# THE CONSTRUCTION OF BEAUTY BY MOBILE APPLICATIONS

A Master's Thesis

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THE CONSTRUCTION OF BEAUTY BY MOBILE APPLICATIONS

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
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by

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Management

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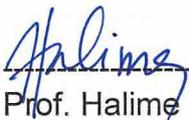
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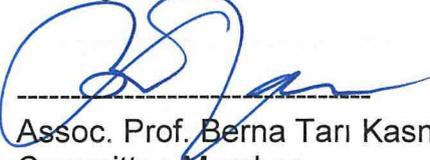
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# ABSTRACT

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF BEAUTY BY MOBILE APPLICATIONS

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As a highly complex, intriguing and contested matter incorporating a variety of meanings at different dimensions, beauty has long been of interest to scholars. Prior research that approached beauty as a socially constructed phenomenon has often pointed to the conceptualization of beauty around the normative ideals of whiteness, thinness and youth for the female subject, and mostly focused on and underlined the role of traditional media in reinforcing and disseminating these ideals. As new media constituting a crucial part among the recent developments in digital technologies and characterized by interactivity, mobile applications contemporarily play a role in the construction of beauty with their promise of a novel way to experience beauty. Yet, little interest has been shown in their sociocultural analysis, and both the construction of beauty by mobile applications and the role of interactivity in

this construction are yet to be explored. In its aim to redress this gap, this thesis (1) engages in the critical sociocultural analysis of mobile applications by evaluating them as "sociocultural artefacts" and (2) adopts the theoretical framework of *The Social Construction of Reality* as proposed by Berger and Luckmann (1991) and further follows McLuhan's (1994) dictum that "the medium is the message" as it focuses on mobile applications in comparison and contrast to the traditional beauty media of magazines and discusses the role and impact of the interactivity of new media as implicated in the construction of beauty by mobile applications.

Keywords: Beauty, Interactivity, Mobile Applications, New Media, Social Construction

# ÖZET

## MOBİL UYGULAMALARDA GÜZELLİĞİN İNŞASI

Baş, Burçak

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Değişik boyutlarda, çok çeşitli anlamları bünyesinde barındıran güzellik kavramı; oldukça karmaşık, merak uyandıran ve tartışmaya açık yapısı ile akademik araştırmalara konu olmuştur. Güzelliği sosyal inşa olarak değerlendiren araştırmalar; güzelliğin çoğu zaman kadın özne için normatif idealler olan beyazlık, incelik ve gençlik etrafında tanımlandığını ortaya koymuş, bu ideallerin güçlenmesinde ve yaygınlaşmasında geleneksel medyanın rolüne dikkat çekmiştir. Günümüzde güzelliğin inşası, yeni gelişen dijital teknolojiler içinde önemli bir yere sahip olan ve etkileşim özelliği ile ön plana çıkan mobil uygulamalar tarafından, güzellik deneyimine yenilik getirme iddiası ile yapılmaktadır. Buna karşın, mobil uygulamaların sosyokültürel analizine yeterince ilgi gösterilmemiş, güzelliğin mobil uygulamalar tarafından

nasıl inşa edildiği ve yeni medyanın etkileşim özelliğinin bu inşadaki rolü henüz araştırılmamıştır. Literatürde yeterince ilgi gösterilmeyen bu alanlara katkı sağlama hedefindeki bu tez; (1) mobil uygulamaları "sosyokültürel materyal" olarak değerlendirerek mobil uygulamalar için eleştirisel sosyokültürel analiz sunmakta ve (2) Berger ve Luckmann (1991) tarafından öne sürülen *Gerçekliğin Sosyal İnşası* teorik çerçevesinden bakarak ve McLuhan'ın (1994) "medya mesajdır" görüşüne dayanarak, mobil uygulamaları geleneksel güzellik medyası olan dergilere kıyas ve karşılaştırma yoluyla incelemekte; yeni medyanın etkileşim özelliğinin rol ve etkisini, mobil uygulamaların güzelliği nasıl inşa ettiğinden yola çıkarak tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etkileşim, Güzellik, Mobil Uygulamalar, Sosyal İnşa, Yeni Medya

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As a highly complex, intriguing and contested matter, beauty has long been

of interest to scholars and received attention from a variety of disciplines

ranging from philosophy to sociology (Peiss, 2001). Scholarly research that

approached beauty as a sociocultural and historically constituted

phenomenon have pointed to the socially constructed nature of beauty

(Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994; Isa, 2003; Isa & Kramer, 2003; Rokka,

Desavelle, & Mikkonen, 2008) around the dominant patriarchal and Western

normative ideals (Bordo, 2004; Calogero, Boroughs & Thompson, 2007;

Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005; Jones, 2010; Rokka, Desavelle, & Mikkonen,

2008) of whiteness, thinness and youth for the female subject (Fredrickson &

Roberts, 1997) and underlined the role of traditional media in reinforcing and

circulating these ideals (Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994). Magazines as

cultural artifacts in particular have received utmost attention for creating and

disseminating the standards of beauty (D'Enbeau, 2009) and have often

been criticized for promoting patriarchal norms that in turn suppress and alienate the female subject (Bartky, 1997).

In contrast to magazines that are often accused of being the dominating tools of patriarchal norms (Bartky, 1997), mobile applications as new media characterized by interactivity, contemporarily construct beauty, with claims of flexibility, individuality and independence. A focus on (the interactive nature of) mobile applications and their potential to mediate how beauty is contemporarily experienced as supposedly more engaging and personalized, hence raises the following research questions: (1) How do mobile applications construct beauty? and (2) What is the role of interactivity in the construction of beauty by mobile applications?

Specifically, despite being a rather novel phenomena constituting a crucial role in the recent technological developments with magnitude and potential, only little interest has been shown in the critical sociocultural analysis of mobile applications (Lupton, 2014). In addition, the construction of beauty by mobile applications and the role of interactivity in this construction is yet to be explored. In its aim to redress this gap, this thesis (1) methodologically focuses on the sociocultural analysis of mobile applications and (2) adopts the theoretical framework of *The Social Construction of Reality* as proposed by Berger and Luckmann (1991) and further relies on the view that "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1994) in contending on the construction of beauty by the new media of mobile applications in comparison and

contrast to the traditional beauty media of magazines and in addressing the role of interactivity in this construction.

In the following four main chapters, I will first provide the literature on beauty as I introduce beauty as a socially constructed phenomenon and point to the role of the traditional beauty media of magazines in this construction. I will then address the role of media in general and introduce mobile applications new media characterized by interactivity, pointing to their capacity in the construction of beauty. Second, I will explain the methodological approach to research design, data collection and data analysis, before I point to the limitations regarding the methodology. Third, I will analyze the focus of mobile applications in terms of their bodily and/ or facial target, point to the claim of and transition to beauty and explore the underlying processes through which beauty comes about as I introduce the emerging themes of naturalness and magic. I will then address the characteristics of the subject of beauty in terms of the beauty ideal as posited by mobile applications. Finally, I will discuss the construction of beauty by mobile applications in comparison and contrast to the traditional beauty media of magazines and explore the role of interactivity of new media as implicated in the construction of beauty by mobile applications.

# CHAPTER II

# LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will introduce beauty, elaborate on its social construction around normative ideals and explain the role of media in reinforcing and disseminating these ideals, as I specifically focus on the traditional beauty media of magazines. I will then point to the role of media in the construction of beauty, before I introduce mobile applications as forms of new media characterized by interactivity and with the potential to mediate the way beauty is contemporarily constructed.

## 2.1. Beauty

Beauty is defined by the Concise Oxford (as cited in Synott, 1989) as "Combination of qualities, as shape, proportion, colour, in human face or form, or in other objects, that delights the sight" (Synott, 1989: 610). Yet, this definition cannot capture beauty in its entirety as beauty incorporates a diverse set of meanings at various levels and dimensions such as the

"physical or spiritual, inner or outer, natural or artificial, subjective or objective, positive or negative" (Synott, 1989: 610).

Having been evaluated through various lenses in relation to a wide range of attributes, beauty has been of interest to many. Beauty has been broadly classified as an aesthetic category from the perspective of philosophical and artistic traditions, and more recently has been reclaimed as a culturally constituted category from the sociological point of view (Peiss, 2001). Whereas in the former perspective, beauty as an aesthetic category is assumed to be based on and represent universal standards that are agreed upon by all, the latter perspective is built on the view that sociocultural and historical mechanisms underlie the (possible) meaning(s) of beauty. Evaluating beauty through the second lens, sociologists and feminists, among others, have criticized and challenged the aesthetically oriented and universal view of beauty for lacking the social, cultural and historical mechanisms that make up beauty, contending instead that beauty is a culturally constituted phenomenon (Peiss, 2001).

The evaluation of beauty as a sociocultural and historically constituted phenomenon, points to its highly controversial nature. "Beauty is a contested category today because we both long for and fear its seductions" (Brand, 2000: xv). When beauty is evaluated positively, it could be seen as liberating and a matter of joy and pleasure by "activating the realm of fantasy and imagination" and yet, it can still be seen as equally enslaving (Brand, 2000: xv) as beauty is also a defining element through which the female subject

comes to be characterized (Travis, Meginnis, & Bardari, 2000). Still today, beauty functions as the determining factor against which the female subject is evaluated and judged by others (Black & Sharma, 2001) and serves as a benchmark that determines her self-worth by affecting how she evaluates her looks and what she expects from herself (Travis, Meginnis, & Bardari, 2000). Evaluating beauty as a sociocultural and historically constituted phenomenon (Peiss, 2001) and as the product of the values and beliefs in which it is embedded (Reischer & Koo, 2004), points in turn to its socially constructed nature.

### 2.1.1. The Social Construction of Beauty

Proposed by Berger and Luckmann (1991), *The Social Construction of Reality* refers to the relationship between knowledge and reality, whereby knowledge is created, shaped and disseminated through individual actions and interactions, and is further sustained to a degree that it becomes fully integrated in the fabric of the society, contributing to the formation of a shared reality that is experienced as meaningful and objective. According to this view, the social world around us is not given or fully determined, but is rather socially negotiated. The meaning and understanding of reality is not created within the single individual. It is instead socially agreed upon through social interactions before it comes to be seen as real. Berger and Luckmann (1991) succinctly illustrate the social construction of reality as they point to three phases regarding the construction of reality: "Society is a human product. Society is *an objective reality. Man is a social product*" (Berger & Luckmann, 1991: 79).

According to Berger and Luckmann (1991), these three phases underlie the way through which the reality comes to be accepted as a given. In the first phase called externalization, individuals create their social worlds through their social activities, contributing in turn to the making of the society and the formation of a reality. In the second phase of objectivation, what has been externalized becomes part of the reality, which is then identified as predefined, orderly and is seen as imposing and objective. Referred to as reification, the world is then experienced as a given fact, which cannot be controlled, and starts to appear as if it is not the product of one's own activity. Hence, it is in the last phase named internalization that individuals learn about and internalize the institutional order and perceive the reality as if it had an existence of its own from the very start, lacking the final understanding regarding their initial contribution to the making of the reality.

As a socially constructed phenomenon, the formation and understanding of beauty has been of interest to scholars (Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994; Isa, 2003; Isa & Kramer, 2003; Rokka, Desavelle, & Mikkonen, 2008). Scholarly research that builds onto the view that beauty is socially constructed further evaluates the way beauty is defined, created and disseminated in relation to the beauty culture in general and media in particular.

### 2.1.2. The Beauty Culture and Media

The standards of beauty in general and the "look of beauty" in particular are created and defined by the efforts of the beauty culture which represents a massive market in the presence of cultural gatekeepers such as cosmetic manufactures, advertisers and women's magazines (Isa, 2003). The operations of the beauty industry are supported by media and advertising channels, which create and communicate cultural values and norms regarding the beauty ideal - the "culturally prescribed and endorsed 'looks' that incorporate various features of the human face and body, and thus define the standards for physical attractiveness within a culture" (Calogero, Boroughs, & Thompson, 2007: 261).

As such, as a socially constructed phenomenon, beauty is neither universal nor static (Isa, 2003). The beauty ideal is the result of and is based on the shared understandings of the members of the society regarding what is valued as beautiful and is further represented through media. That is, media functions to create and reinforce the reality embedded in the social world not through reflecting it as it is, but by representing the meanings of the shared understandings of what is acclaimed as reality (Ibroscheva & Ibroscheva, 2009). Within this contention, media representations are the products of the ideologies from which they arise and reflect the stereotypical and implicit beauty assumptions and choices of cultural gatekeepers who being "historical subjects", "unconsciously and unwittingly "speak" dominant discourse(s) and adapt certain tacit, unquestioned ideological positions and conventions" (Kates & Shaw-Garlock, 1999: 38).

Historically, a single beauty ideal has been predominant in the West such as the "boyish flapper" of the 1920s, the "Marilyn Monroe ideal" of the 1950s or "the curvaceously thin beauty icons" of the 1990s (Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994). Although with the proliferation of lifestyles and the cultural diversity they entailed, media vehicles have started to represent a multiplicity of ways of being beautiful (Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994), the cosmetics industry and its respective marketing efforts primarily attempt to communicate a "uniform" look of beauty (Isa & Kramer, 2003), indicative of the dominant patriarchal and Western ideologies (Bordo, 2004; Calogero, Boroughs & Thompson, 2007; Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005; Jones, 2010; Rokka, Desavelle, & Mikkonen, 2008), extensively promoting youth, thinness and whiteness (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997) for the female subject as features of ideal beauty.

Taking the beauty ideal as a normative category, the feminist critique holds the beauty industry responsible for idealizing standards of beauty (Bordo, 2004) and criticizes media for portraying "inauthentic imagery" to "authentic masses" (Duffy, 2013) under the disguise of a "beauty myth" that is both tyrannical and oppressive (Wolf, 2013). Evaluating beauty as a cultural phenomenon that is constructed around the normative standards underlines the role of beauty as the "signifier of difference" which operates at multiple levels through its emphasis on race, age and gender among others (Peiss, 2001). Specifically, it is contended that, in emphasizing and promoting the idealized gendered, raced and aged features as attainable and beauty as

flexible and malleable, the beauty culture and media not only urge the female subject to reject an inherent beauty but also to pursue ways to improve her beauty by using right beauty products or adopting the right cosmetic procedures (Burkley et al., 2014), although most, if not all women fall outside of these standards (Benbow-Buitenhuis, 2014; Kates & Shaw-Garlock, 1999; Wolf, 2013). Hence, the feminist critique holds that these ideals, as reinforced and disseminated by media channels, function to raise expectations for the female subject, without necessarily accounting for her willingness to abide by these standards in the first place (Rokka, Desavelle, & Mikkonen, 2008).

Conventionally, traditional media have played a role in the construction of beauty and in reinforcing and disseminating its ideals. Scholarly research has often addressed the construction of beauty, through their analysis of traditional media such as magazines (Rocha & Frid, 2016), and television, in contexts such as music shows (Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994), makeover shows (McCann, 2015) and beauty pageants (Gilbert, 2015), among others.

For the purposes of this study where I investigate the construction of beauty by mobile applications and the role of interactivity in this construction, I focused on one particular traditional media, namely magazines, which are one of the oldest and prevalent forms of traditional media (Iqani, 2012) that have conventionally functioned to construct beauty for the female subject. Having the underlying view that the traditional beauty media of magazines

would provide an account on the historically well-established end of the spectrum regarding the construction of beauty, I expected that magazines would provide a relevant and meaningful point of comparison to the new media of mobile applications.

Specifically, not only are a large number of women being exposed to print media (Sypeck, Gray, & Ahrens, 2004), but are also influenced by magazines. Women are introduced and prompted to follow beauty ideals through images of beauty represented in the content and ads of magazines, which then hint at women's bond to and common concern for beauty in their monthly beauty sections and special beauty issues (Moeran, 2010). Magazines portray current trends of beauty and provide prescriptions for cosmetics and clothing with the overt aim of promoting certain beauty styles as well as products and hence serve as "potent means for socializing young consumers about beauty and fashion and for advertising beauty- and fashion-related products" (Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994: 53).

According to Moeran (2006), fashion magazines are not only cultural products that provide their readers with a variety of fashion and beauty related how-to recipes, narratives and illustrations upon which they could reflect and act, but are also commodities that provide a medium for the industry to market and promote fashion and beauty products and services. As a result, fashion and beauty editors of magazines have to constantly navigate between the needs of the readers, as well as the industry and advertisers in relation to aesthetic and commercial expectations. Fashion

magazines are hence intermediaries between the producers and consumers of fashion and beauty, functioning to concretize the aesthetic discourses for the public. However, as there is no unified public to be addressed but rather a multiplicity of them with diverse set of interests and expectations, the selections of editors reflect what they think would make a difference with respect to lifestyle and prevailing norms, once built upon and emphasized.

In the next sections, I will elaborate on how magazines construct beauty, as I (1) explain the beauty ideal of whiteness, thinness and youth in relation to the body and face, and address the role of the male gaze and (2) introduce the fragmentation of the body followed by the establishment of beauty by magazines.

### 2.1.2.1.  The Ideal: Whiteness, Thinness and Youth

Images represented in media often provide an idealized version of beauty, which in turn urge their intended audiences to evaluate their looks and to reflect, imagine and act on the normative and stereotypical beauty images (Moeran, 2006) with respect to their idealized self-image. The dominant patriarchal and Western normative ideals (Bordo, 2004; Calogero, Boroughs & Thompson, 2007; Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005; Jones, 2010; Rokka, Desavelle, & Mikkonen, 2008) that are reinforced by media channels often revolve around whiteness (Fowler & Carlson, 2015), emphasizing Caucasoid "body type and phenotype" (Isa & Kramer, 2003: 42) and attributes such as the "thin body, big eyes, full lips, flawless skin, and high cheekbones" which characterize youthfulness (Goodman, Morris, & Sutherland, 2008: 147).

12

Often claimed as the universal aesthetic standard of beauty (Fowler &
Carlson, 2015), the role of whiteness has often been addressed (Fowler &
Carlson, 2015; Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005; Malkin, Wornian, & Chrisler,
1999; Redmond, 2003). In investigating the representation of beauty in
Asiana, a magazine aimed at British Asian women, McLouglin (2013) finds
that pale skin is prioritized, and concludes that white skin coupled with
Western and wealthy looks defining the beauty ideal for the female subject.
In similar vein, Xie and Zhang (2013) find in their analysis of skin beauty
advertisements in China and the United States that Asian models have even
more fair skin tones than their Caucasian counterparts and underline a
cultural preference for a fair and white complexion in China, even more so
than in the United States.

Saraswati (2010) also points to that whiteness is often evaluated as a
supreme category, based on the analysis of skin whitening ads in Indonesian
and skin tanning ads in the United States contexts. However, the author
differentiates between the desire for "whiteness" and the idealized beauty
standards on "Caucasian whiteness". Instead of taking whiteness as an
ethnic or racial category, Saraswati evaluates whiteness as a cosmopolitan
category that is transnational and virtual, and hence neither real nor unreal
but mobile. Specifically, the author contends that cosmopolitan whiteness
relates to the feeling of cosmopolitanness, which then turns whiteness into an
attainable feature irrespective of the initial biological or racial features. In this
view, magazines not only reinforce the whiteness ideal through an emphasis

on the white skin but also through their use of the vocabulary of "enhancing" with "bronze" and "tan" instead of "blackening" or "browning", which in turn allow them to conceptualize "tan" as a temporal and contextual category, hinting at one's "control" over her body in general and skin color in particular.

The role of whiteness is further evaluated in relation to the more frequent portrayal of Caucasian females. Cross-cultural studies find that Caucasian females are more frequently portrayed in magazines across contexts such as the United States and South Korea (Jung & Lee, 2009), the United States Taiwan and Singapore (Frith, Shaw & Cheng, 2005) and, the United States and China (Fowler & Carlson, 2015), pointing in turn to the fixation with whiteness across contexts.

Caucasian females are not only more frequently portrayed in magazines but are also employed to emphasize the body. When the body is addressed as the utmost determinant of beauty, thinness and youth are of particular focus in magazines. Malkin, Wornian and Chrisler (1999) find in their analysis of the covers of women's magazines that the thin and youth ideals are frequently promoted with the use of models wearing revealing clothing. Similarly, in examining the portrayal of the female beauty ideal in the covers of fashion magazines in the American context for a forty-year period till the 1990s, Sypeck et al. (2004) find that magazines often communicate the "thin ideal", with the body size of the fashion models becoming increasingly thinner. The authors point in turn to the more frequent portrayal of the full body instead of the upper torso and the face in fashion imagery, in

contending that magazines emphasize the body shape, instead of solely espousing a "pretty face" as the determinant of beauty.

However, scholarly research points to racial differences as to whether the body or the face is more frequently emphasized. Specifically, whereas Caucasian models are more frequently employed in clothing ads that emphasize the body and sexuality through long shots, Asian females are often represented in more demure ways through close-up shots that emphasize the face, in an aim to primarily market beauty products that relate to the upper body, particularly the face, skin and hair (Frith, Cheng, & Shaw, 2004; Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005). In contending on the facial or bodily focus of magazines advertisements in the Asian and United States contexts respectively, Frith et al. (2005) underline the role of the male gaze.

Well-established in film and feminist theories, the "gaze" or more notably "the male gaze" (Mulvey, 1989) refers to the active gaze of the male, which controls the female subject by turning her into a passive object to be gazed at. Berger (2008: 47) succinctly illustrates the "male gaze" in *Ways of Seeing*:

> Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.

Building onto the male gaze, Frith et al. (2005) contend that the traditions of the "male gaze" may have developed differently in Eastern and Western

settings such that the understanding of beauty in the West may be characterized by the assumption that the body is what gets noticed, with the face having the utmost importance in the East. The authors, in turn, call into question the assumptions of the feminist theory that relates the unattainable ideals of beauty to the desirability of the body shape in arguing instead that the fixation with the body may not be uniform across different cultures. In similar vein, Frith et al. (2004) contend that the "sex sells" adage that some magazines use with an emphasis on sexuality of the body may not be a common feature in all contexts.

2.1.2.2.   The Fragmentation of the Body and Establishing Beauty

"Representationally, close-up, high-key lit shots of the face; long shots of the whole body (…); and fragmented shots of parts of the body (legs, arms, breasts, cheeks)" have been conventionally dominant in the image system (Redmond, 2003: 181). Despite variations in the focus of magazines on the body and/ or the face and how the male gaze may possibly operate, the fragmentation of the body appears to be common in magazines.

The fragmentation of the body and face into multiple parts and pieces enables magazines, with the aid of advertisers, to create a constant state of discomfort in the readers, who, irrespective of their cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds, are then expected to reassemble and coordinate these parts to eventually form beauty (Moeran, 2009; Moeran, 2010). In creating a female image that can no longer stand as a signification of its own and experienced in its totality, magazines take away the agency of the female subject and

create "an unreachable woman model forever translated into consumer goods" (Rocha & Frid, 2016: 1). According to Rocha and Frid (2016), magazines, which fragment the body then encourage the female subject to alter her body around innovative and modern ideas of beauty, also instruct her how to attain and improve her beauty as they establish a continuity between the natural and cultural by creating a form of magic, whereby the cyclic, permanent and recurrent nature of totemic time replaces the linear logic of time. Here, magazines create an unattainable female ideal through appropriation of timely dimensions of totemic system in the form of magic, whereby adjusting the body then relates to individuality as well as power.

Based on both the textual and advertising content of women's fashion magazines, Moeran (2010) contends that it is with the fragmentation of the body that the female subject is urged to assume beauty as a "magical" power portrayed in highly charged images and one that could be achieved once the fragmented parts are built into a whole. According to Moeran (2010), magazines present beauty as a system of magic with their portrayal of idealized images of beauty in advertisements, as well as their use of headlines and taglines that imbue beauty with magical power. Here, magazine editors use magic to have control over their readers in the form of a "secret" through their use of a magical power or a "technology of enchantment" that functions to isolate and enumerate "the various or constituent parts of the recipient of the magic" (a woman's eyes, hair, lashes, lips, nails, skin, and so on), and then make a magical transfer that enables

them to become "dazzling," "healthy," "luscious," "kissable," "soft," "natural," and so on" (Moeran, 2010: 502).

Similar to Moeran (2010) who underlines the role of a magical transfer to "natural", Li, Min, Belk, Kimura and Bahl (2008) find an association of whiteness with natural beauty based on their analysis of magazine advertisements of skin whitening and lightening products in Asian countries. According to the authors, the white skin emphasizes purity and naturalness and points to the role of technology embedded in natural ingredients and essences. Here, technology serves as a tool for naturalization, implying possibilities for achieving the "natural order of things" and promising not only body control as the outward sign of inner beauty, but also the human control over nature at a broader extent (Li, Min, Belk, Kimura, & Bahl, 2008: 447).

The interplay between naturalness and science is also evident in Redmond's (2003) analysis of the whiteness ideal in British magazines. Redmond finds that magazines predominantly use images of radiant and glowing female bodies coupled with glowing faces, skin and hair, to reinforce the thin and white beauty ideal by conceptualizing them as natural facets. The ephemeral and heavenly looks hint at the natural beauty of the white and thin female subject, with the glow mirroring the natural light that comes from within her and not an artificially enhancing light that comes from the outside. Here, the association of whiteness with light not only signifies the "natural beauty" that is inherent within the white female subject but also the quality of the treatment that good science yields. That is, the good and hence "white"

science functions to set off the natural beauty that is already inherent in the female subject by curing or treating the original or natural state. However, once the natural beauty is set off, women are then ironically encouraged to put on make-up, pointing to the presence of a duality. According to Redmond (2003: 186):

> [W]hite women are asked to 'make up' themselves so that they appear not to be made up at all, so that they appear natural or naturally absent – all glow, in a heavenly state of grace. White women are asked to work at their state of grace even while they are being told that this state of grace exists within. Nature, the essential, and the manufactured get mixed up in what are often representations of excess. This is then the terror, but also the confusion at the core of images of white femininity.

In this view, whiteness is a "natural" and essential quality inherent in the white female subject, and is also one that requires constant work and beautification to reach the idealized standards of beauty. Moeran (2010) finds a similar dilemma in magazines, which both promote the ideal that the true or "natural" beauty comes and is cultivated from within and at the same time claim that "the inner-self can change, and with it a woman's external appearance" (Moeran, 2010: 495).

Duffy's (2013) analysis of authenticity in terms of naturalness and realness in the editorial and advertising content of women's magazines echoes Redmond (2003) and Moeran (2010), as it reveals that magazines simultaneously promote ordinary looking external looks and inner self-discovery without necessarily giving up on their commercial function. Duffy

19

(2013) suggests that internal and external beauty are often constructed as intertwined and indistinguishable from one another as magazines that conventionally emphasize reinvention through making up the external self are contemporarily promoting naturalness. That is, magazines which claim that the external look functions to mirror the uniqueness of the internal self, also ironically express authenticity as a quality to be achieved by manufacturing looks to "reveal" the natural beauty coming from within (Duffy, 2013).

According to Duffy (2013), when realness is associated with external beauty, ordinary looks are claimed imperfect yet lovable in contrast to the ideal yet inauthentic beauty standards that ask for perfection. Here, magazines urge their readers to reject these idealistic standards, although still contradictorily expecting them to fit in the normative standards of beauty that they themselves claim, as these "imperfections" are not without their solutions. Hence, when magazines use the authenticity discourse, naturalness refers to being outside of the heteronormative and idealized standards of beauty. Labels such as "flawed" or "imperfect" comes to be associated with the average yet authentic state of the individual, which is then assumed to form the basis for the female subject to further sculpt her beauty (Duffy, 2013).

Conventionally constructed by the traditional beauty media of magazines, beauty is contemporarily constructed by mobile applications. In the next section, I will elaborate on the role of media with an emphasis on interactivity, before I introduce mobile applications as forms of new media characterized

by interactivity and with the potential to mediate how beauty is contemporarily constructed.

## 2.2. The Role of Media, Interactivity and Mobile Applications

On the role of media, McLuhan (1994) famously stated in the 1960s that "the medium is the message", as the traditional media such as TV and magazines made their ways to everyday lives. In stating that "the medium is the message", McLuhan equated the presence of a new message with the effect of a new medium as "the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology" (McLuhan, 1994: 7). According to McLuhan (1994) change would emerge because of the medium itself that has potential to alter pattern in the way human affairs operate.

Conventionally, traditional media - communication platforms such as print and broadcast media that came prior to the Internet and digitalization and are characterized as being static and having no interactivity (Manovich, 2001) - have played a role in the construction of beauty around normative ideals. Contemporarily new media, which relates to "the convergence of information and communication, of content and interactivity, of representation and of practice" (Lash & Wittel, 2002: 2000), have an impact on the way beauty is constructed through platforms such as blogs, vlogs and social networking sites (Boyd, 2015). A main characteristic that differentiates new from traditional media is that of interactivity, which characterizes the former. Yet,

studies addressing the role of new media in the construction of beauty has so far remained scant and the role of interactivity in this construction is yet to be addressed.

For example, in investigating the social construction of beauty via avatar choice of players in the Second Life created by Linden Labs, Mills (2012) finds that individuals choose stereotypical images of beauty such as the "perfect body size" as well as light skin even when they have the choice to determine their desired ideal. Although Mills (2012) recognizes that the social construction of beauty would depend on how beauty standards are provided and presented to players by cultural gatekeepers, namely the employees of Linden Labs, this study only provides an account on the social construction beauty by the player community of Second Life and hence neglects the analysis of the role of media or cultural gatekeepers in the construction of beauty.

In indirectly providing an account on the construction of beauty by focusing on fashion blogs, Boyd (2015) underlines the rise of fashion blogs and points to the shift from professional to non-professional cultural gatekeepers in constructing beauty. Specifically, Boyd points to the democratization of fashion following the transition from print to online and finds in her comparative study of online fashion that, in contrast to print media, individual fashion blogs are more diverse in terms of what bodily types and races are being portrayed. In relative comparison, Boyd (2015) finds a fewer number of white and higher number of minority female images as well as a higher

frequency of the "average" body type in contrast to the idealized imagery provided by magazines. Although this study points to the role of fashion blogs and non-professional bloggers in the construction of beauty, how beauty is contemporarily constructed in the presence of interactivity remains unexplored.

Especially with the rise of the Internet, interactivity has been of increasing interest to researchers (Kiousis, 2002). Scholarly research has often evaluated interactivity in relation to its technological, psychological (Kiousis 2002) or sociological (Quiring and Schweiger, 2008) underpinnings, making it difficult for researchers to reach a consensus on one single definition that could capture interactivity in its entirety. However, when broadly classified, interactivity could either refer to user-system or user-user interactivity (Quiring & Schweiger, 2008) as "[w]hile some scholars see interactivity as a function of the medium itself, others argue that interactivity resides in the perceptions of those who participate in communication" (McMillan, 2000: 71). Specifically, whereas research on user-system interactivity points to that users interact with a media system, which has the capacity to both present content and respond to user input (McMillan, 2006), research with an emphasis on the role of users underline user-user interactivity, whereby users communicate with one another (Quiring & Schweiger, 2008).

In reconciling various perspectives and acknowledging that with the proliferation of new media, definitions of interactivity will require fine-tuning, Kiousis (2002) proposes that interactivity can be claimed, once the following

conditions are met: "First, there must be at least two participants (human or non-human) for interactive communication to transpire. Further, some technology allowing for mediated information exchanges between users through a channel must also be present (e.g.telephone or computer chatroom). Finally, the possibility for users to modify the mediated environment must exist" (Kiousis, 2002: 370). Within this contention, "the speed, range, and mapping capabilities of a medium" constitute the extent of the interactivity a medium can provide although the user still has the ultimate control (Kiousis, 2002: 360).

Scholars have contended that certain technologies may be more interactive than others such as computers, cellular communications and digital communications (Kiousis, 2002), as there may be variations in their level of interactivity (Downes & McMillan, 2000). Although, the meaning of interactivity in the context of mobile applications is still unclear (Gao, Rau, & Salvendy, 2009), mobile applications, as forms of new media characterized by interactivity, contemporarily have an impact on the way beauty is constructed with their claim of allowing to a novel experience of beauty.

Mobile applications, or more commonly apps, refer to software allowing its users to engage in a certain activity through the use of mobile devices (Liu, Au, & Choi, 2014). As rather novel and global phenomena, mobile applications constitute a crucial part among the recent developments in digital technologies and are increasingly prevalent in our daily lives (Lupton, 2014). The number of mobile applications has increased exponentially in the

last years (Pappachan et al., 2015) and the number of downloads that was approximately 2.52 billion in 2009 worldwide is expected to reach 268.69 billion in 2017 (Statista, 2016).

Despite their capacity to designate how beauty is represented and visualized and potential to mediate how it is perceived and understood, most studies that analyzed mobile applications have neglected fashion in general and beauty in particular. An exception is a recent study by Nie (2016), which investigates the attributes of mobile fashion applications and provides a sociological perspective on the role of mobile fashion applications in reshaping the fashion system. Although this study provides a quantitative account on the characteristics and features of mobile fashion applications and derives from interview data in elaborating on the impact of applications in the possible redefining of the fashion system, it does not provide a sociocultural analysis on how fashion in general, or beauty as part of the fashion system in particular, is constructed by cultural gatekeepers in the presence of interactivity and in the mediation of the app technology.

Having the underlying view that each medium would codify reality in accordance with its particularities and capacity, and that changes that we often take for granted would indicate the presence of a medium around which these conditions could come about, are enabled, enhanced or accelerated (Mcluhan, 1994), this thesis explores the construction of beauty by mobile applications and focuses on the role of interactivity in this construction.

# CHAPTER III

# METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will explain the methodological approach to research design, elaborate on data collection and data analysis and point to methodological limitations.

## 3.1. Approach to Research Design

In order to address the construction of beauty by mobile applications and the role of interactivity in this construction, I employed the mixed method approach in research design, evaluated mobile applications as "sociocultural artefacts" (Lupton, 2014) and their respective app pages as documentary materials for document analysis in data collection, and employed quantitative content and (qualitative) discourse/ critical discourse analyses for data analysis.

I used the mixed method approach in research design in an aim to combine the strengths of and to establish triangulation across qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003), with the expectation that using both methods together would allow increasing the trustworthiness (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989) of this study while at the same time bringing both breadth and depth to the understanding of the research question at hand.

I determined the rationale for mixing methods based on the complex and multidimensional nature of the research problem at hand, which inquired about the construction of beauty by mobile applications and the role of interactivity in this construction. As such, this study involved mapping out the attributes, processes and boundary conditions of beauty, with its emphasis on the role of interactivity. In addressing these multiple dimensions, I adopted document analysis (Bowen, 2009) in data collection and used quantitative and qualitative methods in data analysis of both the written and visual text with the aim of developing a complete and comprehensive understanding on the research question at different yet complementary levels.

Specifically, in using document analysis in data collection, I employed quantitative content analysis for its ability provide a numeric and descriptive account at a more concrete level of the analysis and employed discourse analysis to add meaning and depth to the content analysis by qualitatively uncovering the more nuanced and abstract facets of the construction of beauty.

In the sections that follow, I will first elaborate on data collection and data analysis, before I proceed with the limitations.

### 3.2. Data Collection

I determined the rationale for data collection based on the nature of the research question that inquired about the role of mobile applications in the construction of beauty. I evaluated mobile applications as "sociocultural artefacts" or "digital objects that are the products of human decision-making, underpinned by tacit assumptions, norms and discourses already circulating in the social and cultural contexts in which they are generated, marketed and used" (Lupton, 2014: 607). Describing mobile applications as "sociocultural artefacts" (Lupton, 2014) echoed "documents as 'social facts', which are produced, shared, and used in socially organised ways" (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997: 47). Given that documents may be in various written and visual forms such as advertisements and public records (Bowen, 2009), I evaluated app pages as forms of information rich documentary materials, structured socio-culturally, produced independent of the researcher (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997).

Taking mobile applications as sociocultural artefacts, I then evaluated app pages as documentary materials that involve (1) technical information such as app description, app images and/or an app video, (2) business related information such as the name and address of the app producer, and (3) customer related information such as app reviews and ratings (Harman, Jia, & Zhang, 2012), which are consistent across mobile applications in a

particular app store such as Google Play Store, Apple App Store or Windows Store, and are easily accessible through the Internet.

Specifically, I used document analysis as I ontologically viewed mobile applications as "sociocultural artefacts" that are meaningful representatives and expressions of the social world to which they belong and upon which they reflect back; and epistemologically evaluated them as material and empirical evidences (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997; Hodder, 1994; Mason, 2002) which could be analyzed through their app pages. In evaluating mobile applications through their respective app pages, I relied on document analysis as the viable, relevant and necessary data collection method with the capacity to address the research question and provide benefits such as efficiency and cost effectiveness in data collection (Bowen, 2009).

### 3.2.1. Sampling Decision

Once I established the data collection method as document analysis, I then determined the sampling strategy based on the qualities of app stores, which included Google Play Store, Apple App Store and Windows Store. Instead of focusing on multiple stores, I chose to focus on a single app store in order to achieve standardization across data points and avoid taking app duplicates from different stores. I grounded the sampling decision on the number of mobile applications available in each store and specified Google Play Store as the data source for data collection over its alternatives, as it had the highest market share in terms of the number of apps available in its

repository with 1,5 million apps as of July 2014 followed by Apple App Store having 1,4 million apps (Statista, 2015).

Having the highest market share among app stores, Google Play provides access to apps through its main webpage and allows different routes to accessing intended apps. As a first route, Google Play provides a list of top free and paid applications based on the specific category of apps chosen from a set of 26 categories ranging from shopping to education, and business to health and fitness. In this option, each category represents app developers' choice of category based on the content and design of their apps. Top ranking lists of free and paid apps per category are determined based on downloads and represent a snapshot of the downloading tendencies of users at a point in time. As a second route, Google Play allows querying apps based on keyword search, irrespective of category and price.

Given the lack of a category specific to beauty, I chose to narrow down my focus to include mobile applications in the Photography category only, as I expected that this category would revolve around processes such as the creation, use and dissemination of imagery by allowing their users to take, edit and share their pictures and hence provide an appropriate means to explore how the new media of mobile applications construct beauty in the presence of high levels of imagery, interactivity and engagement in comparison and contrast to the traditional beauty media of magazines, which similarly represent the beauty ideal through their media imagery (Englis,

Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994), and yet are characterized as being static (Manovich, 2001).

Having chosen the Photography category as my focus, I searched the list of both top free and paid Photography applications in Google Play. I did not base my focus on keyword search, in order to minimize the risk of over-relying on the algorithmic calculations of Google Play for determining apps relevant to the research question and including apps that may have imitated the textual content of original apps in purpose of ranking higher in search results. I then expected that the risk of biased selectivity (Bowen, 2009; Yin, 1994) would be lowered, as my etic expectations would not be forced on the data through my choice of keywords such as "beauty", "natural beauty" or "beauty selfie".

### 3.2.2. Selection Strategy

Once I determined the top Photography app category as my focus, I went through 540 free and 96 paid mobile application pages on Google Play on February 15th, 2016. Each app page included app description, app images and in some cases, an app video, that introduced and promoted the respective app. I based the selection strategy on the app description and app images that were available and standard across all apps.

Mobile applications in the Photography category were commonly characterized by a variety of core functions, ranging from selfie and makeover to photomontage and photo editing. After going over 636 app

pages in total, I included mobile applications that (1) made an explicit claim of

beauty in its description, (2) had beauty as at least one of its major functions,

(3) explained how it functioned and what it targeted in relation to beauty, (4)

positioned beauty in relation to the existing body and bodily parts and

features, (5) allowed editing or making adjustments on the body or bodily

parts and features over the picture and (6) had a description available in

English. I did not include apps that fell outside of the predetermined criteria.

This in turn yielded a database of a total of 33 apps for analysis. Mobile

applications selected for analysis can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Mobile applications selected for analysis

| App Name | Offered By | Price | Interactive Elements | Website |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| AirBrush - Best Selfie Editor | MagicV Inc. | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.magicv.airbrush&hl=en |
| Beauty Cam - Selfie Camera | Moonsoft | Free | Users Interact | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.Moonsoft.InstaBeautySelfieEditor&hl=en |
| Beauty Camera | Meitu, Inc. | Free | Shares Info | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.meitu.meiyancamera&hl=en |
| Beauty Camera - Selfie Camera | NorthPark. Android | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.northpark.beautycamera&hl=en |

Table 1 (cont'd)

| Beauty Camera - Make-up Camera | TACOTY APP | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.menue.sh.beautycamera&hl=en |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beauty Makeup Selfie Cam | Lyrebird Studio | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.lyrebirdstudio.beauty&hl=en |
| BeautyCam - Photo Editor Pro | fotoable.global | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.fotoable.selfieplus&hl=en |
| BeautyPlus - Magical Camera | CommSource Technology Co. | Free | Shares Info | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.commsource.beautyplus&hl=en |
| Bestie - Best Portrait Selfies | PinGuo Inc. | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=us.pinguo.selfie&hl=en |
| Camera360 - Funny Stickers | PinGuo Inc. | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=vStudio.Android.Camera360&hl=en |
| Candy Camera | JP Brother, Inc. | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.joeware.android.gpulumera&hl=en |
| Candy Selfie - selfie camera | Ufoto - Photo for U. | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cam001.selfie&hl=en |
| Cymera - Selfie & Photo Editor | SK Communications | Free | Users Interact, Digital Purchases | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cyworld.camera&hl=en |
| Facetune | Lightricks Ltd. | Paid | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.lightricks.facetune&hl=en |

Table 1 (cont'd)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FotoRus - Photo Editor Pro | Fotoable,Inc. | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.wantu.activity&hl=en |
| GoSexy Lite-Face and body tune | Kasaba Bilgi Teknolojileri Tic. A.S. | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.kasaba.gosexyandroidlite&hl=en |
| InstaBeauty - Selfie Camera | Fotoable, Inc. | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.fotoable.fotobeauty&hl=en |
| Makeup Photo Editor | Dexati | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.km.facemakeup&hl=en |
| MakeupPlus | Meitu, Inc. | Free | Users Interact | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.meitu.makeup&hl=en |
| Perfect365_ One-Tap Makeover | ArcSoft, Inc | Free | Digital Purchases | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.arcsoft.perfect365&hl=en |
| Photo Editor | Amazing Studio | Free | Digital Purchases | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=mobi.bcam.editor&hl=en |
| Photo Editor Pro - Effects | CRE APP.COM | Free | Users Interact, Digital Purchases | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.creapp.photoeditor&hl=en |
| Photo Wonder-Collage Maker | Baidu HK | Free | Users Interact, Digital Purchases | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=cn.jingling.motu.photowonder&hl=en |
| Plastic Surgery Simulator | Kaeria | Paid | Users Interact | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.kaeriasarl.vps&hl=en |

Table 1 (cont'd)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plastic Surgery Simulator Lite | Kaeria | Free | Users Interact | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.kaeriasarl.psslite&hl=en |
| Selfie Camera Effects | Csmartworld | Free | Users Interact | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.smartworld.selfiecameraeffect&hl=en |
| Selfie Camera - Facial Beauty | Yahoo Japan Corp. | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cfinc.cunpic&hl=en |
| Selfie Camera with Candy Frame | fotoable.global | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.exmaple.starcamera&hl=en |
| UCam-for Candy selfie camera | Ufoto - Photo for U. | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ucamera.ucam&hl=en |
| Visage Lab – face retouch | VicMan LLC | Free | Digital Purchases | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=to.pho.visagelab&hl=en |
| You Makeup - Makeover Editor | Fotoable,Inc. | Free | N/A | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.fotoable.makeup&hl=en |
| YouCam Makeup-Makeover Studio | Perfect Corp. | Free | Users Interact, Shares Info, Shares Location | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cyberlink.youcammakeup&hl=en |
| YouCam Perfect - Selfie Cam | Perfect Corp. | Free | Users Interact, Shares Info, Shares Location, Unrestricted Internet | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cyberlink.youperfect&hl=en |

Once I finalized which apps to select in mid-February, I then collected and recorded the information on app pages such as app descriptions and app images until February 26th, 2016, which then formed the basis for data analysis. As the overall screenshot of an app page did not provide all images at once, I also separately recorded each image available in a separate sheet for data analysis. Recording the available description and images through screenshots and downloading app video, when applicable, in turn allowed dealing with the risk of loss or irretrievability (Bowen, 2009; Yin, 1994). Although some of the app pages also directed to their respective developer website and social networking sites such as Facebook, I did not include them in the analysis. Instead, I followed these links to familiarize myself with the apps, and chose to record only Google Play app pages, as they provided self-contained, standard and easily comparable data across apps in the data set. Figure 1 illustrates an illustrative screenshot of InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera as recorded for data analysis.
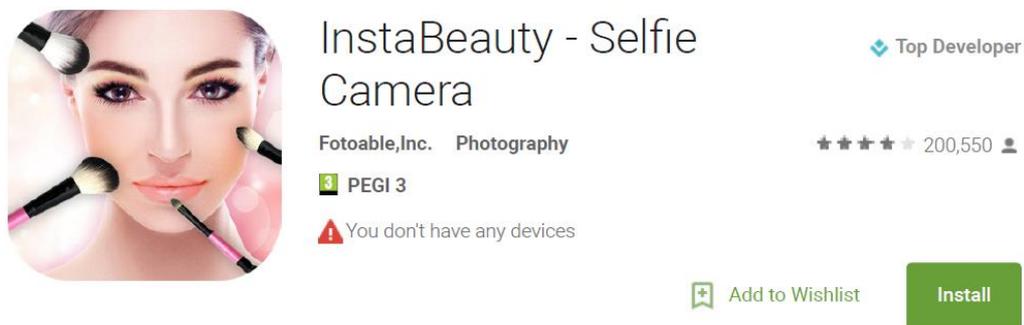
InstaBeauty: Best Selfie photo Editor for Facebook，Instagram and Twitter.

MUST-HAVE for those who like to take selfies!

Want to have BEAUTIFUL and PERFECT skins? InstaBeauty beautifies your photo and video with just ONE-TAP! Touch up your selfies with our quick and easy features and get great results. We also provide powerful selfie functionalities to adjust and fine-tune details as you like.You can recomend them to try InstaBeauty.We believe they will like it.

InstaBeauty comes with 4 main features: Beauty Camera，Beauty Collage，Beauty Video and QuickSnap

◉ Beauty Camera
Take beauty selfie with our camera. With over a dozen beauty PRESETS and filters on camera, you can pick and choose how your skin and face looks - with just ONE-TAP! Each preset provides different levels of smoothing, toning, and also removing temporary imperfections such as pimples and blemishes. If you are not satisfied, tap Adjust button to fine-tune further with several advanced features such as SLIM-FACE, BLEMISH, BIG-EYES and much more! Real-time filter on Beauty Camera do not require post-correction. There are 10+ artistic and unique filters, including a big eyes filter specifically for selfies.

◉ Beauty Collage
What to do after taking lots of selfies with our camera? Choose from 200+ elegantly designed styles and instantly create Magazine-Style collages that look better than other collage apps! Our styles come in Selfie, Square, Landscape, and Stripes modes to fit all your collage needs. Also download new styles every week to get the latest collage designs from our library.

Figure 1: An illustrative screenshot of InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera

37

Figure 1 (cont'd.)

In order to familiarize myself further with the apps and to strengthen my overall understanding regarding the construction of beauty through mobile applications, I watched app videos where available and, downloaded and experimented with some of the apps myself. Although I did not include this secondary study in the data analysis, they still functioned to give a sense on the guiding principles of apps in actual use and helped me deal with the risk of facing insufficient detail (Bowen, 2009), which could have resulted from the unobtrusive nature of app description and images as provided in the respective app pages.

Specifically, focusing on the actual use of apps via watching videos or experimenting with some of the apps themselves helped get me immersed in the data and provided me with a more informed lens on how a typical app

operates. The features and guiding principles of InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera, as a typical app, are outlined in the next section. The account provided on InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera reflects both the app description and images as provided in its app page, as well as the information gathered from the actual use of the app, in order to add depth to the understanding of how an app functions and to address how these functions further appear to the user.

### 3.2.3. The Typical App

Photography based mobile applications in the data set with the claim of beauty are more frequently characterized as selfie and less frequently as makeup or makeover apps. Offered by the "Top Developer" Fotoable, Inc. in the Photography category of Google Play, InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera belongs to the initial category of apps with the selfie function, as the first sentence of its description illustrates: "InstaBeauty: Best Selfie photo Editor for Facebook, Instagram and Twitter." Claiming itself as a must-have, InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera is a typical app representing a range of apps of similar character allowing to taking/ selecting/ seeing, editing and saving/ sharing pictures and is hence expected to provide a useful framework in understanding apps in the data set.

In the homepage of InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera, two shades of pink background divides the screen in to two. The app user sees that the first half of the screen is dedicated to mobile advertisements and the second half to app features. InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera offers its features in various soft-

colored circle icons, which echoes the claim in the app description: "InstaBeauty comes with 4 main features: Beauty Camera, Beauty Collage, Beauty Video and QuickSnap".

### 3.2.3.1.   The Primary Focus

"Beauty Camera" appears to be the most prominent function and hence the primary focus of InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera. The first soft yellow icon represents the "Camera" feature and is followed by the light purple "Library" icon. Whereas the Camera feature allows taking a picture, the Library feature allows selecting an already existing picture from the phone's gallery, both through the in-built features of the app.

Once the "Camera" feature is tapped, one sees her image in the first half of the screen ready for a selfie. Before taking a selfie, the user is offered various beauty levels to choose from to auto beautify the portrait in motion. Specifically, the auto-beautify function comes with a horizontal beautification line. Sliding the cursor on this line allows adjusting the level of automatic beautification. Under the "auto-beautify" line, different beauty levels such as "natural", "sweet" or "sexy" are provided on a sliding row and provide an instant toning of the picture. Tapping on each beauty level allows further determining the overall tone of the picture as it warms up or cools down the entire image, even before a picture is taken. The "Night Mode" can be made on and off, and the user is prompted to use it in dark.

Once a picture is taken or otherwise selected from the gallery through the "Library" function, the app offers two major functions: "Face" and "Edit". The Face function offers tools such as "Auto Retouch", "Soften", "Blemish", "Slim Face", "Big Eyes", "Eyebag", "Nose Lift", "Slim Nose" and "Clear Eyes"; and comes with the "auto" and "manual" options that either provides an automatic or a manually adjustable beautification experience respectively. To illustrate, once the "Big Eyes" feature is selected in the "auto" mode, the app automatically determines that "eyes" are to be addressed and applies the intended change on the eyes based on how the app user moves the cursor on the horizontal beautification line beneath the picture and adjusts the extent of the effect accordingly. On the other hand, if the "manual" option is selected, then the app user is required to first tap and then to pinch to zoom out the relevant part of the face to be able to apply the intended effect. This function is echoed in the app images of InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera, as the app specifically addresses big eyes in one of its app images. Figure 2 represents InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera's before and after image targeting the "Big Eyes" function:
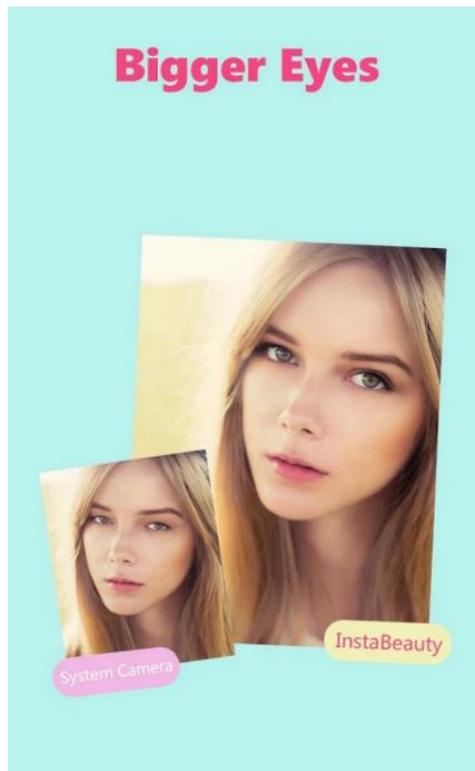
Figure 2: Before/ after image for the "Big Eyes" function (InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera)

As illustrated by the above image, in targeting the eyes, InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera promotes its feature of enlarging eyes as "bigger eyes". The before and after image of a young Caucasian female illustrates a transition from half closed eyes to big eyes as it juxtaposes InstaBeauty against the system camera in an attempt to underline the role and primacy of the specialized InstaBeauty face editing technology, over a regular system camera.

Once the face is worked on with functions such as "Big Eyes", then the "Edit" function further allows to enhance the picture through options such as adding stickers, stretching or slimming the portrait, adjusting the color or tone of the picture, adding fun texts and editing the general outlook and dimensions of

the image. To illustrate, once the "Sticker" option is tapped, the app user is introduced to the "Sticker Lab" which involves various sticker categories such as "Emotions" or "Words". After a sticker is chosen from the library, the app allows adjusting the dimensions and position of the picture by pinching to zoom in and out.

### 3.2.3.2. The Secondary Foci

Whereas the "Beauty Camera" appears to be the most prominent function of InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera, the latter functions seem to be rather complementary or additional. Specifically, "Beauty Collage" appears to be a complementary feature of Beauty Camera while "Quicksnap" and "Beauty Video" as additional features.

As one of features offered by InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera, "Beauty Collage" appears in a pink icon and allows creating and stylizing collages from existing pictures, using one of the existing set of available themes in InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera's inbuilt gallery. Beauty Collage typically points to the step after taking and editing multiple pictures. Specifically, tapping on the Beauty Collage icon directs the app user to select a number of pictures from the phone's gallery from a range of pictures taken either with InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera or otherwise. Once the app user selects multiple pictures to create a collage, then the app offers options such as "Minimal", "Classic" and "Creative" for the app user to stylize the collage with one of the diverse set of themes offered by the app.

The other features, "Quicksnap" and "Beauty Video", are similar to "Beauty Camera" in outlook and functioning, except that Quicksnap allows taking many consecutive snapshots and Beauty Video facilitates instantly beautifying videos in real time. To illustrate Quicksnap, once the app user takes multiple selfies, then InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera saves each shot to the camera roll for future selection. The "Quicksnap" function that facilitates focusing on the pose, echoes the description of InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera:

> For those who like to take lots of self-snapshots, this is the feature you will like. Change different poses and snap away until you get desired photo. Once finished taking photos, you will be able to review each beautified shots and choose which photo you like to keep.

As illustrated by the above example, InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera allows taking a series of pictures instantly and saves each shot for review. The flexibility of choosing which pictures to keep afterwards, allows experimenting with the shots, adjusting the pose each time, instead of trying to achieve the best shot at the first instant. Once the intended steps are completed, the app user is then given the option to first save and then share the beautified picture in social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram, through an in-built feature that facilitates saving and sharing.

As a typical app, InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera represents a wide variety of apps in the data that are of similar character. First, InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera provides a framework to understand the focus of mobile applications in terms of the object of beauty - such as the body and/ or the face and their fragments. Next, it allows seeing that an app commonly follows a sequential

44

pattern in allowing to the way the app user progresses from taking a picture to editing and sharing it within the limits of its affordances. Finally, it points to the subject of beauty in terms of the ideal via its imagery.

In the next section, I will elaborate on data analysis, which is based on app descriptions and images as provided in the respective app pages of selected mobile applications.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

In adopting the mixed method approach in research design and document analysis in data collection, I used quantitative and qualitative methods in data analysis. I used quantitative content analysis in an aim to develop a descriptive account on and qualitative discourse/ critical discourse analysis to qualitatively uncover the more abstract facets of the construction of beauty by mobile applications, in the presence of interactivity.

#### 3.3.1. Quantitative Content Analysis

In order to address the research questions at a descriptive and concrete level, I adopted quantitative content analysis for its potential to provide a structured and systematic means to categorize and classify textual documentary content in quantifiable forms (Krippendorff, 2013; Silverman, 2006). In the quantitative content analysis of both the written and visual text, I established categories based on themes (Berg, 2001), as I specifically focused on the central thematic idea presented by mobile applications. Once I established categories based on themes, I counted the frequencies of

themes (Silverman, 2006) per mobile application in order to determine the relative weights of instances.

First, I analyzed the written text to uncover how the *object* of beauty is targeted by mobile applications. I sought to address *what* bodily parts and features are targeted by mobile applications, irrespective of whether they are coded negatively to illustrate "imperfections" or positively to refer to the "ideal". Thematic categories included various bodily regions such as the skin/ face, eye region, mouth region, legs and arms that emerged from the data. Appendix A shows the coding sheet for bodily and facial regions addressed by mobile applications.

Second, I content analyzed the visuals in an attempt to quantitatively address the subject of beauty. Specifically, in order to determine *who* is targeted by mobile applications, I shifted the focus of analysis to a more macro level as I paid attention to symbolic characteristics (Krippendorff, 2013) in the visuals with an underlying view that visuals represent the greater sociocultural context to which they belong (Rose, 2001). In the analysis of the visual text, I quantified individual attributes based on predetermined themes of gender, race and age to map out the characteristics of the subject of beauty. I determined these categories based on the normative ideal of beauty that revolves around attributes such as whiteness (race) and youth (age) for the female (gender) subject (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Appendix B shows the coding sheet for the subject of beauty as addressed by mobile applications.

### 3.3.2. Discourse Analysis

Whereas I employed quantitative content analysis for its potential to capture insights on the construction of beauty at a descriptive level, I used discourse analysis to gain an understanding on how beauty is discursively constructed and made meaningful to app users at a more abstract and analytical level.

I adopted discourse analysis as a qualitative method to achieve a detailed, nuanced and rich understanding (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2013) on the more abstract facets of the construction of beauty. I analyzed the written text in two levels. In the first level, I focused on the grammatical structure (van Dijk, 1985), paying attention to the use of adjectives, nouns and verbs, as well as the use of punctuation, such as question and exclamation marks as I aimed to address how mobile applications would address these targets.

In the second level, I engaged in critical discourse analysis, as I viewed discourses as representations of the broader forms of knowledge and power articulated through the use of language (Fairclough, 1995). Here, I sought to develop insights on both the object and subject of beauty, as well as on the interrelationships between them. The critical discourse analysis provided a useful framework to determine the sociocultural notions used by apps through their choice of words. In determining these categories, I focused on the descriptive analysis of the text and the context of the text (Cook, 2001) as well as more analytical aspects such as the discursive and sociocultural

practices of beauty, in order to add depth to the understanding of the research questions.

Specifically, I mapped out consistencies as well as inconsistencies between the explicit and implicit claims of apps regarding beauty, in an aim to determine the nature and conditions of beauty at the more abstract level of the analysis. I attempted to evaluate possible tensions and discrepancies between the possibilities of market norms and individual choice, with the underlying assumption that the ideology of beauty would be produced and reproduced through mobile applications' use of discourses and be reflected in the content analysis through visibilities as well as invisibilities.

Once I completed the content and discourse analyses, I combined and contrasted, and iterated between the results of both analyses as I sought to integrate overall findings by pointing to the meaning and boundary conditions of beauty as constructed by the interactive media of mobile applications.

## 3.4. Limitations

As there is not only one single approach to data collection and analysis regarding the construction of beauty by mobile applications, this thesis provides only one of the possible alternatives to the study of the construction of beauty by mobile applications. Although the data collection and analysis together functioned to address the research questions, permitting to evaluate mobile applications in comparison and contrast to the traditional beauty

media of magazines and addressing the role of interactivity, this thesis is not without its methodological limitations.

First, as there was no category specific to beauty in Google Play, I chose to narrow down my focus to include mobile applications in the Photography category only. However, the sole focus on the Photography category may have resulted in missing mobile applications in different categories with the capacity to still suit to the predetermined criteria and provide relevant insights. Hence, future research could take into account different categories such as Lifestyle and Health and Fitness, which may still be relevant to the understanding of beauty, in order to map out if and how the construction of beauty may vary across mobile applications that operate under different categories and with possibly different levels of interactivity.

Second, I determined which mobile applications to select on mid-February and hence data collection was based on the top rankings of the Photography category of Google Play in one point in time in February. Future studies could adopt a longitudinal approach to account for if and how seasonality would operate in relation to the construction of beauty by mobile applications.

Third, in the content analysis of the portrayal of certain genders, races and ages, I counted their frequencies per mobile application and hence did not focus on if and how relative frequencies would differ when evaluations were based on the portrayal of these categories per image in each mobile application. Future research could content analyze relative frequencies of the

incorporation of certain genders, races and ages per image, to explore if and

with what implications mobile applications would weigh certain races,

genders and ages as more significant than others.

# CHAPTER IV

# FINDINGS

In this chapter, I will address the construction of beauty by the interactive media of mobile applications as I explore the focus of apps regarding the object of beauty in relation to the current and the ideal state, the claim of and transition to beauty in relation to emerging themes of naturalness and magic, and the features of the beauty ideal in terms of the subject of beauty.

## 4.1. The Object of Beauty: The Current and the Ideal State

Mobile applications focus on and fragment certain bodily parts and features as they focus on the object of beauty. Instead of targeting all bodily and facial parts and features at once, mobile applications often focus on some regions more than the rest. The portrait and more precisely the face, with its minute parts are more frequently addressed, with only little attention being paid to the rest of the body.

Among all bodily regions that are addressed by mobile applications, the skin/ face has the highest ratio (88%). The eye region (64%) is followed by facial structure (55%) and the mouth region (52%), and relatively less attention is paid to other bodily components such as hair (24%) and nose (21%). The overall body (18%) has a relatively higher weight compared to other non-facial bodily parts and features such as breasts (9%) or arms (3%). Table 2 shows the target of mobile applications regarding bodily regions.

Table 2: Relative frequencies (%) of bodily regions targeted by mobile applications
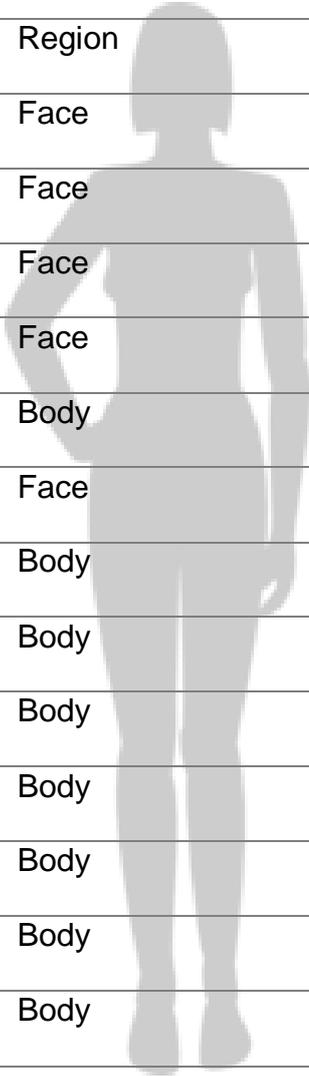
| Target | Region | Relative Frequency |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Skin/ Face | Face | 88% |
| Eye Region | Face | 64% |
| Facial Structure | Face | 55% |
| Mouth Region | Face | 52% |
| Hair | Body | 24% |
| Nose | Face | 21% |
| Overall Body | Body | 18% |
| Waist/ Belly/ Tummy/ Abs | Body | 15% |
| Legs | Body | 12% |
| Breasts | Body | 9% |
| Buttocks | Body | 6% |
| Arms | Body | 3% |
| Nails | Body | 3% |

Implied by the frequency of bodily or facial themes across all apps, mobile applications target certain bodily parts and features to either pinpoint "imperfections" that need to be overcome and/ or the "perfect" state that needs to be achieved by focusing on the current state of the individual as "imperfect" and/ or propose a possible future state as the "ideal" beauty.

### 4.1.1. The Current State as "Imperfect"

In targeting various bodily or facial regions, mobile applications commonly represent the current state of the individual as imperfect. Thompson and Hirschman (1995) use the term problematization in reference to deviations from cultural and normative standards, such as those from beauty standards. In similar vein, mobile applications problematize the current state of the individual as "imperfect" in their attempt to identify problems to further indicate any deviance from their acclaimed standards.

In addressing the current state of the individual, mobile applications often code the "problematic" features in the noun form, making the "problem" concrete for the app user. To illustrate, -InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera refers to "imperfections" such as "blemishes", "acne", "shine" or "dark circles" to literally name the problem to be overcome:

> ©Beauty Camera
> Take beauty selfie with our camera. With over a dozen beauty PRESETS and filters on camera, you can pick and choose how your skin and face looks –with just ONE-TAP! Each preset provides different levels of smoothing, toning, and also removing temporary imperfections such as pimples and blemishes. If you are not satisfied, tap Adjust button to fine-tune further

with several advanced features such as SLIM-FACE, BLEMISH, BIG-EYES and much more! Real-time filter on Beauty Camera do not require post-correction. There are 10+ artistic and unique filters, including a big eyes filter specifically for selfies.

As illustrated by the above example, InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera identifies possible problems to further label as deviations from the standards it defines. It juxtaposes "imperfections" such as "pimples" or "blemishes" that it claims as "temporary", against features such as "slim-face" or "big-eyes". Similarly, in claiming "imperfections" as temporary yet controllable, InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera then proposes the "perfect" skin and face as an achievable aim, and asks for the collaboration of the app user in reaching it. In so doing, the app first attempts to create an awareness in the app user regarding the "problematic" state of her current looks, before it further claims that the problem is not permanent and could therefore be solved once the relevant means are used.

### 4.1.2. The Future State as the "Ideal"

Mobile applications derive from and build onto the current "problematic" state of bodily parts and features, in promising a possible "flawless" and "perfect" future state of beauty. In addressing this future state, apps make use of adjectives such as "slim-face" or "big-eyes" in order to indicate the target of destination as in the case of InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera, or more commonly rely on verbs to highlight practices of beautification. To illustrate, GoSexy Lite- Face and body tune makes use of verbs such as "plump", "lift" or "reshape" to urge the app user to take action towards the ideal:

Reshape your face and body on your selfies. Make Kardashian curves and have Victoria's Secret miracles on your photos. Photoshop to look slim, skinny, fit and sexy. Plump your lips, lift your nose and cheeks with photo editor tools. Get tanned skin with just one tap. GoSexy is Photoshop app for Android

GoSexy Lite- Face and body tune provides a rather fuzzy description of the ideal, with its use of adjectives or verbs. Neither "slim-face" nor "Kardashian curves" necessarily provide a clear understanding on the extent or the intensity of the change, making the "ideal" subject to interpretation. Specifically, whereas the use of nouns such as "pimples" or "blemishes" as in InstaBeauty – Selfie Camera offers a concrete object for the app user to work on, the use of verbs such as "plump", "lift" or "reshape" in GoSexy Lite- Face and body tune only gives an idea on what is to be practiced rather than addressing questions such as to what extent and intensity. This vagueness, in turn, yields the promise of infinite possibilities for the app user to determine a possible future state that could be claimed "ideal".

The focus on the "ideal" is echoed in You Makeup - Makeover Editor, which addresses the female subject in suggesting that she could possibly choose to become whoever she wants to become, whether it is a "Fashion lady", or "a Nightclub queen", through her selection of a make-up type.

You Makeup is a powerful makeup photo editor with many amazing makeup effects
◎ If you want to be a Shining star, you cam makeup with it.
◎ If you want to be a Nightclub queen, you cam makeup with it.
◎ If you want to be a Gorgeous woman, you cam makeup with it.

◎ If you want to be a Fashion lady, you cam makeup with it.

Here, the use of phrases such as "Shining star" not only suggests that the app user would stand out among the crowd "unique", but also point to endless possibilities for becoming beautiful.

## 4.2. The Claim of and Transition to Beauty

In explicitly and simultaneously concretizing the current state as "problematic" and making the possible "ideal" future state of beauty rather abstract, mobile applications create a gap between what is "problematic" and "ideal". Once a gap is formed between the two states, apps then seek ways to bridge it by proposing certain processes. Commonly referred to as the process of beautification, apps provide guidelines for practicing beautification, as they either rely on removing "imperfections" or enhancing the object of beauty. Experimenting, and practicing by trial and error, followed by stylization are central to the beautification process with a wide range of activities such as smoothening and whitening the skin, removing blemishes, lifting face, enlarging eyes, putting on make-up or slimming the body. The ability to make Comparison with the earlier versions facilitate making adjustments instantaneously. Figure 3 shows the before and after image of a young Caucasian female, representing the transition made possible by You Makeup - Makeover Editor:
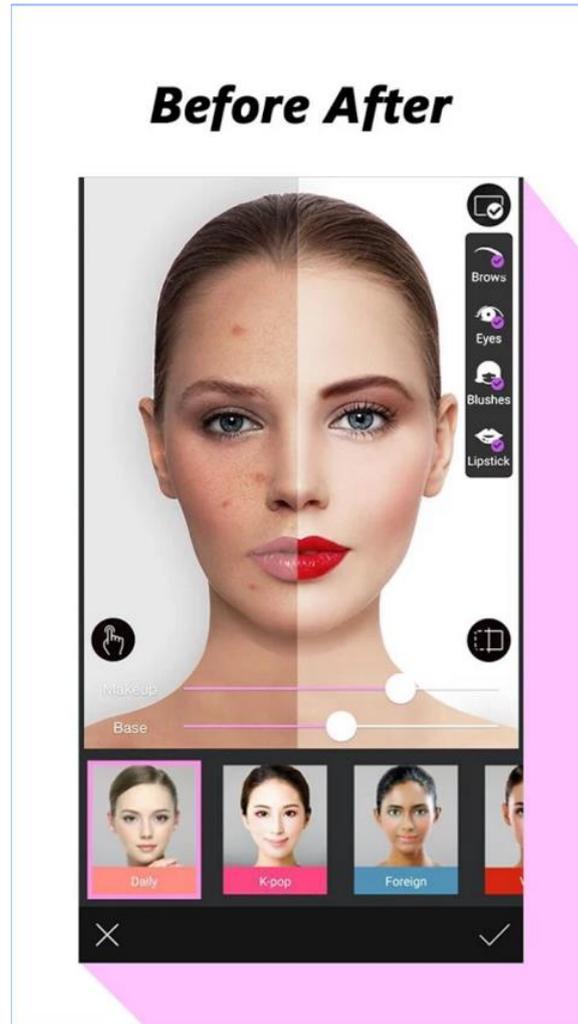
Figure 3: Before and after image by You Makeup - Makeover Editor

In the claim of and transition to beauty, naturalness and magic emerge as the two central thematic foci for mobile applications in claiming beauty as they commonly build onto the current physical state of the individual and claim and ideal state. In commonly considering the initial state as "natural" yet "imperfect" and seeking to achieve a possible future state that is "natural" and "perfect", mobile applications claim a transition from the initial to the future state is made possible through "magic", which serves to bridge the acclaimed gap between the two states. Figure 4 shows the expected process of

transition from the "problematic" to the "ideal" state in terms of naturalness
and magic, as it outlines activities that relate to each thematic outcome.

Activity                    Thematic Outcome

```
┌─────────────┐             ┌ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┐
│             │             ╎               ╎
│ Take/ Select/│ ─ ─ ─ ─ ▷  ╎  "Imperfect"   ╎
│    See      │             ╎ Natural Looks  ╎
│             │             ╎               ╎
└─────────────┘             └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘

┌─────────────┐             ┌ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┐
│             │             ╎               ╎
│    Edit     │ ─ ─ ─ ─ ▷  ╎     Magic      ╎
│             │             ╎               ╎
└─────────────┘             └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘

┌─────────────┐             ┌ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┐
│             │             ╎               ╎
│Save and Share│ ─ ─ ─ ▷   ╎"Perfect" Natural╎
│             │             ╎    Results     ╎
└─────────────┘             └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘
```
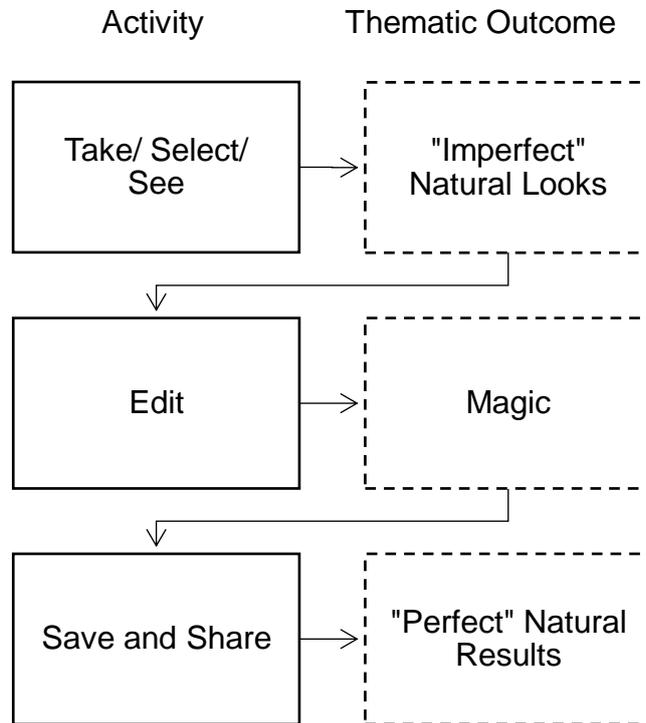
Figure 4: Expected process of the transition in relation to naturalness and
magic

### 4.2.1. Naturalness

Naturalness is identified as a central theme in how mobile applications
construct beauty. Manifested in words such as "natural" and "real",
naturalness is frequently used to describe the existing or the future state of
the individual. Whereas mobile applications often draw on "natural looks" to
address the current state of the individual as "problematic", they refer to
"natural results" to describe the possible "ideal" future state that could be
obtained.

In problematizing the current state of the body or bodily parts and features, mobile applications often use "natural looks" to highlight the importance of preserving the existing state of current looks for further sculpting. Typically used together with the word "retaining", the use of "natural looks" implicitly refers to the initial state of the body as it is untouched or un-intervened by technology. To illustrate, when Beauty Cam – Selfie Camera claims; "You can now enhance beauty while retaining the natural look of your skin and hair", it suggests that the existing natural state of the individual implies a "natural" or digitally untouched basis that is to be retained for beauty to be further enhanced. In this case, the app addresses beauty as a facet that already exists, and beauty as one that relies on digital interventions to excel.

Whereas "natural looks" is used to describe the existing state to be preserved, "natural results" is often used to explain what can possibly be achieved as a possible future state. Specifically, naturalness in terms of results is often used to address beauty in terms of the picture. Here, naturalness is a manifestation of the collaboration between the app technology and app user, whereby the app provides the necessary professional and artistic tools and features through its technology and the app user is then expected to experiment on them. To illustrate, AirBrush - Best Selfie Editor suggests:

> Imagine a world where you never have to deal with the hassle of another complicated beauty retouch app that ends up over editing with unnatural results. Easy to use with no rules, AirBrush was designed to give users the best selfie photo editing experience with user friendly, Photoshop quality retouch tools that give you natural

> results…every single time. With AirBrush, you can
> achieve perfect selfie photos from the convenience of
> your phone with a simple swipe or tap.

As illustrated by the above example, mobile applications implicitly claim that only a successful collaboration of the technology and the app user would yield "natural" results regarding beauty, irrespective of the initial and hence the "problematic" state of the app user and her distance to the acclaimed ideal. Here, the juxtaposition of what is acclaimed as "natural" against "unnatural" suggests the attempts of mobile applications to discursively define what is valued in relation to what is not. Figure 5 shows a before and after image to underline natural results as provided in InstaBeauty - Selfie Camera:
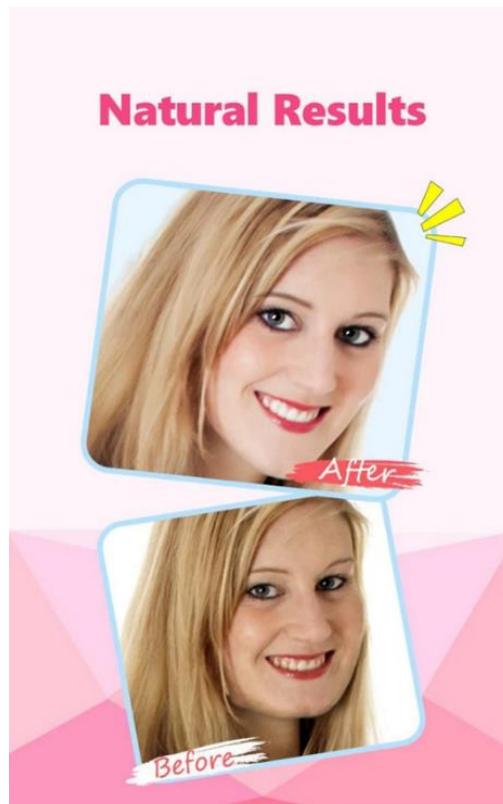


Figure 5: Before and after image on natural results of InstaBeauty - Selfie Camera

Once natural results are obtained, they are then juxtaposed against the initial state to point to the ease in achieving a transition. Specifically, in creating a tension between the "natural" and "unnatural", the app invokes in the user that "natural" results is the valued option and that the "unnatural" is to be avoided. The mastery and creativity of the app user is first involved in choosing the "right" tool or feature from a diverse set of options. Second, it includes practicing and experimenting with beauty to a high extent, in determining the "right" degree and intensity of beauty. In so doing, the app user is then promised a successful collaboration in achieving results that are free of artificiality, which then refers to traces of any technological intervention, which would have otherwise made results look "unnatural".

### 4.2.2. Magic

Whereas naturalness appears as a recurrent theme in how mobile applications describe the existing and/ or the future state of the individual, "magic" is identified as another theme, which serves three functions: (1) magic as transition, (2) magic as "instant" effect and (3) magic as secrecy.

#### 4.2.2.1.  Magic as Transition

The magic theme allows mobile applications to claim a transition from the "natural" yet "problematic" current state to the "natural" and "ideal" future state.

In order to claim a transition between the two states, mobile applications first offer a "problematic" reality to be challenged and overcome. As an app that heavily relies on the magic theme, Visage Lab – face retouch introduces a "problem" as it first uses the question format to give a sense of an uncomforting or problematic reality and then exclamation marks to give a sense excitement toward the possibility of overcoming the then realized problematic state. The magic theme is often addressed in conjunction with the naturalness theme and is identified by the repetition of the term magic along with words such as dream, wish and effect. To illustrate, Visage Lab – face retouch first creates a hypothetical scenario where magic seems to operate, by personifying beautification tools such as the concealer, toothpaste, and the eye liner and mascara; and the skin to underline the "problematic" state of the individual:

> WHAT IF...
> Would you like me to hide those horrible Pimples and Spots and smooth the Wrinkles? - asked the Concealer.
> I'd love to get rid of them and look younger! - exclaimed the Skin.
> Then the eyes need to be enhanced as well: we'll outline them and define the eyelashes. – said the Eye Liner and the Mascara.
> To add a final touch, let me whiten your teeth! – said the Whitening Toothpaste.
> Now you are ready for a photo shoot! - they said in chorus.

Whereas the use of the question mark functions to make the app user first to become aware and then question what would otherwise appear non-problematic, the use of exclamation marks seem to target in the app user an already existing longing towards overcoming the "problematic" state. The use

of the "right" beauty tools is then offered as the solution, as Visage Lab –

face retouch further illustrates:

> BACK TO REALITY
> Of course, cosmetic products cannot speak ;) But there is magic of another sort! Discover 'Visage Lab' app that will enhance a face in a photo with the wave of a magic wand! Just select a portrait photo from the Gallery or make a shot with the camera and let the app do the rest. 'Visage Lab' applies eye and skin makeup, removes wrinkles and oily glare, whitens the teeth and performs smart color correction in seconds. Besides, it automatically removes red eye, if necessary. You don't have to learn to use complicated software like Photoshop to retouch your photos!

As illustrated above, magic is not only positioned against but is also used in

line with 'real' or 'reality'. Whereas Visage Lab – face retouch makes the

claim of "what if…" to further point to an impossible case where cosmetic

products could speak, it still relies on "magic" when it claims "back to reality".

Claiming magic to be of "another sort", the app relies on its "magical" tools to

enhance beauty. Specifically, the app provides the app user with tools to

overcome the present state of the skin that it claims "horrible" and then

suggests that other related parts and features of the body would also require

an enhancement, then to cohere with the "fixed" part. By problematizing each

part and providing a solution for keeping the unity of beauty, the app invokes

a sense of an aesthetic responsibility in the app user to first achieve and then

keep the unity, as it gives the message of "you can".

### 4.2.2.2. Magic as "Instant" Effect

The magic theme not only highlights the transition to the ideal state, but also the nature of possibilities in reaching the ideal. Here, the nature of change towards the ideal is represented with phrases such as "instant" and "effect".

The app user is often promised an easy and quick transition independent of time and place. Once the timely dimensions are taken away, beauty is then claimed possible. To illustrate, when Beauty Cam – Selfie Camera proposes "Make things more stunning using our magic camera. High quality selfies whenever you want and wherever you wish", it takes away dimensions such as time and place, the app addresses infinite possibilities in reaching the ideal. Similarly, Selfie Camera -Facial Beauty- shows a before and after image of a young Asian female and make use of stardust and shimmer sprinkled over the beautified image, to represent the transition made possible by "magic", which could be found in Figure 6:



Figure 6: Transition made possible by magic in Selfie Camera -Facial Beauty-

64

As illustrated above, Selfie Camera -Facial Beauty- implicitly problematizes acne to further idealize the "baby skin", which it claims possible only through the use of tool such as "acne concealer" that can then create magic. The app further reinforces the magic theme through its background as well as the shimmers and stars on the beautified image, which in turn underlines that the "ideal" version is more vibrant and shiny as opposed to the initial state with acne.

Once mobile applications claim that the change is instant, they then make an emphasis on the "effect". To illustrate, when Beauty Cam – Selfie Camera claims ""Beauty Camera" is designed to make your photo look more beautiful. Take a selfie and see the makeover magic effect", it promises an enhancement over the photo, through the "magic" effect of the makeover. Specifically, the app promises the app user a "magical" makeover on the selfie, although the implicit claim is not a makeover per se but rather the "effect" of a makeover that is applicable only in pictures.

### 4.2.2.3. Magic as Secrecy

In mobile applications, the app user is prompted to share the newly established results through social networking sites such as Facebook, as magic not only operates as a magical effect, but also functions to keep the effect as a mystery and secret to the outside world.

When the app Perfect365 One-Tap Makeover claims: "(…) share the amazing results with your friends via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. You can also ask your friends to rate your looks!" and suggests "You can even control the intensity of each effect, so no one but you has to know why you look better than ever", it in fact urges the app user to share the newly achieved looks to receive positive feedback. By making mystery a part of the tasks of sharing and presenting one's self in front of an audience, the app suggests secrecy as an option to comfortably "show off", without having to worry about whether the secret will become public.

Here, the use of the word "mirror" by mobile applications often support the claim of secrecy. To illustrate, when YouCam Makeup- Makeover Studio claims "Try on makeup in real-time with the live Makeup Cam. Get an instant makeover with hundreds of makeup & beauty looks that you can apply in real life! This instant makeover is just like a magic mirror!", its emphasis on the word "mirror" implies that the transition towards the ideal will stay true to the existing "natural" state of the individual in achieving the "natural" and ideal state, and yet will not be an exact match as it will rather be an enhanced reflection of the original.

Thus, in mobile applications, magic often complements the naturalness theme as it allows to the transition from the initial to the ideal state, both of which are claimed to be "natural", and hence creates an instant effect of change towards the ideal, making the transition remain unknown to the intended audience.

In the next section, I will address the subject of beauty as addressed by mobile applications.

### 4.3. The Subject of Beauty

Mobile applications that focus on the current state of the individual as "imperfect" before positing beautification as a step toward the future state of the "ideal" through their use of naturalness and magic themes, more frequently portray certain races, genders and ages more than others. Mobile applications more frequently portray the young-adult Caucasian female subject as the subject of beauty. 88% of mobile applications portray Caucasian models in their app images, with 70% of apps portraying only Caucasians in their images, without incorporating other races. 27% of mobile applications portray Asian models in their respective app images, with 12% of apps portraying only Asian figures in their images and 9% of apps represent Asian models along with Caucasian models. Colored models are the least represented (9%) and are never represented alone if other races are not portrayed. Young adult models (93%) are highly portrayed and are followed by teenagers (67%) and kids (27%). However, no mobile application portrays the age range that fall outside of young adult, teenager and kid categories. All apps, with no exception, portray females (100%), with 42% of apps that primarily portray females also incorporating male figures. Table 3 provides frequencies of different races, genders and ages per mobile application.

Table 3: Frequencies for different races, genders and ages per mobile application

| Category | Feature | Frequency/ App |
|----------|---------|----------------|
| Race | Caucasian | 88% |
| | Asian | 27% |
| | Colored | 9% |
| Gender | Female | 100% |
| | Male | 42% |
| Age | Young Adult | 93% |
| | Teenager | 66% |
| | Kid | 27% |
| | Other | 0% |

The more frequent focus of mobile applications on the young-adult Caucasian females point to the raced, gendered and aged nature of the construction of beauty around normative ideals, characterizing in turn the extent of the nature of the claim of and transition to beauty.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the construction of beauty by mobile applications in comparison and contrast to the traditional beauty media of magazines and explore the possible implications of the interactivity of new media as implicated in the construction of beauty by mobile applications.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Conventionally, traditional media in general and magazines as cultural artifacts in particular have been influential in creating and disseminating the standards of beauty (D'Enbeau, 2009). However, magazines have often been accused by feminist scholars of constructing specific understandings of femininity in a way that create a "cult of femininity" (Ferguson, 1983) as well as of appropriating feminist discourses and using contradictory claims (D'Enbeau, 2009; McCracken, 1992), which together paved the way for and promoted patriarchal norms that in turn oppressed and alienated the female subject (Bartky, 1997).

In contrast to magazines that are often claimed to be the dominating tools of patriarchal norms (Bartky, 1997), mobile applications are contemporarily defining and conveying the meaning of beauty for the female subject, with claims of flexibility, personalization and independence. As forms of new media characterized by interactivity, mobile applications allow to the

collaboration of the app technology and app user, involve the input and understanding of the user to a high extent, and favor her engagement in claiming beauty as quickly, easily and reversibly achievable.

In arguing that the limits of negotiations and the extent of the acclaimed subjectivities are dependent on power dynamics in the presence of multiple actors, Sandikci and Ger (2010) encourage consumer behavior scholars to delve more into "normative frames, morality of choices, institutional forces other than the market, and the processes of change" (Sandikci & Ger, 2010: 33). The analysis of the construction of beauty by mobile applications and the role of interactivity in this construction points to (1) the acclaimed room for agency as implicated by the emergence of self-gaze, following the fragmentation of the body and face and (2) the dominance of the structure as implicated by the interplay between magic and naturalness that still converge to a single beauty ideal despite interactivity.

## 5.1. The Fragmentation of the Face and the Emergence of Self-Gaze

"The body, particularly the upper body and most particularly the face, is the interactional presence of selfhood" (Jenkins, 2004: 69) and is of utmost importance for it is where beauty resides (Synott, 1989). Scholarly research addressing the construction of beauty by magazines finds that, Caucasian females are more frequently depicted in sensual ways and in terms of the body in promoting clothing (Frith, Cheng & Shaw, 2004; Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005) and as the representation of the thin (Malkin, Wornian, & Chrisler, 1999; Redmond, 2003; Sypeck, Gray, & Ahrens, 2004), and the

white ideal (Fowler & Carlson 2015; Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005; Malkin, Wornian, & Chrisler, 1999; Redmond, 2003), in contrast to their Asian counterparts who are commonly portrayed in in terms of the face (Sypeck, Gray, & Ahrens, 2004) to sell beauty products that often relate to the skin, hair and face (Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005). In contending on the focus of magazines in terms of the body or the face, Frith et al. (2005) in turn argue that the traditions of the male gaze may have developed differently in Western and Eastern settings, whereby the face is deemed the determinant of beauty in Eastern and the body in Western settings (Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005).

Unlike magazines that vary in their focus of beauty, mobile applications almost always target the upper body and more precisely the face. One way to interpret the more frequent focus of mobile applications on the face would be to relate it to the high numbers of mobile applications in the data set with selfie and makeup functions that inherently ask for a focus on the face. However, as it has been outlined in the methodology section, data selection was not based on these functions but rather on the criteria to select apps with an explicit claim of beauty in the Photography category of Google Play. Hence, most mobile applications in the data set only happened to be selfie and makeup apps, with some apps still focusing on the non-facial bodily parts and features such as arms, legs and waist. This, in turn, pointed to the emphasis of mobile applications on the face as a common characteristic of the beauty category as I constructed it.

Within this contention, the construction of beauty more in terms of the face than the body by mobile applications underscores that the beauty ideal has come to be defined more in terms of the face than the body for the female subject in the presence of mobile applications, with the "sex sells" adage that some magazines have used in promoting sexuality with an emphasis on the body (Frith, Cheng, & Shaw, 2004), becoming an obsolete category in the contemporary constructions of beauty. That is, it is irrespective of the race of the figure being portrayed that mobile applications focus more frequently on the single category of facial beauty, pointing in turn to the idea that beauty has come to be defined more in terms of the face not only for the Caucasian female subject who is conventionally addressed with an emphasis on the body (Malkin, Wornian, & Chrisler, 1999; Sypeck, Gray, & Ahrens, 2004) but also for all races, making bodily beauty rather secondary to the claim of beauty.

One way to explain the more frequent focus of mobile applications on the face in particular would be to link it to the role and affordances of mobile phones or tablets through which the mobile applications operate, and the affordances or policies of social media sites where the final picture taken and enhanced by mobile applications is then expected to be uploaded. First, the understanding of and approach to beauty may have developed differently in the new media of mobile applications as taking pictures is bounded by the affordances of mobile phones or tablets – such as their small screen sizes in contrast to the traditional beauty magazines that come in bigger sizes, as well as their interactive nature which requires one to actively engage in the

72

production process of pictures. Second, the capacities and policies such as the content, size and format of the picture to be uploaded as well as the expectations in social networking sites such as the "profile" picture in Facebook that is more generally assumed to focus on the portrait may have bounded mobile applications to particularly emphasize the face. Another, yet more relevant way to explain the more frequent focus of mobile applications on the face could be to suggest that the interactive nature of mobile applications may function to facilitate working on the particularities of the face by fragmenting it into pieces.

Specifically, scholarly research underlines the fragmentation of the body into pieces as a common feature in magazines and further evaluates it in relation to the male gaze, which functions to remove the agency of the female subject (Rocha & Frid, 2016). In this view, the fragmentation of the body into pieces not only takes away the sense of a bodily totality (Rocha & Frid, 2016) but also the sense of the agency of the female subject, as her authority is delegated to the products to "speak for" her instead (Rocha, 2013). Here, magazines that fragment the body and face into pieces, create a constant state of discomfort in the female subject regarding her various bodily parts (Moeran, 2009), before they then ironically urge her to reassemble these bodily parts and features to further build beauty (Moeran, 2009; Moeran, 2010) and hence obtain individuality, power and autonomy (Rocha, 2013).

Similar to magazines that fragment the body into many pieces to first take away the subject position of the female subject for her to further reestablish

it, mobile applications use fragmentation as a strategy, albeit in the presence of different underlying mechanisms. In mobile applications, the fragmentation of the body and more particularly the face is claimed to come with and represent a series of possibilities allowed by the app technology as mobile applications that more frequently focus on the face first take away the subject position of the female subject by fragmenting her face into pieces and yet delegate her authority to the app technology, which then ironically asks for her collaboration in building back her sense of an agency.

Here, the expectation of mobile applications regarding the collaboration of the app user points to the possible role of self-gaze - how one's own gaze perceives, evaluates and further chooses to work one's current looks – in determining beauty. Self-gaze emerges as the app user is offered tools and options and is further expected to collaborate with the app technology in sculpting beauty, with the ability to decide on whether to work on certain bodily parts as well as how much effort to devote to each part. The collaboration expected from the app user to achieve beauty is the end result of the ability provided to the app user to experiment by trial and error instantaneously and in real-time, allowing the app user to pay more attention to a part that may need more work or leaving parts that do not need much work. Working on minute parts such as the skin, eye and the mouth region at a time with ease, quickness and reversibility is facilitated by mobile applications as they allow paying attention to each and every minute bodily part that could have gone unnoticed so that the female subject could then achieve a totality for herself through her choices.

5.2. Towards the Ideal: Magic and Naturalness

Sandikci and Ger (2010) suggests that not only the choice itself but also "the practice of "making a choice" is a socioculturally constructed process that should not be taken for granted but problematized and unpacked" (Sandikci and Ger 2010: 31). Following Sandikci and Ger (2010), the underlying mechanisms through which the interactivity of mobile applications contribute to or limit the practices of choice-making is of interest, as mobile applications that focus on the face in particular, fragment it into pieces in claiming that the app user can then "magically" obtain "natural" results for herself by collaborating with the app technology, both in terms of scientific precision and as a technologically enhanced creative endeavor.

5.2.1. Possibilities of Magic

Scholarly research points to that, once magazines fragment the body, they then claim that the totality of the body could be attained through magic. In magazines, magic functions to reassemble and coordinate the bodily parts in to one for the female subject in the form of an ideal (Moeran, 2009), as the linearity of time is replaced with cyclicality and recurrence (Rocha & Frid, 2016). In providing idealized images of beauty, magazines allow the imagination of the reader to run on a possible image of one's self, by hinting the ideal future state in terms of a secret (Moeran, 2009).

Unlike the idealized images in magazines which function as a mirror-image allowing the readers' imagination to run on possible ideal states regarding

what she could possibly become (Moeran, 2009), magic relates to practicing by trial and error and experimenting instantly on one's self through seeing herself in the screen in real-time and obtaining immediate and ostensibly effortless outcomes. In mobile applications, the use of magic makes a hands on experience superior to an imagination running on an ideal. In altering the meaning of magic to imply reaching a possible future state that one thinks is ideal for one's self, mobile applications remove any timely dimensions, and contribute in turn to the magical and timeless character of beauty by embedding scientific precision and artistic creativity into magic.

Specifically, in problematizing and/ or idealizing certain bodily parts and features, mobile applications ask for the collaboration of the app user to achieve the "best" beauty option for herself, which they claim possible in the successful collaboration of the app user and app technology. Here, mobile applications do not necessarily set the upper limits for its users but rather provide multiple options to choose from as the app technology comes with scientific precision and app user is expected to add a touch of creativity to achieve magical outcomes. In providing a concrete account on what is "problematic" or "imperfect" regarding the current looks, and yet remaining rather vague in defining the "ideal", mobile applications make the promise that one could become anyone she would like to and choose to become, whether it is a "fashion lady" or a "night club queen" as proposed in the "You Makeup – Makeover Editor" app.

As such, magic functions to help the app user to become "anyone" whom one wants to become yet stay "natural" anywhere and anytime irrespective of where once stands in relation to the normative standards, rather than aiming to bring the "natural" best out of one's self. Here, magic refers not only to the process of beautification but also to the creation of pictures for the social networking sites that are "magically" mistaken as an exact mirror image of the user and hence qualify as "natural".

### 5.2.2. Possibilities for Naturalness

For magazines, "naturalness" is a controversial theme that may either refer to an inborn quality of the inherently glowing white female subject (Redmond, 2003), or an imperfect yet lovable state that is both authentic and real (Duffy, 2013). Whether "naturalness" is defined through the ideal and "perfect" or the ordinary and "imperfect", the female subject is urged in both cases to unleash her beauty although it is in fact ironically claimed to come from within. When defined through the ideal, the naturally existing beauty within the glowing and heavenly white female subject is to be ironically unleashed with the use of the right products and procedures that magazines themselves promote (Redmond, 2003). In the latter case, the female subject is again reminded that "imperfections" are not without their solutions and hence could be overcome (Duffy, 2013).

Similar to magazines that use naturalness to point either to the ideal yet achievable standards or to the possible deviations to be challenged and overcome, mobile applications provide natural looks as the most welcome

state of being. Given the role of the app technology in further achieving naturalness as an ideal state of beauty, mobile applications welcome "imperfections", as these acclaimed "problems" are not without their instant and effortless solutions. For mobile applications, the initial state of the individual is "natural" as long as it is untouched and the future state could gain the status of "natural beauty" as long as it is technologically enhanced and yet lacks the impression of technological manipulation.

Specifically, in contrast to magazines in which naturalness is a result of technology that yields beauty through natural ingredients and essences (Li et al., 2008), naturalness in mobile applications requires first the absence and then the presence of technology to make beauty possible. In juxtaposing technology and naturalness, mobile applications claim beauty as a technological and yet a natural category free of artificialities. However, it is not beauty per se but rather the "effect" of beauty that is made possible by mobile applications as the interplay between naturalness and magic creates an "effect" of beauty that is mistaken for (natural) beauty.

### 5.3. The Beauty Ideal

"Contemporary consumer culture is marked by a dialectic between self-discipline for normal physical appearance and a hedonic pursuit of pleasure from achieving a better outlook" (Tari, 2008: 226). The use of the complementary themes of naturalness and magic by mobile applications reveals that reaching the beauty ideal depends on a magical transition from natural yet "imperfect" looks to natural and "perfect" results, in the presence

of a collaboration between the app user and technology. By underlining the role of this collaboration in creating magically "natural" results, mobile applications seem to make the claim that "anyone" can aim at and achieve beauty "anywhere" and "anytime".

That is, unlike the "male gaze" that fragments the body into pieces functioning to remove the agency of the female subject in magazines (Rocha & Frid, 2016), mobile applications rely on the role of "self-gaze", with their promise of allowing the app user to have control over the end result. It is due to their interactive nature that, in contrast to the traditional media of magazines that allow the imagination of the reader to run through the idealized images of beauty (Moeran, 2009), mobile applications that rely on practice provide instant results of what one could possibly become, replacing imagination with practice and experimentation. Here, the app user is given a considerable number of choices as the operations of the self-gaze are facilitated by the app technology. However, the extent and intensity of beauty are still bounded by the technological affordances of the mobile applications and by the initial male gaze of app developers. Hence, the technology and algorithm behind mobile applications seem to be imposing on the app user and determining her creative input and effort to a high extent.

Specifically, despite their claim of making beauty easily and effortlessly available for all, mobile applications more frequently portray the young and Caucasian female subject based on the ideals of youth and whiteness for the female subject, pointing in turn to the gendered, raced and aged nature of

79

beauty. Feminist scholars who follow the Foucauldian lead of "docile bodies" in evaluating power as disciplining and dominating, point to the role of self-surveillance in underlining patriarchal standards regarding femininity (Deveaux, 1994). Building onto Foucauldian disciplinary practices, Bartky (1997) underlines the role of patriarchal domination in determining bodily practices and femininity as she points to that the ideal body of femininity is a "practiced and subjected" body to which an inferior status is thereby inscribed (Bartky, 1997: 100). Bartky (1997) argues that the disciplinary power that inscribes femininity the inferior status, being of anonymous and dispersed in character, is powerful in that it provides the grounds for women to commit to "self-surveillance" which then takes place in the "form of obedience to patriarchy" (Bartky 1997: 108) as the female subject internalize the normative ideal and evaluates non-conformity as costly to a high extent, contributing to the disciplinary yet subtle nature of power (Deveaux, 1994).

Self-surveillance takes a different form in mobile applications, as power, despite being promised in the form of increasingly many choices and infinite possibilities of reaching the ideal for one's own, is still disciplinary and yet even subtler in exercise. Specifically, mobile applications that take away the subject position of the female subject by fragmenting her into pieces also ironically use technology to re-delegate the authority that she is then lacking under the disguise of a collaboration. In incorporating the role of collaboration between the app user and app technology, mobile applications allow to the emergence of self-gaze as facilitated by their interactive nature and hence are able to promise flexibility and personalization. However, it is under the

disguise of self-gaze that mobile applications prompt their users to willingly take part in the process of self-surveillance and contribute to the "patriarchy as a structure of domination" (Einspahr, 2010: 4)

Although mobile applications create an impression that beauty could be achieved once the relevant tools and features are used, beauty as a function of magic and naturalness still points towards particular characteristics, which underline the social construction of beauty around the normative and idealized standards. In commonly providing a rather stereotypical image of the young and Caucasian female subject as representations of beauty, mobile applications seem to undermine their claim of providing endless possibilities and flexibility to the app user for her to determine beauty for herself.

Despite this acclaimed room for agency, with app users having been given a collaborative role in claiming beauty alongside the mobile app technology, what is beautiful is still socially constructed and appears to be the function of the technological affordances of mobile applications, and to be further determined by how effectively, artfully and creatively the user can benefit from the tools and options that apps themselves determine. Hence, although mobile applications seem to provide room for an agency for the female subject, in the presence of interactivity, the structure that points to normative standards appear to be rather dominant and to limit the extent of her agency, forcing practices of beauty to converge into the single and normatively constructed patriarchal ideal.

# CHAPTER VI

# CONCLUSION

In exploring the construction of beauty by mobile applications and the role of interactivity in this construction, this thesis has evaluated mobile applications as "sociocultural artefacts" methodologically (Lupton, 2014) and addressed them as new media that are characterized by interactivity and with the capacity to mediate how beauty is contemporarily constructed under the theoretical framework of *The Social Construction of Reality* (Berger & Luckmann, 1991).

Methodologically, this thesis has provided a sociocultural analysis of mobile applications (Lupton, 2014) by following a systematic procedure for data collection and analysis. At the theoretical level, it has explored (1) the construction of beauty by a new medium through an analysis of mobile applications in comparison and contrast to the traditional beauty media of magazines and (2) the role of the interactivity of new media as implicated in the construction of beauty by mobile applications.

For McLuhan (1994), the presence of a new message implies the effect of a new medium. "The medium is the message" precisely because change emerges not because of the content in media but the medium itself that has the potential to impact and alter existing patterns, by accelerating the way things come about and operate (McLuhan, 1994). In exploring the social construction of beauty by mobile applications with a focus on the role of interactivity, this thesis has thus discussed that although the interactive nature of mobile applications allows them to claim increasingly many possibilities through their emphasis on flexibility and independence, altering the possible meanings of naturalness and magic through which beauty is constructed, the normative ideals are still reiterated and reinforced despite interactivity, as the patriarchal structures are still very dominant.

Future research addressing the boundary conditions of the construction of beauty by mobile applications could focus on if and to what extent the claims of mobile applications hold from the perspective of users and explore how beauty is socially constructed once the app technology is used and practiced by app users. Future research on beauty could also inquire about the market and technology related mechanisms that underlie the construction of beauty by consulting mobile application developers.

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84

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# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A

Bodily/ Facial Region: Bodily and facial regions as thematic categories are formed based on the written text

Skin/ Face: Complexion and tone related aspects including blemishes, wrinkles, acne, pimples, spots, shine, freckles, moles, color

Eye Region: Eye, eye bag, eye-lids, eye circles, eyebrows, dark rims

Mouth Region: Teeth, lips, overall smile

Facial Structure: Size, shape, weight, contour related aspects; including jaw ines, chin, cheeks and cheekbones

Hair: Hair related aspects of hair color, haircut

Nose: Shape and size related aspects of the nose

Overall Body: Shape and size related aspects on the overall body in its totality such as curves, without an emphasis on its parts

Legs: Shape and size related aspects of the legs

Waist/ Belly/ Tummy/ Abs: Shape related aspects of waist, belly, tummy and abs:

Breasts: Size related aspects of the breasts

Buttocks: Shape related aspects of the buttocks

Arms: Shape related aspects of arms

Nails: Nail art related aspects

# APPENDIX B

Race: Figures are coded based on contextual clues on racial features on appearance

    Caucasian: Ethnically white and predominantly Western (mostly European or American) in appearance

    Asian: Asian (mostly Chinese and Japanese) in appearance with primarily predominant Asian features

    Colored: African American or African features in appearance

Gender: Figures are coded based on contextual clues on masculine or feminine attributes

    Female: Facial and bodily contextual clues indicating feminine attributes

    Male: Facial and bodily contextual clues indicating masculine attributes

Age: Figures are coded based on contextual clues on age according to the below scale

    Young adult: 18 to 35 years

    Teenager: 13-17 years

    Kid: 5-12 years

    Other: Less than 5; 36 and above