



# Perceptions of Attractiveness On Social Media

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## 1. Introduction

- Over 78% of adults aged 18 and over use social networking sites such as Instagram (Sensis, 2017).
- Instagram is a social media platform that allows users to share photos and short videos where users are able to receive likes, comments, and follows from others.
- Comparing the number of likes a photo receives has been found to have a role in determining self-worth and perceptions of beauty in a sample of women (Tiggeman et al., 2018).

### Hypothesis:

- Photos with a higher number of likes will be perceived as more attractive compared to the same photo with fewer likes.

## 2. Methods

### Participants:

- Convenience sampling through the university's online research pool to recruit 45 participants.
- Participants were 76% female, 21% male, and 3% other; aged between 18 and 25 years.

### Materials:

- 5 male and 5 female generic fair-use photos, that were selected for ethnic diversity, were used in both the control and experimental condition.
- The likes underneath the photos were manipulated to show either high (thousands) or low (single digit) likes on an Instagram page, creating two groups of photos.



Figure 1. Photo from experiment with a high number of likes.

## 2. Methods Cont.

### Procedure:

- All data was collected online using Qualtrics.
- Participants were randomly assigned to either the high likes ( $n = 23$ ) or low likes ( $n = 22$ ) condition. The photos in both conditions were the same and differed only on the number of likes.
- For each condition, participants viewed the set of 10 photos and rated the attractiveness of each photo on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "not at all attractive" to 6 = "extremely attractive".

### Design:

- Independent groups experimental design
- IV: Number of likes on a photo (high or low).
- DV: Perceived attractiveness averaged across all photos.

## 3. Results

- An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the perception of attractiveness based on a high or low number of likes for the photos.
- There was no statistically significant difference between the high like condition and the low like condition;  $t(43) = 1.1, p = .600, r^2 = .03$  (small effect).
- See Figure 2 for means and standard deviations.

## Acknowledgments

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## 3. Results Cont.

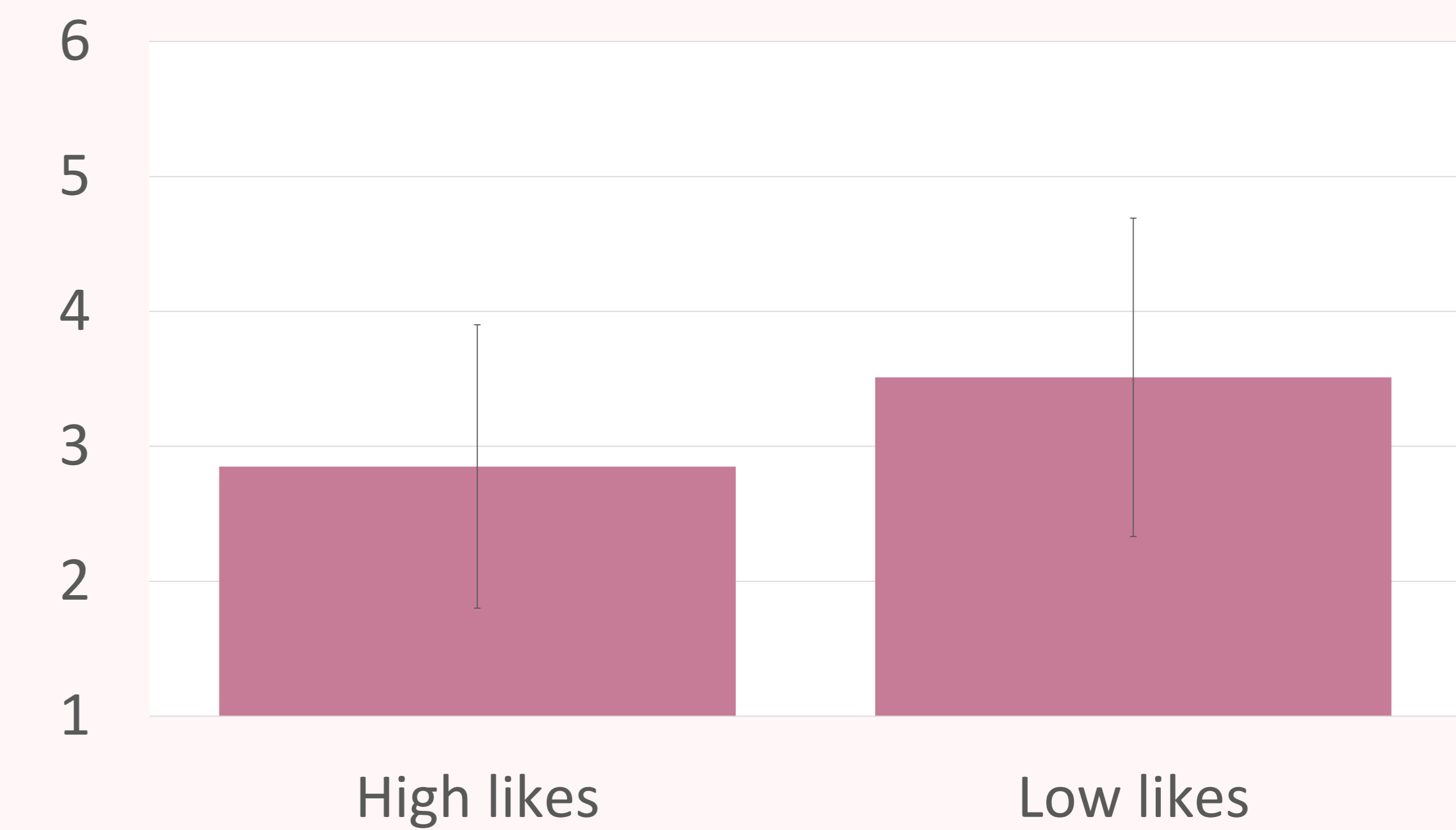


Figure 2. Means and standard deviations for attractiveness ratings for the high like and low like conditions

## 4. Discussion

- Against our hypothesis, the results of this study did not find a statistically significant effect of the number of likes in a photo on perceptions of attractiveness.
- This is in contrast to previous studies that have found that comparing likes on social media posts can have an impact on self-satisfaction and standards of beauty (Tiggemann et al., 2018).
- Limitations of this study may include variabilities in cultural perceptions of attractiveness as well as gender differences as males and females may experience different perceptions of beauty. These interaction effects are lost in the single comparison and cannot be fully explored without a larger sample size. The manipulation may not have been salient enough as participants may not have paid enough attention to the number of likes.

## 5. References

- Tiggemann, M., Hayden, S., Brown, Z., & Veldhuis, J. (2018). The effect of Instagram "likes" on women's social comparison and body dissatisfaction. *Body Image, 26*(90-97). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2018.07.002>
- Sensis. (2017). *Sensis Social Media Report*. <https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/535ef142/files/uploaded/Sensis-Social-Media-Report-2017.pdf>