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**Thigh gaps and six packs: An investigation into how four female finalists from ITV's
Love Island communicate body image through Instagram and how young females
perceive this communication**

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Abstract

Over the years, the 'ideal' body image has changed considerably. Historically, the female body has been represented within the media as having a fuller figure, however as time has passed this figure has become thinner and society has become increasingly obsessed with body image and shape. As a result, the female body has occupied a rather significant and central role within Western culture. The media, as a powerful conveyor of sociocultural ideals, has therefore exposed females to messages which emphasise the thin-ideal body image. This norm is promulgated throughout the media and has been found to have detrimental effects on younger females and their opinions on body image, in particular their weight and size. This research project investigates the self-representation habits of four female participants from ITV's *Love Island* and how their communication is received by four younger female individuals. *Love Island* promotes their participants as somewhat 'ordinary' individuals and, after their experience on the programme, the female participants communicate to a large degree through their Instagram accounts. Utilising both content and reception analysis, this research investigates the ways in which the four finalists' self-representational practices are received by younger females.

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Introduction

Within modern day society, there is considerable debate surrounding the topic of body image. According to scholars, Western society in particular has come to idealise a body image that is slimmer, particularly regarding younger females (Dorian and Garfinkel, 2002: 5), therefore resulting in somewhat unhealthy attitudes towards weight and body shape. It can be deduced that the media has become partially responsible for such attitudes, through their representations of an 'ideal', slimmer body image within Western society. Grogan (2007) notes that one definition of body image refers to the degree of satisfaction an individual holds with their body, as well as their appearance and body size perceptions. Veldhuis et al (2016: 75) have expanded Grogan's argument, by indicating the significant degree of influence that media portrayals hold on the development of body image within younger females. Despite a clear understanding of why the thin-ideal body image has come to play such an important societal role being largely unavailable, it is important to consider the factors behind the media's role in promoting the thin-ideal body shape.

Literature focused on the negative effects of the thin-ideal body image on younger females is not a new concept; an abundance of research has in fact produced vast volumes of literature on the subject. As displayed in the media, societal standards of body image emphasise both the need and desirability of slender ideals (Dorian and Garfinkel, 2002: 11) however, as scholars such as Pompper & Koenig (2004) state, these standards are both unrealistic and unachievable. It can be argued that more traditional media, for example in the form of magazines, has gained the attention of scholars with regards to body image, however within modern day society the role of the online environment and the proliferation of social networking sites is also extremely important to consider. It has been noted that social media platforms produce similar effects on body image as that of more traditional media, with numerous academics speculating that these platforms contribute towards the negative associations younger females make towards body image (Chrisler et al, 2013; Ghaznavi & Taylor, 2015). Instagram, in particular, is an important platform to consider; as an image based social networking site, Instagram provides increased exposure to images which may, in turn, lead to body image dissatisfaction. There is, however, limited research examining the effects associated with Instagram use, in terms of body image and younger females.

The main focus behind this research project studies the self-representational practices of four finalists from the reality television programme, *Love Island*, on the social networking platform Instagram, answering three key sub-questions regarding body image. As well as this, the research further addresses the perceptions that four younger female individuals have of the four finalists and their body image endorsement; how each Instagram account belonging to the *Love Island* finalist makes them feel about their own body, if they aspire to have the same body image as the four finalists and where they stand on the argument that Instagram is harmful to body image as a whole for younger females. The second section of this research sets out the literature surrounding body image, section three discusses my chosen methodologies, with section four discussing the analysis and findings and section five drawing final conclusions. The main research question in which this report will be focusing on is as follows:

Thigh gaps and six packs: An investigation into how four female finalists from ITV's Love Island communicate body image through Instagram and how young females perceive this communication

Am I skinny enough? Representation of body image in modern day society

Western society currently faces a considerable conflict regarding body image; slimmer body sizes have come to be considered as representative of the ideal body size by both media and the Western society as a whole (Veldhuis et al, 2016: 74), to the extent that a preference for a slimmer body shape has been established as the 'norm'. Throughout the years, the cultural standard of body image has been broadcasted, to a significant degree, via the media. These messages have been communicated throughout traditional media, television and, due to technological developments, newer digital platforms such as Instagram. Scholars such as Berscheid et al (1973) have indicated that as a general rule, females have come to be more dissatisfied with their bodies than their male counterparts. Over many centuries, female involvement with their appearance has, according to Frost (1999: 117), been ascribed negative meanings within the media; it can be deduced, therefore, that significance of body image resides in both how other individuals have judged female body sizes and the ways females have perceived themselves. Ultimately, scholars such as Fallon (1990) and Kilbourne (1994) have indicated that the messages communicated to females for the need to be slimmer in order to be both attractive and accepted within society largely comes from the media; this notion can be seen both historically and within present society.

The concept of 'body image' was first brought to light by the German physician, Paul Schilder, in his 1935 book *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body*. Schilder defined body image as the way in which individuals form a picture of their body in their own mind, that is to say, how their body appears to them. This definition has been expanded and discussed by different scholars throughout the years, for example Cash and Henry (1995) later noted that body image may also be described as the combination of an individual's feelings, perception and thoughts about both their body and physical appearance. Society's somewhat obsession with body image has, according to Counihan (1999), historical precedents; throughout time, particularly within Western society, a focus upon female body image in particular has been observed. Despite the body being important to the representation and identity of both males and females, scholars have noted that it is particularly dominant within the notions of femininity (Gimlin, 2002: 4). Rubin

Suleiman (1986: 1) supports this by stating that the female body has indeed occupied an important and central place within Western culture.

Historically in Western culture, the female body has been represented as a somewhat fuller figure, with a rounded stomach and rounded hips (Grogan, 1999). During this time, larger body sizes within females were further considered as representing both prosperity and health (Thompson et al, 1999); we can deduce from this that a larger body shape was ultimately considered as ideal, thus attractive and healthy. However, over the last century this ideal has changed; Wiseman et al (1992) maintained throughout their research that the desired female body in Western culture has decreased in terms of weight and size over the years. This notion is discussed further within the research carried out by Wykes and Gunter (2005: 140), who state that during the 1970s and 1980s, a slimmer body type was emerging as popular, particularly among young females. Calden et al (1959) reinforces this notion, stating that for over thirty years in Western society female individuals have indicated positive attitudes towards a body type which is smaller and slimmer.

Within modern day society, females are largely encouraged and somewhat expected to maintain a body shape that is slim and slender in order to achieve various attributes, including fitness and success (Wykes and Gunter, 2005: 145). Being overweight has come to be associated with negative connotations, such as lethargy and self-indulgence (Glassner, 1988; Ogden, 1992). However, despite females potentially accepting the slimmer modern day societal ideal as an attainable goal, scholars have criticised such ideals and have thus indicated that western culture's portrayal and somewhat expectance of a slimmer body shape for all individuals may be unrealistic (Pompper & Koenig, 2004; Wood-Barcalow et al, 2010). Nasser (1988) further makes the case that the emphasis within Western culture placed on thinness may be a culture-bound syndrome; within these societies, females who are seen as slender are ultimately considered maximally attractive (Smith et al, 2007). It must be considered, therefore, that Western cultural and social norms, particularly those which idealise slimmer body shapes, may impact upon potential unhealthy and

negative attitudes towards body image. It is thus important to consider the main platforms in which any negative ideals are communicated towards females within modern day society.

Depictions of body image within the media have over time, both reflected and reinforced the concept of physical appearance as an extremely important aspect within the life of a female (Dorian & Garfinkel, 2002: 13). In terms of media images, Dorian and Garfinkel further note that that the body is found to be highly emphasised when directed towards females, in contrast to the emphasis on facial features shown to men. Early social theorists Veblen (1899) and Simmel (1904) both predicted within their research that the characteristics of a burgeoning culture, which was heavily consumer-oriented, may ultimately be broadcasted through societal attitudes towards the body. As the mass media are considered to be extremely powerful conveyers of sociocultural ideals, it is therefore important to consider the ways in which body image is communicated. From a young age, females within modern day society are exposed to media images which emphasise that appearance is a highly important aspect of life and that potential acceptance or rejection within society is heavily centred upon their looks (Barrios & Pennebaker, 1983; Gergen, 1991). Fashion and lifestyle magazines aimed at teenage girls, for example, result in young females growing up in an environment which enables them to compare themselves with both celebrities and models who illustrate the slimmer body size ideal. As well as this, Dorian and Garfinkel (2002: 27) note that this environment may further promote messages to young females that this comparison is a necessity, in order to remain attractive and desirable within society. This promotion of ideals also takes place through different products for younger females, for example, through toy dolls. From an early age, children play with toy dolls which are designed with unrealistically thin bodies, however play a central role within the child's life (Dittmar et al, 2006; Grogan, 2008). As a child grows up, they are surrounded by a consumer culture that emphasises the 'perfect' body and ways in which one can achieve this.

As well as this, Dorian and Garfinkel (2002: 14) note that advertisements within the mass media rely heavily on images of the 'ideal' yet unattainable female body shape in order to sell their products. Diet advertisements, for example, have come to be greatly overrepresented within

female magazines (Dorian and Garfinkel, 2002: 12). In an image conscious society, scholars have further suggested that the societal pressure of thinness by the media is particularly influential during both adolescence and young adulthood for females (Schlundt et al, 1985), therefore we can deduce from this that the development of body image during the early life of a female is heavily influenced by the media. Sociocultural norm theory (Thompson et al, 1999) states that the various attitudes females hold about body image are the result of both social and cultural influences, which are predominantly conveyed through the mass media. As well as this, scholars such as Wykes and Gunter (2005: 148) bring into the argument the notion of cultivation theory, which states that media representations within society often tend to be repetitive, thus regular exposure to such images may cultivate within the audience the idea that certain ideals are the norm. Grogan (2007) reinforces the notions of both sociocultural norm theory and cultivation theory by arguing that portrayals of media figures within modern day society predominantly circulate and endorse the Western ideal body shape, thus the mainstream view becoming cultivated in the consciousness of the audience is that of being smaller and slimmer.

This, therefore, adds pressure for females to conform to the mainstream body shape that is in vogue, as the cultural and social norm is promulgated to a large degree throughout the mass media and is arguably extremely salient towards females. It is, however, well documented throughout scholarly research that females are often left feeling dissatisfied with their bodies due to the circulated cultural norms for thinness; various research has stated that cultural norms, in regards to being small and slimmer, have resulted in negative physical and psychological effects in females, as well as becoming a potential harm to their social wellbeing (Frederick et al, 2007; Smolak, 1996; Rodin et al, 1984). Despite this, academic articles have become particularly hesitant to claim that the mass media causes issues with females and body image. As the internet includes both realistic and unrealistic images, Williams and Ricciardelli (2014: 390) note that, in the longer term, exposure to these images may potentially lead to less body image concerns and in fact provide a naturalistic environment for females. Tatangelo and Ricciardelli (2013) support this theory and expand on it, arguing that there is limited understanding of the ways in which young females interpret these media messages, thus there is limited understanding of their impact.

Nevertheless, scholars such as Bessenoff (2006) strongly maintain that the thin-ideal clearly contributes towards negative impact and we can deduce from this that media exposure has the likely potential to be linked with female body dissatisfaction. As a whole, it is not clear as to why Western society has developed the norms and ideals surrounding body shape (Dorian and Garfinkel, 2002: 28). As a consequence, according to scholars such as Wykes and Gunter (2005: 148), it is important to consider that more research is required in order to assess the ways in which the mass media and its content influences body image further.

#thinspiration and #fitspiration: body image on social media

As Lewallen and Behm-Morawitz (2016: 1) maintain, the soaring popularity of social networking sites over recent years has brought various social and psychological issues to light in the media landscape. As discussed previously, the idea that the mass media in modern day society may contribute negatively towards body image is a highly debated topic within the academic field, however, it is also important to consider the role of social networking sites. As a newer and rapidly evolving platform, social media's influence on body image is arguably less understood. Despite this, many scholars, such as Blair Burnette et al (2017: 115), argue that there is considerable reason to believe that social media may have detrimental effects on body image, with their ability to showcase visual images worldwide, especially to a younger audience. Research undertaken by Duggan and Brenner (2013) showcases that 18 to 29 year olds are the largest demographic group to utilise a social networking site and, perhaps more importantly, females are more likely to be 'online'. We can deduce from this that the impact of social media may have a greater outcome in terms of negative body ideals than that of the older mass media. Research by Perloff (2014) supports this argument, stating that social networking sites in modern day society are rapidly rising in popularity over other forms of mass media, where individuals globally can access information about body image ideals. Perloff further demonstrates that social media in Western societies has the ability to infiltrate the life of an individual in ways which were not possible with more traditional mass media; we can therefore gather from this that body image ideals may be cultivated through this form of digital technology. This is of particular interest to my

own research, as I question the extent to which chosen patterns of self-representation on Instagram reinforce or challenge ideologies related to the dominance of social media in Western societies. Research has further indicated that images communicated through social media may be accessed anywhere and at any time (Eveland, 2003; Sundar et al, 2013) and, as a result, individuals may be constantly exposed to a higher percentage of body image ideals.

Despite this, scholars have concluded that there is little understanding in how individuals interpret media messages and, to an extent, how these media messages are reinforced by their consumption of digital media (Tatangelo and Ricciardelli 2013). This may be a limitation to my own research; Tatangelo and Ricciardelli have further noted that individuals within modern day society are not passive audiences and, due to the large amount of body ideal images throughout society, females may become desensitised to the content of such messages. Williams and Ricciardelli (2014: 390) later sustain this argument by maintaining that social media may in fact be a supportive environment for online users. We can deduce from this that social media uses and gratifications (Katz et al, 1973) may not be largely linked to the negativity surrounding body image and the mass media; Perloff (2014: 367) notes that it is unrealistic to assume that social media exerts a direct effect upon an individual and their associations with body image. Nonetheless, relevant research does indeed suggest that portrayals via social media may exert harmful influences (Ferguson et al, 2011) and, despite the research being relatively young, studies have suggested that the impact of social media on body image may be more harmful than that of traditional media (Blair Burnette et al, 2017: 115). From the perspective of uses and gratifications, individuals who may be more vulnerable to others may be susceptible to negative body ideals communication within the online environment.

Instagram: a harm or a help?

The social networking platform Instagram was launched in 2010, designed with the purpose of allowing users worldwide to share pictures by uploading them onto the newsfeed. Since its launch, the social networking platform has risen to become one of the most popular online sites,

ranking 30th globally in 2014 (Alexa Web Information, 2014). In 2015, around 57% of users visited the site at least once a day and, in 2017, Instagram surpassed 800 million active users whilst averaging 95 million image uploads per day (WordStream, 2018). According to further research, 59% of users are aged between 18 and 29, with 68% of all total being female (Omnicores, 2018). Users have the ability to follow both their peers and those who are of a more well-known, celebrity status, all of which are posting images as a way of self-representation; as Thumim (2012: 10) indicates, self-representations are flourishing throughout digital culture. This is of particular value to my own research, as I am interested in the ways in which the self-representation of *Love Island* finalists on Instagram directly address widespread notions of body image. Selfies are simply images an individual takes of their face or body; from this, scholars have maintained that the images posted on Instagram may promote societal ideals and norms, thus resulting in users judging themselves against these images (Myers and Crowther, 2009; Vandebosch and Eggermont, 2012). This upward comparison falls in line with that of social comparison theory; in its original version, Festinger (1954) maintains that individuals find it both diagnostic and purposeful to compare themselves to those around them, with Suls and Wheeler (2000) later supporting this.

In an online environment which is a hotspot for images of peers and celebrities alike, scholars such as Perloff (2014: 369) further propose these online platforms are popular for opportunities which fall in line with social comparison, as users have an innate drive to liken themselves to others. Tiggemann and Brown (2016: 38) state within their research that the top eight out of ten most followed Instagram accounts were those belonging to thin, toned and attractive females. Any social media-triggered comparisons may result in a greater effect on body image disturbance, especially due to the higher number of younger female users who follow peers and celebrities whom they may idolise. However, it is again essential to consider that of individual vulnerability; Perloff (2014: 369) makes the important suggestion that the more vulnerable individuals may be susceptible to such social comparisons, thus producing a higher level of dissatisfaction with one's body image. This is important to my own research, as I am highly interested in younger female's views on the argument that Instagram may be a harm to body image ideals. As well as this, in line with body image and social media, it is also vital to consider

the messages communicated through television; many of the individuals who are highly followed on social media originally made their media debut through the reality television genre.

“100% my type on paper”: body image and reality television

As the likes of Hill (2005) and Couldry (2009) have noted within their respective research, reality television (RTV) is a diverse genre of factual programming, offering somewhat ‘ordinary’ individuals the opportunity to become known within society. Nabi et al (2003: 303) further maintain that at the turn of the millennium, the modern media landscape was marked by the explosion of reality-based television programming. Despite scholars arguing that there is no definitive or industry standard definition of the genre (Nabi et al, 2003: 304), Cavender and Fishman (1998: 3) make the case that RTV is predominantly distinguished by programmes that claim to present a representation of ordinary individuals and reality within modern day society. As television has come to be considered a highly important source of social information and values (Kinnally & Van Vonderen, 2014: 218), we can deduce that many viewers might assume that RTV includes somewhat ‘realistic’ representations of body image within their programming, ones which do not follow the ‘slimmer’ body image ideal that is promoted throughout the mass media.

However, scholars such as Egbert and Belcher (2012: 411) oppose this theory, by stating that overall, RTV casts include a high number of individuals with idealised body types and thus cast members endorse a body image that is conforming to the norms set out by modern day mass media. In line with Egbert and Belcher’s proposal, research has further indicated that self-presentation and branding are fundamental foundations to the success of RTV participants (Nunn & Biressi, 2014: 274); within modern day society, youth focused RTV programmes and their contestants both embrace and place a high importance on looking their best and, furthermore, follow the body image norms laid out within the industry and the wider mass media as a whole. Negra (2009: 119) supports this by making the argument that the drive to look ‘good’ is one of the most distinctive features of modern day society; RTV thus creates a space for the representation of such norms through both the casting and performance of these cast members (Hearn, 2010).

According to cultivation theory, RTV viewers over the course of a television series may overlap societal views with the ideals they consume when watching such programmes; we can deduce from this that one of the primary ways in which RTV consumption may be connected to cultivation is through repetition. Kinnally and Van Vonderen (2014: 218) support this notion by indicating cultivation effects on body image is more evident in females who have, over time, consumed thin-ideal media messages and norms. Cumulative exposure to RTV programmes featuring cast members who represent and endorse the societal body image ideals may result in individuals observing repetitive thin-ideal messages, all of which project the notion that they are both accessible and a highly important social value for females (Kinnally & Van Vonderen, 2014: 217). This, therefore, may result in females becoming more likely to accept the thin-ideal perspective as an everyday social norm. Myers and Biocca (1992) and Park (2005) support this, having found in their respective research that exposure to RTV programmes has in fact impacted viewers, their perceptions of the own bodies and, to an extent, stimulated body dissatisfaction.

Representations of so-called 'ordinary' individuals who do in fact endorse societal body image ideals have, over the years, become far more prevalent in popular mass media than ever before (Palmer, 2005: 40) and the attractiveness of RTV programmes which follow a dating format is on the rise. Dating has been recognised as a perfect arrangement for RTV, offering various strategies for producers and viewing pleasures for consumers (Gray, 2009: 260-261). As well as being highlighted in the mainstream media, it is difficult to deny that body image is largely emphasised in RTV programmes that follow a dating set-up (Egbert & Belcher, 2012: 410). There is a large amount of research which supports this statement, including that of McClanahan (2007) and Streitmatter (2004), who both indicate within their respective studies that dating RTV programmes are among those most likely to include females of a smaller stature, thus placing more emphasis on conforming to the slimmer body norms set by modern day mass media. Gray (2009) develops this by arguing many reality dating programmes feature attractive, slimmer female contestants, predominantly shown wearing revealing clothing whilst being portrayed as ordinary. However, with their ideal physical form, they will ultimately achieve wealth, success and love (Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2006; Heinricy, 2006).

Within the last few years, the RTV programme *Love Island* has become something of a social phenomenon, drawing in wider audiences year after year and ultimately becoming an important programme to consider within the argument surrounding body image and RTV. The programme is highly marketed off the contestants' attractiveness, with every advert featuring the 'Islanders' in swimwear and the opening credits showing nothing but bodies which would fit in to the ideal body shape set by the wider mass media. Drawing on social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954; Suls & Wheeler, 2000), we can deduce that female viewers of *Love Island* may find the innate drive to compare themselves to these contestants when confronted with such cultural norms of body image, in order to make evaluations about themselves. This is particularly valuable to my own research as I am extremely interested in how the participants in my focus group feel when they look at the *Love Island* female contestants. RTV programmes such as *Love Island*, being observed as sources of how females should look, have been directly linked to cause body dissatisfaction; such thin-ideal media perpetuates these perspectives (Harrison, 2000) and thus set further unrealistic body shape goals for the females who consume these messages.

As a media genre which has proliferated and become increasingly popular, it can be argued that RTV has historically been stigmatised and thus ignored by scholars, who may see it as artificial and trivial (Cummins and Gordon, 2006; Schroeder, 2006). However, as this research dates back to 2006, this may not be the case within present day research. Due to its claim of somewhat displaying reality, Egbert and Belcher (2012: 408) state that media scholars have a responsibility to investigate to what extent RTV affects viewers. As it stands, past investigations into the impact of RTV on body image has resulted in exposure being associated with body image dissatisfaction (Myers & Biocca, 1992; Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996), however more research is arguably required to determine the full extent.

Methodology

In order to assess how the female contestants from ITV's *Love Island* communicate ideas regarding body image, I began with analysing the Instagram accounts of the four female finalists from the 2017 series: Amber Davies, Camilla Thurlow, Olivia Attwood and Gabby Allen. I chose to analyse the last four finalists as they became the most popular females throughout the weeks that *Love Island* was broadcasted, with Amber Davies winning overall, Camilla Thurlow placing second, Olivia Attwood placing third and Gabby Allen in fourth. As defined by Russmann and Svensson (2016: 3), a follower of an Instagram account is an individual who subscribes to an account and then receives 'updates' in the form of pictures and videos. According to their respective Instagram accounts, the four contestants have the following amount of followers as of August 2018:

- Amber Davies: 1,700,000 million
- Camilla Thurlow: 1,400,000 million
- Olivia Attwood: 1,600,000 million
- Gabby Allen: 1,000,000 million

In order to analyse the four Instagram account thoroughly, I used both quantitative and qualitative content analysis on each Instagram page in turn, screen capturing each image posted over the four month period which was of relevance to my research. I decided upon content analysis as my research is predominantly guided by set of sub-questions, drawing upon key features from each Instagram account. From my reading of scholarly work, other research focusing on Instagram indicates the use of content analysis as a key method (Yiseul Choi & Lewallen, 2018; Russman & Svensson, 2016), therefore I believed an adaptation of these research articles would be most appropriate for my own work. I also presented different variables for each Instagram account in tables under each sub-question, allowing for a different approach when analysing and, furthermore, a precise view of key factors for each *Love Island* finalist.

I analysed the four Instagram accounts from the perspective of an ordinary everyday citizen, more precisely a younger female, who has an interest in *Love Island* and who utilises social media as part of their daily routine. It has been acknowledged by scholars that Instagram has come to be regarded as an unparalleled source of data for social researchers (Boy & Uitermark (2016: 1). As its users navigate everyday life utilising the platform, I would argue that Instagram is a key social networking site, providing the ability to access a wide variety of accounts and, furthermore, follow the lives of individuals such as the four *Love Island* finalists. Firstly, I drafted three sub-questions as a basis for my analysis:

- a) Do the four *Love Island* finalists use their Instagram accounts to address notions of ideal body image?
- b) In what other ways do they reinforce or challenge norms about body shape and size in their self-representational practices on Instagram?
- c) How do the chosen patterns of self-representation of the finalists on Instagram reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies related to consumerism and entrepreneurial capitalism?

I attempted to construct the sub-questions to cover all aspects of how the *Love Island* finalists communicate, whether directly or indirectly, about body image to their followers through their Instagram accounts, addressing the ways in which the females reinforce or challenge norms about body image, how they do so and also whether their self-representation supports any dominant ideologies surrounding the notions of consumerism in Western society. With the sub-questions planned out, I first analysed the Instagram account belonging to Amber Davies, then moved to Camilla Thurlow, Olivia Attwood and finally Gabby Davies. I began my analysis of each Instagram account from each finalist's first post upon leaving *Love Island* and analysed the images posted within the following four months. I decided upon a four month period as there are differences in the amount of images each finalist posted upon leaving *Love Island*, therefore I concluded that four months was a sufficient amount of time to gain enough empirical research for analysis. When analysing the Instagram accounts I made detailed notes under each sub-heading

for each respective account. I found this process time consuming, however I would argue that utilising sub-headings and analysing each Instagram account one by one was a strength within my initial research, as I was able to focus on one account completely, thus analysing under the sub-questions thoroughly. Once the analysis was fully completed, I pulled all notes together in order to create a comparison for my initial research findings. Screen captures of the images which I planned to discuss were taken and saved for reference throughout the findings.

Once my initial empirical research was fully completed, I turned my attention to the second part of my research: the focus group and reception analysis, with the aim of uncovering the deeper perceptions of the Instagram pages from younger females and Instagram users. Morgan (1996: 130) maintains that focus groups are a particular research technique that collects data through group interaction on a certain topic which has been determined by the researcher. Adding to this, Morgan and Krueger (1993) state that one of the most prominent strengths of a focus group is not simply exploring what different individuals have to say, but in providing various insights into the foundations of both complex behaviours and motivations. Furthermore, Morgan (1996: 139) indicates that a further strength comes from the ability of the researcher to ask participants for comparisons amongst their views, rather than accumulating individual data for comparison purposes.

I recruited four participants for my focus group; all female, aged 18, 20, 23 and 25. I chose a range of ages in order to gain a wider perspective. A weakness of this may be that I could have gathered a larger amount of participants, as well as including males to gain a different insight, however after careful consideration I believed that four participants would provide qualitative data that I could analyse at a deeper level. As Morgan (1996: 139) discusses, participants within focus groups can both query each other and explain themselves to each other at a profounder level than that of separate individual interviews, therefore we can deduce from this that discussion in focus groups may ultimately gather highly detailed qualitative information. I also believed that recruiting female-only participants would be more appropriate for my research, as I am analysing the

Instagram accounts of female contestants, thus I would make the argument that their appeal is predominantly to female Instagram users.

Before the focus group began, I drafted a list of main sub-questions which I aimed to ask after gaining an initial insight into each participant's opinion on *Love Island* and their Instagram usage. The main sub-questions of the focus group are as follows:

- a) Can you tell me how looking at the Instagram accounts makes you feel about your own body, if at all?
- b) Do you aspire to have the same body image as the four *Love Island* finalists?
- c) Where do you stand on the argument that Instagram is harmful to body image and younger females?

At the beginning of the focus group, I asked each participant to sign consent forms. Each participant then browsed through the four Instagram accounts, looking at images from the four month period only, for a total of five minutes per account whilst making notes. I would argue that five minutes provided enough time to study both images and text on the account, thus allowing individual opinions to be formed and enough information gained in order to participate fully in the focus group. After the twenty minutes were over, the focus group commenced, the audio being recorded on my laptop. At first, I gained an initial insight into the participant's opinions of *Love Island* and asked about their Instagram usage, for example, how many times they utilised the platform a day and whether they followed any of the four finalists' accounts. I then asked the three main sub-questions in turn, allowing a sufficient amount of time per question for the participants to discuss ideas and opinions between themselves. A weakness to my research method may be that discussion has the potential to be limited; Morgan (1996: 140) argues that it is in fact the researcher, rather than the participants, who determines the agenda of the discussion, thus there can be concerns for the range of topics which can be researched effectively during the focus group. Discussion was directed by the sub-questions therefore could not easily flow into other topics, however I would argue that participants had the ability to discuss the sub-questions in depth

without any interference, therefore providing my research with the relevant qualitative information I required.

Once the focus group was finished, I spent time transcribing the qualitative data recorded from the discussion. A weakness here was the amount of time consumed typing out the findings, which may have been shortened if I had chosen another research method, such as a survey. However, referring back to Morgan (1996: 139), the ability for participants to both query and explain themselves to each other provided an important strength to my research, allowing the collection of valuable insights. Once the qualitative data was recorded, I focused on the sub-questions, dividing the data up and analysing in order to answer each respective question, whilst referring to my original empirical research.

Love Island 2017: Instagram Analysis

Love Island is a British RTV programme which first aired on the commercial television channel ITV in 2005, running for two series and then returning in 2015 as a remake of the original. The format of the programme is that of a dating show, involving a group of male and female contestants (referred to as Islanders) who are placed to live in isolation from the outside world in a villa in Mallorca. The contestants are under constant video surveillance and to survive in the villa, they must 'couple up'. After a number of weeks, the public votes for their overall winning couple of *Love Island* and this couple receives £50,000 to share between them.

The 2017 series of *Love Island* began on 5th June and ran for seven weeks, making it the longest running series to date. After seven weeks the general public voted for Amber Davies, with partner Kemal Centinay, to win the series. Camilla Thurlow, with partner Jamie Jewitt, placed second; Olivia Attwood, with partner Chris Hughes, came in third and Gabby Allen, with partner Marcel Somerville, placed fourth. Once each Islander leaves the villa, they are reunited with their friends and family and, more importantly for the focus of this research, their mobile phones and social media accounts. The four couples who reached the final in 2017 left the villa on 24th July. The following table indicates the amount of images the four female finalists posted on Instagram over a four month time period (from 25th July to 25th November 2017), once being reunited with their mobile phones:

Name of Finalist	Date of first post	Number of posts	Amount of followers
Amber Davies	25 th July	130	1.7 million
Camilla Thurlow	25 th July	57	1.4 million
Olivia Attwood	25 th July	131	1.6 million
Gabby Allen	30 th July	46	1 million

Table 1: Quantitative content analysis of finalists' Instagram accounts

We can see from this table that there is a large difference in the amount of images posted between the finalists. Amber Davies and Olivia Attwood both posted around 130 images each in the four month time period, whilst Camilla Thurlow and Gabby Allen posted under 110 images between them. It is important to question why there is such a noticeable difference between the

two sets of finalists, one which I will analyse in the coming sub-questions, as well as the nature and aim of the images posted by each female.

- a) Do the four Love Island finalists use their Instagram accounts to address notions of ideal body image?

	Amber Davies	Camilla Thurlow	Olivia Attwood	Gabby Allen
Images showcasing whole figure	X	X	X	X
Images in underwear	X		X	
Images in swimwear	X		X	X
Mention of fitness and/or diet				X
Images in gym-wear				X
Images of a provocative nature	X		X	X

Table 2: Qualitative content analysis of finalists' Instagram accounts

All four female contestants post images regularly on their Instagram accounts, as mentioned above. With Amber Davies and Olivia Attwood claiming the top spot for the most images posted, it is first important to consider how these two females use their Instagram accounts to directly address notions of ideal body image, compared to the accounts of Camilla Thurlow and Gabby Allen. With 261 images posted between them in the four month period, Amber and Olivia come under exactly the same points throughout the analysis of their Instagram. The first factor to consider in terms of their self-representation is the way in which they showcase their body image to their Instagram followers. Drawing on McClanahan (2007) and Streitmatter's (2004) research, both scholars have indicated that female RTV contestants are more likely to have a smaller and slimmer body image. Olivia Attwood's first post after leaving the *Love Island* villa supports this argument, which can be seen in Figure 1:



Figure 1: Olivia Attwood Instagram post 25th July 2017

As Figure 1 portrays, the image uploaded by Olivia showcases her slimmer body type, supporting the argument that RTV contestants are more likely to have smaller statures. This image also supports the argument made by Gray (2009) who states that contestants such as Olivia are largely viewed by the audience as individuals who are wearing revealing clothing. As Olivia chose to post this image herself, her self-representation both addresses and endorses the notion of the thin-ideal body shape, as she is portraying her slimmer body image in a bikini to her 1.6 million followers. Despite not directly mentioning the notion of body image ideals in the Instagram post, the image showcases a body image which may be highly unachievable to Olivia's followers and fan base. As the image received a total of 95,446 'likes', with Olivia's followers leaving supportive comments about her body image, we can deduce from this that Olivia's post was hugely admired, with a large percentage of her 'likes' and comments coming from younger female fans. As discussed within the literature review section of my research, younger females within modern day society are highly exposed to images which emphasise a slimmer body ideal and, furthermore, indicate that appearance is a highly important aspect of everyday life (Barrios & Pennebaker, 1983; Gergen, 1991). The impact from following individuals such as Olivia on Instagram may be damaging to younger females, who may look up to Olivia as a role model, despite Olivia addressing slimmer body image ideals through the posts uploaded. This can be seen further through an image uploaded by fellow contestant and *Love Island* winner, Amber Davies:



Figure 2: Amber Davies Instagram post 2nd August 2017

Similar to that of Olivia, Amber's account holds many images of the *Love Island* winner in revealing clothing and thus endorsing the thin-ideal body image in her self-representation on the social media platform. Amber holds the highest amount of Instagram followers at 1.7 million, with her Instagram account extremely similar to Olivia's following their departure from the Love Island villa. With their notably increased following, both females posted similar images to their respective accounts within days of being reunited with their phones, in either underwear or swimwear, as can be seen further in Figures 3 and 4:

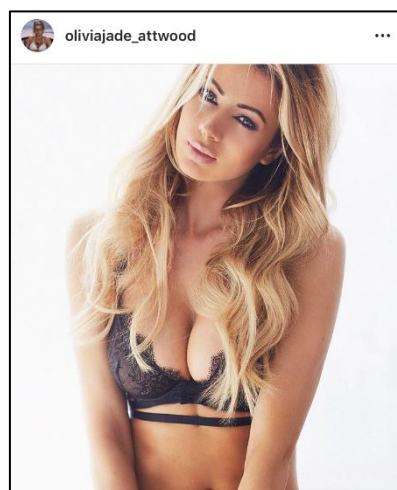


Figure 3: Olivia Attwood Instagram post 27th July 2017

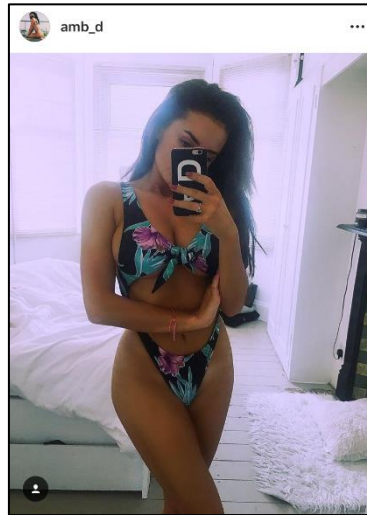


Figure 4: Amber Davies Instagram post 15th August 2017

Figure 3 shows an image which was posted three days after Olivia's departure from the *Love Island* villa, again portraying herself in revealing clothing and showcasing her slim figure to her followers, whilst Figure 4 portrays a mirror 'selfie' taken by Amber Davies. Both finalists are slim and attractive females, with what would be considered the 'ideal' body shape within Western society. The nature of these images falls in line with theory argued by Negra (2009: 119), who has stated that looking attractive is a distinctive feature within modern day society. The Instagram pages of Olivia and Amber support this notion, as both females are well made up, with long hair and bodies which would be considered attractive within society.

With Amber and Olivia holding the highest amount of followers between the four *Love Island* finalists, the images which further may endorse the thin-ideal body shape, whilst also promoting societal ideals and norms, are thus being disseminated to a large amount of individuals, many of whom are younger females, and are also repeatedly broadcasted throughout both Instagram pages. In total, Olivia uploaded 20 images over the four month period which represent her in a bikini or revealing clothing such as her underwear, whilst Amber uploaded 17. In relation to social comparison theory, images of this nature on both Olivia and Amber's Instagram account have prompted comments from female fans, an example of which can be seen in Figure 5:

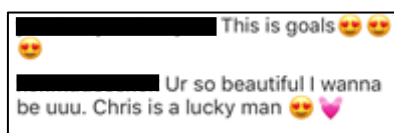


Figure 5: Comments from Olivia Attwood's Instagram post 27th July 2017

From this, we can deduce that the comments left by two of Olivia's followers indicate tendencies which arguably fall in line with social comparison theory; both followers are implying that they wish to look like Olivia. Despite research indicating that individuals find it purposeful to compare themselves to others (Festinger, 1954), I would strongly make the case that comparing themselves to individuals such as Olivia and Amber, who fall into the category of having an 'ideal' body image as encouraged within Western cultures, and who arguably address and endorse a body image which is highly promoted by the mass media despite being potentially unattainable, may hold negative aspects over positive ones. We can infer from comments such as those in Figure 5 that comparisons which are triggered may later result in a greater impact on body image disturbance; as females are more likely to utilise the internet to follow individuals such as the *Love Island* finalists, images such as those posted by Olivia and Amber may have detrimental effects on body image in younger females.

In comparison to this, it is worth noting that Gabby Allen also posts images which may be considered to address and endorse the notions of ideal body image throughout her Instagram account. Despite holding a significantly lower amount of followers and posting approximately half the number of images throughout the four months as that of Olivia and Amber, Gabby has still utilised her platform to represent herself in terms of ideal body image, as can be seen in Figures 6 and 7:

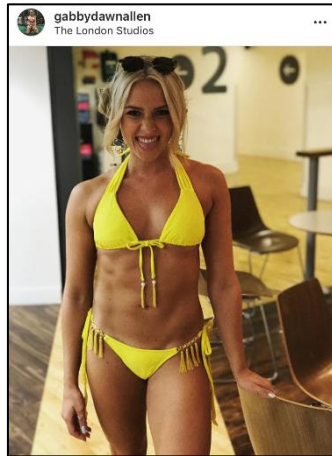


Figure 6: Gabby Allen Instagram post 8th August 2017

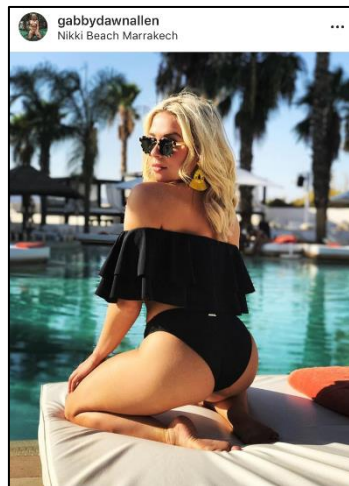


Figure 7: Gabby Allen Instagram post 31st August 2017

Much like Olivia Attwood and Amber Davies, shortly after leaving the *Love Island* villa and becoming increasingly well known throughout popular culture, Gabby has chosen to post a variety of images which portray her in a bikini as a form of self-representation, with a further total of 8 images portraying her body image in such a way uploaded over the four month period. Despite the lower number of followers to her fellow finalists, many of Gabby's followers are younger females and thus may be susceptible to negative body associations, following Gabby's posts portraying the finalist in bikinis and rather revealing clothing. Much like Figure 5, Gabby's Instagram posts shown in Figures 6 and 7 received an abundance of comments, many of which indicate that her followers aspire to look like her:

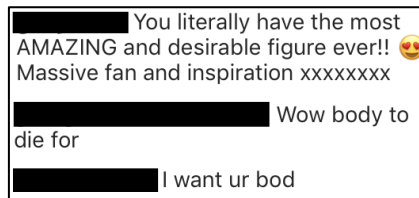


Figure 8: Comments from Gabby Allen's Instagram post 8th August 2017

These comments can be seen as very similar to those shown in Figure 5; Gabby's followers are aspiring specifically to have her body shape and image. Despite having the fewest amount of followers out of the four finalists, Gabby has still self-represented in a way that addresses the notions of body image ideals. Cumulative exposure to Instagram accounts such as this may result in younger females becoming increasingly encouraged and to maintain a body shape which is slimmer and slender, therefore increasingly the potential of becoming susceptible to body dissatisfaction.

In comparison to Amber and Olivia, there is one factor which must be considered in regards to Gabby's Instagram account. Gabby is largely associated with fitness, therefore has posted a large number of images related to a gymnasium, examples of which can be seen in Figures 9 and 10:

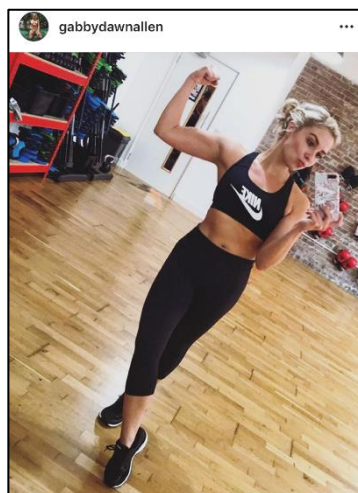


Figure 9: Gabby Allen Instagram post 7th October 2017



Figure 10: Gabby Allen Instagram post 18th November 2017

Gabby's interest in fitness and the images uploaded of herself in fitness attire could be seen to have a positive impact on her followers; her followers may be encouraged to become fit and healthy, therefore it could be argued that Gabby is in fact a positive role model on younger females. However, the caption which was uploaded along with Figure 10 may have a detrimental impact over a positive one:

gabbydawnallen I am fully on a mission to get back to my pre-villa body 🍌🍌🌟 in preparation for exciting projects, the plan was to train every day this week but then down to eye watering DOMS I had to take a rest day yesterday 🌟 back at it today with a barbell class, followed by my beloved barre and finally finishing working on my own things 🍌🌟 watch this space 😊🌟

Figure 11: Gabby Allen Instagram post caption 18th November 2017

As can be seen from Figures 9 and 10, Gabby's self-representation of her body image falls in line with the ideals set out within Western culture; she is slim and attractive. In indicating to her younger female followers that she wishes to change her body to become more attractive, i.e. her 'pre-villa body', we can deduce that Gabby may be encouraging the slim-ideal notions of body image even further, thus doing more harm than good for her younger, potentially more susceptible female followers who may be dissatisfied with their bodies. If Gabby is aiming to fall more in line with the notions of a slimmer body image, by directly addressing such ideals in her Instagram captions, increasingly positive attitudes regarding a possibly unachievable body image may circulate throughout her female following.

In comparison to Olivia Attwood, Amber Davies and Gabby Allen, we find Camilla Thurlow. Placed second in the *Love Island* final, we can see from Table 2 that Camilla utilises her Instagram account in a vastly different way to that of the other finalists. Out of her 57 posts over the four month period, Camilla posted a total of zero images that represented herself in line with culture-bound body image ideals in regards to posting images in underwear, bikinis or revealing clothing. Instead, Camilla utilises the social networking platform to predominantly increase awareness of charity work and volunteering. That being said, there are images uploaded by Camilla that indirectly address notions of body images, for example Figure 12:



Figure 12: Camilla Thurlow Instagram post 2nd September 2017

The lack of images in revealing clothing, unlike that of her fellow finalists, may support the research undertaken by Williams and Ricciardelli (2014: 390), indicating that exposure to images in the online environment may lead to less body image concerns; as Camilla does not directly represent herself in the same way as the other finalists, she may be seen as more naturalistic and thus more realistic in terms of body image than that of Olivia, Amber and Gabby. However, whilst Camilla is not directly addressing the slim-ideal body image in her posts, Figure 12 is a self-representation of an attractive and notably slim female, therefore we can deduce that despite not posting images of herself in revealing clothing, Camilla is indirectly representing herself in ways that may endorse societal views on body image. Camilla may therefore be indirectly promoting messages to younger females that illustrate the slimmer body size, as the *Love Island* runner up is viewed to be both slim and attractive and, as a result, successful within modern day society.

- b) In what other ways do they reinforce or challenge norms about body shape and size in their self-representational practices on Instagram?

	Amber Davies	Camilla Thurlow	Olivia Attwood	Gabby Allen
Mention of global issues		X		
Mention of charitable events	X	X		X
Images of a sexualised nature	X		X	X

Table 3: Qualitative content analysis of finalists' Instagram accounts

As previously discussed, the nature of RTV programmes may imply that the participants selected hold more 'realistic' representations of body image, ones who do not necessarily endorse the thin-ideal laid out within modern day society. Despite this, we can deduce from the four finalists' Instagram accounts that this may not be the case; as also noted previously, RTV participants, as a general rule, have an idealised body type (Egbert & Belcher, 2012: 411) which is highly represented throughout the images uploaded to the social networking platform. It is important to consider any other ways *Love Island* participants reinforce or challenge norms about body shape and size through their self-representational practices, as these, along with branding, are key foundations to the success of those participating in RTV (Nunn & Biressi, 2014: 274).

As perhaps the 'odd one out' of the four *Love Island* finalists of 2017, Camilla Thurlow's self-representational practices point somewhat toward the more 'realistic' representations of body image, in the way that Camilla does not upload images in bikinis or underwear and thus does not directly expose her followers to the wider notion of the thin-ideal body image. It is this that places Camilla in the 'challenger' section to norms about body image and size. Despite placing second in a highly popular RTV programme, Camilla has utilised her Instagram account not for endorsing body image, but mainly for representing her life with her friends and family. As well as this, Camilla is highly involved in charity work and volunteering, and uses her Instagram as a platform to address worldwide issues. Despite posting images that showcase her figure, Camilla does not post

images that emphasise her body image in a sexualised or provocative manner and, furthermore, repeatedly addresses other issues in the captions with accompany her images:



Figure 13: Camilla Thurlow Instagram post 10th August 2017



Figure 14: Camilla Thurlow Instagram post 28th September 2017

Figures 13 and 14 do portray Camilla's body image, however not in the same manner as that of Amber, Olivia and Gabby. Camilla challenges the norms surrounding body image with her self-representational practices as, despite research indicating that RTV contestants place an extremely high importance on looking their most attractive, Camilla's Instagram is highly focused on external issues such as volunteering and charity events. Figure 14 is an image portraying Camilla and her partner, Jamie, on their way to the Everyday Heroes Awards ceremony; the image does indeed place a focus on Camilla's slimmer figure, however her self-representational practices as a whole do not fall in line with the norms of placing high value on looking her best, instead

Camilla challenges norms and is more focused on wider issues. It has been argued that RTV creates a space for representation of the thin-ideal norm through the casting and performance of the contestants; *Love Island* has in fact created a space for Camilla to address global issues and charitable causes.

In comparison to Camilla, it is possible that the same argument could not be made for the three other finalists of *Love Island 2017*. The self-representational practices of Amber, Olivia and Gabby appear to place looking their most attractive as a high priority, which in turn reinforces norms about body shape and size. These three cast members both represent and endorse the societal body image ideals through the images uploaded to their Instagram accounts, however their self-representation indicates that the nature of such images is part of their everyday lifestyle, thus indicating that they are somewhat 'ordinary' and reinforcing their body image as a norm. Amber Davies, for example, posted an image portraying her attendance at the Pride of Britain Awards, however there is a noticeable difference between her upload and that of Camila's:



Figure 15: Amber Davies Instagram post 30th October 2017

Amber's self-representational practices seen in Figure 15 are vastly different to that of Camilla's, despite both attending award ceremonies for good causes. Both female's body image is

portrayed in the images, however Amber has placed a higher focus on looking her best with the mention of her '*glam squad*', as well as factors such as her stance within the image and her facial expression, which is a contrast to Camilla, who simply mentions the award ceremony and is representing herself smiling alongside her partner. Amber's self-representational practices reinforce norms surrounding body image, despite addressing wider issues in the mention of the awards ceremony, with the prioritisation of looking attractive, thus supporting the argument made by Negra (2009: 119) that this has become one of the more distinctive features of modern day society.

As well as this, each of the three contestants have uploaded images since their departure from the *Love Island* villa that are of a sexualised nature, examples of which can be seen in Figures 16, 17 and 18:



Figure 16: Olivia Attwood Instagram post 23rd August 2017



Figure 17: Amber Davies Instagram post 8th November 2017



Figure 18: Gabby Allen Instagram post 3rd November 2017

From these three images, we can deduce that Olivia, Amber and Gabby are self-representing in such a way that they are normalising the sexualisation of the body. Amongst these images, they upload regular posts regarding their day to day life, with their friends and family, however once images such as the above are available throughout the online environment, they are exposing younger females to thin-ideal messages of a particularly sexual nature, thus projecting the notion that they are potentially accessible as a body image and are part of an ordinary, everyday lifestyle. Amber and Olivia's images perhaps imply more of a sexual tone, with their provocative, revealing outfits and their sultry facial expressions, however Gabby also self-represents in a sexualised manner, wearing a swimming costume with her back to the camera, whilst looking over her shoulder. Normalising the sexualisation of the body, along with endorsing the thin-ideal perspective, is featured throughout each of the three finalists' Instagram accounts, sending the message that is a normal part of their lives. However, this endorsement and reinforcement of norms regarding body image may in fact impact female followers in a harmful way; the finalists' female following may be susceptible to social comparison, thus images of this nature may cause the perceptions of their own bodies to become negative and potentially stimulates an increased body dissatisfaction.

- c) How do the chosen patterns of self-representation of the finalists on Instagram reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies related to consumerism and entrepreneurial capitalism?

	Amber Davies	Camilla Thurlow	Olivia Attwood	Gabby Allen
Promotion of own business				
Partnership with external organisation	X	X	X	X
Promotion of discount codes/sales	X		X	X
Promotion of own calendar	X		X	

Table 4: Qualitative content analysis of finalists' Instagram accounts

Within modern day consumer culture, social networking platforms such as Instagram are highly utilised for promotion of business, thus the online environment is highly driven by consumerism. When considering the four *Love Island* finalists, it is crucial to consider the ways in which consumerism and entrepreneurial capitalism operate, alongside the self-representational practices of the four females, in regards to body image. When repeatedly faced with manufactured images on Instagram, individuals may seek to find trends, therefore seeking what to purchase. A report carried out in America stated that, after reviewing Instagram users, 72% of said users have made purchases after seeing something on Instagram (Dana Rebecca Designs, 2017). The case can be made that after leaving *Love Island*, finalists may be introduced into the world of entrepreneurial capitalism and consumerism, as can be seen through the Instagram accounts of Olivia, Amber and Gabby.

Amber, as the winner of *Love Island*, partnered with one particular fashion company quickly after leaving the programme: Boux Avenue, a chain of lingerie stores owned by British entrepreneur Theo Paphitis. In order to promote Boux Avenue's products, Amber represented herself on Instagram in a way which addressed body image, as can be seen in Figure 19:

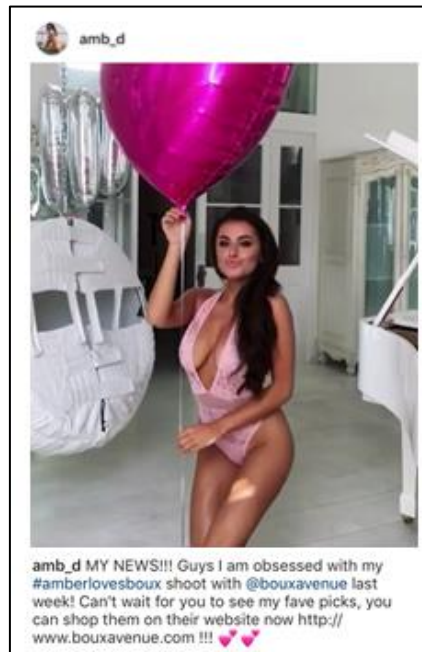


Figure 19: Amber Davies Instagram post 13th August 2017

The captions on Amber's Instagram posts inform her followers of her partnership with the company, however the images themselves are represented in such a way that her body image is the main focus. We can see this again in a later post:



Figure 20: Amber Davies Instagram post 14th September 2017

Amber's chosen pattern of self-representation with a large focus on body image falls in line with theories regarding consumerism and entrepreneurial capitalism; as previously noted, Dorian and Garfinkel (2002: 14) have stated that advertisements within the mass media rely on a potentially unattainable body image in order to sell products, however this body image is promoted

as the 'ideal' by both Amber and the partnered company. Amber's partnership with Boux Avenue, we can deduce, is a strategy to increase the profit margins of the company. However, in doing this, Amber is promoting the thin-ideal body image further, alongside promoting specific Boux Avenue products. This can be seen further in a post uploaded by Gabby Allen:



Figure 21: Gabby Allen Instagram Post 11th October 2017

Despite both Gabby and Amber not specifically mentioning their body image, the focus of all three images and the means in which products are conveyed to target audiences for consumerism purposes are also heavily influenced by the thin-ideal body image. Being exposed to such manufactured and edited images of the two finalists may cause audiences to feel a need to purchase what they are promoting, in an attempt to keep up with the lifestyles of those they deem attractive and, to some extent, successful. Amber's legs and stomach are very much highlighted in both images, a self-representation in accordance with advertising the lingerie. As well as this Gabby's legs and breasts are highlighted with her promotion of a tanning product. All three images are directly indicating to their younger female followings that a slimmer body image is one to be aimed for, whilst also encouraging the sale of both companies' products and, as a result, increasing profits and gaining awareness of their target audiences. Research has stated that consumers are looking to each other for trends about what to purchase (Salpini, 2017), therefore we can deduce that companies are turning to Instagram in this way in order to influence

purchasing decisions, with an arguably detrimental impact on the younger females who are exposed to such body image focused strategies.

This can also be seen through the promotion of calendars; after leaving *Love Island*, both Amber and Olivia announced the arrival of a 2018 calendar featuring images of themselves. Examples of these images can be found in Figures 22, 23 and 24:



Figure 22: Olivia Attwood Instagram post 9th October 2017



Figure 23: Olivia Attwood Instagram post 13th October 2017



Figure 24: Amber Davies Instagram post 6th November 2017

It is important to consider from these three images that both Amber and Olivia are highly focused on representing themselves, in a consumerist environment, in a way that will sell their calendars and create their brand— namely, through the representation of their body images. As branding is considered a fundamental foundation to the success of such individuals (Nunn & Biressi, 2014: 274), Amber and Olivia place a high degree of importance on the images promoting their calendars. Both females have posted images of a provocative nature: they are both in lingerie, made up in terms of their hair and make-up, staring at the camera with a large focus on their bodies. Due to their involvement in an industry which is heavily focused on profit, both females are repeatedly posting manufactured images on their Instagram feeds that endorse the thin-ideal body image; drawing on sociocultural norm theory (Thompson et al, 1999), the beliefs and attitudes females hold about body image stem from various influences that are conveyed through the media. Regular exposure to such images, through the regular promotion of both calendars on their Instagram feeds, may cultivate within the audience that the thin-ideal body image is heavily associated with success, as well as the potential purchasing of Amber and Olivia's products, thus creating both a stronger brand and increased profits for the two females.

This notion towards consumerism and entrepreneurial capitalism, in terms of *Love Island* finalists partnering with external organisations in order to increase profit margins and spread awareness, as well as promoting their own products in order to create a brand and make a profit,

may have an overall negative impact on the younger females. As Blair Burnette (2017: 115) states, there is a considerable reason to believe that social media as a whole has a detrimental effect on body image in younger females. The online environment is arguably highly driven by consumerism and, as a result, younger females are increasingly exposed to pressures to conform to the mainstream body image that, according to the media, is 'in vogue'.

Focus Group Analysis

With regards to the four younger females and body image, the focus group brought about mixed opinions. All four participants noted their use of Instagram on a daily basis, with indications that morning was the more popular time for F/20, F/23 and F/25. F/23 in particular stated *“It’s the first thing I do on my phone when I wake up”*, before stating that her preference of social networking sites used to be Facebook, however has changed to Instagram. F/18 agreed with the higher use of Instagram over Facebook and further noted her use of Instagram when she was bored, as she likes to look at the images posted. These responses support the research undertaken by Duggan and Brenner (2013), who state that overall, 18 to 29 year olds are the more likely demographic to use the social networking platform. All four participants further discussed who they follow on Instagram: all indicated they follow their friends, with F/25 and F/18 also stating that they follow fitness pages. F/25 further stated that she *“followed some reality stars but I don’t follow a lot, even though I do watch a lot of reality television”*, which is interesting, compared to F/23 in particular, who stated that she follows a lot of reality television stars due to the types of programmes she watches. When asked if they followed the four finalists from 2017’s *Love Island*, all participants said yes, whilst later agreeing that they all watched the programme. It is important that all four participants both watched and follow the finalists on Instagram, as it provides a more grounded basis for the focus group discussion.

In terms of sub-question A of the focus group, the participants gave mixed responses when asked how the four finalists’ Instagram accounts made them feel about their own body. F/18 was the first to respond and simply stated that she *“did not feel good at all”*. F/25’s response was entirely different, stating that if asked the question a year ago the answer would potentially have been negative, however she was *“quite happy”* with how she is now in terms of her body image. F/25 also placed a large amount of emphasis on the fact that she was older than the other participants, implying that as she was older, she was more comfortable in her own body. F/23, the second oldest participant, did not agree with this; F/23 expressed that despite being one of the older participants, she still felt *“awful”* when looking at the Instagram pages, therefore indicating

that age was not a major factor in her feelings towards the images. F/20, in comparison, stated that she has never been particularly concerned about her body image, however the Instagram accounts did impact her in a way that made her feel as though she should have the same body image as Olivia and Amber, for example. Despite this, F/20 went on to argue that everyone is different and “*it should never be like, ‘I need to look like that’*”. It can be deduced from the participants’ views that age did not have any particular impact on how the participants felt; both younger participants expressed negativity towards their own body image after looking at the finalists’ Instagram accounts, however F/23, being one of the older participants, agreed with F/18 and F/20 in expressing negative feelings. F/25 was the exception, mainly focusing on the fact that she did not care for the finalists and therefore was not impacted in the same way as the others. The views expressed may support notions that the images portrayed on Instagram predominantly endorse the body image that is in vogue within Western society, as the focus group findings indicate that these ideals are particularly salient with the younger females interviewed. However, the focus group further indicated that more vulnerable individuals may be more susceptible to social comparisons, falling in line with Perloff’s (2014:369) research; as it appeared within the focus group, age was not a factor, as three of the four participants commented on the impact the Instagram accounts had on their body dissatisfaction, regardless of their age.

As well as this, the participants commented further on how the finalists have ‘sold themselves’ to social media due to their appearance in *Love Island*, with the exception of Camilla. F/23 in particular argued that Instagram is very much “*smoke and mirrors*” and that the images posted are not a true representation of the finalists themselves, with F/25 commenting further that the finalists are merely promoting their body image via the platform. All four participants picked up on Amber’s Instagram, in particular commenting on Figure 15 (as seen above). F/18 remarked that she was shocked due to Amber’s representation of the awards; she commented that Amber did not mention the awards properly, instead she was stood “*posing, not even smiling*”. F/25 agreed, arguing that Instagram was a positive platform for telling stories and celebrating the achievements of the awards show, however Amber was predominantly focused on informing her followers about her clothing and “*glam squad*”. These comments support the initial research mentioned within this

study, as Amber's self-representation habits do indeed reinforce the norms surrounding body image and 'looking good', thus further supporting the theory published by Negra (2009: 119) that one of the more distinctive features of modern day society is to look attractive. F/23 in particular makes the argument that, bar Camilla, the other three finalists are "*so focused on how they look*". F/23 commented later on during the focus group about the number of comments left by the finalists' followers, particularly on Amber and Olivia's accounts. F/23 argued that the majority of the comments were left to compliment the finalists, "*mostly from younger girls*". F/25 agreed and further maintained that these comments implied that the younger female followers idolised the finalists, whilst also commenting on the fact that the comments were left in a manner that portrayed them wishing to look like the finalists, in terms of their body image. This falls in line with the above empirical research and also the theory of social comparison; as the focus group participants inferred, the finalists' younger female following may trigger body image disturbance by continuously comparing themselves to those who may have an unachievable or unrealistic body image, thus resulting in possibly detrimental effects.

The focus group participants further commented on Gabby's use of Instagram to mention her fitness. In particular, the participants commented on the image shown in Figures 10 and 11. As mentioned in the above empirical research, Figures 10 and 11 portray an Instagram post uploaded by Gabby, which mentions her wish to get back to her 'pre-villa body'. F/18 originally commented that Gabby seems to be the "*girl next door*" type however her posts are still "*sexy and provocative*", thus still placing a large amount of emphasis on her body image. Participant F/23 mentioned the image shown in Figures 10 and 11, questioning the aim of Gabby gaining her 'pre-villa body' as F/23 was unsure what Gabby was going to do, as she is "*still really skinny and toned*". F/23 made the case that Gabby's self-representation on her Instagram account was ironic, as she focuses on fitness however F/23 commented that all the images Gabby posts showcase her "*perfect body*", therefore implying that Gabby's aim to get back to her 'pre-villa body' was slightly unrealistic and, therefore, ironic. F/20 agreed with F/23's comments, mentioning that it was clear Gabby worked hard in terms of her fitness, however she did not look any different from the other finalists as she had "*perfect make-up*" and a "*skinny body*".

As argued in the above empirical research, Camilla Thurlow is arguably the 'odd one out' of the four finalists, a theory which the participants of the focus group strongly agreed with. F/20 originally commented that Camilla has uploaded many 'natural' looking images of herself, with F/25 agreeing and commenting further that it seems Camilla does not care about her appearance as much as the other finalists. This argument caused a slight disconsensus within the group: F/23, on the other hand, maintained that despite her natural looking images, she was *"still chosen by Love Island, so she must have the body image type they want"*. F/18 agreed with this statement and commented that if you *"look at the wider picture, [Camilla] is the same in looks"*, later stating that Camilla is not any different in terms of her body image to Amber, Olivia and Gabby. However, all four participants came to the agreement that Camilla does not utilise the online platform to directly promote body image, very much unlike the other three participants. The participants argued that in terms of Camilla's self-representation, the main focus communicated throughout her Instagram account was concentrated on the humanitarian and charity work Camilla appears to be passionate about. These opinions indeed support the initial research of this study, agreeing that Camilla does not post any direct representations of her body image in terms of images in bikinis or her underwear. F/23 implied that Camilla's body image falls in line with societal norms, as she is very similar in body image to that of the other finalists. However, it was firmly agreed upon by all participants that she utilises the platform in a different manner, thus coming to the conclusion that Camilla is *"doing something that will have a positive impact"* (F/25) on younger females. F/18 made the interesting statement that Camilla *"has chosen to carry on with her life pre-villa"* and that she is *"using the added attention (...) to enhance what she was already doing"*. As implied by F/23 and F/18, Camilla falls into the same category in terms of her body image, however by not continuously self-representing in the same manner as the other finalists, the focus group participants agreed that her Instagram account is a more positive platform for younger females to be exposed to.

When asked whether the focus group participants aspired to have the same body image as the four finalists, there was again a disconsensus within the group. F/25 argued her age has an impact upon her opinion; she *"wouldn't complain"* about having the same body image, however as she was older, body image is not as important to her as it may have once been. F/20 somewhat

agreed, stating that she does not feel the requirement to go to the gym and she also does not see herself being able to achieve the same level of body image as the four finalists. F25 later noted that out of the four finalists, she would aspire to look like Gabby as Gabby is more notably focused on fitness, however still remained firm that her priorities have changed and she does not place her body image at the top of her priorities. On the other hand, both F/18 and F/23 remarked that they would aspire to have the finalists' body image. F/23 made an interesting comment, stating that despite being older it made her "*feel bad*" about her body, that she would "*love to look like them*" and then observed that she may be more susceptible to body image dissatisfaction than other people. We can again deduce from these comments that the vulnerability of an individual may play an important factor regarding negative views about body image, as the two older and two younger participants came to a disconsensus about their personal feelings towards body image aspirations, with F/23 in particular noting that she may be more susceptible, despite not providing any reasons as to why this may be. Despite their original disconsensus regarding their personal feelings towards aspirations of body image, all four participants agreed that the body image represented on the finalists' Instagram accounts is not achievable and thus agreed that it is due to the media that younger females in particular feel such aspirations, which may in turn lead to body insecurities. These comments support research undertaken by Barrios and Pennebaker (1983), who, as noted in the above literature review, have commented that the mass media are considered powerful conveyers of ideals and, therefore, younger females are exposed to images that represent the thin-ideal body type as achievable, despite these ideals being potentially unattainable, as noted by the focus group participants.

Money also became a highly debated topic of conversation; all four participants commented on how the finalists, in particular Olivia and Amber, self-represented their body image in order to promote businesses, in order to drive profit. F/25 initiated the conversation by stating that the finalists "*promote so much*" and referred to Amber's partnership with Boux Avenue, as discussed in sub-question C of the above Instagram analysis. F/23 developed on this point by stating that due to their partnership with businesses, the finalists increase their public awareness and are thus able to sell such products. In turn, F/18 analysed Amber's partnership with Boux Avenue and commented

that it seemed *“coincidental”* that Amber was partnered with an organisation that sells lingerie, as *“it just means more images of her in her underwear”*. By noting on these capitalist and consumerist factors, the focus group participants showed their awareness of the finalists using their body image for consumerist purposes. F/25 further commented about the number of posts on their accounts which *“just plug their 2018 calendars”*, with F/23 agreeing and stating, in reference to Amber and Olivia, that *“they’re both half-naked on every post”* and thus *“using their bodies to make money”*. These points again support research that argues that advertisements utilised within the media rely on the thin-ideal body image in order to sell products (Dorian and Garfinkel, 2002: 14), as was clearly stated by the participants with their comments regarding Amber, Boux Avenue and the promotion of products.

The final question asked during the focus group provided a definitive answer. When considering their stance on whether Instagram is harmful to body image and younger females, all four participants came to the same consensus: yes, it is. Initially, the participants came to the conclusion that as Instagram is an image based online platform, this is an important factor when considering its harm. F/20 commented that as Instagram is image based, *“you see all these images and think: ‘maybe I should look like that’*. F/25 and F/23 agreed with this observation, arguing that images have a larger impact than words in terms of body image, especially in regards to younger females. Interestingly, F/20 stated that she is *“not bothered”* about her online image posting habits, however confirmed that she understood her outlook was maybe not in keeping with females of her age. F/23, as a comparison to F/20, indicated that she finds the platform to be rather obsessive, stating: *“I sit and look at photos that I want to post (...) for ages and I don’t think I’d be any different to a lot of people for saying that”*. F/18 expanded on this point by noting that whenever she posts an image on Instagram, she strives to ensure it is the best image possible.

These comments indicate the obsessive need for younger females, such as F/23 and F/18, to post images that show them at their best. F/25 further commented that Instagram is there for younger females in particular to become engrossed, as well as noting that the platform *“makes people think they have to look their best at all times”*, as the online Instagram environment has

created the requirement of looking highly attractive. F/23 indicated her awareness of this by stating *“posting any old photo which doesn’t show you at your best isn’t the general attitude”*, as well as commenting that individuals have a habit of comparing themselves to others. This, therefore, supports the notion that Instagram is an online environment which promotes societal ideals and norms of body image, resulting in younger females ensuring their images are of the right level of attractiveness, as well as the upward comparison of judging themselves against others (Myers and Crowther, 2009; Vandenbosch and Eggermont, 2012). F/18 argued that Instagram was a positive environment for younger females when initially launched, however has *“gotten a bit out of hand now”*; this comment falls in line with Ferguson et al’s (2011) research, which ultimately stated that social media exerts harmful influences. F/20 expanded on this point by arguing that Instagram in particular has become extremely responsible for both the pressure and body image insecurities younger females are faced with. The four focus group participants, therefore, came to the definitive consensus that, despite snippets of positivity, Instagram is indeed a harmful environment for younger females to be both exposed to and involved in.

Conclusion

The media, in both traditional and digitised form, has long provided an environment for younger females to be exposed to the thin-ideal body image. This research project has indicated that the four Instagram accounts of the *Love Island* 2017 finalists do little to deter the impact of the thin-ideal body image – particularly the accounts belonging to Amber Davies, Gabby Allen and Olivia Attwood. As shown throughout the qualitative and quantitative content analysis, these three finalists posted the most images of a provocative and sexualised nature, which in turn both showcased their body image and endorsed the thin-ideal shape. The cumulative exposure to images showcasing a slimmer body image could be detrimental to younger females. Consequently, the three finalists' Instagram accounts also support the theory argued by Negra (2009: 119), that you must look attractive within society. As well as this, it can be deduced that social comparison theory plays a major role when discussing younger females and body image; comments left by the finalists' followers and also discussion between the focus group participants showed that negative feelings towards body image is not necessarily associated with the age of the individual, but more the vulnerability and susceptibility of the individual.

As seen throughout the research, Camilla Thurlow was the 'odd one out' of the four *Love Island* finalists. Camilla's Instagram account showed her continuing commitment to both charitable and humanitarian work around the globe. However, as discussed within the Instagram analysis and focus group analysis sections, Camilla endorses the thin-ideal body image much like her fellow finalists, despite not directly advocating this ideal through her Instagram posts. Camilla's uploaded images are vastly different to that of, for example, Amber's and Olivia's, however Camilla's followers are still exposed to her slimmer body shape which falls in line with societal norms, as was noted by the focus group participants. Nevertheless, Camilla's Instagram account heavily promoted positive causes, with a noticeable absence of provocative or sexualised images, therefore as a comparison her account may be the more positive platform for younger females to be exposed to.

It can be concluded that younger females aspire to look like the four finalists, however the results of the focus group indicated that individuals may also be aware that the thin-ideal body

shape is not as achievable or attainable as it is promoted to be. The participants of the focus group further concluded that Instagram, as a highly popular social networking platform, was once a positive public space for younger females, however has now become increasingly harmful; more damaging than positive, in terms of body image and body dissatisfaction.

As noted above, there is very little research which examines the impact of Instagram use on body image in younger females. Additionally, *Love Island* remains a relatively new reality television programme, therefore this platform could possibly be more diverse in its representation of female participants in future years. As discussed within the literature review section of this research project, the media landscape has been marked by the explosion of various reality television programmes since the turn of the millennium. It is somewhat unfortunate that younger females within modern day society are exposed to such negative communication and, as a result, are left feeling required to look a certain way, with a perhaps unachievable body image to aim toward. In light of this, it would be interesting to consider, in future research, the relationship between Instagram and reality television programmes, as well as its participants and, perhaps more importantly, the individuals who are impacted behind the scenes.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Focus group transcription

Key:

F/25: *Female, aged 25*

F/23: *Female, aged 23*

F/20: *Female, aged 20*

F/18: *Female, aged 18*

I: How much do you use Instagram a day and when do you typically use it?

F/25: I probably use Instagram throughout the day... I'll look at it when I get up in the morning, look at people's stories, and then in the evening when I'm going to sleep as well

F/20: I definitely use it on a morning when I wake up, look at all the stories, in the night before I go to bed, and then just when I'm bored really. I'll look through everything, see if there's any updates from my friends etc

F/18: I'm pretty much the same. I use Instagram a lot more than Facebook nowadays, I'll just use it when I'm bored

F/23: It's the first thing I do on my phone when I wake up. I definitely used to use the likes of Facebook a lot more, and now I use Instagram all the time.

F/18: Yep, I like looking at the photos

I: What kind of people do you generally follow?

F/25: I mainly follow my friends, a few funny ones that have memes etc, some fitness pages. I follow some reality stars but I don't follow a lot, even though I do watch a lot of reality television

F/20: I'm very similar, I follow most of my friends,

F/23: I follow a lot of girls, and a lot of them are reality TV stars because of the programmes I watch

F/18: I follow the likes of Lucy Meck from TOWIE, I have a few fitness people for personal training etc

I: Okay, do you follow the four finalists from last year's Love Island?

F/18: I do

F/23: Same

F/25: Yes I do, I love Camilla but I don't really look at her as an RTV star, she does a lot of humanitarian work and I like to follow her to see what she's doing.

F/20: I follow them all but I know what you're saying about Camilla. It's as if she doesn't want to promote herself. She focuses on other things

I: Did you watch Love Island last year?

All participants: Yes

I: Okay, moving on. Can you tell me how looking at the Instagram accounts makes you feel about your own body, if at all?

F/18: I just don't feel good at all

F/25: I think if you'd probably asked me the question a year ago, I'd have said it makes me feel bad because I was in a very different head space in my own body. There were a lot of personal factors. I think when you see people and they showcase themselves and their bodies on Instagram in the way they do, they're all perfect. There's nothing wrong with them. It's all very sexualised and they're getting a lot of attention from other people for it. But now I look at them and I don't really care. I'm quite happy with how I am.

F/20: It makes me sad. All their accounts are, apart from Camilla, very similar and they're all skinny and perfect. It's as if they're promoting that body shape that isn't achievable.

F/25: I was the same, but now I've gotten older I've become a lot more comfortable in my own body. I would never have said that a year ago. But now I think they all look the same and it's almost boring – they only represent a tiny amount of society – I'm sure a lot of people would say the same. You might feel like that when you're younger but for me, I think when you get older you learn it's not really the be all and end all of everything.

F/20: I think for me, I've never really been that bothered about how I look but when you see people like that on Instagram, I feel like I should look like that. Everybody is different and it should never be like "I need to look like that" however it's just happened that people feel they do. I could go out in a bikini on holiday and be fine, however some people will feel "I'm going on holiday, I'll need to go on a four week diet, no carbs etc, to look like Amber or whoever". But really, they shouldn't have to do that

F/25: The only time I wish I looked like that is when you see how much money they're getting from promoting clothes – I wish I had that! I think it's an easy way to make money.

F/23: See, I'm older as well but I still feel really awful when I look at them.

F/25: For me, a year ago I would have looked at them and thought it's depressing, but now I'm like, well, they don't actually look like that, they have the best lighting, the best angle, hair stylists every day, make-up artists, they get spray tans, they get styled, they aren't left to their own devices.

F/23: Instagram is very much like smoke and mirrors. It's not really a representation of what they look like

F/20: I feel as well it's just telling us how they live their lives – this is them going for an expensive meal, this is me going to a photoshoot.

F/18: At the end of the day, they've sold their lives to social media and RTV and I feel there's an expiry date on that – I don't think Instagram will last forever, I don't think RTV will be in forever. What do they do beyond that?

F/25: They're making money now by exposing everything about themselves which is great because who doesn't want to make money, but they're promoting their bodies etc. But it isn't long-lasting. Take Amber, when I was looking through her account it was just 'her her her', no real images of any real r/ships with her family or friends

F/23: It seemed to be a lot of mirror selfies and ones where she's half naked

F/18: It is, I was really shocked because there was an event that she was at (Pride of Britain awards), she put an image up and it was a photo of her and another girl from last year's show, and rather than talking about the POB awards which they were clearly going to, she was stood posing, not even smiling and that was it.

F/25: That's such a good platform for that award show, to tell stories and to celebrate achievements and she didn't do that – she used it to flog her clothing and 'glam squad'

F/23: All of them are like that, bar Camilla. The other three are so focused on how they look. Olivia Attwood was just promoting her 2018 calendar all the time.

F/25: In fairness to Gabby, she's had some snippets of sexualised posts but a lot of hers are the 'girl next door' in comparison to Olivia and Amber. She didn't post as quickly as them when she came out of the villa

F/20: Whereas the others were straight on it

F/18: She's definitely the girl next door but there are posts which are sexy and provocative. They're smiley but definitely still focusing on her body

F/23: Yeah she promotes fitness, but I think it's ironic how she plugs fitness but all the images that she posts are still her with a perfect body. She posted one saying that it was her mission to get back to her pre-villa body – but she was still really skinny and toned in the photo, so what was she going to do?

F/18: Yes she was in gym clothes but I think that's one of the things that puts young people off and make them feel bad about their bodies – she's in designer leggings, really skimpy bras, showing off her six pack. Not just something you'd buy and throw on

F/20: In all the videos, yes she was working hard but she didn't look any different, she still had perfect make up and skinny body

F/23: I saw a few photos on her Instagram of her at the gym but it wasn't natural – her phone is in front of her face, you can't actually see her it's literally just showing off her body

F/18: She takes photos from behind with her bum sticking out and that's it, that's her thing it seems.

F/20: As for Amber, no photo is unique on her account. They're exactly the same

F/18: She loves a mirror selfie, taking them herself, covering her face, showcasing her body

F/25: Literally everything is her body though, there's one from November at her at a spa, on the bed in a swimming costume, why did she feel the need to do that? She was still flaunting herself. I get it's the way she has to make her money but there's not really any other substance to it. It's all about the way she looks all the time.

F/23: They all just look like robots

F/20: I do think Amber out of all of them has the most photos of herself though, with Olivia a really close second

F/23: Olivia has a lot of photos and she does have a few of her and her relationships/family etc but it's still mainly just photos of her

F/18: I think she's got what she thinks is the perfect body – all of her photos say that, the way she poses and looks at the camera

F/25: I think it's a shame because she seemed different in the villa but now it's all about how she looks. When she came out the first post she did was immediately after, thanking her new found fans, but it was just her in a bikini, why did she feel the need? I was hoping she'd use her platform for something else like Camilla but it's not looking that way

F/23: I was reading the comments and there were some people, young girls, commenting 'you're unreal' and there were some others saying that it was edited, but that was rare. Most of the comments were ones complimenting her and they were mostly from younger girls

F/25: Most of the comments I read for her and Amber were the likes of 'unreal', 'fire' and 'sexy', yes it doesn't hold much substance but it still shows people kind of idolise her and want to look like them

F/18: If you look at Love Island in general, every girl has to go in in a swimsuit or a bikini – that kind of body image is pushed on younger females from the start

F/23: Love Island creates this image for girls and then that carries on when they leave the villa and get back on Instagram

F/25: No other show has their profile based on a bikini or half naked girls

F/20: And most of the time they're in a bikini

F/23: Then they take that into their Instagram because they probably feel like they have to be that way all the time, they wouldn't post anything where they look terrible.

F/20: The only person who does post no matter what they look like is Camilla – there's so many natural photos of her

F/25: She's actually doing work where she doesn't care about her appearance

F/18: She just looks happy, nothing is majorly posed

F/23: I still feel though, even though there's lots of natural images, she still has the body image that all the rest of them do. I agree she does different things with her life and she volunteers etc, using the platform differently, but at the end of the day she was still chosen by Love Island so she must have the body type they want, she wasn't randomly picked

F/18: She looks the same as the others and she doesn't push her body image on social media, but then if you look at the wider picture she's the same in looks

I: So would you say Camilla is the exception out of the four?

F/18: Body image wise, no, personality, yes and the way she uses her fame

F/20: You look at the four contestants and they're probably all a very similar height, very similar age, maybe different hair colour but all got long hair, it's all very staged

F/25: I don't know, I feel Camilla is completely different. The majority of her photos are concentrating on her humanitarian work and there's no bikini photos

F/23: There's absolutely no bikini photos on her page no

F/25: There's photos of her in nice dresses but then I think everyone does that

F/20: I feel with that, her photos are very covered up. You can still tell that she's skinny but it's nothing like the others who wear short dresses or something that's see through – she's a lot classier than Amber and Olivia

F/23: She doesn't have any outfit details tagged and she's not half naked in every photo

F/25: She's actually doing something that will have a positive impact on younger girls

I: Do you aspire to have the same body image as the four Love Island finalists?

F/25: I wouldn't complain about it but it's not at the top of my priorities anymore – I feel as you get older your priorities change in terms of what you want. When I was younger I was very consumed by my image and it took up a lot of time but now I think I have better things to do with my time – I don't have time to go to the gym every day or whatever else you need

F/20: I think for me, it's the same, I don't feel the need to go to the gym. They've probably worked a long time for that and they're probably on a strict diet and that's not for me – I don't think I could achieve that level

F/25: No, it's definitely not achievable

F/20: People might want to but I think you'd have to work ridiculously hard and have the time. Who has the time for that if you have a full time job – it's not realistic

F/18: I'd like to look like them, I'd be lying if I said I didn't, but I don't think (money wise) I'd be able to afford it – personal trainers, gym membership etc

F/23: Even though I'm older as well it makes me feel bad about my own body when I look at them. I don't know whether I'm more susceptible to it than other people but I would love to look like them

F/25: But they don't even pay for it most of the time – they just get it for free or they're paid to promote it. They promote so much, like Amber with her Boud Avenue or whatever it is

F/18: I know it's an underwear company but it's very coincidental that she's partnered up with them. It just means more images of her in her underwear

F/23: And then because of their increased awareness they can go and sell their calendars

F/20: Which is when you'd look at them and think 'oh I'd like to have a body like Amber or Gabby or whoever' but it's going to cost so much money a month

F/23: And they're going to make money from us buying whatever they're promoting anyway, or buying their calendars

F/18: Olivia and Amber are the worst for that, there's so many posts on their accounts which just plug their 2018 calendars

F/23: And they're both half-naked on every post so what does that tell you about them

F/25: Basically using their bodies to make money

F/20: You're spending more money to look like them when in reality you should just be comfortable with what you're actually like. Yeah, it'd be great to look like that but I can't afford to spend over £100 a month on something like that

F/25: I think, because I'm older, I look at things differently and I did worry about things like that when I was younger. It does worry me, with Instagram etc, nowadays all younger girls are probably on it, they're more exposed to it which I never was when I was younger and that worries me. They probably don't have the same outlook as I do and when you see these girls making money out of the way they look – that frightens me, it's not a good influence

F/23: It's like an aim for younger girls now, to go on Love Island or make money out of their body image – to be an RTV show. It's harder to go on Love Island than it is to get into Cambridge nowadays!

F/20: Even if I've walked to the shop or whatever, I've seen kids that are about 12 and older and they're on their phones. If you're that age, what are you looking at on that phone that's not a game? Why are they on social media – it might make them think they have to look like Olivia and that's a goal when it maybe shouldn't be

F/25: Younger females do look up to them though

F/18: On one of Amber's photos, there's a comment from a young girl saying that 'her legs make me sad' (30th July)

F/23: I wonder how young she was – I bet these girls look at their photos and not see the dangers behind it – they probably think 'I do want to look like that because that's what society is telling me to look like' and it doesn't matter about anything else, as long as you look like that you'll be okay in life

F/20: As long as you're attractive and popular on Instagram, I think that makes people think they'll be okay

F/23: Maybe it's a bit narrow minded of me to think they've got an expiry date on their bodies because that's their career – that's what she wants to do. But it worries me that they push it on other people – it makes other people think that's what they should be doing

F/23: Camilla has less followers than Amber and Olivia but she's still popular even though she's posted a third of the amount that the others have

F/25: Amber and Olivia have probably increased their followers because of all the promotion work they do

F/23: I think on average, Olivia and Amber maybe get a few more 'likes' and 'comments' on all their photos which show them half naked

F/18: But it is lifestyle choices, Camilla has chosen to carry on with her life pre-villa and she's using the added attention she's got to enhance what she was already doing

F/25: I think it's reassuring to see that some girls who go in that villa leave and think about the positive impact they can have on people. I think it's very shallow when people such as Gabby leave and think they can change the way people think about their bodies when really it's all just a money making scheme – there's no other incentive

F/20: Gabby was a personal trainer beforehand and she's using the 'fame' to promote it more out of the villa. She's the only one who posts images in the gym etc

F/25: I think out of all of them I do like Gabby's figure the best – she's tiny but she's still athletic – if I was wanting to get in shape more I'd want to be like her. I think Amber and Olivia's body shapes are very unrealistic – they're both very skinny and that would never happen for me

F/23: I think Gabby will have worked at it more because she was a personal trainer before – Olivia and Amber have paid for it I think

F/18: I'm the same about Gabby – I think she's got the nicest body image and I would want to look like that – but on the whole I don't think any of them are achievable

F/23: I would love to look like them but it's a very unrealistic aim to be honest

F/25: I don't have enough time to invest that much in my appearance! They do look attractive but it wouldn't be for the average woman to achieve – it's just added stress – there's more goals in life than your image

F/23: The media at the moment just play on body image – you see pressures all the time, especially on Instagram. The media are so responsible for the insecurities females feel in society

F/20: I think, as well, that's what they do for a living – they come out the villa and all of a sudden they're huge on Instagram and they're influencers. They do have time to go to the gym or have a set meal plan but someone else will probably do it – it's not healthy to promote that – younger girls probably don't have the means to do that in a healthy way – it's not achievable

F/18: On Amber's Instagram, she's mainly in her underwear – she's very sexualised but that's what she's aiming for it seems, she's proud of it and it seems like that's her goal so it probably makes other people feel like it should be theirs

F/23: There's other ones that Olivia posts as well, in a skimpy outfit, she just promotes that body image constantly

I: Where do you stand on the argument that Instagram is harmful to body image and younger females?

F/20: I think because it is image based that's the main thing, you see all these images and think 'maybe I should look like that'

F/25: Photos have so much more impact than words I think

F/23: Especially on younger girls

F/25: Yep, it's just there, you don't have to do anything or put much time into reading something, it's just there for you to be engrossed by. I know what I'm like with photos that people have taken of me – for all that I say I don't mind how I look I'll still zoom in on what I look like and see if there's any lumps and bumps on my body that I don't want there

F/23: I sit and look at photos that I want to post on Instagram for ages and I don't think I'd be very different to a lot of people for saying that

F/18: I think a lot of people would do that. Whenever I post something I always make sure it's the best that it could be

F/20: Personally, I'm not that bothered about what I post online, but I know that's not normal for girls my age.

F/25: I think the best thing is that it's natural and not posed, but Instagram as a whole is very posey and makes people think that they have to look their best all the time

F/23: Because people always compare themselves to others

F/18: Yep, I know some of my friends are obsessed with what they're going to post and they care too much – is there any need?

F/20: I think there is a need because that's the environment you're going into when you post online

F/23: Posting any old photo which doesn't show you at your best isn't the general attitude so yes, I do think it's harmful

F/25: I think it's very harmful

F/20: Once you look at the photo, you read the caption, you might go on their account and have a scroll, it's a whole process which leads you down this path of comparing yourself to someone you don't even know

F/23: People become obsessed by it, how many likes they get etc

F/18: People have the attitude nowadays that if they don't get over 10 likes they're going to delete the photo because they feel like 'why aren't people liking my photo'

F/20: People also think about when the best time to post – at night, in a morning etc, just so they know people will see and like it

F/25: It's an actual thing, saving it in your phone and waiting for a peak time to get the most likes

F/20: But if people are going to like it they'll see it anyway and like it if they want to – it's nothing personal if they don't but people get really obsessed with it

F/23: I edit photos for a while and make sure that I'm happy with it as much as I can be and I know that a lot of other girls do the same. But now I'm thinking that that's actually not good for me

F/18: Why do you bother, it's just making it 'social media approved'

F/25: I put a filter on but then there's so many other things and people are aware of these and that's what gets obsessive. I can't be bothered with all of that

F/23: I think a lot of girls, and I've been guilty of this before, get obsessed with the entire thing and how perfect their entire page looks – it rules their lives

F/18: I know girls who delete images if they haven't reached a certain number of likes and just little things like that

F/25: I think it's so sad, all these girls who get thousands of likes, how much time are they investing a day on social media? I don't understand it, I couldn't sit around every day trying to get the perfect photo which I wouldn't even be 100% happy with because I'd still find something I didn't like about my body

F/20: You're never happy with what you have, you always want to change it and I think things like Instagram is partly responsible for that

F/18: People like Amber and Olivia probably don't even like every single part of themselves

F/23: I think they represent themselves in a way that says they do, but I don't believe for a second that they're fully happy with their bodies

F/25: I think there will be things that they don't like but they don't play on their insecurities because they're getting money for it

F/20: They probably Photoshop the majority of their photos anyway

F/23: People still get drawn into it though, and think that these 'stars' are perfect idols and have the perfect body

F/25: There's one thing Camilla said when she first posted when she got out of the villa – she put a photo a few days after leaving and she apologised for the lack of activity and I thought that it was nice that she wanted to her real relationships outside of the Instagram bubble before impressing an anonymous audience

F/18: Whereas Amber and Olivia posted straight away and got their bikini photos out there as soon as possible

F/25: That's not as refreshing as what Camilla did

F/20: They go into the villa, they're not allowed on their phones, they come out and they have 500k plus followers and they just go a bit mental with it all

F/23: I think it's quite sad that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the finalists who were popular and made it to the final last year were really pretentious – I think it just says a lot. They're just obsessed with how great they look

F/18: The whole Instagram thing, I think when it started, was good because people could share nice photos of themselves etc but I think it's gotten a bit out of hand now

F/25: It's definitely a harmful environment for young girls