



**Eximia Journal**  
**(ISSN 2784-0735)**

**Vol. 12**  

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**2023**

## **The Power of Images: Exploring Gender Performances of Filipino Female Celebrities on Instagram**

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**Abstract.** Instagram is a social photography ‘app’ designed to run on a Smartphone through which the social media user can produce visual and textual impressions, thus allowing the ambient viewer to interact and distribute these impressions (Mirsarraf et al., 2017). This study aimed to examine how social media networks are changing the way female celebrities portray themselves to the public and how these digital platforms are assisting in the cultivation of celebrity personas. This study was analyzed using feminist theory, and framing analysis. The results revealed that each female celebrity used Instagram in different ways; however, there were commonalities to their self-representation. Anne Curtis Smith, Liza Soberano, and Kathryn Bernardo all used the medium as more or less a self-promotion tool. Anne Curtis Smith created a somewhat accessible persona, though this was done through self-objectifying, body centric, and sexually explicit images and messaging; Liza Soberano created an accessible persona through less objectifying visual messaging; and Kathryn Bernardo created a dynamic and distant persona through sexualized and dream-like imagery and subject matter.

**Keywords.** sociolinguistics, feminist discourse, textual analysis, critical discourse analysis, advertisement, Ideology, semiotics

### **Introduction**

Today, we are living in a digital environment where visual and digital stimulation are widely favored. We are constantly bombarded by digitally generated media images whether walking through the streets, checking our social media accounts or emails. Some of these digitally generated media images are directed toward the "modern" woman to offer dynamic representations of women rather than "sexualized" stereotypes. However, Gill (2008) in his study on Empowerment/Sexism: Figuring Female Sexual Agency in Contemporary Advertising reveals that these images often fail to convey a relatable realistic sense of female empowerment, instead depicting women in powerful business roles wearing revealing clothing in sexually suggestive poses.

Advertising firms are no longer the sole creators and distributors of media images. All kinds of individuals now have the autonomy and ability to communicate ideas instantly and globally through personally created and curated visual messages on social media, specifically Instagram. People who have access to the appropriate technology can communicate mediated

personas across social media networks. According to Marwick & Boyd (2011), this has had an impact on what passes for important or attention-grabbing media content, with fans, publics, and popular culture having a seemingly insatiable appetite for the personal details proffered by celebrities' online profiles. These images are redefining our understanding of celebrity, reformatting fans' anticipations of reality, establishing an expectation that everyone develop a social mediated persona, and helping to define emerging modes of subjectivity in a world dominated and increasingly defined by social media networks.

There were extensive amounts of research conducted on how Facebook allows for self-expression and how individuals construct themselves and are now in control in contrast to traditional media images by which they are surrounded (Hum et al. 2011, Goggin 2014). Presently though, scarce amounts of research have been conducted using the new mobile application called Instagram, the use of which is increasing worldwide. Instagram is a social photography 'app' designed to run on a Smartphone through which the social media user can produce visual and textual impressions, thus allowing the ambient viewer to interact and distribute these impressions (Mirsarraf et al., 2017). Instagram is a photo-sharing, video-sharing social networking service that has quickly become one of the top applications for mobile devices. Lee, Lee, Moon, and Sung (2015) found five primary social and psychological motives driving Instagram users: social interaction, archiving, self-expression, escapism, and peeking. Findings revealed "Instagram users are motivated to establish and maintain social relationships with other people using this platform" (Lee et al., 2015). How celebrities use this channel and what messages they convey through media images can reinforce or challenge social, gender, or sexual stereotypes. Specifically, social media allows female celebrities to communicate their daily activities, which, in turn, has the potential to express the everyday complexity of female experience. Rather than focusing on stereotypical media images created by a team of communicators depicting women in sexualized dress, or as silent and submissive objects within a frame, Instagram allows users -females and female celebrities in particular – to consciously or unconsciously challenge these stereotypes.

Today's female celebrities have untold social and cultural influence as powerful agents within western society. With the proliferation of social media, this influence becomes further embedded into the psyche and everyday lives of followers and fans. Aguayo and Calvet as cited in Kolb (2014) argue that "ordinary or vernacular images are a pervasive and under studied category of photography" (2013, p. 181). Instagram has spawned a rise in ordinary photography, and by sharing ordinary or private images we gain insight into the more nuanced aspects and complexities of female celebrities' lives (2013, p. 183). Indeed, through the creation and uploading of images to social media celebrities can engage in self-promotion and persona development, thus creating more personalized connections between users and celebrities (2013). Additionally, Humpheres and Verad state that "new media practices offer different affordances for the performance of gender, rather than, or as well as, the representation of gender by someone else" (2014, p. 5). Ultimately, new media leads to greater diversity in gender performance and its representation (2014, p. 5).

This research study used the postmodern feminist theory and framing analysis to analyze: 1) the Instagram accounts of the top three most followed female Filipino celebrities: Anne Curtis Smith, Liza Soberano and Kathryn Bernardo; 2) how these celebrities' portray themselves in order to create an accessible persona for their fans; and 3) what these female celebrities' social media performances can tell us about female empowerment and self-representation, and if these messages offer an appropriately complex representation of females in media images in our social media defined era.

It is important to examine powerful images created by individuals who have amassed “celebrity” status from a socio-cultural and professional communication perspective. Through analyzing such media images, it allows for a window into how these individuals view themselves, or their professionalized personas, while assessing the potential influence celebrity generated media images have on networks and larger society.

Through social media’s channels a new generation of fans and a plethora of online communities are being exposed to media images that convey visual messages with powerful implicit and explicit meaning. Given our ongoing interest in (female) celebrities

(Furedi, 2010; Harper & Tiggemann, 2007; Ruane & Wallace, 2013; and Simon & Holt, 2012) it is crucial to understand the ways media images can influence media users and viewers and the ways these images can reinforce and reinscribe cultural, sexual, and gender stereotypes. By better understanding the messaging of media images uploaded to Instagram we can begin to examine and understand the benefits and limitations of the Instagram social media channel.

This study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) How are female celebrities portraying themselves using media images on Instagram?
- 2) What messages do these media images convey?

## **Methods**

### **Data Collection Methods**

The main purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze media images uploaded by the top-three most followed Filipino female celebrities on Instagram using the following theoretical and methodological approaches: feminist theory and Erving Goffman's framing analysis. The primary source of data was the media images from the public Instagram profiles of the top-three most followed Filipino female celebrities. However, with the rise of social media, the definition of celebrity has changed. Nowadays anyone can become recognized through a prolific social media presence (Baroncelli & Freitas, 2011). Because of this, the researcher created a core criterion to select well-known Filipino female celebrities for analysis. First, the scope of the project was limited to recognizable celebrities working in the entertainment industry (i.e. music, film, television etc.). This was done to ensure that each celebrity had a following beyond the confines of social media. Female celebrities who are famous for other reasons were not considered. The second criterion was to choose the top-three most followed Filipino female celebrities on Instagram. Having created suitable research parameters, several female celebrity profiles were accessed to select appropriate candidates. As a result, the top three most followed Filipino female celebrities on Instagram as of April 2020 were the following: 1. Anne Curtis (@ANNECURTISSMITH) with 14,741,876 followers; 2. Liza Soberano (@LIZASOBERANO) with 12,858,948 followers and 3. Kathryn Bernardo (@BERNARDOKATH) with 11,762,066 followers. Anne Curtis Smith-Heussaff is a Filipino-Australian actress, model, television host, VJ and recording artist in the Philippines. She is one of the hosts of ABS-CBN’s noon time show “*It’s Showtime*”. She has entered a new chapter in her life and that’s motherhood that’s why fans are looking forward to more posts, this time of her daughter Dahlia Amélie on her Instagram feed. Hope Elizabeth “Liza” Soberano is a Filipino-American actress. She started in a range of television series and films. She rose to prominence after playing the protagonist in the romantic comedy television series *Forevermore* with Enrique Gil. Liza kept a low profile for most of 2019, yet the *Make It With You* actress has remained the second most-followed Filipino female celebrity on Instagram. Kathryn Chandria

Manuel Bernardo is a Filipina actress, recording artist, model, and endorser. She became known for her role as Mara in the TV series *Mara Clara*. Year 2019 was particularly big for Kathryn, because of the massive success of her film *Hello, Love, Goodbye*.

The importance of this research study was to investigate how the celebrities were depicted in the images. How these Filipino female celebrities chose to represent themselves, through physical expression and framing analysis were the central focus of this study. The data collection was limited by the scope and timeline of this study; thus, criteria were selected to mitigate these limitations.

### **Analytical Frameworks**

The researcher assessed the images from a feminist theory and framing analysis perspective after reviewing the images containing Anne Curtis Smith, Liza Soberano, and

Kathryn Bernardo, referencing the material identifiers observed. The researcher employed Judith Butler and Sandra Lee Bartkly's theories; and adapted Jill Kobb's (2014) Interpretative Framework by reviewing images of interest as well as analyzing overall trends from the images collected over the 12-month span. More specifically, from the feminist perspective the researcher analyzed what stereotypical representations of gender were performed through dress, makeup, body language, and composition. Identifying the most popular styles of images that were uploaded informed the overall analysis and revealed the social frameworks employed by each female celebrity.

### ***Judith Butler's Performativity Theory and other Feminist Theories***

According to Kolb (2014), online celebrity performances are embraced by networks of fans and publics interested in learning about the daily habits of their favorite celebrities. Female celebrities are using social media channels as outlets of expression, to generate publicity and as a tool for shaping their personas. Instagram allows celebrities to publish images of themselves that give networks of fans perceived access to their private lives. Instagram provides celebrities with the ability to create private/public personas with images uploaded depicting their private moments to millions of people. This private/public persona cultivation can be examined using Judith Butler's performativity theory which analyzes individual behavior by suggesting that individual actions are powerful and "performed" personal expressions capable of reproducing gendered behavior. Performativity theory will allow for the objectification of the flexibility of gender and self-presentation (Dobson, 2012, 2013). After all, images hold multiple meanings and allow for the reinvention of self-based on the content and the sociocultural context.

In her article *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory* (1988), Judith Butler develops a theory wherein she argues that gender gets defined, manufactured, and perpetuated through performative acts (1988, p. 520). It is through repetitious behavior that we define and reinforce normalized acts of sex and gender. As Butler explains:

Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts that are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (Butler, 1988, p. 520)

Here Judith Butler argues that we are affected by the actions of others and that our own actions contribute to the perpetuation of gendered behavior. We are part of this mundane social audience. Not allowing for the existence of "natural" gendered behavior, the performer and

audience come to expect and believe traditional and socially constructed gender roles. It is through this reciprocal “performativity” between performer and audience that we relate to and through which we perpetuate the gender roles with which we identify. However, based on the diversity of gender performances we can influence behavior by altering the performance associated with a gender (Butler, 1988, p. 521).

Using Butler’s theory to assess photographs created, uploaded and shown on three Filipino female celebrity Instagram profiles, this project revealed the gendered complexity of on- and off-line self-presentation. Of course, the complexity of performed identities also contributes to structures of power and hierarchy in societies – representations and performances, in other words, are never neutral. Tonya Hammer affirms this reality when she observes that controlling images and images based on stereotypes are used throughout western society in order to subjugate women (2009, p. 203). Thus, a further motivation of this project is to examine and reveal what stereotypes, if any, still exist and are being reinforced, in these three celebrities’ Instagram accounts; or whether new sexualized, objectifying or empowering trends are occurring through images uploaded to social media.

Sandra Lee Bartkly extended the observation that images, gender performance, and power go hand in hand when she argues that one of the three tools of oppression is stereotyping, along with cultural domination, and sexual objectification (1990, p. 23). For Bartkly oppression can take the form of many kinds of social pressures, from social norms – influenced hegemonic structures – to cultural artifacts, such as media, advertisements, entertainment, and so on (1990, p. 24). She observes that gendered oppression is built into everyday life through language, popular culture, institutions and capitalist enterprise (Bartkly, 1990, p. 25). For Bartkly, media images (as popular culture) can be understood as a possible tool of oppression and stereotyping.

The oppressive power of stereotyping women through media images is well documented (Ogden et al, 2011; Ruane & Wallace, 2013; Myers & Crowther, 2007; Simon & Hoyt, 2012; Harper & Tiggmann, 2007; Lamb, Graling & Wheeler, 2013; and Tyler & Bennett, 2010). Images are found to have a profound and lasting effect on body dissatisfaction, thin-ideal internalization and self-objectification with “even short-term exposure to thin women in media images leading to increased body dissatisfaction” (Myers & Crowther, 2007, p. 297). As social media becomes increasingly image-based there is potential for media images to have even greater – not to mention, more immediate – impact.

Foucault (1979) explains that subjective and practiced bodies, are known as docile bodies and explains that bodies are within Panopticon in which they are disciplined and under constant surveillance (138). Sandra Bartky’s (1988) theory on femininity builds on Foucault’s (1979) theories, explains that women are not only under the imposition of discipline or control in specific institutions such as factories or schools (as Foucault focused on), but that they are also under surveillance to present femininity or a feminine body (Bartky 1988:26, 36). Bartky (1988) uses ‘docile bodies’ and the Panopticon to show that women are further surveilled and expected to appear in a certain way, and if they do not, they are then expected to change. They are expected to transform following certain disciplinary practices in order to fit the expectations of how their physical bodies should appear depending on the culture (30). She helps us to understand how femininity is socially constructed, and how femininity is exercised through the female body. She explains that women are either expected to follow regimes such as diet plans, have specific body characteristics such as the “hour glass” shape, wear specific clothing, and use products like cosmetics (Bartky 1988: 8; Bolin 1992:801).

***Feminist Theory and Framing Analysis***

It is crucial that a framework be established to mitigate subjectivity when assessing media images from a feminist theory and framing analysis perspective. It is difficult to ensure impartiality while analyzing images from a socio-cultural perspective is a necessity when contextualizing the possible impact of media images on a social scale.

The researcher adapted Kobb’s (2014) interpretative framework to assess images uploaded to Instagram by Anne Curtis Smith, Liza Soberano and Kathryn Bernardo. This framework was used to assess image content from a feminist perspective, which in turn influenced the framing analysis findings.

**Kob’s (2014) Interpretative Framework**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Identifiers</b>
<b>Dress:</b> assessing what clothing the individual is wearing. How revealing is the clothing? Is much of their body exposed?	<p><b>Sexual</b> – referring to exposure of breasts, buttocks, entire back, and legs, also referring to form of garments such as bras, underwear, stockings etc.</p> <p><b>Formal</b> – referring to garments worn for formal events, ball gowns, long dresses, pantsuits etc.</p> <p><b>Relaxed</b> – referring to garments worn without a manicured purpose, workout garb, pajamas, etc.</p> <p><b>Tomboy</b> – referring to garments worn that are traditionally worn by males, including baseball caps, oversized shirts and pants etc.</p>
<b>Makeup:</b> assessing if the individual is wearing makeup.	<p><b>None</b> – no visible makeup detected. <b>Makeup</b> – makeup is clearly visible on the individual. <b>Extreme Makeup</b> – makeup that alters the individual’s features, pronounced nose, eyes, lips, etc.</p>
<b>Hair:</b> assessing if the individual has their hair done.	<p><b>Wild</b> – hair is imperfect and messy without styling. <b>Did</b> – hair has been manicured in some way.</p>
<b>Body:</b> assessing the individual’s body language within the composition of the frame.	<p><b>Sexual</b> – the body is positioned in a sexually suggestive way.</p> <p><b>Neutral</b> – the body is in a relaxed neutral state, which may or may not be active.</p>

### ***Goffman's Framing Analysis***

The presentation of the self through images is not a new concept. What has changed is the way we access and share that information. It is through an analysis of images created and uploaded to Instagram that we can begin to reveal how the content and presentation of self may influence our perception. Using Erving Goffman's framing analysis I will analyze three female celebrities' media images uploaded to Instagram.

When combined with postfeminist theory, Goffman's framing analysis will help establish an interpretive framework to better understand messages expressed through the uploaded media images.

Erving Goffman introduced framing analysis in his seminal work, *Framing Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. He argues that there are two broad classifications of what he calls "occurrences," the natural and the social (1986, p. 22). The so-called "natural" occurrences are unguided, unoriented, purely physical events or instances. These occurrences have no apparent willful agency behind them, they are not positive or negative, they simply are "natural." An example of natural framing is the weather or a natural disaster (1986, p. 22). Social framing, on the other hand, describes occurrences with intelligent effort and intention behind them; there is a will, aim or controlling effort – they are, in other words, expressions of agency.

Routinely we find both natural and social framing being connected throughout peoples' lives and individual experiences. For example, natural occurrences may interrupt a social activity, like rain stopping a baseball game. Regardless of the ratio of natural versus social framing employed, the important point is that Goffman's framing analysis provides an analytical lens to assess the world around us. He states, "we can hardly glance at anything without applying a primary framework, thereby forming conjectures as to what occurred before and expectations of what is likely to happen now" (1986, p. 38).

Thus, the social frames we use to extract knowledge about our social and cultural experiences enable us to interpret our world: "the primary frameworks of a particular social group constitute a central element of its culture, especially insofar as understandings emerge concerning principle classes of schemata. ... [Through frameworks we can] try to form an image of a group's framework of frameworks – its belief system (1986)."

For Goffman, every image allows for a further understanding of group or network culture. It is through framing analysis that we come to know how groups view experience and how these experiences are important to that group. Once frames are identified, belief systems can be better understood.

This theoretical perspective is crucial to the analysis of media images insofar as it provides an interpretative framework that allows for a more nuanced understanding of image content and associated meaning. Goffman's theory is often employed when analyzing media images (Gamson, Croteau & Sasson, 1992; Featherstone, 2010; Gill, 2008; Gamson, Croteau & Sasson, 1992), but has yet to be applied to social media or Instagram.

Goffman's framing analysis is relevant to the researcher's study because it provides an excellent tool for analyzing media images uploaded to Instagram by female celebrities. The researcher determined different frames or classifications of frames to help derive meaning from the images selected by employing Goffman's analysis.

In addition, Goffman's framing analysis was used to ascertain a framework of meaning relating to the selected Instagram media images of Curtis-Smith, Soberano and Bernardo. Meaning was established through trends observed from the findings of material identifiers analysis. Goffman's framing analysis was used to observe overall trends from the data. Thus,

there was no coding or identifiers created to analyze the content of the image from a framing analysis perspective, as the analyses completed this. Assessing the trends that the findings revealed allowed for the application of Goffman's framing analysis.

As Goffman (1986) observes, it is through framing analysis that we come to know how groups view experience and how these experiences are important to that group. Once frames are identified, belief systems can be better understood. Having already established frameworks through the analysis, findings were analyzed to identify potential meaning.

Therein, assessing the totality of the findings from an inductive reasoning perspective, a framework of meaning was suggested for each female celebrity.

With the combination of feminist theory, and Erving Goffman's framing analysis allowed the researcher to provide a more holistic and well-rounded analysis of how female celebrities are portraying themselves on Instagram and what messages these media images convey.

### **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure the reliability and validity of this qualitative study, the researcher invited two former colleagues who are studying Applied Linguistics. The researcher worked collaboratively and have the analysis done by discussing and reached the agreement whenever different opinions occurred.

### **Results and discussions**

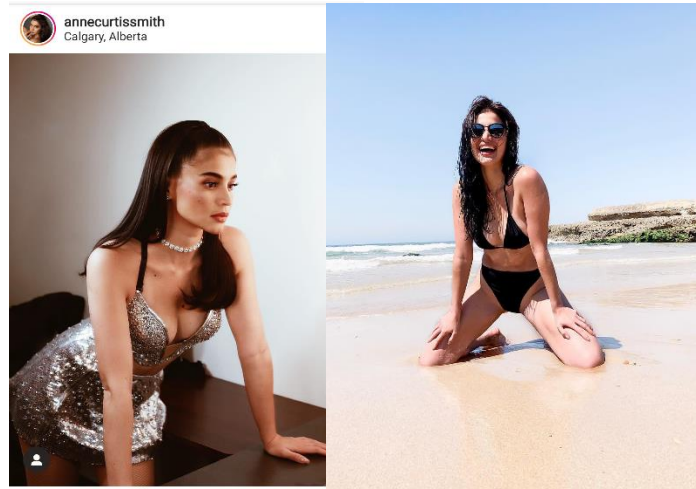
#### **Interpretations**

The researcher employed Judith Butler's performativity theory and Sandra Lee Bartkly's oppression feminist theory to analyze specific trends starting with a feminist interpretation of the media images. Following this, the researcher analyzed the general themes conveyed through the images, using Erving Goffman's framing analysis to analyze how each female celebrity is creating a framework of frameworks – or meaning – through these images.

As discussed above, Judith Butler and Sandra Lee Bartkly's theoretical perspectives can be combined to analyze how media images may impact gendered roles and social stereotypes. Butler's focus on performativity of gender, that which is observed is often imitated and reinforced (Butler, 1988), can be applied to how women view and understand other women and women in power (i.e. celebrities), and how these representations can be interpreted and reinforced. To start, it is appropriate to analyze the media images from a performativity perspective to describe how Anne Curtis Smith, Liza Soberano, and Kathryn Bernardo are portraying themselves and their bodies through media images uploaded to Instagram.

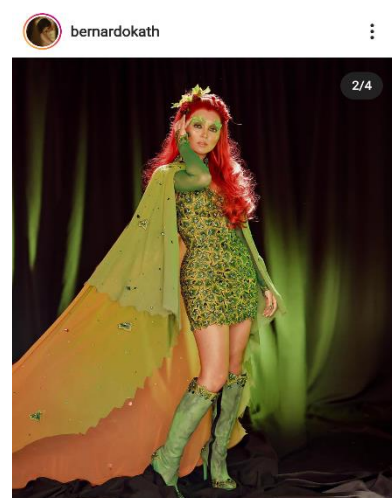
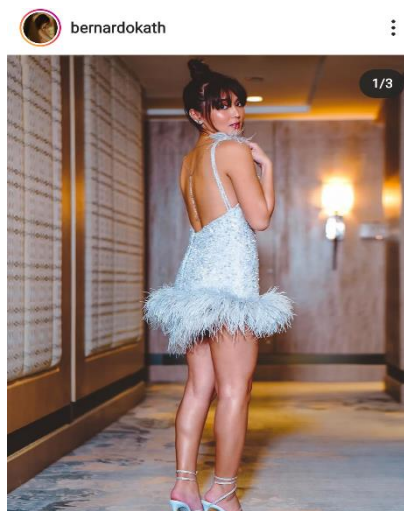
Overall, the way Anne Curtis Smith's media images posted to Instagram were stylized and dynamic. Anne excelled at keeping the viewer engaged through contrasting images that make her seem tangible and accessible to the viewer. Anne uploaded the most sexually revealing and objectifying images. This conveyed an almost self-objectifying message or performance (Harper & Tiggemann, 2008, & Myers & Crowther, 2007).

Furthermore, she did little to combat gender and racial stereotypes. The images uploaded that contain depictions of Anne Curtis Smith were extremely stylized. Even images that portrayed Anne in a relaxed or natural environment come across as imaginary dreamlike depictions of a woman who was simply fabulous all the time. Constantly represented as coiffed or relaxed and styled, Anne's Instagram account reinforced popular culture's scopophilic tendencies and objectifying stereotypes.



*Anne Curtis Smith, Instagram, 2019*

When analyzing Kathryn Bernardo's images the viewer was brought into a world of apparent authenticity. A closer look, however, revealed that in nearly every image Kathryn's makeup has been done, often showcasing her flawless skin. Departing from Harrison's metafunction analysis, many of the images uploaded by Kathryn depicted her hair, face, and clothes from a close personal distance inviting the viewer to take in her static being. Again, many of these images were not dynamic, and from a performative perspective they offer a rather one-dimensional depiction of Kathryn. Further, as the 12-month observation period progressed, it was apparent that Kathryn's images became more stylized, coiffed, and polished. As a result, Kathryn was reinforcing stereotypical conceptions of beauty (Bartkly, 1990). By performing conventional acts of beautification in her photos, Kathryn Bernardo conveyed a need to regenerate or perform representations that were similar to the mainstream status quo (Butler). Thus, Kathryn appeared to be overly concerned with her exterior and performative expression of self.



*Kathryn Bernardo, Instagram, 2019*

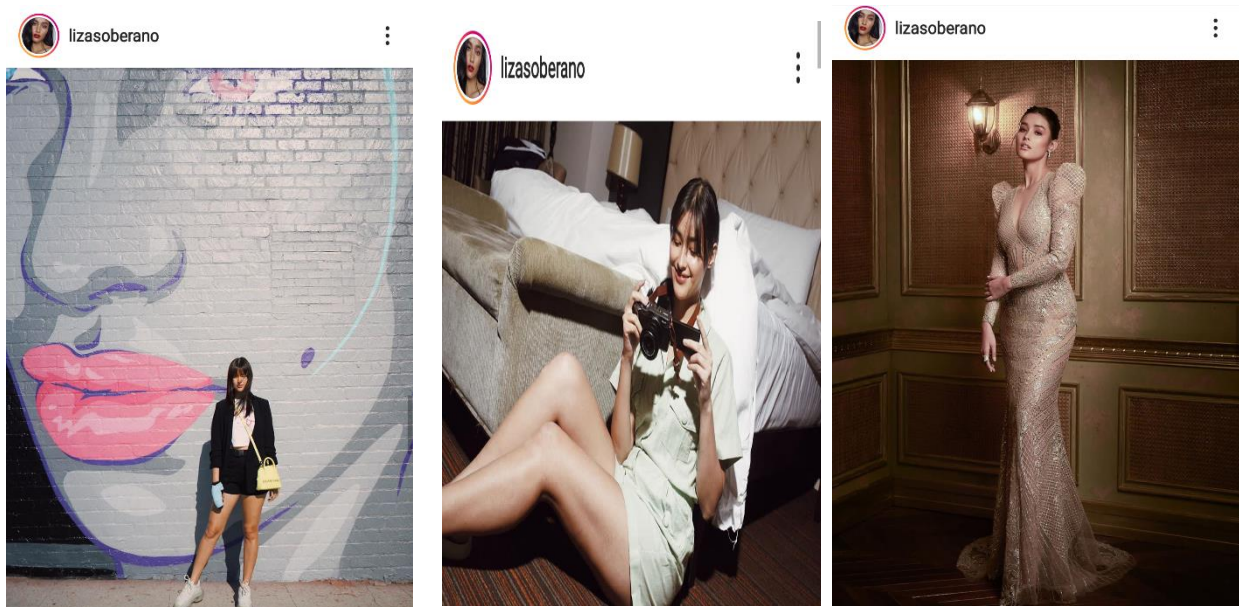
Liza Soberano, on the other hand, revealed that she appears to want to portray herself as more accessible using more relatable image representations. Her images were more relatable to her followers through her choice of dress, action, makeup, and image composition, in comparison to Anne and Kathryn. For instance, Liza did not have hyper sexualized images of herself, nor many images with elaborate dress. Thus, she appeared to have a more relatable or accessible persona. With clearly more authentic photos, Liza portrayed herself as a relatable – or a less coiffed – individual.

Unlike Anne and Kathryn, Liza’s media images often portrayed her in action shots in various states of unkempt or “style distressed” looks, clearly opting for comfort over a coiffed image. From a performative perspective, Liza seemed to embrace various states of unkempt femininity representing a more relatable portrayal of female experience. Her images were more relatable to female experience in that she allowed herself to be seen in unflattering images with unkempt hair – an experience that had by all females yet was not often shown in public through media images. As referenced by

Bartkly (1990), women are routinely looked upon as sexual objects or sexualized stereotypes; Liza’s images problematized these assumptions and stereotypes.

However, this relatable normalcy was somewhat lost through a more comprehensive interpretation of all images posted by Liza. She is, after all, a popular television and movie actress, donning glamorous attire to attend galas or for promotional photo-shoots.

Considering Bartkly’s notion of stereotyping as a form of oppression, Liza offered a more complex and relatable representation of the female experience; however, in a few images certain scopophilic and objectification reinforcing stereotypes are present (see below). Regardless, given how few images Liza posted in relation to other female celebrities, Anne and Kathryn in particular, she did a good job offering complexity in a world of overly coiffed celebrity images.



*Liza Soberano, Instagram, 2019*

Overall, through the media images uploaded by each female celebrity the viewer gained access to what appears to be the celebrities’ private lives. Regardless of how obscure, idealized, real or isolated female celebrities’ realities appear, the viewer ultimately gained a sense of how

Anne Curtis Smith, Liza Soberano, and Kathryn Bernardo preferred to depict themselves to their audiences. Though each celebrity could never fully communicate their individually complex female experience through an image uploaded to a social media platform, in each of their Instagram accounts more or less conventional gender roles were perpetuated and reinforced. Also, with perhaps the exception of Liza Soberano, stereotypical and objectified female forms are recreated and reinforced.

Generally, the qualitative analysis revealed that each female celebrity has created her own framework and system of visual understanding. By observing the media images as cultural artifacts a richer persona and self-representation of the female celebrity can be observed. Erving Goffman argued that we interact and view the world through social frames influenced by our social and cultural circles (1986, p.27). The cultural artifacts and expressions we create and share are expressions and representations of our social framework, how we see reality, and how and where we see ourselves in this reality.

These cultural artifacts are represented in this project by the media images of female celebrities uploaded to Instagram.

With this understanding of media images as a representation of social framing, each celebrity, Anne, Liza, and Kathryn, created an experience for the viewer that provides a lens into their reality (or the reality they are interested in performing for the public). With the nature of social media platforms being selective and able to be directed by the uploader, female celebrities upload images they wish their followers to see. Thus, by selecting media images representing their bodies and selves they communicate how they want their reality to be interpreted.

For instance, Anne Curtis Smith predominantly uploaded images that were shot from a medium angle wherein she is represented as coiffed yet relaxed. Though she attends various industry events, as evidenced by her media images, Anne uploaded many of herself at the beach or spending travel days in streets. The changing scenery and her propensity to allow followers to see the everyday side of her experience conveys a strong message of inclusion in her life in an all too often dynamic and isolating mediascape.

Similarly, Liza Soberano created an accessible social framework through the media images she has uploaded to Instagram. With only 12 media images depicting her over the course of 12-months, Liza has a less narcissistic social media presence. The images uploaded that include Liza often depict her performing tasks with other individuals, or inspiring laughter through facial expressions. With many media images blurred out it is clear that she does not wish to be the center of attention on a regular basis. From these images, it is apparent that Liza's social framework is relatable and often relaxed, with more images depicting information or objects that relate to her rather than depictions of her.

Finally, Kathryn Bernardo has an inaccessible and distant social framework and persona. Few images depict a relatable side of the performer. Though her life may be quite extraordinary, the over stylized images uploaded give a sense of a removed and idealized individual. Portraying herself in such a way relates to how she viewed herself and her reality. Things appear on the surface. The color and imagery used suggests a fantastic existence while connection to the average follower appears to be lesser.

Overall, each female celebrity uses the medium differently. Since social media allows each user to use the medium as they see fit, the user can shape and create a social world that best represents their lives or can manipulate the channel to create an inaccessible persona. All users, celebrity or not, can cultivate, facilitate, and create social frameworks, or systems of

meaning and beliefs, that visually reveal their relationship to the world, themselves, and their audiences.

With these analysis and findings, it was clear that media images uploaded to Instagram could be extremely influential. With the number of followers, a celebrity has on Instagram would correlate to the popularity and potential social influence the celebrity may wield. Ultimately, as referenced above, by being a well-known celebrity in the twenty-first century is a powerful position. With this power, followers and fans may be more reluctant to question the authenticity or stereotypical sexual representation of a celebrity in an image, accepting the content of the image and using it as a source of comparison rather than innately questioning its message (as per Myers & Crowther, 2007). Following from the findings, it was clear that female celebrities were recognizable role models perpetuating gendered and sexual stereotypes. Stereotypes and socially conventional gender roles are all too easily reinforced depending on the content of the media images.

It was clear that media images uploaded to Instagram helped to develop celebrities' personas regardless of their varying degrees of influence. Based on what media images were uploaded a celebrity can generate wider social interest through the use of a racy or counter-cultural visual (People, 2014). celebrities may use the medium to push the limits of sexualized imagery to differentiate themselves from their competition in order to garner more attention and publicity. With the ability to easily cultivate a persona through self-generated media images, manipulation of reality and messaging may further influence audiences.

### **Conclusions**

It undeniable that Instagram's influence is already being felt globally. This study attempted to ascertain some of the ways female celebrities were portraying themselves through media images uploaded to Instagram, and what messages these images convey. This was accomplished through the analysis of media images through feminist theoretical perspectives and framing analysis methodologies. The images were coded and reviewed to reveal what messages and representations these visual performances conveyed.

Each female celebrity used Instagram in different ways; however, there were commonalities to their self-representation. Anne Curtis Smith, Liza Soberano, and Kathryn Bernardo all used the medium as more or less a self-promotion tool. Anne Curtis Smith created a somewhat accessible persona, though this was done through self-objectifying, body centric, and sexually explicit images and messaging; Liza Soberano created an accessible persona through less objectifying visual messaging; and Kathryn Bernardo created a dynamic and distant persona through sexualized and dream-like imagery and subject matter.

There is a need for further study about the ways social media imagery influences the web surfing and social media using public as Asian society's fascination with celebrity continues to increase. Academic and market research could be combined to further analyze the effects of these images to gain additional access and insight.

Female celebrities are human regardless of beauty, persona, longevity, profit, wealth, or popularity. The images they post of themselves are representations that exist within a field of social and cultural conventions and expectations. Therefore, it is important to educate and equip younger generations with social media literacy and visual literacy skills to combat the unhealthy messages that so often permeate our culture.

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