiciyaşam) or the successive combinations like #yummy #vegan#glutenfree are added to the photos to show their eating habits.

All these choices framed in posted shoots are at one point or another has connections with yoga body of yogi and yoginis. They declare their practices are directly related with “dancing with mind, flowing with emotions, appreciating the body and enjoying the soul” or “self practicing to touch to the Self”. In other words, yoga body gives clues about yogin’s identity

while an asana is being practiced. As their posts ranged with different asanas, Instagram provides a space to body and self intersect and the body becomes the medium for conveying the expressions on how the subject is strong, aesthetic and balanced. Accordingly, they present challenging asanas to distinguish yogins from the others in the society. What makes them different is the capabilities and unique representations after all.

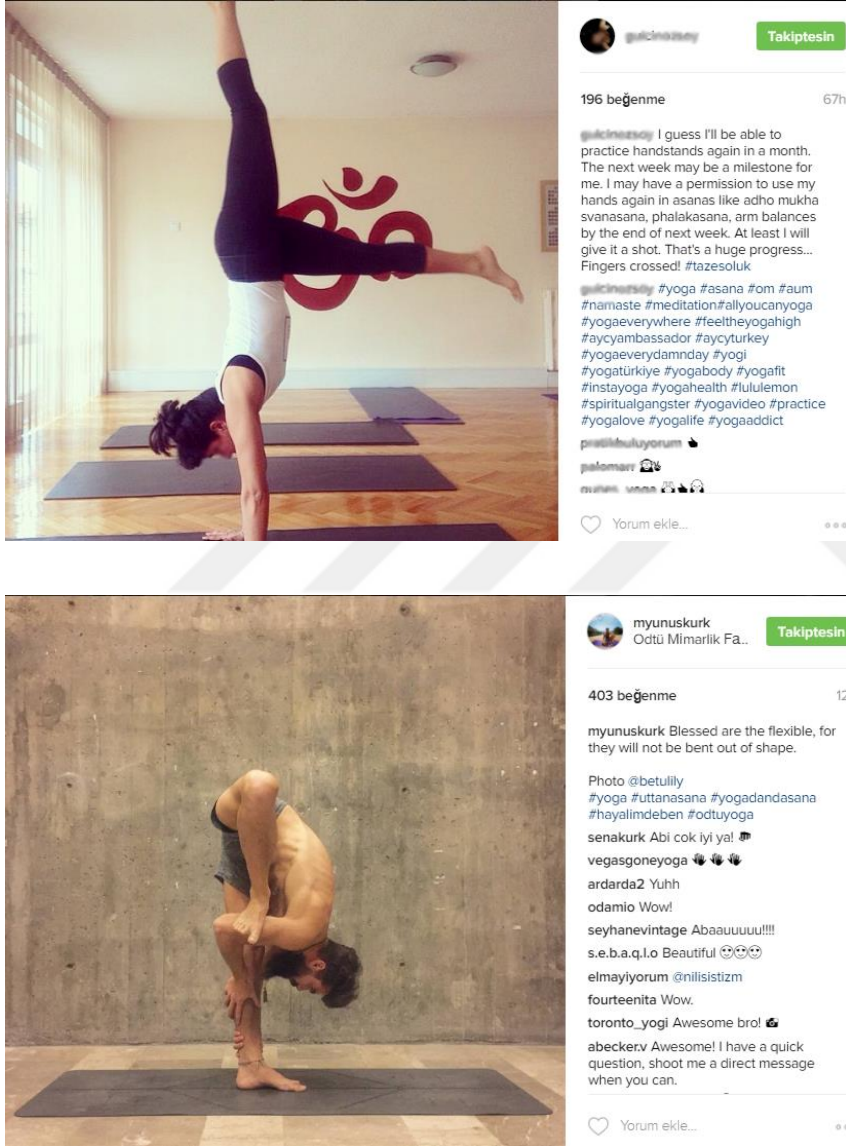


Figure 7: A Yogini Practising Handstand Pose

Figure 8¹: A Yogi Practising Another Challenging Yoga Pose

¹ The yogi himself requested not to anonymize his account name.

In the same way, a visual language is attained through the poses displayed on Instagram. Bordered by yoga mat, indoor yoga reflects the isolation of other elements which can interrupt the performance and harm the yogin's given expression. Instead of them, yogi or yogini wearing yoga clothes on the mat in an asana consist of the general composition. Even if the photograph was taken in an outdoor scene, by increasing the difficulty of the pose; yogins keep the attention on themselves if they are not intending to show another aspect of their lives like showing their love to the nature or their enthusiasm about travelling. Turning back to the posts dominated by body, in view of all the handstand, headstand or scorpion poses exhibited in the galleries of my sample, it can be suggested that there is an aesthetic display of the self and an artistic approach which is discussed in Chapter 2.

Instagram, like the other media watched by society, is full of *perfect* body images as well as the photographs reflecting Instagrammers' lifestyle choices such as leisure time activities, clothes they wear or food they eat, even so the content differs from genre to genre. Some of the users share landscape photography while a certain number of them prefer self-portraits to convey personal narratives. Within the range of different genres of Instagram accounts, the sample of my study reveals that body-dominated posts supported by sign equipments are used to maintain their performances on digital space. After looking through how yogins present their bodies via their posts in response to healthy lifestyle and body image demanded by the society, the main question arises about the degree of yoga body's independence in the stage of Instagram.

The potential of Instagram, basically social media as a whole, to make the individual express him/herself publicly or quite the reverse to exclude from a public digital space points to

instrumentalization of body which was mentioned previously regarding to two aspects of manipulation of bodily practices as regards normative values and the alternative aesthetic practices against them. Accordingly, when representation of yoga body is considered, new ways to operate power on the individual appears in digital realm. However, the operation in question here is not noticable as it might be expected. Therefore, it should be noted that Instagram becomes an area in where body has undergone a power recognized hardly while the messages about yogin-self is conveyed via flexible and strong, healthy body images. Though the dominant discourses on *openness*, *freedom* and *creativity* manipulate the awareness of the society, herein there is an issue of controlled body from two interplayed sources: from Instagram and from social norms.

Even if, it looks like that anyone can create an account and use Instagram coequally, common practice on the SNS which is including only well-postured yoga moments expels some community members from the platform and blocks their self-expressions in this particular SNS. For example, a yoga teacher who is working in a well-known yoga studio said that “Since I’m not able to do those aesthetic poses due to my physiological conditions, I don’t prefer to use my Instagram account very often”, even if her studio demands using social media accounts actively (personal communication, February 6, 2016). Besides, I realized that yogi and yoginis I followed are generally the ones who can do challenging poses, because people follow them and because the platform welcomes them. They justify this tendency by that advanced level of yoga poses attract audience quickly and foster people’s admiration to yoga meanwhile yogi and yoginis increase their visibility. Again, the power controlling the subject emerges in everyday practices of the social media user and “somatic expertise” (Rose, 2006) is employed for compelling the subject to have a body which has already defined.

However, there are also *Yoga-strammers* who are challenging ideal body image imposed by mass media. For instance, plus-size yoga teacher Jessaym Stanley reaches more than 200,000 followers with her account @mynameisjessamy and utilize the platform to voice her advocacy against social pressure about perfect body image. After becoming popular in social media, she got the chance to find a wider audience to assert her standing like she did in a Daily Mail interview:

I call myself “femme” because I identify as a queer femme, a human who rejects the cisgender spectrum but who still enjoys presenting herself in the stereotypical presentation of feminine identity.

I call myself "fat" because I am. Because I am not ashamed to be "fat". Because I am sick and tired of the word "fat" being used as an insult. 'Because it is the responsibility of the oppressed to reclaim the language of their oppressors. Because I don't want to fear a word. Because I am "fat" and I am proud. That's why I call myself "a fat femme" (Byrant, 2016).

Pursuant to this example, instead of publicly displayed media images of thin and in a “tubular” shape bodies (Polivy&Herman, 2004), account owners who deviate from the stereotypical role models have a place to speak online. However, in return for this kind of accounts, there is a myriad of yogi and yoginis whose accounts reverberate the dominant approach of the mass media and advertisements for *ideal body image*. Besides, as previously stated, the tendency for deviant activities on Instagram are highly related with offline contexts of the societies and even for a global phenomenon like social media, how people use SNSs for their self-expressions varies in accordance with the existing social norms. Thus, it is critical to recognize that influences of the existing social conditions which are re-formed and added new dimensions, but still have influences on communication of the self-identity even if it is hard to notice. If @Nude_YogaGirl example is visited again and the responses of the interviewed yogins about the nudity issue on Instagram are evaluated critically, the lack of concern on the restriction on display of women body signals the local influences on

communication patterns of universal tools. Hence, it can be said that an unaccustomed authority comes into being for the implementation of censorship online in this instance.

4.2. Censorship, Nudity and Gender Roles on the Stage of Instagram

According to Instagram community guideline, women are not allowed to show nipple; whereas they can share breastfeeding photos. In its guideline page; Instagram declare that “We agree that breastfeeding is natural and beautiful and we’re glad to know that it’s important for mothers to share their experiences with others on Instagram.”

(<https://help.instagram.com/172319602942927>) That is to say, motherhood is *natural* thereof acceptable, but nudity is not within this scope alone. This regulation has been criticized for employing censorship on woman body when it didn’t meet “society’s standard of femininity” (Collins, 2013) and some members of Instagram community went into action to oppose this restriction. For example, they found a way to resist to the rules of Instagram by sharing nude poses without showing nipples. Among them, @Nude_YogaGirl has become popular with the shots of her clothes-off yoga poses on the platform. She claims that “Instagram’s notorious anti-nudity guidelines, which many a brave warrior has tried to battle against (Chrissy Teigen, Chelsea Handler), have not stopped one woman’s account dedicated to photographing herself practicing yoga in the nude” (Stern, 2015, December 11) and draws attention to body’s artistic potential to manifest one’s self-government. (“We can shape our life. We can shape our body”).

For the case of Turkey, “Coconut Skins Project” can be taken as an unconventional visual display of the yogi and yoginis. Kerim Knight, @wallonaflly, is conducting the photo-art

project that the photographer shoots nude and artistically posed yoga bodies and shares pictures of yogis and yoginis from İstanbul, Geneva and London on his Instagram account.



Figure 9: Post from the Instagram Account of “Coconut Skins”

Knight (personal communication, June 6, 2016) mentioned about his experiences in Coconut Skins project in an e-mail interview with following sentences:

It seems that there is a pattern of women who discover yoga through some form of stress, repression or sickness (be that work, husband, family etc.) and they feel the need to express themselves and be who they are. Yoga allows them a form of freedom without them being judged (similar to that of an online presence on some form of community site). Photography (and certainly my work) is an extension of that need of expression.

One of my interviewees (personal communication, June 4, 2016) also remarks that Instagram is a place for people to express themselves via photographs and the texts posted on:

That is a place of mine to relief, I mean, intensively (“hani bayaa bayaa yani”)... Sometimes, things that make me unable to breath are happening.... when I write it down there, I’m relaxing because something is screaming inside... If not, it makes me sick, I mean if I do not express; I need to express that thing.

However, the fact remains that a certain number of his women subjects preferred to remain anonymous. As Goffman states, “if an individual is to give expression to ideal standards during his (her) performance, then he (she) will have to forgo or conceal action which is inconsistent with these standards” (1959: 41). Aligned with his argument, these hidden activities can be expounded by their desire of Turkey’s yogins to maintain an idealized presentation and abstain from an inconsistency in their performances. Yet there are exceptions which adds another dimension to this situation in the example of Coconut Project. Like Pelin, some of the yogi/yogini models are tagged in @wallonaflly account, but they do not share these photographs on their own accounts. Pelin who is a typical yogini user of Instagram from Turkey (with emphasized motherhood on Instagram, announcements of yoga classes regularly, posting food photos referring to healthy lifestyle and yoga poses hard to accomplish etc.) gave shoots for @wallonaflly, but not on her own account. Since her name is tagged in another public account, it is hard to say that she is hiding her “naked” poses, but allowing their presence in another setting, an art project that reflects her tendency to the relation between body and art. This setting-dependence can be interpreted as the constraints on self-presentation are beyond risking to control one’s impression by interrupting the *routine of impression*, but a dilemma of Turkey’s yogi and yoginis. On the one hand, they express their *openness* to overstepping traditional boundaries with their lifestyles. For example, their dietary habits (“Most of us tranquilize the storm by watching television or eating crisps. But the storm does not tranquilize after them.”) or their clothings suggest this openness. When their Instagram posts are analyzed, on the other hand, yogin performances appear as aligned with the expectations from their gendered roles in particular.

Getting back to the nudity example, Kerim Knight (personal communication, June 6, 2016) pointed out the continuation of existing social norms on yogin subject:

What is most common is the women who want to shoot nude, but can't as they are worried to be judged by their social surroundings. Or they do a shooting and won't post it due to the same reason. It's interesting to see an illusion of being free and yet they are still bound by those similar repressions that brought them there in the first place. Those people I have photographed outside of Europe are more expressive and proud to show what they do, unfortunately that is not as much of the case in Turkey... Additionally what is deemed as being nude seems to be obscured a little in Turkey. A woman showing her bare back is interpreted as nudity even when she's got shorts or yoga pants on. Seeing a woman's back is the effectively the same as seeing her wearing a bikini, just without the straps...

Knight concluded his comments by comparing attitudes of male and females he faced with and generalized that men are more comfortable about being photographed nude. Moving on now to consider the discourse on Instagram associated with family make displayed gendered roles visible. For the case of yoga community of Turkey, there is a little concern about nude yoga on Instagram compared with the gendered roles of the members. The audience encounters with many posts around the discourse of "motherhood", even if they are not taken during breastfeeding. Herein, the yoga challenge event on Instagram for Mother's Day illustrates mothering aspect for gendered role of yoginis. For the challenge, #playwithyogacici hashtag was disseminated to invite parents to share photos while doing yoga with their kids (See Figure 10).



Figure 10: The Event Post for *Yoga Cici*

This event made me aware that it is a very common practice to share photos with their kids and screens from happy family moments for yogins. On the contrary, neither family nor being a father are emphasized in the galleries of the yogis. Unsurprisingly, a challenge for Father's Day wasn't organized in 2016, yet the yogins continued to share photos with their fathers to celebrate their day. In the light of all these cases, how the concepts of censorship and nudity are perceived and reacted-or not reacted- on Instagram can be seen as an evidence of that offline social norms have influence on online communication patterns. In addition to them, underlined gender roles in digital realm supports this claim. After all, the local influences on the performances in digital realm demonstrate even if the communication tools are designed in one center for to be used all over the world, their utilization depends on communal contexts.

In the case of social media practices, instead of "traditional authorities" (Giddens, 1991), more subtle authorities are exercising their power on subject. Even so late-modernity offers a post-traditional approach (1991), social norms fed by both local and global streams are still producing social codes and controlling performances at certain level. Yoga community of Turkey is an example here which is subjected to this authority. For the subtle authorities, we can say that the user who is a yogi or yogini and from Turkey need to negotiate in two sides: The first one positioning themselves in their own society. The second one is caused by the interaction between the locality and global aspects of the phenomenon of social media. Even if the worldwide features of the structure leave a way to free themselves from the restrictions of offline in terms of self-expression, my research shows that boundaries of offline local context still matters. For example, differently from the U.S. case, my interviewees don't seem to getting annoyed restrictions about nudity on Instagram. Like Ogün who said that "I don't

want to see anyone's ass hole" (personal communication, June 11, 2016), they are upholding the regulations which are criticized as censorship by a group of users in other social contexts.

At the same time, another possibility arises as creative potential in terms of yoga body in social media. Along with communicating asana on digital realm, it can be claimed that the self is aesthetized on Instagram via bodily presentation of the yogins. A comment of my interviewee Dicle (personal communication, June 4, 2016) bears traces about the potential of yoga at this juncture:

Yoga is really something aesthetic. I mean, doing yoga poses... I mean when the one becomes reconciled with movement inside, she/he has already transformed to someone aesthetic and pretty... Or let me put it this way, it actually reveals what is in you more... I mean, what is in you comes up. But the best part of it comes up. The prettiest part... If you are a bonehead, you are becoming a pretty bonehead.

Like Dicle said, a mundane part of the individual's life can be taken as an artistic expression of the one, in this case, by manipulation of body. Standing on the hands, or twisting about the spine to show strength and flexibility while putting an alternative to existing norms contain a potential within itself for visual display of the self. Using technological tools such as filters supports this practices for highlighting the display. In this way, the discourse and motivation on creativitiy for Instagram activities become prominent for yogi and yoginis here while they are positioned in the current health and fitness system of the contemporary society including Turkish yoga community.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

While social media has changed the way how people communicate, it has also been evolved through the technological changes as well as the reflections from society. This dynamic and two-way dialogue on digital realm has enabled the people to participate in social dialogue via many alternatives of online platforms. New media technologies has been fastened this process while a variety of Social Network Sites (SNSs) were emerged in our everyday. As a consequence of existing polymedia environment, which platform will be used depends on the aim of the user and the specific attributes of the service. Among multitude of SNSs, Instagram appears as a tool focuses on image-based communication by instant photos from everyday. Therefore, it was an appropriate platform to discuss the facet of online practices considering the dominance of seeing and effectiveness of visuality in contemporary communication.

Like the choice of Instagram, the case of yoga answered the purpose of investigating how self is performed online through lifestyle-related and consumption-led preferences of everyday.

As noted earlier, while my thesis has been focused on Western yoga culture in Turkey, it was not the issue that yoga in Turkey has been taken Western in all aspects. At this point, the scholars studied yoga in a Western society (e.g. Markula, 2014; Lavrence&Lozanski, 2014) were helpful for this study to position yoga practiced in Turkey. This discussion has highlighted that the negotiation between social structure of Turkey community and late-modern culture's influences, dialogue between spiritual and secular sides of the discipline, local affinity to gym culture all have influences on yogi and yoginis' performances on Instagram. At the juncture of yoga community of Turkey and their use of social media, the study conducted for this thesis shows that Instagram is preferred under three reasons: Firstly, as a communication tool aligned with contemporary society's visual dominant tendency, they find Instagram useful to increase their visibility, and in this way, yogi and yoginis both introduce themselves and advertise yoga to a large audience. As a second motive, they utilize the SNS for artistic expression through both posting images of their creative activities and also tailoring the photographs by Instagram filters and other photo-manipulation applications. In addition to these, the members of my sample considers Instagram for offering solutions to their followers about how they can live better and improve themselves. In brief, polymedia environment which was mentioned throughout this thesis proposes a variety of SNSs and several practices to the users. For the case of Instagram user yogi and yoginis of Turkey, aforementioned three motives appears dominantly.

To repeat, this study has looked for how self-identity is presented on the stage of Instagram by using Goffman's dramaturgical approach. Resulting in, the motives explained in Chapter 1 denotes the function of the platform as a polished flow of the user's everyday life fractions. To the extent that this arrangement, the data indicated that people prefer Instagram for activating his/her "personal front" (Goffman, 1959) and conveying messages about yogin

identity. After analysing emphasized aspects of the sample's performances, the following conclusions have been drawn from the findings which reveal an insight regarding to Instagram practice patterns of the sample: While yoga makes available manifesting who they are and what they stand for in Turkish society, attitudes of the yogins on censorship and nudity suggest another side of the communication in question. In general, it seems that Instagram is appraised as a stage for yoga community of Turkey to reach wider audiences in comparison with other SNSs and therefore, the publicly shared content is formed accordingly. Both the discourse found in yogins' posts and their comments about the Instagram practices have shown that existing social norms are effective on their decisions regarding to what will become visible about their self-identities on Instagram. Moreover, imposed restrictions from whether the architecture of the platform or the offline context are not criticized, even not realized by the users most of the time. In addition to that, when yoga body which is the center of self-representation on the posted photos was examined, twofold possibility to use this social network has been arose. And despite of universality in social networks, whether *deviant* users will find a stage to voice themselves or dominant perception on body, in particular on feminized body, exhibited by mass media will remain forceful depends on the conditions of online community and offline circumstances.

In point of the argument stated here, taking social media as a global phenomenon merely without a consideration of the practices' offline background may cause missing the core of the communication in digital realm. Available evidence underlines that there are many ways to use Social Network Sites (SNSs) while it differs from context to context. All the points explained throughout this thesis considered, it can be said that social media is full of possibilities in a multidirectional way. On the one hand, a subtle structure is ready to exercise its power on subject, to censor or manipulate the shared content. On the other hand, it make

the individual to express his/her self in an aesthetic manner. In order to activate the second use, the society should be aware about the whole structure and the power relations in the realm. Therefore, it is crucial to study social media practices in different context while considering outside of the computer's or mobile device's screen. On these grounds, this thesis attempts to claim that each society applies its own existing social characteristics to the practices on SNSs. Ultimately, SNSs contain a great potential within themselves which might serve either to subjugation or to creative expression of the individual. Although my research brought it open that the progress for effective use of social media demands an awareness and maturity in the society in terms of both online and offline context, looking for the implementations of the communities and on the platforms at variance can serve the aim of enhancing the awareness on power relations which shape the discourse, components of the media structure and interaction between online and offline contexts. As a consequence, it is worth to consider that taking social networking sites as stable structures prevents discovering its full potential in communication patterns. At this point, instead of accepting an SNS as a homogenized platform, looking through how the users' adapt the recent technology to their social conversation gives an opportunity to explain the meaning of online performances. In this thesis, I revealed how and why Turkey's yogi and yoginis use Instagram, at the same time, articulated social and corporate level forces which shaped online communication. In doing so, I tried to draw attention to heterogeneity of SNSs' employment and to create an awareness about the potential of online platforms for communication patterns. At last, it can be said that more studies for different platforms in varied contexts can bring about a consciousness for effective use of SNSs, and in this way, the users can truly utilize social media for their self-expressions.

REFERENCES

- Androutsopoulos, J. (2008). Potentials and limitations of discourse-centered online ethnography. *Language@Internet*, 5. Retrieved from <http://www.languageatinternet.org/articles/2008/>
- Aspling, F. (2011). *The Private and the Public in Online Presentations of the Self: A Critical Development of Goffman's Dramaturgical Perspective*. Master's Thesis, Stockholm's Universitet.
- Atkinson, M. (2010) Entering scapeland: yoga, fell and post-sport physical cultures. *Sport in Society*, 13:7-8, 1249-1267. doi: 10.1080/17430431003780260
- Barthes, R. (2005). *The Language of Fashion*. (Trans.) Stafford, A. Eds. Stafford, A. & Carter, M. Bloomsbury. Oxford/New York: Berg. Retrieved from <https://rosswolfe.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/roland-barthes-the-language-of-fashion.pdf>
- Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of seeing: Based on the BBC television series with John S Berger*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press in Carter, M.J. & Fuller, C. (2015). *Symbolic interactionism*. Sociopedia.isa. doi: 10.1177/205684601561

Bonilla, Y., Rosa, J. (2015). #Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States. *American Ethnologist Journal*, 42, 4–17.

boyd, d. (2002). *Faceted Id/entity: Managing representation in a digital world*. Master's Thesis, Cambridge, MA: MIT. Retrieved from <http://www.danah.org/papers/Thesis.FacetedIdentity.pdf>.

boyd, d., Ellison. N. B. (2007). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 210–230. doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x.

boyd, d. (2014). *It's Complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Burgess, J. (2007). Vernacular Identity and New Media. Master's Thesis, Queensland University of Technology. Retrieved from http://eprints.qut.edu.au/16378/1/Jean_Burgess_Thesis.pdf.

Byrant, M. (2016, June 2). 'I am sick and tired of the word "fat" being used as an insult!' Plus-size yoga guru who proudly describes herself as a 'fat femme' hits out at negative body shape stereotypes. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3621830/I-sick-tired-word-fat-used-insult-Plus-size-yoga-guru-proudly-describes-fat-femme-hits-negative-body-shape-stereotypes.html>

Chalfen, R. (2016). Ubiquitous Photography by Martin Hand, *Visual Studies*, 31:1, 84-86, doi: 10.1080/1472586X.2014.941603

Cheung, C. (2000). A Home on the Web: Presentations of Self on Personal Homepages. In Ed. David Gauntlett, *Web studies: Rewiring media studies for the media age*, (pp. 43–51). London: Arnold.

Chi, H.H. (2011). Interactive Digital Advertising VS. Virtual Brand Community: Exploratory Study of User Motivation and Social Media Marketing Responses in Taiwan. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 12, 44-61.

Coleman, E. G. (2010) Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 39, 487-505. doi: 10.1146/annurev.anthro.012809.104945

Collins, P. (2013, Oct 17). *Why Instagram Censored My Body*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/petra-collins/why-instagram-censored-my-body_b_4118416.html

Çakır, M. (2014). *Küresel kitle kültürü ve görsel kültür arasındaki bağlar*. Ütopya Yayınları.

Debord, G. (1970). *Society of the spectacle*. Detroit: Black & Red.

De Michelis, E. (2004). *A history of modern yoga: Patañjali and Western esotericism*. Continuum.

De Vries, D.A. & Peter, J. (2013). Women on display: The effect of portraying the self online on women's self-objectification. *Computers in Human Behavior Journal*, 29, 1483-1489. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2013.01.015.

Ellison, N.B. & boyd, d. (2013). Sociality through Social Network Sites. In Dutton, W.H. (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies*, (pp. 151-172). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellison, N., Heino, R., & J. Gibbs. (2006). Managing Impressions Online: Self-Presentation Processes in the Online Dating Environment. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, Vol. 11, No. 2.

Featherstone, M. (2007). *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London: SAGE Publications.

Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the Self: A seminar with Michel Foucault at the University of Vermont, October 1982 In (Eds.) Martin, L.H., Gutman, H. Hutton, P.H. *Technologies of the Self. A seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Foucault, M. (1993). About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth. *Political Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 198-227.

Foucault, M. (1994). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*. New York: Vintage.

Gershon, I. (2010). Media Ideologies: An Introduction. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*.

Vol. 20, No. 2. 283–293. doi: 10.1111/j.1548-1395.2010.01070.x

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late-modern age*.

Cambridge: Polity Press.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. University of Edinburgh:

Social Sciences Research Center.

Granovetter, M. (1983). The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited Reviewed work(s). *Journal of Sociological Theory*, Vol. 1, 201-233. Retrieved from

<http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/faculty/friedkin/Syllabi/Soc148/Granovetter%201983.pdf>.

Jain, A.R. (2012). The Dual-Ideal of the Ascetic and Healthy Body: The Jain Terapanth and

Modern Yoga in the Context of Late Capitalism. *Nova Religio*, 15:3, 29-50.

Jordan, H. (2014, April 22). *Gated Communities: An Attempt to Create Meaningful Identity*.

Retrieved from <http://gatedcommunities.weebly.com/late-modernity.html>

Iyengar, B.K.S. (1989). *The tree of yoga: Yoga Vṛkṣa*, Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications.

Knight, B. 2013. Performative Pictures: Cameraphones at the Ready. In (Eds.) Wise, J. M. &

Koskela, H. *New visualities, new technologies: New ecstasy of communication*.

London: Ashgate Publishing.

Kroeber, A. L., & Kluckhohn, C. (1952). *Culture: a critical review of concepts and definitions*. Cambridge, MA.: Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology Papers, 47 (1).

Krzyżanowski, M. (2011) Ethnography and critical discourse analysis: towards a problem-oriented research dialogue. *Critical Discourse Studies*, Vol. 8, No.4, 231-238, doi: 10.1080/17405904.2011.601630

Laboon, P. (2016, Sep 6). *Capitalizing On Instagram's New Algorithm*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2016/09/06/capitalizing-on-instagram-new-algorithm/#73a70b3f57a9>.

Lester, P.M. (2006). *Syntactic Theory of Visual Communication*. Retrieved from <http://paulmartinlester.info/writings/viscomtheory.html>

Levin, S. (2016, July 14). *Why everyone is crazy for Prisma, the app that turns photos into works of art*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jul/14/prisma-app-photography-artificial-intelligence-art>

Madianou, M. & Miller, D. (2012). Polymedia: Towards a new theory of digital media in interpersonal communication. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 16(2), 169–187. Retrieved from: ics.sagepub.com.

Mandala. (2013, August 2). Retrieved from <http://pi.web.tr/mandala/>

Manovich, L. (2009). Cultural Analytics: Visualizing Cultural. Patterns in the Era of 'More Media'. *Domus* (Milan). Retrieved from http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/063-cultural-analytics-visualizing-cultural-patterns/60_article_2009.pdf

Manovich, L. (2016). *Notes on Instagrammism and mechanisms of contemporary cultural identity*. Retrieved from <http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/notes-on-instagrammism-and-mechanisms-of-contemporary-cultural-identity>

Markula, P. (2014). Reading Yoga Changing Discourses of Postural Yoga on the Yoga Journal Covers. *Communication and Sport*, Vol. 2 No. 2, 143-171.
doi: 10.1177/2167479513490673

Marwick, A.E. (2005). I'm more than just a Friendster profile: Identity, authenticity, and power in social networking services. *Association for Internet Researchers* 6.0, Chicago.

Miller, D., Costa, E., Haynes, N., McDonald, T., Nicolescu, R., Sinanan, J., Spyer, J., Venkatraman, S., Wang, X. (2016). *How The World Changed Social Media*. UCL Press. Retrieved from <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1474805/1/How-the-World-Changed-Social-Media.pdf>

Moreno, M.A., Goniü, N., Moreno, P.S. & Diekema, D. (2013). Ethics of social media research: common concerns and practical considerations. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 16(9),708-13. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2012.0334.

Obar, J. A. & Wildman, S. S. (2015). Social media definition and the governance challenge:

An introduction to the special issue. *Journal of Telecommunications Policy*, 39(9),

745-750.; Quello Center Working Paper No. 2647377. Retrieved from

<https://ssrn.com/abstract=2647377> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2647377>

Polivy, J. & Herman, P. (2004). Sociocultural Idealization of Thin Female Body Shapes: An

Introduction to the Special Issue on Body Image and Eating Disorders. *Journal of*

Social and Clinical Psychology, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1-6.

Postill, J. & Pink, S. (2012). *Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web*.

Media International Australia.

Rainie, L., Wellman, B. (2012). *Networked: The New Social Operating System* Cambridge,

MA: The MIT Press. in Ellison, N.B. & boyd, d. (2013). Sociality through Social

Network Sites. In Dutton, W.H. (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies*,

(pp. 151-172). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Robinson, L. (2007). The cyberself: the self-ing project goes online, symbolic interaction in

the digital age. *New Media & Society*, (9), 93-109. Retrieved from

<http://nms.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/9/1/93>

Rose, G. (2002). *Visual Methodologies; An Introduction To The Interpretation Of Visual*

Materials. London: SAGE Publications.

Rose, N. (2006). *The politics of life itself: Biomedicine, power, and subjectivity in the twenty-first century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Russon, M.A. (2016, July 18). *What is Prisma? Behind the hip new app that turns your photos into impressionist paintings using AI*. Retrieved from <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/what-prisma-behind-hip-new-app-that-turns-your-photos-into-impressionist-paintings-using-ai-1571191>

Seppä, A. (2004). Foucault, Enlightenment and the Aesthetics of the Self. *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Vol.2, No.4. Retrieved from <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=244#FN51>
[link](#)

Sinanan, J., Graham, C. & Jie, K. (2014). Crafted assemblage: Young women's 'lifestyle' blogs, consumerism and citizenship in Singapore. *Visual Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 201-213.

Singleton, M. (2010). *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stern, C. (2015, Dec 11). *Is this Instagram's most naked user? Yoga enthusiast finds a way around the photo-sharing app's strict no-nudity rule by baring her body in a beautiful series of arty shots*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3356264/Is-Instagram-s-naked-user-Yoga-enthusiast-finds-away-photo-sharing-app-s-strict-no-nudity-rule-baring-body-beautiful-series-arty-shots.html>

Strauss, S. (2010). "Adapt, adjust, accommodate": The production of yoga in a transnational World. *Journal History and Anthropology*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 231-251.

Tüfekçi, Z. (2008). Can You See Me Now? Audience and Disclosure Regulation in Online Social Network Sites. *Bulletin of Science Technology Society*, Vol. 28 No. 1, 20-36.
doi: 10.1177/0270467607311484

United Nations Website. *International Day of Yoga*. Retrieved from
<http://www.un.org/en/events/yogaday/background.shtml>

Wesch, M. (2008) *Context collapse*. Retrieved from
mediatedcultures.net/projects/youtube/context-collapse

What is a mandala? (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.mandalaproject.org/What/Main.html>

Wheaton, B. (2010). Introducing the consumption and representation of lifestyle sports. *Sport in Society*, 13(7), 1057-1081. doi:10.1080/17430431003779965

Wright, S. (2016, March 16). *Instagram Changes their Algorithm and What That Means for your Business*. Retrieved from <http://www.blackenterprise.com/small-business/instagram-changes-their-algorithm-and-what-that-means-for-your-business/>

Van Dijk, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.