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Bodies and food on Social Media: representations issues among adolescents

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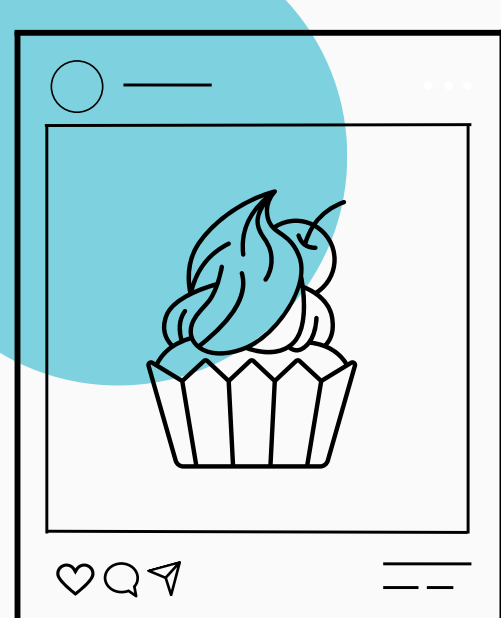
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Aim of the study

The purpose of the reception survey conducted in secondary school is to measure the influence of online food discourses on representations. Indeed, a first iconographic and discursive analysis on a corpus of Instagram and TikTok posts around food allowed to underline a tension between injunction to thinness and self-acceptance. To understand the issues of influence and food on the representations of adolescents - the first consumers of Instagram and TikTok - workshops based on a participatory method were conducted.

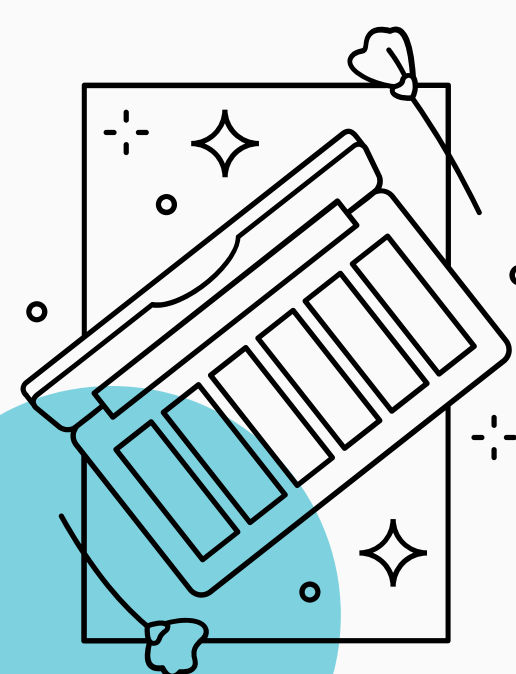
Methodology

80 students of legal age to register on social media (13 years old) participated in the survey at the Marcel Aymé school in Marsannay-la-Côte.



Session 1 - The stakes of influence and food on the representations?

- Free association
- Free sorting task
- Critical perspectives



Session 2 - What content expectations through profile creation?

- Participatory autonomy
- Exchanges and discussions around the creations



Results

Session 1

- Social media are one of their **first sources of information**.
- The term **"content creator" is preferred to "influencer"** which is considered negative.
- Three main reasons motivate the subscription to an influencer: **personality**, **attractiveness** (beauty) and **content** (entertaining).
- **Money from brand partnerships perceived as credibility**. Most students, especially girls, express an interest in purchasing products used or recommended by influencers.
- Strong **sensitivity to body image** in the content categorizations.
- Most of them **believe that the content has no influence** on their relationship with their body and their practices.
- **Demonization of cosmetic surgery**, which they associate with a standardization of bodies and which they oppose to "natural" bodies.

Session 2

- The profiles crystallize **gendered representations** around the **cult of performance for boys** while **girls replicate standards of beauty and thinness**.
- The implementation of a real creative strategy to make contents attractive reflects the **importance given to the image**.
- The attention to the verisimilitude of the influencer, notably by taking care to create a universe.
- The **importance of notoriety** through indicators (subscribers, likes) **as a guarantee of the influencer's credibility**.
- The choice of food represented is conditioned by the activity and the type of influencer chosen.
- Most of influencers profiles created represents **aspirational content and idealized life**.

Conclusion

On the one hand, the survey shows a declared distrust of influencers, which is counterbalanced by the daily use of social media, particularly in the search for information and entertainment. On the other hand, a paradox emerges between discourses that express an ideal of diversity and consumed contents that are articulated around stereotyped representations. As a result, the development of a duality between tolerance messages and projection into ideals circulating online. It questions not only the norms conveyed online, but also the tools available to teenagers for critical reading and use of these digital spaces. This study calls for further work to put in place a prevention and awareness protocol for young people.

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