

Exploring the Impact of Instagram Ads on the Desire for Cosmetic Procedures A Qualitative Study.

Dr. Afnan Qutub

Associate Professor, Journalism and
Digital Media Dept., Faculty of Media
and Communication, King Abdul-Aziz
University, Saudi Arabia

Fadiyah Bukhari

Lecturer, Marketing Communication
Dept., Faculty of Media and
Communication, King Abdul-Aziz
University, Saudi Arabia

Introduction

As mass media has grown more prominent, society's perception of ideal body image and beauty image has been influenced by media content, including newspaper advertisements, films, television, and commercials. History reflects the influence media has had on the world's perception of the ideal beauty image. Consequently, academic media and communication researchers have studied the correlation between social media content and body and face satisfaction, which has contributed to the understanding of its long- and short-term effects on society's perceptions (Afful & Ricciardelli, 2015; Aldosari et al., 2019).

In recent years, the focus of this issue has been directed toward a critical consideration of social media platforms, as they represent the new era of media content. Women's perceptions of beauty and body image has been found to be affected by their exposure to social media content (Yamout et al., 2019; Zerhouni, Flaudias, Barre, and Rodgers, 2022). The current study aims to explore the impact of Instagram advertisements on viewers' desires to pursue cosmetic procedures or surgeries and how exposure to Instagram ads influences one's self-evaluation. This study also examines which cosmetic procedures are most of interest and the reasons the participants might pursue these particular procedures. Finally, this study addresses the factors that might influence one's decisions about cosmetic procedures and sheds light on the social rewards and benefits associated with beauty standards.

Research objectives

The current study intends to achieve the following objectives:

- Explore both the positive and negative outcomes of viewing Instagram's ads in relation to body image.
- Understand if viewing Instagram ads motivates viewers to consider cosmetic procedures, and if so, which procedures in particular users have considered.
- Investigate how Instagram users evaluate themselves in relation to Instagram ads.
- Investigate if and how social comparison theory applies to the context of Instagram ads female viewers.

Research Problem

Previous literature highlighted that TV Egyptian female viewers responded to beauty standards and compare themselves with other (Wasef, 2022). In Addition, Instagram studies reported that not only do users strove to adhere to a variety of beauty standards; but they also experience appearance dissatisfaction when trying to measure up to these ideals where. Moreover, participants frequently compared their looks or the number of likes/comments with others (Baker, Ferszt, and Breines, 2019). Accordingly, such negative effects on woman's body image leads to the acceptance of cosmetic surgeries for social reasons (Nerini, 2022). Considering that, young females' fascination with cosmetic surgeries and procedures overshadows the medical risks of the surgeries. Also, such body dissatisfaction could cause depression among young females. Thus, promoting beauty ideals through social media could influence the wellbeing of young female users. with that in mind, the current study attempts to explore the impact of Instagram ads on body satisfaction and the tendency to consider cosmetic procedures among Saudi users.

Literature Review

Previous studies have examined the impact of media on body and beauty image and have found that women often compare themselves against the media's depiction of an ideal body, which increases their feeling of dissatisfaction (Wykes & Gunter, 2004). A limited number of researchers in the Mena region have investigated the impact of advertisement in social media to understand its influence on the desire to undergo cosmetic procedures (Sharifi et al., 2016; Yamout et al., 2019). The literature review that follows provides a background on

the history of feminine beauty standards, Saudi society and beauty standards, Instagram and body image, and the correlation between cosmetic surgery and social media and beauty standards.

History of Feminine Beauty Standards

Our basic ideas of beauty standards have been established by ancient cultures. Watterson (1991) (as cited in Calogero et al., 2007) stated that the history of beauty ideals provides the clearest demonstration of the importance of beauty and appearance in the lives of women. Surviving texts, artifacts, and images from ancient Egypt showcase the immense amount of time and effort women invested toward the perfection of their bodies (Calogero et al., 2007).

Bovet (2018) supported Buss's (1989) assertion that the ancient Greeks used mathematical rules to explain human beauty, and that "according to these early scholars, beauty was defined in terms of right proportions (or 'golden ratios')" (Bovet, 2018). Body image and body shape have long held an important role in defining beauty throughout history.

Different body types have defined beauty standards over the years. Calogero et al. (2007) held that the standard of female beauty between 1400 and 1700, as is exemplified in the popular art of the era, was "fat and full," while Hone (2003) indicated that the traditional Korean image of beauty was average or even overweight in size because it represented abundance (Yan & Bissell, 2014). More recently, physical body features such as a curvy body, a small waist, and feminine features have become the basic standards for beauty that are promoted in traditional and digital media. These standards have been globalized from Western culture to the East after decades of considering straighter, thinner bodies as the ideal body image and body shape. Previous literature has also confirmed that "ancestral men" sought to mate with women who were the most fertile, and "as a woman's fertility is largely determined by her physical and physiological condition, men value physical cues in prospective mates more than women" (Bovet, 2018).

Thus, perspectives on beauty evolved throughout history, moving from an hourglass-shaped feminine body to a straight, thin body. Moreover, facial features such as lip, face, and eye shape have emerged as major beauty standards. Walker and Krumhuber (2019) noted that innate preferences, such as "symmetry and small waist-to-hip ratio" in women, guide society's perception of attractiveness. A phenomenon of cultural assimilation has been uncovered; local cultures are being integrated into a universal standard of beauty that is dominated by Western ideals such as round eyes, narrow faces, and pronounced noses (Yan & Bissell, 2014).

The proliferation of mass media in the 1920s ensured the perpetuation of standardized

beauty ideals and the homogenization of Western culture. Motion pictures, magazines, and Hollywood stars informed women's and men's perceptions of what was beautiful. The Great Depression saw a return to longer hemlines and narrow waists and a reemergence of emphasis on secondary sex characteristics. While overall, slender figures were still ideal, flat abdomens and long legs were also emphasized (Calogero et al., 2007).

It has been reported that beauty standards can negatively impact women's psychological wellbeing. For instance, Calogero et al. (2007) noted that "women's anxiety about their appearance is a global phenomenon, observed in every country studied from Saudi Arabia to the United States"; this study also found that 67 percent of women between ages 15 and 64 reported that they tended to "withdraw from life-engaging, life-sustaining activities." In other words, women may avoid activities such as working out at public gyms because of their negative body image.

Saudi Society and Beauty Standards

Physical appearance and the perception of beauty have been shown to affect our lives. For many decades, people have been developing ideas and behaviors to gain social acceptance and meet the demands of their social groups (Baammer, 2019). People might allow social influence to affect their thoughts and behavior for a variety of reasons, including the fact that we often attempt to gain acceptance through conforming to group norms (Psychologist World, n.d.).

Social media promotes certain beauty standards and ideal body image across individuals and groups to conform these standards. As a part of this global village, Saudi society has assisted in cultivating beauty standards. A recent study that investigated Saudi females' social media use and attitudes toward cosmetic surgeries found that Saudi females have indicated that most of them hold positive self-physical appearance perceptions even though there were some factors that may affect their intentions to undergo cosmetic surgeries. However, the more they feel their society has set certain criteria for attractiveness and beauty features, the more they hold positive attitudes toward cosmetic surgeries undergoing behaviors (Bakarman, 2019).

Bakarman's (2019) finding was interesting as it demonstrates that Saudi females in general think that Saudi society does not object to the use of cosmetic surgeries to improve physical attractiveness, in fact society pressures on females.

Beside this, a Saudi study about dissatisfaction with body Image in Makkah region mentions that mass media has created a beauty image that contains a thin body with big eyes and fuller lips. The study conducted on a sample of 718 Saudi women reported that

23% of the sample were classified as being highly sensitive to the ideal media model of appearance. Also, it was confirmed that media images work as continuous reminder of how women body should look in order to be loved and accepted from others (Alzahrani, 2019). This highlight how media pressures women while male beauty standards are rarely addressed by either media or society.

In addition to social influence and traditional media, social media influencers play a significant role in shaping Saudi people's perceptions of body image and beauty standards. Indeed, daily exposure to social media content created by these influencers cultivates the ideal of a thin body, perfect flawless skin, and specific facial features, which increases the appeal of using cosmetic products, editing pictures using applications, and having plastic surgeries. For instance, out of the 378 participants in Bakarman's (2019) study, found that 71 percent of the sample follow social media celebrities and Arabian bloggers like Noha Nabeel and Model Roz.

Instagram and Body Image

Instagram has had a demonstrable impact on society, not just with regard to beauty standards, but as a new social institution through which individuals can get lifestyle and celebrity information. Studies have explored this platform in the context of its negative effect on its audience, especially with regard to self-esteem and wellbeing (Weber et al., 2021). Sharifi et al. (2016) defined body image as "how we mentally 'see' our bodies." They went on to explain that body image "has both perceptual and attitudinal components"; dissatisfaction with one's body and body image has been acknowledged as a widespread and persistent problem worldwide (Sharifi et al., 2016).

A recent study conducted on a sample of 16-18 years old Saudi females confirmed that exposure to social media celebrities is negatively correlated with low body image evaluation (Alsayed et al., 2023).

Another Saudi study examined the correlation between body image and eating disorders by assessing "self-perception of body image, body mass index (BMI), and comparing the agreement between actual and perceived BMI among Saudi female adults at Princess Norah University (PUN) in Riyadh" (Alhussaini et al., 2018). Their study included 336 participants between the ages of 18 and 50 years who were randomly selected from one of the three colleges at PUN. The study, which focused on weight perception, body image, and the media's influence on ideal body image, found that about 68 percent of the participants reported positive body image perceptions, about 84 percent reported that "appearance was very important in the context of body image perception," about 47 percent stated that they

most wanted to change their abdominal area, and about 53 percent hoped to lose weight in order to improve their appearance (Alhussaini et al., 2018).

Further to this, an Iranian study about the impact of Instagram use on body image concerns examined the correlation between Instagram and negative body image. This study uncovered three key themes with regard to Iranian female students' body image concerns, including "changes on body appearance, health and beauty, and Instagram effects" (Sharifi et al., 2016). Sharifi et al. (2016) also indicated the significant role media plays in reducing the negative effect of exposure to the media's image of the thin ideal. They stated that "Iranian people use Instagram, and this has caused people to have more attention to photography. Mina said, (Wherever I go I want to take a picture and put in Instagram and be seen by others and to be encouraged.)" They went on to explain that many women are affected by Instagram images, which could pose an overall threat as it may encourage "risky behavior" (Sharifi et al., 2016). Daily exposure to particular Instagram images cultivates beauty standards that negatively affect body image.

The Correlation Between Cosmetic Surgery, Social Media, and Beauty Standards

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of cosmetic procedures such as lip fillers that are performed around the world (Karch et al., 2023). There are many factors that lead people to pursue cosmetic procedures or plastic surgery in order to meet social expectations of beauty. Studies have shown that besides social media, some of the factors that have led people to have cosmetic surgery in order to meet beauty expectations defined by society include body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and social environment. A recent study that was conducted in Saudi Arabia found a significant correlation between social media and cosmetic surgery (Yamout et al., 2019).

Other recent studies that have examined the interrelations between social media and beauty perceptions revealed that exposure to social media images impacts personal beauty perceptions (Dayan et al., 2021, Karch et al., 2023). These results reflect the fact that the relationship between social media use and desire for cosmetic surgery is not mediated by body dissatisfaction. In fact, social media use was found to be a stronger predictor of a participant's desire for cosmetic surgery than body dissatisfaction. These findings further suggest that viewing images of females with cosmetic enhancements can influence young women's desire for cosmetic procedures, especially if they spend a significant amount of time on social media, follow many different accounts, and are not satisfied with their own appearance.

Saudi society is no different, and social media plays a vital role in desire for cosmetic procedures. One Saudi study, Aldosari et al. (2019), found that “the majority of patients visiting plastic surgery clinics were positively affected, but not exclusively, by the media coverage of cosmetic surgery results.” This work also revealed that social media, TV programs, and advertisements can motivate patients to undergo plastic surgeries, “setting new trends in the world of cosmetic surgery and spreading hope for severely deformed patients to restore the shape and function of their body parts” (Aldosari et al., 2019).

As a result of social media’s impact on perceptions of beauty, women are more open to getting plastic surgery to increase their self-esteem. In 2004, Dove launched their “Campaign for Real Beauty,” which reported that out of 32,000 teenaged girls and women from 10 countries, only 13 percent of women were “very satisfied with their body weight and shape,” and only two percent considered themselves to be “beautiful.” Disturbingly, more than half of the respondents viewed their bodies as “disgusting.” For girls aged between 15 and 17, more than 50 percent of Japanese teenage girls desired to change their weight, body shape, and neck; nearly 40 percent of Saudi Arabian and Canadian teenagers and nearly 30 percent of Brazilian girls wanted to change their hair; and more than 30 percent of teenagers in Canada and Germany wanted to change their skin color (Yan & Bissell, 2014). This unfortunate finding sheds light on the high number of young girls and women who feel dissatisfied about their bodies and who desire to make changes.

Conceptual Framework

People tend to compare themselves to media images, and this contributes to negative body image and body dissatisfaction. Festinger (1954) explored this idea in his theory of social comparison. His social comparison theory holds that “individuals compare themselves to others in order to gain information about their skill level, social standing, and group contribution” (Bozsik, 2020).

Women usually compare themselves and their body image against individuals who share similar beauty ideals and are of the same class level, social background, and region or country. As Festinger (1954) rationalized:

Individuals tend to choose others who are similar to them as comparison targets. That is, they tend to compare themselves to those with similar skill levels or traits. When a comparison group is extremely attractive to the individual an exception is made.

Social comparison theory also explains the body dissatisfaction and negative feelings that arise after comparison. Bozsik (2020) cited Festinger’s (1954) argument that “the stronger the attraction or desire to be similar to a comparison target, the more

pressure is experienced to acquire the target's characteristics. This may partially explain the widespread influence that thin ideal media models have on women even though they represent a highly deviant sample. Despite this sample's appeal, alteration of body weight is not easily achieved and most recognize a discrepancy where their desired weight is lower than their current weight. If one's 10 standards are not met, this theory suggests that feelings of disappointment and inadequacy are likely to develop" (Bozsik, 2020).

In particular, the current study focuses on the idea of self-evaluation proposed by social comparison theory as Instagram users may compare their physical appearance to a model's appearance in advertisements.

Method Design

This qualitative study used in-depth interviews and focus groups to collect data; we used two forms of data collection to enhance the validity of the results. While both methods focused on answering two of the research question(s), collectively, they also answered all four of the research questions. The in-depth interview emphasized the participants' preferences, narratives, and intentions related to self-evaluation and cosmetic procedures, which is the focus of research questions one and two. As issues related to body weight and cosmetic procedures might be perceived as sensitive or confidential issues, we limited discussion of these topics to one-on-one interviews for the comfort of the participants. The focus group, meanwhile, identified the participants' general beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to social judgments and rewards involved with body image and beauty standards, which is the focus of research questions three and four.

Research Questions

RQ 1: How might exposure to Instagram ads influence your self-evaluation? (feeling/diet/workout)

RQ 2: Which cosmetic procedures interest you (if any)? Why?

RQ 3: Which factors might influence your decisions about cosmetic procedures (Instagram ads, criticism from others, self-awareness)?

RQ 4: What are the social rewards and benefits involved with beauty standards?

In-Depth Interviews

We conducted in-depth interviews with 26 Saudi undergraduate females. The objective of the interviews was to gain insight into the respondents' perceptions of beauty standards

presented on Instagram ads. Thus, the semi-structured interviews explored issues including body image, cosmetic procedures, and the influence of Instagram models. During the interviews, we asked the participants the following predetermined questions:

1. "How do you evaluate yourself when seeing Instagram ads?"
2. "What are the thoughts that occur to you?"
3. "When looking at the ads, do you think of a part of your body that might be enhanced using a surgical or cosmetic procedure?"
4. "How do Instagram ads make you feel about your body?"
5. "Has watching Instagram ads motivated you in any way to make a diet change (e.g., Keto diet, calorie restriction, etc.)?"
6. "Does viewing Instagram ads motivate you to work out?"
7. "Do you think that Instagram ads have been digitally edited to appear prettier, or are you seeing their natural beauty?"

Table 1: Interview Sample

1	Name	Age	Major
2	Rawan	23	Public Relations
3	Lames	22	Human Resources
4	Suha	22	History
5	Lana	21	Marketing/Communications
6	Judy	20	Biology
7	Lames	21	Public Relations
8	Eman	20	Marketing/Communications
9	Shaza	21	Public Relations
10	Esraa	22	Chemistry
11	Rana	22	Islamic Studies
12	Reham	23	Geography
13	Manal	20	Islamic Studies
14	Salma	21	Public Relations
15	Raneem	19	Marketing/Communications
16	Huda	22	Finance
17	Elham	19	Chemistry

18	Amal	22	Biology
19	Shaimaa	23	Public Relations
20	Malak	22	Public Relations
21	Leen	20	Human Resources
22	Rania	20	Marketing/Communications
23	Alaa	21	Human Resources
24	Norah	22	Public Relations
25	Jawaher	22	Marketing/Communications
26	Manar	21	Public Relations
27	Reem	20	Human Resources

Focus Groups

Focus groups are widely used in mass communication and social science research (Berg, 2009; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). They are often used to identify general background information and generate insights about a particular topic. Given this, in our focus group discussions we attempted to identify key ideas about cultural norms and Instagram ads that might shape viewers' self-evaluation or motivation to have cosmetic procedures. The focus groups were conducted face-to-face with two different groups, with each researcher conducting one group. The focus groups included participants who ranged between 19 and 38 years old. Considering the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, we used convenience sampling to recruit our participants. As is shown in Tables 1 and 2, all participants were female who were either student or employed.

Table 2: Focus Group 1

Name	Age	Marital Status	Working Status
Rotana	24	Engaged	Unemployed
Ghala	22	Single	Student
Shahad	19	Single	Student
Mayar	23	Single	Student
Jana	22	Single	Student
Maha	19	Single	Student

Table 3: Focus Group 2

Name	Age	Marital Status	Working Status
Lamees	25	Previously engaged	Medical Resident
Asayil	27	Previously engaged	Teacher
Heba	34	Married	Insurance manager
Sebah	35	Single	Academic job
Noora	38	Divorced	Public relation director
Layal	38	Married	Administrative job at a beauty salon
Sarah	29	Single	Business analyst
Yara	27	Engaged	Visual merchandising

Focus groups are ideal for producing insights from group interactions (Tracy, 2013), and the objective of the focus groups in this study was to learn about popular cosmetic procedures and to understand to what extent Saudi women view them in relation to society's beauty standards. In addition, the focus groups explored the social rewards associated with being more attractive. In particular, the focus group discussions explored social rewards, types of cosmetic procedures, and social judgments of beauty standards. For instance, open-ended questions such as:

1. "Tell me about some of the things that you wish to enhance or change?"
2. "What is your opinion about retouching cosmetic procedures such as lip fillers, laser hair removal, microblading?"
3. "Have you tried any of these procedures? If yes, why?"
4. "Are the things that you would like to change about yourself related to social media ads, criticism from others, self-awareness?"
5. "Do you think that having cosmetic procedures might boost your self-confidence?"
6. "Do pretty ladies get better employment options, relationships, or marriage proposals compared to ladies who are less attractive?"

Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to examine the motives for considering cosmetic procedures. After carefully reading through the transcripts of the focus groups and the in-depth interviews, recurring patterns were identified. The qualitative analysis of data was conducted through developing a code frame, creating conceptual categories, and developing themes. The techniques used to generate themes include the following: looking for repetitions of issues in the data, examining pairs of expressions from multiple participants' data. The location of linguistic connectors that signal conditional and causal relations was used as a technique to generate sub-themes (Joffe, 2012). Focus groups were insightful in identifying the social benefits of cosmetic procedures, which were not explicitly stated in the interviews.

Findings

Our focus groups and in-depth interviews resulted in the over-arching themes of motivation and diet, self-evaluation, comparison, beauty standards and beauty image, beautifying procedures, and social rewards and beauty. The following section will explore these areas further.

Motivation and Diet

Although most participants noted that they compare their body shape to models viewed on Instagram ads, they also mentioned that seeing advertisements motivates them to pursue a healthy lifestyle. Elham, a 19-year-old student, highlighted how seeing models in Instagram ads helps her maintain a healthy lifestyle. She said that "watching Instagram ads motivates me to continue my healthy system, I mean . . . I love my body when it's in shape." When asked to describe her feelings about models in Instagram ads, Rania mentioned that she "wants to commit to the gym and lose weight." A third participant reported that "when I neglect my diet, looking at ads makes me mad at myself yet it motivates me to start a strict diet." It is clear that looking at Instagram ads provokes both positive and negative feelings to viewers. While Saudi female viewers tend to compare their shape and weight with those of the model, the ads also motivate them to work out and maintain a balanced diet.

Self-Evaluation

Participants also reported that Instagram ads resulted in negative feelings toward the self. Norah explained that sometimes she feels "sad because I am not as fit as the models, yet I try to challenge myself and become more committed to sport or healthy." Another participant highlighted the role of childbirth and breastfeeding on her body image, saying that she "used to feel better about my body before my pregnancy. But after my childbirth I hated my body because of how I become." Similarly, Raneem expressed that the "ads make me feel less of myself. It seems as if beauty is fixed with particular standards which really

annoys me.” These statements indicate that most Instagram ads promote beauty standards such as being a size zero through two, which excludes a wide range of ladies who are above size four, recent moms, or breastfeeding moms. This places a psychological pressure on those viewers who do not fit with these standards. Another participant reported that they “mostly evaluate myself in term of what is missing me, I have to take care of my body and face like models.”

Despite the fact that social media viewers are generally aware of the digital effects, such as Photoshop, used in such social media posts, viewing the ads still triggers negative feelings in response to comparison with the model. Huda explained that the models “seem flawless and perfect so makes me feel frustrated I’m aware of Photoshop.” Another participant commented on this, saying that “in the past I used to feel so frustrated when seeing those ads, all images appear perfect and after a while I became aware that not every image is 100% true and that was such a relieve.”

Interestingly, the COVID-19 lockdowns also played a role in the participants’ focus on their flaws; as Jawaher pointed out, “I noticed my lips issue during the lockdown of COVID-19 as I used to stand in front of the mirror which affected my self-acceptance negatively and I then decided to make the filler procedure.”

Comparison

In the interviews, the participants were asked about the idea of comparing oneself to the models who appear in Instagram ads. The data identified two themes on this matter. The first group of participants, which consisted of 20 women, revealed that they do compare themselves to the models who appear in Instagram ads. These comparisons mostly involved hair thickness, skin clarity, weight, eye shape, makeup application, nose shape, style of clothing, body shape, and hair length. One participant, Judy, stated that she does compare herself “to models and I get upset and try to be like them. Even though that’s wrong and I have to love my self but I just can’t stop myself from comparing.” This demonstrates that even when the participant is aware that such comparisons are destructive, they could not prevent themselves from doing it. As Eman expressed, “yes, they seem attractive. I want to look better.”

The second group, however, consisted of six participants who indicated that they opposed the idea of comparing oneself with models. As one participant stated, “definitely not. I don’t like comparing myself with others offline or on social media in which everything is fake and edited with Photoshop.” Similarly, Esraa said, “no, because I know that the images are totally different than reality.” Shaza, meanwhile, highlighted that she gets “really annoyed from ads and celebrity who has many fans, and their post is built upon pretending.” To Shaza, ads and celebrity are based on pretending, and thus it is unfair to make such comparisons.

Findings from focus groups also highlighted that younger participants (19-24) years old were motivated by Instagram ads that included models. On the other hand, older participants outlined that cosmetic clinic ads “normalized these cosmetic procedures and made them look so easy and favorable”. Not to mention that older participants tried more cosmetic procedure than younger participants and this could be explained by the financial status as all of the older participants are employed and have their own income.

Beauty Standards

The participants identified several beauty standards, such as white skin tone, thin figure, clear skin, thin nose, and thick, long hair. Indeed, Manal mentioned that she feels “that society is encouraging cosmetic procedures. Yet, I am more concerned about what I want and what makes me looks prettier.” This explains some of the respondents’ attempts at several kinds of diets along with cosmetic procedures, like calorie reduction, the Keto diet, the flexibility diet, and fasting. Elham, who is only 19 years old, shared that she was “excited to try laser and lip fillers, plasma therapy, because ad and society push for that.” Her rationale indicates that social media and society both promote certain beauty standards, and these motivate young females to consider cosmetic makeovers, regardless of their appropriateness, medical risks, or psychological effects.

The following conversation reveals the kind of social pressure many of the participants experienced around their feelings about their bodies. Jana is a 22-year-old single student who has a large physique (rather than being obese).

Jana: I feel that I am embarrassed from my body.

Researcher: What makes you feel this way if I may ask?

Jana: Umm everything in life the society . . . from my girlfriends . . . I feel that I am the fatter among them.

To understand the origins of the consideration of cosmetic procedures, we asked the participants to describe where they first got the idea and which procedures they would like to try, as the following case exemplifies.

Researcher: From where did you get the idea to consider cosmetic procedures?

Participant: In social media everyone highlights their body, and they overemphasize that. I mean the body requires more . . . the face could be enhanced using makeup.

Researcher: What would like to enhance about your body or face?

Participant: I mostly dislike that my eyes look sleepy eyes . . . and I have been criticized from my network and society and so I thought about making Botox in the eyes area and I also

thought about enhancing my eyelashes as they will probably makes my eyes looks better.

This participant was a 22-year-old single college student who had mainly become concerned about her eyes after being judged by others. This is consistent with the looking-glass self that was introduced by Horton Cooley in 1902. Cooley's concept indicates that a person's self grows out of society's interpersonal interactions and the perceptions of others (Sinigaglia & Rizzolatti, 2011). It is understandable, then, that other's judgments might influence one's self-evaluation and decision-making.

Unlike most of the participants, two of the respondents opposed the idea of beauty standards, saying that "there are no standards for beauty. A beautiful person is someone who acts upon his personality and does not pretend to be someone else. Everyone has something that makes him or her special." In sum, most of the participants thought of cometic procedures in relation to the culture's desired beauty standards.

Beautifying Procedures

Most of the participants noted that they would like to undergo at least one cosmetic procedure to become "prettier." The data indicates that of the total of 35 participants in this study, 32 of them expressed that they have tried, or they would like to try, a cosmetic procedure. Only two of the participants were against these procedures. For instance, Alaa, who is 21 years old, stated that she has "a sense of self-forgiveness and so I don't believe in such procedures." In a similar manner, Malak, who is 22 years old, rationalized that they believe "in natural beauty and that God created us in a perfect shape." Still, most of the participants did favor cosmetic procedures; as illustrated in Table 4, the participants ranked lip fillers, laser hair removal, and tooth whitening as their most desired procedures.

Table 4: Cosmetic Procedures Addressed by Respondents

Name of Procedure	Body Part	Number of Participants
Filler	Lips	32
Botox	Facial areas	7
Cheek raising	Cheeks	6
Laser hair removal	Underarms, bikini, legs, hands, back, and face	29
Fractional	Face	5
Plasma therapy	Head	4
Hair transplantation	Head	3
Microblading	Eyebrow	6

Abdominoplasty (tummy tuck)	Abdomen	3
Breast augmentation	Breasts	4
Browlift	Eye area	2
Tanning	Body	4
Tooth whitening	Teeth	11
Rhinoplasty	Nose	9
Fat removal procedures	Needed areas like arm or abdomen	3

As illustrated in table 4, browlift was the least addressed procedure. This could be explained in relation to demographic factor. While Arab females generally has wide shape eye features, browlift procedure might be more popular among Asian females.

Nose, eyebrow, and face Botox procedures fell in the average range, and only two of the participants from the focus group mentioned that they were interested in the browlift procedure, explaining how it is done and how the results add glow to the face. The following dialogue from the focus group highlights the interconnection between the motivation to try these cosmetic procedures and celebrity makeovers that use cosmetic procedures (see Figure 1 for image of photograph that is being discussed).

Researcher: Can you tell me more what makes you interested in this procedure?

Rotana: Well, it the shape of the eye and the surrounding areas becomes prettier.

Ghala: It become popular after Kylie Jenner did this procedure. If you notice, after the procedure her eye looks wider and there is more space between her eyes and eyebrow.

Rotana: She looks prettier after the procedure.

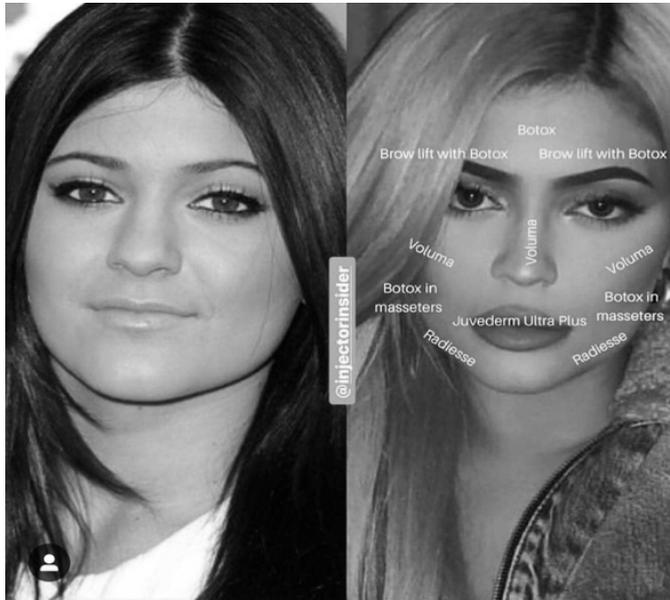


Figure 1: Kylie Jenner Before and After Brow lift

In addition to the influence of celebrities and microcelebrities, the previous conversation also reveals that participants notice particular parts of the body and face and consider how it may look after a cosmetic procedure. For instance, Leen expressed that “I don’t like my arms and shoulders. So, I want to make a procedure that decrease their weight because I feel insecure.” It is essential here to mention that Leen is only 20 years old, yet the weight of her arms has negatively affected her self-esteem and self-evaluation.

Beauty Standards and Rewards

All of the participants agreed that attractive females gained more social and financial rewards compared to less attractive women. Our results identified six types of rewards: marriage proposals, social acceptance, social network, work opportunities, promotions, and higher sales. As we have discussed, the identified rewards consist of social rewards as well as rewards that involve the workplace and personal finances.

○ Beauty standards and marriage proposals

With regard to social rewards, Lamees, a 25-year-old woman, stated that “of course pretty girls get more, and better marriage proposals compared to average girls.” Asayil, who is 27 years old, expanded on this, saying:

So guys who are average will seeks girls who are pretty, yet guys who are handsome will

require a bride who has outstanding beauty standards and will become so picky about small details in the facial features and body shape. It's as if they want to show off as a handsome couple. And to girls as well the appearance is so important. I know I am pretty and so I can't accept someone who is average or ordinary, there should be balance when it comes to appearance and looks. (Asayil)

Previous literature has addressed the interrelation between female beauty standards and marriage proposals (Qutub, 2018). In this study, the participants indicated that future grooms are also being judged in relation to beauty standards promoted on social media. According to Asayil:

Asayil: In the past, a bride is evaluated and judged from head to toe from the groom and his mother and they always use to belief in the saying "the man has nothing wrong with him." However, today that is not accurate.

Researcher: How so?

Asayil: I mean girls today pay more attention to specific beauty standards when evaluating a groom.

Researcher: Like what?

Asayil: For instance, I refused a groom because he has a paunch, although it wasn't that big, but because he enjoys eating and don't go to the gym it is very possible that he will gain weight and I don't want to be with someone fat.

Researcher: Interesting, what else you might consider?

Asayil: Well . . . the hair some men have bald areas even if they are in their early thirties, also the arm muscle and six-pack muscle is desirable.

Researcher: I see.

Our collected data also revealed that exposure to social media microcelebrities influenced girls' evaluation of future spouses. Watching male vloggers and celebrities on Snapchat who have undergone cosmetic surgeries raised the standards for females who are considering a groom.

○ **Beauty standards in the workplace**

Not only do individuals with desired beauty standards gain social rewards, but they also achieve more in the workplace and in business. According to 22-year-old Ghala:

So one of my friends who is attractive was promoting her business in a market area in the mall. Her products were below average, while other girls' products were better. However, she sold most of her products as guys would go to her table and buy her products daily and

chat with her. The other girls did not get the same attention or had regular customers from males who are working in the mall or passing by.

- **Beauty standards and social networks**

The focus group discussions identified several social rewards as illustrated in the following conversation:

Researcher: Is it possible that prettier girls have more social rewards?

Rotana: Of course, there is what is known “pretty girl privilege.”

Researcher: Could you explain what that means? Or share examples?

Ghala: For instance, if there is a pretty girl she gets a better service as a client in an airport, café, or hospital compared to an average girl who gets a regular service.

Asayil: Also, in social gathering, people agree with the prettier girl. In fact, if two girls said something dumb, it is possible that the people will laugh on what the pretty girl said while ignore what the other girl said.

Rotana: Yes, I’ve also noticed that the pretty girl gets to be introduced more.

Researcher: How so?

Rotana: In social gathering, the mother or the friend will introduce the “pretty girl” to people more than other ordinary girls.

Ghala: And because everyone wants to connect and seen with the “pretty girl,” she probably has more connections and relationships compares to ordinary and less pretty girls.

This dialogue indicates that attractiveness is associated with better service, more connections, being perceived as funnier, and being introduced more in social circles compared to those who are considered less attractive. This finding came consistent with former literature that indicated the attractive communicator were perceived more persuasive compared to unattractive communicator (Snyder & Rothbart, 1971).

Discussion

The current study highlighted the effect of Instagram on participants’ desires to pursue cosmetic procedures. Most of the study’s participants showed interest in cosmetic procedures. This finding was consistent with a Saudi study conducted with 390 patients who visited the cosmetic clinic at King Abdulaziz University Hospital. About 66 percent of these patients indicated that had been motivated by before and after images on social media (Aldosari et al., 2019).

Thus, social media content forms a powerful tool in persuading Saudi users to undergo cosmetic makeovers. Accordingly, social media content creators should be sure to include mention of health risks and social responsibility when posting content or promoting ads.

It was also reported that the participants' self-evaluation was influenced by the culture's body standards and other judgments. Instagram tends to promote certain beauty standards for commercial reasons, and this works to convince users of the need for cosmetic makeovers. Individual judgments based on Instagram images supports the idea of the looking-glass self in which one's evaluation of self is formed by the influence of others (Sinigaglia & Rizzolatti, 2011). While in the past, the opinions of family and friends played a significant role in self-evaluation, recent social media developments seem to have overcome the influence of one's network, especially in the context of being able to read about cosmetic procedures, the ability to book online appointments, and the availability of testimonials with just a few clicks.

Most importantly, our study sheds light on the social rewards associated with beauty standards in the workplace, social circles, and when evaluating a marriage proposal. Our data showed that the social pressures on females that are stressed by both individuals and social media result in negative feelings and body dissatisfaction; this supports Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, which held that comparison with another target leads to dissatisfaction. With that in mind, we recommend that advertising agencies choose various types of models instead of one specific type. For instance, agencies could consider including a wide range of women such as those of average weight, those with darker skin, choppy women, pregnant women, breastfeeding women, women with skin issues, women with disabilities, and older women. We also recommend that educational institutions educate females about the negative sides of social media on self-esteem and body image.

Conclusion

The intent of our study was to gain an understanding of how Instagram ads influence self-evaluation and the desire to undergo cosmetic procedures. The study identified several themes, including motivation and diet, self-evaluation, comparison, beauty standards, beautifying procedures, and social rewards. The majority of the participants revealed that they compared themselves to models in ads; while this made them feel negative about their bodies, the ads also worked as a motivator for maintaining healthy diet and working out at the gym.

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