

Lydia Myszka  
Dr. Kretz  
COME 336  
December 11th, 2022

### Love, Hate, and VSCO

The photos you take that do not make their grand appearance on the larger media platforms of Snapchat or Instagram are often forgotten. However, the social media app, VSCO, is the perfect solution for individuals to post their more secretive or aesthetic photos. VSCO was created in 2011 by Joel Flory and Greg Lutze. This app is largely focused on editing and sharing photos, and it is characterized by its lack of quantifying followers and likes. Users of the app have the freedom to solely focus on the artistic nature and self-expression of their pictures. VSCO isn't an extremely new app, but it still has gained a lot of popularity because individuals like the ability to remove the pressure of numbers that many other apps have. The target audience of VSCO is directed towards female teenagers. For this media criticism, I will be analyzing the VSCO page of @hoses-be-mad. This page is run by two girls who upload different photos that contain text and messages about romantic relationships. The media from @hoses-be-mad is strikingly negative and forces users to view romantic relationships as future breakups that focus on blaming the other individual, wishful thinking of what could have been, and egoistic messages.

For this media criticism, I selected fifty-eight media pieces from @hoses-be-mad, starting from posts on November 6th and continuing until I collected enough examples. I wanted to gather a random sample and see how frequently positive or negative messages about romantic relationships were being portrayed. The media pieces are mostly centered around the written text in the media which is where most of my criticism will come from. The second component of my critique will focus on the images or the visual impact of the piece. Out of the fifty-eight media

pieces, nine pieces had a positive or neutral message. I evaluated the remaining forty-nine negative-message pieces and divided them into the categories of blaming, wishful thinking, and egoistic comments.

Before we look at the media pieces, it is important to understand why VSCO is an important platform to analyze. If an individual is going through a breakup from their romantic relationship, one of the places they can turn to is VSCO. The page of @hoses-be-mad and similar pages are a way that people try to understand their breakup. This idea that the media we consume impacts how we act in our everyday lives is called media priming (Hefner 378). If @hoses-be-mad's page is filled with negative messages about relationships, users are more likely to believe those messages because they are viewing them multiple times (Hefner 378). This concept of media priming should be taken into consideration as we look at each of the message categories @hoses-be-mad presents.

In the media sample I collected, there were twelve examples that were grouped under the category of blaming. I will analyze three media pieces from this category, and the first quote is, "Reminder: Fuck second chances, people never change." The most prominent part of this media piece is its vulgarity. The swearing in the text makes the message incredibly harsh, and it is not only saying that people should forget about second chances, but forget about them with the least amount of respect possible. Research has shown that women present more negative reactions to a breakup compared to men, which explains the vulgarity in this media (Perilloux 176). Furthermore, the premise of the quote is saying that people don't change and that giving them a second chance is wasteful. This is telling the followers of @hoses-be-mad that in a romantic relationship it is not possible to have growth between two people, and also that you shouldn't even give your significant other a chance to improve. It is a very negative and dismissive

behavior being presented as it shares that people don't change and implies that the speaker doesn't need to change either. The visual of this media piece is contrasting to the message being conveyed too. The background image is a light green color with hearts on the bottom corner. It looks light and happy, a reminder someone would have on their phone. The simplicity and innocence of the piece's visual appeal downplays the harshness of the overall message and makes it more likely for the viewers to naively believe the message. The vulgarity and blaming the other person makes the viewer believe that romantic relationships have a negative aspect and don't have the potential for growth.

Another media example that is under the category of blaming is the quote, "You're not who I fell in love with anymore." This negative message is blaming the other individual by stating that they are not the same person as they were before. In comparison to the first media piece where it said that people cannot change, this piece is saying that people do change, but only for the worse. This message has a very negative feeling to it because it is putting no responsibility on the individual stating the quote. There is no understanding of the relationship as a single unit, there is more focus on the division between the two individuals. The speaker is purposefully calling out their significant other and by using the opposing words of "you" and "I" there are no unifying messages. The visual of this media piece is very simple. It has a plain blue background with the white text of the quote centered in the middle. Again, this simple presentation simplifies the larger meaning of the media. It hides the negative connotation of blaming that viewers are taking in.

The final media example that is grouped under the blaming category is the quote, "Love didn't hurt you, someone who didn't know how to love hurt you. Don't confuse the two." This again is an example where the speaker is saying that someone is the blame for how the individual

is feeling. Studies that look at dating abuse, found that men are more likely to be motivated by possessiveness, vulnerability, and fear of losing their girlfriend to a new partner (Storer 10). The media on @hoses-be-mad is describing that the hurt that is being felt is from *someone* not from the feeling of “love.” This described hurt could be a result of what the research has found from males who had behaviors where they were trying to hold onto their relationship, but ended up hurting it instead. The media piece also contains the statement of, “Don’t confuse the two” at the end of the quote. This is an intentional way to further dictate the separation between the person loving and the idea of love. This media piece holds the concept of love at a higher ideal than someone loving and then failing to love. It is easier to blame someone instead of accepting that the concept of love failed you. The visual aspect of this piece has the quote on the side of a building’s windows. The words are written across the windows in white with the final sentence being in red. Having the message be broadcasted on the side of the building makes it seem like the negative message is normal as anyone could be walking down the street and see the message. All of these media examples from @hoses-be-mad place the blame of the romantic relationship on another outlet besides the individual.

Another category present in the media examples selected from @hoses-be-mad were pieces that showcased regret in forms of wishful thinking or brooding. Research has proved that when asked about what were some individuals' biggest regrets, romance was listed third on their lists (Roese 1281). Dating has a lot more freedom than it did in previous years, which is why romance has a higher regret level than it did previously (Roese 1281). There were twenty-one media examples that fit under this category of wishful thinking. Studies also explain that the reasoning for regret can be understood by the opportunity principle. If individuals believe that the relationship could have been changed or there were other options available, then regret is

showcased (Roese 1282). The first media example in this category from @hoes-be-made is the quote, “If I tell you why I love you, can we start over?” The meaning behind this message is the individual wants to start over and is wishing that everything in their relationship could go back to normal. It makes the viewer feel anxiously hopeful about the situation. The quote wants everything to be wiped clean because of the declaration of love from the speaker. However, there is an essence of giving up in the statement. Since the quote begins with, “If I...” it shows that the situation is already so dire that the speaker is giving this last question as a transactional piece. This quote is categorized under the wishingful thinking section because it asks a question in anticipation of acceptance. It wants to avoid regret and the word choice of “if” makes it even more telling that the speaker is wishing and desiring things to be back to how they always were. The visual for this media is a screen capture from Boogie wit da Hoodie’s song, “Let’s Start Over.” The media has a simple blue background with the music lyrics which follows the theme present across previous media examples; it is simple. The everyday nature of the music lyrics gives the impression to the viewer that these wishful behaviors are normal.

The second example of media in this category takes wishingful thinking even further towards the side of regret by introducing the idea of brooding. Research proves that individuals with less-secure attachment orientations develop less beneficial behaviors, like emotion-focused responses, when coping with a breakup (Saffery 8). Researchers have observed that these individuals do not think positively about their past relationship, but they would brood, which is a more negative expression of thinking about what went wrong and how they or their significant other messed up (Saffery 15). This brooding does not allow for the individual to move on from their relationship. The media example from @hoes-be-mad that demonstrates this is the quote, “me when im scrolling through my notes & find that one paragraph I wrote about a guy who

didn't care about me." With this media example, the visual is also helpful to understand the message because behind the text it has a girl who is sobbing with her face being centered so the viewer can easily see her tears. The message being conveyed in this media example is that this girl is still not over her past relationship and by seeing a paragraph that she previously wrote, it still brings her to tears. First off, this media supports that it is ok to keep notes on your phone from previous relationships. In some cases, maybe this is acceptable, but it still makes it hard to move on if the individual is still not able to let that relationship go. Additionally, by showing that the girl is crying makes it seem like she still is controlled by her significant other that didn't care about her. This media tells the viewer that instead of having healthy ways to move on from the relationship, you should continuously brood and remember the situation that hurt you so much. Research also shares that if individuals continue to hold on to memories from past relationships without growing from them, people might start to believe that in their next relationship it's only going to be a matter of time before their relationship fails (Saffery 77). This can result in even more brooding if an individual is trying to understand why relationships keep failing (Saffery 77). Brooding is not a healthy way to deal with a breakup ending, but the VSCO media contradicts that.

The final example that also lies in the wishful thinking category is the quote, "idc if he was toxic i feel so empty without him." This quote has many harmful effects to the viewer if they take this message seriously. The meaning behind this media is that even if their significant other is toxic or in a toxic relationship, it is better to be in that relationship instead of being alone and feeling "empty." Studies share that negative cognitions post break up like grief, depression, or anxiety can play a major role in how an individual deals with a romantic breakup (Boelen 18). Moreso, studies have shown that people demonstrate negative beliefs about themselves,

catastrophic misinterpretations about their reactions, and blame themselves for the relationships if they don't work through their emotions after the breakup (Boelen 19). This quote shows those negative thoughts by the line, "i feel so empty." In addition to the text, the visual of the media contains three laughing emojis on the bottom. These emojis take away any seriousness that could have been associated with the message. It makes the viewer think that it is ok to laugh about someone being toxic and it's ok to think about yourself negatively. This quote has the speaker wishing they were back together even if their significant other was not healthy for them. Having these brooding messages on VSCO creates a harmful message for the viewer to absorb.

The final category that I grouped from @hoses-be-mad was media that made egoistic comments. There were sixteen examples in the collected sampling that showed comments where the speaker's motives were the main focus. The first media example is the quote, "I let you go because I deserve the best." The message behind this example is that the speaker stopped the relationship because they felt that they needed more. Researchers have looked at the available dating advice for women and found that they usually fall into three categories, self-esteem building, metaphorical, and practical advice that draws upon empirical evidence (King 197). This media's message falls under the category of self-esteem building and tells the viewer that they can leave relationships if they think positively enough of themselves to deserve better. It encourages the viewer to increase their own self-esteem in themselves and romantic relationships. The visual of this media follows the previous patterns of simplicity by a basic purple background and the text centered. The media supports the idea that individuals can leave relationships if they are not getting fulfilled.

The second example that shares an egoistic view is the quote, "I find it hard to believe that anyone will love you as great as me." This media is focused on the speaker's needs and

desires because it is sending a message that they are better than everyone else in regards to loving someone. Studies have looked into the concept of giving and receiving love and some individuals get confused that love isn't transactional. Sometimes individuals feel unjustified when their love is not reciprocated (Gheaus 498). In this media example, the speaker feels that they invested more love than their partner and believes no one will be able to compare. This is a very self-centered view to understand relationships. Unrequited love has harmful emotional effects if the individual cannot control their hopes and expectations (King 497). The visual for this media is a screen capture of the song "Just Like Me" by Summer Walker. The simplicity of the media makes it relatable to viewers and something they can easily understand.

A common theme from all of these media examples is the normalcy of them. All of the images on @hoses-be-mad's page were easy to understand with the simple colors and bold text. The media was a mix of images, text, and screen-captures from music. VSCO pages are a way for users to share their feelings in a less public way, because of the lower number of followers, and if they are turning to the page @hoses-be-mad they can be easily convinced that those messages are what they should be listening to. Research has shared that now people can turn to any media source for their dating advice (King 204). These messages are easily accessible in romantic movies, social media sites, and other platforms that anyone can use in their own relationships. Apps like VSCO allow users to see a collection of repeated messages which reinforces the meaning behind them.

In conclusion, the VSCO page @hoses-be-mad contains many negative messages about romantic relationships. There are messages about blaming the other person, wishful thinking about what could have happened, and egoistic comments. Out of the fifty-eight media examples, forty-nine were negative, and the category of wishful thinking messages were the most prevalent.

Even the page name of “hoes be mad” has a certain connotation about how viewers should feel. Generally, the messages have encouraged viewers to engage in unhealthy behaviors after a break up and only give minimal examples of positive romantic relationships. It is important to realize the significance of these messages because VSCO has an audience of teen girls who are viewing the media. If these girls are consuming these messages frequently, they can believe untrue statements about what a relationship should look like or even stay in an unhealthy and abusive relationship because they can't recognize the warning signs. Learning more about the effects of @hoes-be-mad's messages can help discover how adolescents get their dating advice and explain their romantic behaviors. VSCO pages like this one and countless others have a tremendous impact on young adults' perception of romantic relationships.

## Appendix A - VSCO quotes

1. "Life goes on with or without you"
2. "Got too much love in my heart for the bare minimum"
3. "I miss you baeeee come back"
4. "Not stressing anymore, I did my best to keep us going"
5. "I hope what you did to me, haunts you"
6. "Perhaps one day I will look into the mirror and not see an empty shell of somebody who used to love too much"
7. "Even though we didn't make it as far as I hoped, you were the best"
8. "Fuck second chances, people never change"
9. "I find it hard to believe that anyone, will love you as great as me"
10. "It's okay to still be sad about what you had with them. Even if what you had with them was never given a name"
11. "Love didn't hurt you. Some who doesn't know how to love you hurt you. Don't confuse the two."
12. "I see a stranger in your eyes where I once saw a soulmate"
13. "Some people only come into your life to show you what love is not"
14. "There is love in holding on and there is love in letting go"
15. "One day I'm over him and next day I am obsessed again"
16. "I would give anything for a day with the person you used to be"
17. "One day, we was lovers and friends But everythin' gotta come to an end"
18. "Different ways to say I love you"
19. "I've been tryin' to make you love me But everything I try just takes you further from me"
20. "Want this man breaking down crying, screaming, throwing up, passing out, breaking things thinking about the thought of losing me"
21. "You're not who I fell in love with anymore"
22. "Me when I'm scrolling through my notes & find that one paragraph I wrote about a guy who didn't care about me"
23. "If I tell you why I love you, can we start over?"
24. "I hope you're haunted by the thoughts of what we could have been."
25. "The fact that we both wanted this so bad, but somehow we just can't get it?"
26. "Knew that you would leave because they all do. I was there when you needed me. But when I needed peace, I couldn't call you."
27. "What you did to me was not love"
28. "Now we can't be friends"
29. "I knew you would leave me, but I didn't think you could do it so easily"
30. "If it's meant to be you'll come back to me"
31. "If I told you I did not miss you....then I am a liar. I miss you. I miss you. I miss you. But you have become another stranger, another sunset with no other place to go."

32. "Because I'd rather fail with you than win with anyone else"
33. "Just move on babe, he's not gonna change."
34. "When my day ends I want to tell you all about it"
35. "Gave u all of me for what"
36. "Not everything you think is love is love. For some it's just a joke or something to laugh about."
37. "Maybe she'll make you happy like I never did"
38. "I still look for you in everything I do. I don't know how to let you go just yet"
39. "There was before you and there was during you. For some reason, I never thought there would be an after you."
40. "I didn't know what to do with the way we kept growing apart so I let you go"
41. "Some days, I wonder if you miss me. Other days, I wonder why I'm still wondering."
42. "I wish things didn't end up how they did. I miss you being in love with me."
43. "Unless it's mad, passionate, extraordinary love, it's a waste of your time. There are too many mediocre things in life; love shouldn't be one of them."
44. "I dream you love me again."
45. "I just miss how happy I was with you."
46. "Me, her, and the moon"
47. "It didn't last forever, but it meant something to me."
48. "I let you go because I deserve the best."
49. "True love shouldn't be this complicated."
50. "I found someone I really cared for, and then with time they became my soulmate."
51. "I keep the things you wrote for me locked inside a tiny box in my heart to remind me on my loneliest days that you once loved me back."
52. "We're just strangers with some memories."
53. "I love you more than you love me"
54. "Idc if he was toxic, i feel so empty without him"
55. "Just so you know, I loved you. All of you. It was exhausting."
56. "Moving on and trying to cope/looking for him in everyone you meet"
57. "I still remember how impatient we were for the future before everything fell apart."
58. "Loving someone isn't as much fun as it sounds."

Appendix B - VSCO Media

Linked [here](#)

## Works Cited

- Boelen, Paul. Negative cognitions in emotional problems following romantic relationship break-ups. *Stress and Health: Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress* 25(1) 1532-3005.
- Gheaus, A. (2021). Unrequited Love, Self-victimisation and the Target of Appropriate Resentment. *Journal of Ethics*, 25(4), 487–499.
- Hefner, V. (2019). Does love conquer all? An experiment testing the association between types of romantic comedy content and reports of romantic beliefs and life satisfaction. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 8(4), 376–384.  
<https://doi-org.snc.idm.oclc.org/10.1037/ppm0000201>
- King, A. (2020). “Chick Crack”: Self-Esteem, Science and Women’s Dating Advice. *Society*, 57(2), 195–205. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-020-00465-8>
- Perilloux, C., & Buss, D. M. (2008). Breaking up romantic relationships: Costs experienced and coping strategies deployed. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 6(1), 147470490800600119.
- Roose, N. J., & Summerville, A. (2005). What we regret most ... and why. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(9), 1273–1285. 10.1177/0146167205274693
- Saffery, C., & Ehrenberg, M. (2007). When thinking hurts: Attachment, rumination, and postrelationship adjustment. *Personal Relationships*, 14(3), 351–368.  
<https://doi-org.snc.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2007.00160.x>
- Storer, H. L., Schultz, K., & Hamby, S. L. (2020). The role of gender in adolescent dating abuse: An interpretive meta-synthesis of the qualitative literature. *Social Work*, 65(4), 335–348.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swaa032>