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A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body—Recipes for a Healthy Living as Seen in Polish Vlogs

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Abstract The fashion for leading a healthy lifestyle has recently reached Polish society. Inspired by exposure through the mass media, many people have decided to introduce changes into the way they eat and exercise, primarily in order to become healthier and slimmer. According to recent surveys, one of the most popular sources of information concerning healthy lifestyles is, of course, the Internet. It is an extremely functional tool that allows its users not only the possibility to find the relevant information they need, but it also helps them create their own resources containing advice and information for other like-minded users. This article analyzes examples of Polish vlogs posted on the Youtube.pl platform that are principally devoted to improving fitness, as well as showing the most effective ways to lose weight. The four main areas of focus investigated are: the vloggers' motivations for creating and publishing videos, the vloggers' reference to their own bodies, the reasons they offer for seeking a healthier way of living, the vloggers' bodies as their representation in the social space of the Internet, and the role of the Internet community in the many processes in helping people become slimmer.

Keywords Healthy Lifestyle; Vlogs; Poland; Slimming; Human Body

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According to Luc Peuwels and Patricia Hellriegel (2009:389-390), "Youtube is an open community that encourages its users to send in their thoughts and comments about their experiences of the site." In Poland, the popularity of the Youtube.com service is rising, and is currently in fifth place among twenty of the most popular broadcasters in Poland.¹ In November 2016, 73.9% of Polish Internet users were ac-

¹ Gemius / PBI Report "Polish Internet in October 2016." Retrieved December 20, 2016. (<http://www.pbi.org.pl/pl/aktualnosci/292/polski-internet-w-listopadzie-2016>).

cessing it, the numbers of which have quadrupled within the last eight years.²

There are several features which determine the popularity of the service. First, it can be accessed on multiple devices such as laptops, Smartphones, or tablets, which makes it available and easy to use in many everyday life situations. It also enables both the sharing of and the search for information in almost every field of expertise and knowledge imaginable. It has all the advantages of social media: it can be used for expressing and exchanging opinions, gaining other people's attention or subsequent admiration. As it allows access to a large audience, it is a powerful tool for marketing and trendsetting. The word "youtuber" has entered the (Polish) common language, and is used as a synonym of its service users, and is increasingly applied to people who have gained national or international popularity by creating the most subscribed to Youtube channels. Since Youtube.com is a source of inspiration for many, and is seen as a barometer of social trends, the authors of the most popular vlogs not only have the attention of their own followers; they also become authorities in the subjects which they want to popularize.

According to Susan C. Herring (2010:240), "[a] weblog (blog for short) is a type of web document in which dated entries appear in reverse chronological sequence...Like other web documents, blogs can be multimodal or purely textual and variants exist that feature photos, voice recordings (audio blogs) and videos (vlogs)."

² Gemius / PBI Report "Polish Internet in October 2016." Retrieved December 20, 2016. (<http://www.pbi.org.pl/pl/aktualnosci/292/polski-internet-w-listopadzie-2016>).

In my article, I would like to analyze one kind of thematic vlogs as seen on the Youtube.pl platform, whose main purpose is to provide subscribers with information concerning healthy living. According to research results published by Gemius in July of 2013, dieting and fitness were two of the most popular topics searched for by Polish Internet users.³ The Internet is an interactive medium that enables people to search for information, but also helps them find the support they need, as well as receiving useful advice from other users. I decided to investigate videos published on vlogs as I wanted to learn something more about the various experiences regarding a healthy lifestyle, which many authors of vlogs wanted to share. Due to the multiplicity of subjects referring to a healthy lifestyle, I decided to narrow the scope of my analysis to one specific kind of video, essentially those which present their authors' attempts to become slimmer.

Materials and Methods

Since there is little scholarly research on vlogs, the study's objective was explanatory. The research procedure was divided into several stages. The preliminary stage focused on selecting materials suitable for analysis. One of the tools used was a short survey conducted on 40 students who were asked to name and briefly describe their favorite vlogs concerning healthy living. The list of vlogs was then used as a starting point for selecting the most interesting ones. Another source of information

³ Gemius / PBI Report "Czas na dietę i odchudzanie w sieci." Retrieved December 20, 2016 (<https://www.gemius.pl/wszystkie-artykuly-aktualnosci/czas-na-diete-odchudzanie-i-fitness-w-sieci.html>).

was the ranking list of Poland's most subscribed to Youtube channels,⁴ which helped identify several vlogs devoted to healthy living among 100 of the most subscribed to channels as used by Polish Internet users. But, it soon transpired that most of the vloggers with the greatest subscription numbers rarely focused on healthy living as such, and that many of them diversified the topics of their videos in order to attract a greater audience.⁵ For this reason, selecting vlogs suitable for analysis only on the basis of the number of subscribers proved to be inadequate. However, examination of the most often subscribed to vlogs helped identify a particular kind of video, namely, videos documenting the vlogs authors' attempts to become slimmer. To assemble a group of similar videos, I used the snowball sampling technique: all videos linked to those from the first stage were duly checked. This helped identify a group of 40 videos concerning the same topic. All of them shared a similar presentation structure: they demonstrated their author's efforts to become slimmer, usually documenting changes in the kind of diet they used, the fitness exercises they implemented, and the use of records to monitor changes in body shape (weight loss in kilograms or centimeters), as well as the authors' opinions concerning the observed changes both in their bodies and their state of mind. Some videos comprised a series of episodes documenting the process of getting slimmer. In such cases, all episodes were subject to analysis. In general, 40 vid-

eos published by 16 vloggers were analyzed over December, 2016.⁶

Only videos posted in 2016 were taken into consideration, and only those in which the authors declared themselves to be amateurs, therefore any videos posted by professional trainers or dietitians were rejected. The information concerning the vloggers (the information they provided about themselves) was presented in a table posted at the end of the article.

Also of note, viewers' opinions and statements in the comments section were not analyzed. The initial idea was to perform a systematic content analysis, however, due to a variety of topics mentioned by different authors, such as the fact that authors often digressed, and that not all of the videos covered the same topics, the identification of a particular unit of analysis proved to be very difficult.⁷ Eventually, a non-systematic content analysis was performed.

According to Susan C. Herring (2010:241), "content analysis works well in analyzing themes represented in blog entries and comments." As Norman Fairclough (2003:6) indicates, the concept of "text" can be used in a broad sense to refer to a language that is written or printed, as well as visual images and sound effects. Texts can be analyzed as elements of social processes: they can bring changes in our knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and the material world. Meanings are made through the inter-

⁴ *Youtube Top 100 Most Subscribed Poland Channels*. Retrieved December 20, 2016 (<http://vidstatsx.com/youtube-top-100-most-subscribed-poland-pl-channels>).

⁵ For example, this was the case with Red Lipstick Monster (854,987 subscribers), whose vlog focuses on beautifying the body and makeup techniques, but several videos were devoted to her "turn to healthy living."

⁶ The list of videos and vlogs visited was specified in references.

⁷ As Susan C. Herring (2010:240) notices, "multimodality poses challenges on content analysis, especially as regards the identification of units of analysis. However, traditional content analysis has been applied to the analysis of photographs, radio, television and film content, so these challenges are not new per se."

play between the production of text, the text itself, and the reception of text (Fairclough 2003:8, 10). In my analysis, I was particularly interested in how the vloggers mediate in the process of disseminating knowledge concerning slimming practices and slimness as an important attribute of the human body in contemporary culture.

By watching each of the videos several times I became immersed in the worlds of the vloggers. As it was mentioned before, all of the videos were of a similar structure. This helped me identify four main areas of focus that I wanted to investigate further in the course of my analysis.

The four areas were:

1. The vloggers' motivations for creating and publishing the videos.
2. The vloggers' reference to their bodies and reasons for wanting to pursue a healthier way of living.
3. The vloggers' bodies as their "representation" in the social space of the Internet.
4. The role of Internet community in the process of getting slimmer.

Each of the videos was examined at least twice, which included close observation, taking notes when watching the videos, and the making of transcripts. The transcripts were then carefully read. This helped identify common patterns, which appeared across all of the videos, namely, the mo-

ments, in which the vloggers referred to their bodies or presented them to the audience. They were examined more carefully and the parts of transcripts, which referred to them, were coded.

Results

The Vloggers' Motivations for Creating and Publishing the Videos

The authors of the videos used different arguments to justify posting their videos on the Internet. According to the various motivational factors cited, they can be divided into four groups:

1. Motivators—those who wanted to share their experiences of slimming in order to motivate others. Both positive and negative argumentation was used. Different arguments were addressed to men and women.
2. Innovators—those who presented new forms of body care. They focused on following the latest trends in dieting or fitness exercises, and presenting them to an audience.
3. Documenters—those who mainly focused on documenting the step-by-step approach they followed in order to gain a slimmer figure. Some of the vloggers regularly published videos presenting routines of measuring and weighing their bodies. In such cases, vlogs were utilized as diaries.
4. Sharing experiences—those who sought the attention of other Internet users, including their support or admiration.

The aforementioned categories of vloggers will be further described in the subsequent parts of the article.

The Vloggers' Reference to Their Own Bodies and the Reasons They Give for Looking for a Healthier Way of Living

Although most of the videos were posted by different people, the stories they told had much in common. Many of the videos usually started with a description of their authors' lives, followed by the rules for healthy living, after which came the "turning point," a moment of reflection on the negative consequences of the described bad habits on their health. In subsequent parts, the authors often described what changes they had decided to introduce into their lifestyle, as well as the results of implementing these changes, namely, the impact these changes had on the way they looked and felt. In general, many of the videos adopted a schema of metamorphosis through the use of *before* and *after* pictures, which helped highlight the subsequent body transformations before and after implementing the necessary lifestyle changes. In the narratives of the videos, their authors often referred to their bodies, meaning the body itself was the subject of transformation.

Most of the authors were critically severe about the way they used to treat their bodies before they changed their lifestyle: "I used to eat rubbish, I used to drink rubbish,"⁸ "I could see 'that' [that

⁸ Video by vlogger LilyChannel, published on July 03, 2016. Retrieved December 21, 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0iF5P1JZ30k&t=1s>).

I gained weight—A.M.] in the pictures [of myself—A.M.] and that would bring me down."⁹

In the narratives of the analyzed videos, their authors usually stressed a particular moment when they realized that they had been neglecting their bodies for a long period of time. It was usually a turning point which helped them realize that their bad habits had had a devastating effect on their health. Common examples of such behavior were: ignoring the needs of one's organism, avoiding any physical exercise, eating fast food rather than well-balanced meals, or ignoring the fact they were gaining weight.

For most of the authors, the moment in which they decided to introduce changes into their lives took place when their bodies "failed" to function in some way. They had either fallen ill or they were "dissatisfied" with the way their bodies were functioning: getting tired very quickly due to a lack of any physical exercise, or that their bodies looked unattractive because of excess weight, lack of firmness, et cetera. This was usually expressed in such words as: "I didn't like looking in the mirror, I didn't like my body anymore,"¹⁰ "I found it tiring to climb up the stairs."¹¹ Some of the vloggers experienced rejection from other people because they were overweight or looked unattractive, while

⁹ Video by vlogger LilyChannel, published on July 03, 2016. Retrieved December 21, 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0iF5P1JZ30k&t=1s>).

¹⁰ Video by vlogger Aleksandra Żuraw, published on April 27, 2016. Retrieved December 10, 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okMLQHLv-Sw&t=7s>).

¹¹ Video by vlogger RoKoGym, first of the videos documenting the slimming process, published on September 14, 2016. Retrieved December 12, 2016 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQp7_nWkp0s).

other vloggers excluded themselves from socializing because they felt dissatisfied with the way they looked.

Another common pattern that appeared repeatedly in many videos was a kind of “struggling” with the body: difficulties in changing habits which had previously proved to be so destructive. However, the greatest effort vloggers had to make was changing their normal routine, and they often reported how difficult it was to get used to a new regime until it was fully “embodied.”

One of the most challenging aspects reported by many of the authors was learning how to “listen” to their bodies, how to recognize the needs of the organism. Bloggers often recalled how they had to rethink their former approach to their own bodies, which they had to learn how to follow the natural “rhythm” of their organism by putting its needs first: “I did not respect my body,”¹² or “I had no time for eating well,”¹³ or “I forced myself to eat five times a day.”¹⁴

The changes introduced in their everyday routine were usually implemented gradually and reflexively. This reflexivity can be observed particularly in changes introduced in the two main spheres of

everyday activity: the reorganization of preparing meals, and introducing fitness exercises into everyday schedules.

Changes in the sphere of meal preparation usually involved planning meals in advance, as well as eating about five meals during the day. This also entailed changes in other spheres, such as organizing shopping for food, or learning how to create meals according to the various rules of healthy eating. This “turn to healthy eating” was often documented in *foodbooks*, such as videos which showed how to make meals prepared for the whole day or week.

The reflexive approach also involved searching for the most appropriate form of physical activity for each of the video publishers. The authors of the films often stressed that before implementing the required changes into their lifestyles, they had not been in the habit of doing regular physical exercise. They went on to report how after some time they started to enjoy exercising, especially after their bodies had become used to regular physical activity. Doing sports was often described as the moment when they started to feel “in touch” with their bodies. Many of the vlog authors declared that they could no longer imagine starting the day without doing any exercise, whether that was running, visiting a gym, et cetera. They often compared how difficult it was in the past with how they were feeling now, in particular, that moment when they finally got to “know their bodies better,” which soon became a more “familiar” sensation.

They often talked about how they were currently feeling, about the level of satisfaction they had

¹² Video by vlogger RoKoGym, first of the videos documenting the slimming process, published on September 14, 2016. Retrieved December 12, 2016 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQp7_nWkp0s).

¹³ Video by vlogger RoKoGym, first of the videos documenting the slimming process, published on September 14, 2016. Retrieved December 12, 2016 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQp7_nWkp0s).

¹⁴ Video by vlogger VlogLOLA, published on May 04, 2016. Retrieved December 17, 2016 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAbEud_2A1Q).

about their bodies. This sentiment was often expressed with the words: “I feel more comfortable with my body,” which indicated a newer, more intensive method in experiencing how to use their bodies, and consequently, the ability with which to respond to its needs.

Differences were also noted in the way male and female vloggers referred to their bodies. Videos posted by women focused much more on losing weight, whereas those posted by men sometimes involved attempts at making their bodies look more muscular. An interesting example of such vlogs was “Trenuj z Krzychem” (“Train with Chris”). The author of the vlog specializes in presenting freestyle football tricks, but in several episodes, he documented the transformation of his body from that of a very slim body into that of a muscular one. The metamorphosis was a kind of a tribute to footballer and idol, Ronaldo.¹⁵

In videos in which men demonstrated weight loss, they tended to describe their bodies differently than the way in which women did. They did not hesitate to use sarcastic expressions when describing the body parts with which they were most dissatisfied. For example, the author of the vlog, “Odwaga,” documented his process of slimming in order to motivate other men to implement a healthy lifestyle. One of the very specific and negative ways he had of describing his body was to use self-mockery or self-deprecation,

¹⁵ An example video, a part of a series entitled “Form Chris to Ronaldo,” published on April 09, 2016. Retrieved December 02, 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMhrflPK-3sU&t=6s>).

which became an identifiable hallmark of his vlog.¹⁶

The Vloggers’ Bodies as Their “Representation” in the Social Space of the Internet

What was striking when watching these videos for the first time was the openness with which authors shared their experiences of becoming slimmer. Most of the videos included pictures which presented the way their authors had looked before the transition, when their bodies had still been unattractive. Nevertheless, this did not prevent them from sharing their pictures. On the contrary, referring to their own experiences made them a more reliable source of information for their subscribers, which was interpreted as a sign of “authenticity.”

As I mentioned before, the videos served as a “documentation” of the slimming process. The “documenting” included practices of measuring and weighing of the vloggers’ bodies, as well as doing the “body work”—training them (e.g., in the gym). The purposes of body work were slightly different with regard to different genders: while female vloggers usually focused on the process of losing weight itself, male vloggers’ videos documented the process of building up muscles as well.¹⁷

Some authors documented the moments of physical effort in their videos, others tended to avoid show-

¹⁶ An example motivating video published by Odwaga on March 18, 2016. Retrieved December 11, 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0iF5PIJZ30k&t=1s>).

¹⁷ This was the case in a video published on April 09, 2016 by “Trenuj z Krzychem.” Retrieved December 02, 2016 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hl89_TF-W9c&t=299s).

ing the “dirtier” parts of body work (e.g., sweating) and focused on the results they achieved rather than on the effort they had to put into shaping their bodies.

Picture 1. Documenting “body work” in a video posted by vlogger Odwaga.¹⁸



The way of “presenting” the slimming process to the audience seemed to be carefully planned: in the narratives of the videos, certain moments in vloggers’ biographies were illustrated by certain “representations” of their bodies. Some of the vloggers took an active part in constructing their body images not only by trying to get slimmer but also by making attempts to find and expose distinctive attributes of their bodies, such as tattoos, dyed hair, or pierced ears, something which would make them recognizable among other vloggers. One could say that they were creating their own public *persona*. This was the case with Red Lipstick Monster, a popular vlogger specializing in presenting makeup techniques and beautifying the body, who referred to her tattoos, dyed hair, and vivid makeup as her “distinctive marks.” In one of her videos, we can trace her “way” to a slim body (picture 2).

¹⁸ Published on March 18, 2016 (Instagram: grzegorz_dakann_baranski). Retrieved February 20, 2017 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0iF5P1JZ30k>).

Picture 2. Red Lipstick Monster and the documentation of her slimming process.¹⁹



The Role of the Internet Community in the Process of Getting Slimmer

For many of those vloggers who had transformed their bodies, this ultimately became a source of pride for them, especially when they later became role models for other people. This was particularly noticeable in Q&A episodes, in which video authors who had managed to reach a certain level of expertise in the area of “body shaping” were then able to answer other users’ questions. Many of them stressed that they were not professional counselors, and often instructed anyone looking for advice to refer to the appropriate person. Yet, the fact remains that they *were* asked for advice, which in itself served to encourage the vlog authors to post follow-up films documenting “their way” of healthy living. The vloggers declared that they did this so as not to disappoint their followers.

Sharing the results of their slimming processes with other people was also a means by which to gain the

¹⁹ Retrieved February 20, 2017 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbM_bBv3KVo&t=183s).

attention of subscribers, not to mention their admiration. This could be observed through the words of one of the vloggers: "I cannot notice any difference, but you keep telling me: Wow, you look so slim!"²⁰ Therefore, the words can be interpreted as expressing the vlogger's need for approval, for staying motivated through the continued support of other people. Such examples help us to realize that the Internet is frequently employed as a tool which enables communication, as well as assisting in creating relations between the vlogger and their subscribers. Sometimes it also functions in the reverse order: this is the vlogger who makes attempts to motivate others or to give them support.

For example, one of the most popular pieces of advice given to the viewers by those who managed to transform their bodies was to "stop forcing oneself to do anything," for example: "I kept blaming myself for not eating regularly."²¹ In this way, the vloggers were able to express their support for those who were putting their bodies through severe regimes, people who were being too strict. It can also be interpreted as a way of creating a sense of the so-called "shared experience" with their subscribers, as well as unifying the community.

During the course of analysis, I also encountered several videos posted by young women whose intention was to encourage other women not only to a greater acceptance of their bodies but to learn tol-

erance towards one another. One of these women presented a very intimate portrait of herself, one in which she shared firsthand experience of what it was like to suffer from an eating disorder, which she went on to explain was caused by her strict adherence to healthy eating. Another vlogger published a video in the form of a manifesto, in which she appealed to the audience for a greater approval of their bodies and a greater tolerance of the appearance of other people.²²

The community also served as medium for exchanging information concerning all kinds of products which they recommended were necessary for leading a healthy lifestyle. As such, these vloggers were assigned the status of "authorities." There were those who recommended products because their "authority" was based solely on their experience, and as such were supported by such "salient" facts as being successfully able to reduce their weight. Even if the vloggers did not declare support for any particular brand as such, they still went on to state that by simply watching their videos people could learn how a variety of things could be helpful in leading a healthy lifestyle. As for examples of the products they recommended, among the many they "advertised," were types of sports equipment, food, and even Smartphone applications (apps that measured heartbeat and other body parameters).²³

²⁰ Video posted by vlogger SSarusska on April 13, 2016. Retrieved December 08, 2016 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0jfg0Jp1_g&t=12s/).

²¹ Video posted by vlogger VlogLOLA on May 04, 2016. Retrieved December 12, 2016 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAbEud_2A1Q).

²² An example video encouraging women to a greater acceptance of their bodies published by vlogger Banshee on March 19, 2016. Retrieved December 18, 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3emX2L2SLhg>).

²³ An example video, a review of smartwatches, published by Odwaga on September 16, 2016. Retrieved on December 18, 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7DMW60g7bU>).

Vloggers also reported to their subscribers how they were often contacted by professionals who offered them assistance in planning diets or exercise, and so in this way the community was also used to popularize the services of personal trainers or diet specialists.²⁴

Two of the vloggers referred to their past experiences and recalled that there had been no such a variety of products available when they were younger, or in some cases, just a few years before. They went on to say how today they could appreciate a greater availability and diversity of goods, but also access to a variety of role models whom they could follow. Some of the industry professionals mentioned were Ewa Chodakowska and Mel B., the current Polish and British fitness authorities.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I would like to propose some sociological interpretation of the findings of my study.

The aim of the article was to present how the vloggers mediate in the process of disseminating knowledge concerning slimming practices and slimness as an important attribute of the human body in contemporary culture.²⁵

As Magdalena Szpunar (2011:92) indicates, in contemporary societies, the creation of knowledge is

²⁴ For example, the author of the vlog “Trenuj z Krzychem” was supported by professional trainers from “Fabryka Siły” Gym.

²⁵ As I mentioned before, according to Fairclough (2003), texts are mediated through the mass media.

no longer the domain of individuals, but rather it is created by digital communities. The analysis of various vlogs illustrates that this shift in the means of creating socially shared knowledge is an excellent form for doing so. Referring this in regards to Michel Foucault’s (1991) concept of power/knowledge, we can interpret the analyzed vlogs as a means of creating discourses concerning the human body. The videos are not only records of somebody’s attempts to shape their body but they also serve as a series of instructions for other people to follow. The discourses concerning the most desirable body shapes are popularized by means of the Internet, and the discourse of how to attain slimness has remained unchanged, but is disseminated through new channels such as the Internet.

The authors of the analyzed vlogs are people who have become both adept and successful in disciplining their bodies (for instance, they managed to become slimmer). They have since gained the status of experts, and are often referred to by other Internet users. By sharing their experiences, they are able to help other users in reducing uncertainty arising from the fact that there are many different methods of “body work” available. Yet, the vloggers’ status as authorities is, in this case, built solely on the criterion of self-experience. This finding can be interpreted with reference to the thesis of Wiesław Godzic (2007), a Polish media expert, who claimed that contemporary mass media has entered an era of Demopticum: that people no longer desire to rely on an experts’ knowledge. They would rather prefer to refer to their own experiences.

According to Burges and Green (2009:47), “participants in Youtube clearly engage in new forms of ‘publishing,’ partly as a way to narrate and communicate cultural experiences, including their experiences as ‘citizen-consumers,’ which are bound up with commercial popular media.”

Burgess and Green point out an important feature of contemporary culture, that social media users are “prosumers,” they trust in other users’ recommendations rather than the average commercials distributed by large media companies. This explains why recommending products comprised an important part of the analyzed videos.

The aforementioned authors (2009:47) refer to Nicole Matthews who names any culture which allows observation of other people’s everyday lives as being a “confessional culture.” This phenomenon can be observed in the vloggers’ tendency to share even the most personal experience with their viewers. However, an alternative interpretation is also possible. As Jill Walker Rettberg (2008:145) indicates, vlogs are a mirror and a curtain at the same time. On the one hand, they are used as mirrors: they allow us to strike a pose in which we like ourselves. On the other hand, vlogs are a kind of a curtain, they allow us to hide aspects of our private lives which we do not want to reveal. According to this interpretation, the ways vloggers present themselves can be seen as result of their deliberate creation. This thought is further developed by Sherry Turkle (1997:9) who claims that: “we come to see ourselves differently as we catch sight of our images in the mirror of the machine...the computer offers us both models of mind and a new medi-

um, on which to project our ideas and fantasies.” Debra Gimlin (2002:6) indicates that body work is, in fact, work on the self. The Internet as a medium allows its users to construct the kinds of selves that they want to share with other people. This can be seen and referred to in the way that vloggers involve themselves in changing the appearance and condition of their bodies. Their initial intention was to create a more positive image of themselves, but their new image, based on a slimmer and more attractive body, was also used as a “persona,” one which they use particularly in representing themselves in the social media. The authors of the vlogs instruct the viewers how to use certain products in order to make their bodies look more attractive. Joanne Finkelstein (1991:183) interprets such practices as “turning a self into a sign.”

Referring to Paul Sweetman’s (1999) terminology, we can say that, by pointing out to the distinctive attributes of their bodies, the vloggers are “anchoring” their selves in their bodies.

The way the vloggers experienced their bodies can be interpreted as turning from “dys-embodiment” to “re-embodiment” (Nettleton and Watson 1998:10). For most of the vlogs authors, the moment in which they decided to introduce changes into their lives took place when their bodies “failed” to function in some way. Because of experiencing pain or discomfort, their bodies, previously not important in their lives, became central objects of all their efforts. As Nettleton and Watson (1998:10, 12) indicate, re-embodiment “requires a considerable amount of *biographical work*.” This can be observed in the vloggers’ narratives about their biographical

experiences: their videos are illustrated with pictures of their bodies representing certain moments of their lives.

In one of my previous studies, I analyzed a magazine aimed at people interested in losing weight, a publication which has been in circulation since 1994. Using content analysis of press, I compared all magazine issues released in 1995 and 2015. I focused on three contexts in which obesity was described: aesthetical, medical, and the sphere of social relations. One of the findings of the study was that the social aspects of obesity, the way in which overweight or obese people function in society, such as problems with being accepted or rejected by others, were less often mentioned in the 2015 editions than they had been in the 1995 editions. I assumed that one of the possible reasons for this shift was because some people had begun to seek the advice and support of other people operating in the realm of the social media (Maj 2016).

Although the analysis of the selected vlogs does not allow us to draw far-reaching conclusions, it does seem to show that social media has become the new forum in which people can discuss how to effectively lose weight, among other health influence issues.

In contrast to traditional forms of mass media such as the press, social media is interactive, which allows dialogue and the exchange of relevant information and experiences. Most notably, social media is instrumental in meeting the needs of its users, and as a result plays a significant role in helping people gain the acceptance and support of other people. In essence, its users are able to become part of their desired community.

What is more, these communities act not only as receivers of information and knowledge concerning healthy living but in terms of facilitating; they play an active role in producing and disseminating it.

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Appendix: Analyzed vlogs in alphabetical order (all available on Youtube.pl).

The vlogger's name:	Presents themselves as:
Aleksandra Żuraw	—motivating vlog for young women, the author is a former participant of the Polish edition of “Top Model” TV show.
Banshee	—a 20-year-old woman, 35 th position on the list of Polish most subscribed Youtube channels.
Iwona Malinowska (MojeMalinoveLove)	—describes herself as a “plus size woman,” currently residing in the UK, posts motivating videos concerning dieting and fitness exercises.
LilyChannel	—make-up artist, interested in beautifying the body, tattoos, and piercing, she lost 20kgs of weight.
Natalia K	—a 30-year-old mother of two boys, vlog addressed to young mums.
Nissiax 83	—cosmetologist, currently living in NYC, posts videos concerning doing yoga and running, beautifying the body, popularizing vegan diet.
Odwaga	—he lost 20kgs of weight, motivating vlog. Instagram: grzegorz_dakann_baranski
Partycja Perline	—young woman, daily and lifestyle vlog.
Red Lipstick Monster	—31 st position on the list of Polish most subscribed Youtube channels, specializing in make-up techniques, she has published her own book. redlipstickmonster.pl
RoKoGym	—he lost 50kgs of weight, motivating vlog.
Simplybypola	—young woman, daily and lifestyle vlog.
Smesz	—she lost 18kgs of weight, interested in power lifting.
Sylwia Gracjas	—she lost 50kgs of weight, motivating vlog.
Ssarusska	—19-year-old student, currently residing in the USA, interested in fashion.
“Trenuj z Krzychem”	—Football freestyler, specializing in football tricks, he has published his own book, 42 nd on the list of the most subscribed Youtube channels.
VlogLOLA	—journalist and copywriter, PR specialist. Enjoys posting motivating videos and daily vlogs.