

THE UNDERWORLD OF CATFISHING, BEAUTY APPS, AND FANTASY ONLINE IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT: *Online identity is part of characteristics that humans develop in cyberspace and interaction between netizens. Online identity is an identity that has been created online or virtual reflecting the identity of the person in reality. In today's technological advancement and the rise of the significance of beauty apps and social media, users have created an online identity that differs from reality. Many of these imaginary and fantasy identities have created sparks in social media indicating that people are being 'catfished' through these virtual profiles. Catfishing is luring people into a relationship based on an online persona. These profile pictures tend to be filtered by using beauty applications, creating an audience that believes how we look is exactly similar to what is posted online. 20 undergraduates consisting an equal number of male and female students of University Malaysia Sarawak were interviewed using personal interview methods. The findings reveal that the fantasy online identity is used for self-confidence, to protect one's real identity, and to manipulate and be deceitful. The limitation of this study is that the number of respondents is small and further research should be bigger in size of respondents.*

Keywords: Beauty Apps, Online, Identity, Catfishing, Fantas

INTRODUCTION

Identity is how we define and represent ourselves to the people surrounding us. Researchers [1] mentioned that identities are 'the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is. In some sense, identities can be created and socialized into a person [2]. Online identity, however, is an identity that has been created online or virtual reflecting less or more of the identity in reality. It can be imaginary too. It has created sparks in social media indicating that people are being 'catfished' through these virtual profiles. Catfishing is luring people into a relationship based on an online persona [3]. Beauty applications somehow contribute to the 'do not believe your eyes' situation. Profile picture in Facebook, for instance, is the main picture of ourselves that we display on our Facebook page. These profile pictures tend to be filtered by using beauty applications, creating an audience that believes how we look is exactly similar to what is posted online. Users of beauty applications link it to increase self-confidence. Self-confidence somehow is applicable and only stays online rather than offline. People will be disappointed if the person that you chat with online is different from what you showcase virtually. Selfie is the way how people take solo pictures of themselves through the front camera [4]. The obsession with 'selfies' is so famous that this word has been included and added in the Oxford dictionary.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Beauty applications have marked their ground in the world of easy makeup. It is convenient, can be downloaded free, or can be done online. Somehow, it becomes normal to have a picture of ourselves without being filtered by a beauty application. By filtering the profile pictures, it creates physical appearances of what people expect to be but end up not. Physical appearance can be linked to identity especially to online and fantasized identity. These identities create self-

confidence and lead to motivation that boosts one's self-esteem. According to researchers [4], higher self-confidence enhances the individual's motivation that allows people to see a vested interest in his performance, an incentive to build up and maintain self-esteem. Other than that, beauty application is often intertwined with instant makeup and painless plastic surgery. In a way, it creates a new identity when uploading the pictures online. Most of the beauty applications are used to beautify one's self without changing the actual appearance. It is a satisfaction that pleases one's vain.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will seek to understand and analyze the following research questions:

1. How do beauty applications can boost confidence among students in UNIMAS?
2. How many beauty applications used to alter a person's physical appearances and why?
3. Why beauty applications are widely used in profile pictures?
4. Does 'instant plastic surgery' create an online identity or/and fantasy identity?
5. Are beauty applications widely used by male or female students of UNIMAS?
6. How many filters in the beauty applications are used before uploading it into social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to understand and seek knowledge concepts in relations to self-confidence, beauty applications, and online and fantasy identity as follows:

1. To understand how self-confidence can be developed and boosted through changing appearance
2. To seek knowledge how online identity and fantasy identity are linked to self-confidence