



# **IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSTRUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF BEAUTY**

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## ETHICAL DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have conducted my work in accordance with academic rules and ethical behavior at every stage from the planning of the thesis to its defence. I confirm that I have cited all ideas, information and findings that are not specific to my study, as required by the code of ethical behavior, and that all statements not cited are my own.

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# ABSTRACT

## IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSTRUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF BEAUTY

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This thesis investigates the impact of social media on the construction and consumption of beauty, with particular emphasis on three distinct demographic groups: individuals who embrace positive aging, plus-size individuals, and those who conform to traditional beauty norms. By examining the diverse ways in which these groups interact with and are influenced by social media, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media is reshaping beauty standards and societal perceptions of beauty. Through qualitative research methods, including social media analysis of user interactions (such as likes, comments, and shares), this study explores how beauty influencers, content trends, and user-generated feedback contribute to the shaping of beauty norms. The findings indicate that social media platforms not only provide marginalized groups with the space to voice their own beauty standards but also influence mainstream beauty ideals and consumer behavior. Influencers promoting diversity, authenticity, and body inclusivity play a key role in reshaping beauty norms. This research highlights the transformative power of social media in the beauty industry, offering insights into how different demographic groups

challenge traditional beauty standards and contribute to the evolution of beauty ideals. By considering the interactions and feedback of these diverse groups, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the evolving relationship between social media, beauty, and consumer behavior, providing valuable insights for marketers and beauty industry professionals seeking to engage with contemporary beauty consumers.

Keywords: Social media, Beauty Consumption, Ideal Beauty, Body Perception, Deinfluencing, Diversity



# ÖZET

## SOSYAL MEDYANIN GÜZELLİK ALGISININ OLUŞUMU VE TÜKETİMİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

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Bu tez, sosyal medyanın güzellik algısının inşası ve tüketimi üzerindeki etkisini incelemekte olup, özellikle üç farklı demografik grup üzerine odaklanmaktadır: pozitif yaşlanmayı benimseyen bireyler, büyük beden bireyler ve geleneksel güzellik normlarına uyan bireyler. Bu grupların sosyal medya ile nasıl etkileşime girdiği ve sosyal medyanın nasıl etkilendikleri üzerinde yapılan inceleme, sosyal medyanın güzellik standartlarını ve toplumsal güzellik algılarını nasıl şekillendirdiğine dair kapsamlı bir anlayış sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Nicel araştırma yöntemleriyle yapılan bu çalışma, kullanıcı etkileşimlerinin (beğeniler, yorumlar ve paylaşımlar gibi) sosyal medya analizine dayanarak, güzellik influencer'larının, içerik trendlerinin ve kullanıcı tarafından üretilen geri bildirimlerin güzellik normlarını şekillendirmedeki rolünü keşfetmektedir. Bulgular, sosyal medya platformlarının yalnızca marjinalleşmiş gruplara kendi güzellik standartlarını dile getirme fırsatı sunmakla kalmayıp, aynı zamanda ana akım güzellik anlayışlarını ve tüketici davranışlarını da etkilediğini göstermektedir. Çeşitliliği, özgünlüğü ve beden kapsayıcılığını teşvik eden influencer'lar, güzellik normlarını yeniden şekillendirmede önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu araştırma, sosyal medyanın güzellik endüstrisindeki dönüştürücü

gücünü vurgulamakta ve farklı demografik grupların geleneksel g zellik standartlarına nasıl meydan okuduđunu ve g zellik ideallerinin evriminde nasıl katkı sađladığını anlamamıza katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bu grupların etkileřimleri ve geri bildirimleri dikkate alındığında, bu alıřma, sosyal medya, g zellik ve t keticiler arasındaki davranışları evrimleřen iliřkiye dair derinlemesine bir anlayış sunarak, ađdař g zellik t keticileriyle etkileřime gemek isteyen pazarlamacılar ve g zellik end strisi profesyonelleri iin deđerli ig r ler sađlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Medya, G zellik T ketimi, İdeal G zellik, Beden Algısı, Deinfluencing, eřitlilik





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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The advent of the digital era has given rise to social media platforms, which have become influential instruments that significantly impact several facets of human existence (Marwick and Lewis, 2017). The realm of beauty has seen a significant impact from the pervasive influence of social media (Tung and Rosenthal, 2019). The creation and consumption of beauty have seen a notable shift as a result of the widespread use and impact of social media platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Pinterest (Tung and Rosenthal, 2019). The aforementioned alteration has ramifications that extend beyond surface-level changes, impacting people, corporations, and society on a broader scale (Marwick and Lewis, 2017). Beauty has one of the most dynamic industries, always adapting to match the changes in customer preferences and cultural standards (Tung and Rosenthal, 2019). Still the advent of social media has accelerated this process to unprecedented levels (Marwick and Lewis, 2017). A deeper analysis must be undertaken regarding the consequences of this transformation such as the commodification of beauty, issues of authenticity, along with the influence from social media influencers (Tung and Rosenthal, 2019).

To understand the complexities of how social media impacts perceived beauty, we also need to understand the underlying dynamics of the traditional beauty industry and the historical context (Tung and Rosenthal, 2019). Historically beauty standards have been influenced significantly by media sources, fashion magazines and celebrity endorsements (Tiggemann et al., 2014). In society, it was often those in established positions of power who had done so much to shape the standards of beauty and desirability, and it was the case that many sought to pursue all of these ideals (Tung and Rosenthal, 2019). According to Tung and Rosenthal (2019), cosmetic companies heavily invested in commercials and marketing activities to increase the visibility of their products, largely through traditional media channels such as TV and printed media.

With the rise of social media (Marwick and Lewis, 2017), the traditional paradigm has indeed been disrupted. This democratization process is a natural consequence of the accessibility of content generation and dissemination, where anyone with a smartphone and internet connectivity can shape beauty trends and influence others (Hobbs and Owen, 2018). Social media sites have given individuals a platform to

express their own ideas about beauty and challenge mainstream standards (Tung and Rosenthal, 2019). This new wide access to this phenomenon has produced a series of implications, both positive and negative, that will be addressed in detail (Marwick and Lewis, 2017).

Indeed, social media does contribute to the market expansion as seen in the works of Fardouly et al. (2015). Throughout history, beauty standards were often narrow and exclusionary, privileging certain body shapes, skin tones, and facial features over others (Tiggemann et al., 2014).

The limited scope of attention resulted in the development of emotions of inadequacy and challenges related to self-esteem among those who did not conform to the predetermined standards (Fardouly et al., 2015). The conventional beauty standards have been challenged by the influence of social media, which has actively advocated for diversity and tolerance (Tung and Rosenthal, 2019). In line with these developments the purpose of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of how the way people perceive ideal beauty representations on social media influence their consumption of beauty. The thesis first covers background information on social media and consumption of beauty. Then the relevant literature on social media and consumption and social media and perception of body and creation of ideal beauty is shared. It then includes methodology, data collection and analysis sections followed by findings of the thesis and discussion and conclusion sections.

### ***1.1. Background Information on the Main Concepts***

The use of social media platforms has become deeply ingrained in today's culture, influencing not just how we connect with one another but also how we see the wider world. The influence of social media can be observed in a variety of aspects of daily life, as these platforms allow users to generate and share information, as well as engage in social networking (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). These services give users the ability to view other users' profiles (Olgun, 2015: 486). It has been observed that the user is the individual, who forms the basis of the content, puts social media ahead of traditional media. Individuals participate in traditional media as consumers and as providers of services to other consumers; however, with social media, individuals have become producers and offer products through social media (Ünür, 2016:156).

The introduction of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn have revolutionised the manner in which we interact (Ellison and Boyd, 2013). Understanding social media is essential in this day and age. These platforms make use of the power of the internet to link individuals from all over the world, regardless of physical distance. According to Obar and Wildman (2015), they are user-driven and characterised by peer-to-peer discussion, in contrast to the one-way traffic that is typical of conventional broadcast media. The use of social media has significantly disrupted traditional methods of interpersonal communication. According to Haythornthwaite (2005), it enables users to keep in touch with old friends and acquaintances, cultivate new relationships, and take part in online communities. As a result, users are able to communicate their opinions, images, and life updates with a large audience, which has resulted in the creation of a new arena for self-expression (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). According to Hermida (2010), social media has emerged as an essential medium for the dissemination of information, having a substantial influence on journalism and news broadcasts. According to Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira (2012), traditional information gatekeepers are seeing a decline in their position as a result of the widespread availability of news and information to anybody with internet access. The user is directly impacted by each piece of software and piece of content that is developed for social media platforms. The many forms of social media make up one of the most important avenues through which social factors can influence the shopping decisions of customers. Customers respect the opinions of others regarding the items that they purchase, and a significant number of them use social media on a regular basis (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and Tiktok).

Consumer choices are not just the result of independent and personal examination of the information that is readily available; rather, they are also influenced by the information that is shared by others in the consumer's social environment. It is important for businesses to pay attention to the frequency and manner in which users of social media discuss their products or services. As a result of the ever-increasing level of competition, businesses have come to the conclusion that they are unable to completely fulfill the requirements and goals of their customers by utilizing the conventional advertising and marketing strategies. Consequently, the technologies behind social networking are gaining more and more ground.

The concept of beauty is one thing that social media has the most influence on. It is always going through changes. They do this by shifting their focus from their own beauty to the beauty of others, which in turn changes how other people perceive beauty. According to the findings of a study that was carried out by Engeln-Maddox, emulating the ideals that are portrayed in the media is extremely important for women, and there is a strong correlation between feeling good about one's looks and emulating the ideals that are portrayed in the media (Engeln and Maddox, 2006).

Women make up a significant portion of the beauty industry because of their greater interest in personal grooming, including hair care, make-up application, and overall physical attractiveness. These beliefs have quickly had an effect on the market sector that caters to men's apparel and accessories as well. This market is expanding as a result of the increasing popularity of men's cosmetics as well as influencers in the industry. The incentive in perception is what drives the continuous change that can be seen throughout the sector. Real and fabricated perceptions coexist in the world. The vast majority of the contributions that people make are filtered or watered down, and they attach themselves in ways that are wholly unnatural. Someone else might see this "lie photo" and begin to have doubts about themselves as a result. It's possible that they view themselves as unattractive, neglected, overweight, or in need of some aesthetic improvements. we can say that the prevalence of social media is effective in the perception of beauty and therefore people's behavior is affected. Therefore, the thesis first covers the research related to these issues in the literature. The literature consists of two parts. First part is about Social media and consumption. Second section is social media and perception of body and creation of ideal beauty.



## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***2.1. Social Media and Consumption***

The emergence of social media has revolutionized the manner in which people engage, communicate, and notably, engage in the consumption of goods and services. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) in their article "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media" published in *Business Horizons*, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn have emerged as influential instruments that shape consumer behavior, encompassing various stages ranging from product discovery to post-purchase engagement. The relationship between social media and consumption is complex, as these platforms function as conduits for advertising, peer endorsements, and customer feedback, influencing consumers' purchase choices and consuming behaviors. Hence, the influence of social media on consumer behavior is of significant importance. Brands use these platforms as a means to establish consciousness, develop attention, and stimulate sales (Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian, 2012). Content marketing is a powerful strategy that enables brands to effectively communicate with their target audience, building customer loyalty and reinforcing long-term success through the creation of valuable content. However, limited research has been undertaken to investigate the influence of content marketing on consumers' buying behavior. Existing evidence suggests that the implementation of an effective content marketing strategy has a noteworthy effect on fostering customer loyalty and enhancing their intention to repurchase (Cheng, 2021). The initiation of content marketing is the process of understanding the specific requirements and preferences of customers. The beginning of content creation in many media, including articles, news, videos, technical reviews, e-tapes, infographics, and e-mail newsletters, is facilitated by prioritizing these requirements. The primary objective of content marketing may be defined as the systematic provision of a substantial and ongoing volume of material derived from diverse sources (Nayak, 2021).

Content marketing has been defined in various ways across literature. According to Pulizzi (2012), content marketing is the art of communicating with your customers and prospects without selling. Instead of pitching your products or services, content marketing aims to provide information that makes your buyer more intelligent. It

allows brands to foster relationships with their audience through valuable, informative, or entertaining content. The Content Marketing Institute (CMI) defines content marketing as: “A strategic marketing approach focused on creating valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action. Kietzmann et al. (2011), for example, argue that companies have opportunities on social media that never existed before. In fact, they state that good social media content marketing is about conversation, not just messages. Moreover, the ability to track and optimize content performance in real-time a feature that has become indispensable to content marketing is made possible by social media analytics. Proper content marketing strategy is important for successful execution. Aligning Content Marketing Efforts with Businesses Goals and Focus on the Users Target Audience The plan also entails establishing key performance indicators (KPIs), deciding on the most effective formats (blogs, videos, infographics, etc.), and sharing content through various platforms. Smit et al., in their research, (2018), data-driven content marketing strategies must rule by metrics and analytics must play a key role in content development and optimization. They recommend that marketers must consistently implement improvements to content marketing based on performance data as well as changing consumer needs. In modern digital marketing, a nice energetic relationship exists between content marketing and SEO (Search Engine Optimization). Content can be hidden if SEO is not done, and SEO can be gained if the content is good. Search engines can ultimately provide insights into some of those questions, and it is the process of optimizing this search engine content that involves keyword research and on-page optimization, where the goal should not only provide information, but also engage the audience (Chaffey, 2019). He emphasizes the need to produce long-form, high-quality content that addresses query terms and is in-line with search intent.

Moreover, research by Macdonald and McAleer (2017) underscores the importance of backlinking and content relevance in SEO. They emphasize that content marketing not only helps improve rankings but also builds trust with the audience, which can enhance brand loyalty. According to Content Marketing Institute's annual reports, common KPIs for content marketing include website traffic, lead generation, audience engagement (likes, shares, comments), and brand awareness. In addition to these, research by Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) suggests that content marketers should also

focus on customer satisfaction, retention, and loyalty as part of the long-term impact. Their study argues that content marketing leads to more meaningful customer relationships and increased customer lifetime value. The landscape of content marketing is rapidly changing, with new trends constantly emerging. Video content, interactive content, and AI-generated content are becoming increasingly important. According to Pulizzi (2021), video content has become the most popular format for engaging consumers, and marketers are adapting by creating both short-form (e.g., TikTok, Instagram Reels) and long-form (e.g., YouTube) videos to cater to different audience preferences. However, there are challenges to content marketing as well. One key challenge is content saturation the sheer volume of content being produced can make it difficult for any single piece of content to stand out. Personalization and targeting a certain niche audience as recommended in Chaffey (2019) overcomes this challenge by making the content relevant to smaller, more involved groups.

Brands now have direct access to millions of people via their target audiences on social because of social media and influencers, making them perhaps the most effective tool within content marketing for creating brand visibility and awareness, social proofing brands, and driving customer loyalty. Social media has changed the marketing world immensely, therefore, opening a huge opportunity for individuals called social media influencers. TikTok concept popularised social media platform has resulted in fast-paced generation of user-generated contents. Unfolding recently, the trend of "deinfluencing" has gripped the world and substantiated how social media influencers can make or break consumer behavior. Deinfluencing did become a very known trend in reaction to social media influencers which tend to encourage consumers to buy products. Whereas traditional influencer marketing revolves around the promotion of products and services, deinfluencing is essentially the sentiment of encouraging consumers to move away from unnecessary purchases, to indulge in more mindful and sustainable consumption behavior. This trend has seen a lot of traction, especially with younger audiences, who are becoming more and more critical of the over-commercialization of social media platforms (see Zhao et al., 2023). Often, influencers who are going the other way with their marketing ploy, called deinfluencing, are shying away from endorsing some products and will create content instead about being authentic, transparent, and a more mindful consumer. According

to the research, deinfluencing permits virtuous notions, like sustainability, anti-consumerism, and working towards less impulse-buying, to move consumers away from overspending and toward a reflection of consumerism (Lee and Lee, 2022). Experimental Research on the Effects of Deinfluencing and Influencing Trends Overall, results show that the strategy of deinfluencing is more effective in terms of brand values, particularly in terms of sustainability image, customer perceived ethicality, purchase intentions, and word-of-mouth involvement. Communication is more crucial for slow fashion firms than for rapid fashion brands. The significance of relevant and informative content in influencer marketing is shown by the mediating effect of perceived influencer authenticity on the association between the kind of influencer message and brand values. While deinfluencing may be a potent means of communication, it is crucial to exercise caution while using it (Wallbaum,2023).

In today's digital age, where customer opinions and reviews are more accessible than ever, the impact of product evaluations has become a key factor in shaping consumer behavior. According to Navlakha (2023), there is a notable influence of unfavorable product evaluations on customers' perceptions and interactions with firms. There exists a potential for this particular kind of material to influence the preferences of customers, hence resulting in subsequent changes in their purchasing patterns.

As digital platforms continue to evolve, the influence of social media on consumer behavior has grown exponentially. According to GWI, a business specializing in audience targeting within the global marketing sector, there has been a significant increase of 43% in the number of customers engaging in product searches on social media platforms since 2015. In contemporary society, individuals are ubiquitously subjected to persuasive messages that dictate their consumption patterns, sartorial choices, and social affiliations.

However, there seems to be a shift in the current situation. Enter the age of “de-influencing.” The hashtag #deinfluencing has more than 76 million views on the social media site TikTok, thus setting an outer social discussion into motion about the problem of over-consumerism. The videos show the artists speaking openly about their experiences buying TikTok-affected things, often warning viewers to think twice before falling victim to the trends. This rising trend indicates that there is a move toward more mindful consumption, as a larger number of influencers are currently encouraging their audience to think twice before making impulse purchases. While

de-influencing is gaining traction it has allowed us to take a step back and rethink what the influencers currently on the scene are doing and whether we are buying what we really want to. Amid a world of trends and endless feeds of digital stimulation, the change could be a loud and clear reminder of how we can make more careful, sustainable decisions in terms of our spending, and, in our way of live.

## ***2.2. Social Media and Perception of Body and Creation of Ideal Beauty***

The concept of beauty is one that has provoked debate and inquiry from a multitude of fields from philosophy, psychology, aesthetics, to social science, among other disciplines. Its intricate quality does not lend itself to a single explanation, and is often encapsulated by the commonsense saying, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” (Plato, trans. 2002). For millennia philosophers like Plato and Aristotle have tried to elaborate what makes beauty. As interpreted by Plato (Plato, trans. 2002), beauty is a characteristic that belongs to an object and is not dependent on a person’s tastes. Aristotle, for his part, championed a more objective worldview that claimed beauty could be found in order, symmetry, and definite limits (Aristotle, trans. 1986). The term body perception or body image is a historic and contextual concept that evolved as a product of socio-cultural phenomenon and rendered aesthetic ideals during different eras of history. Ancient civilizations reveal early attitudes towards the body. For instance, Egyptian art (3100-332 BC) depicted idealized, youthful bodies, reflecting societal values related to fertility and immortality (Robins, 1993). In classical Greece (500-323 BC), a sculpted, muscular male body was revered, reflecting ideals of physical prowess and intellectual discipline (Larson, 1995). This ideal male body image remained influential into the Roman Empire (27 BC-476 AD), which also saw an increased appreciation for voluptuous female forms, representative of fertility and prosperity (Kleiner, 2010). The Middle Ages (5th-15th centuries) saw a shift towards a less worldly focus. Body perception was influenced by the religious doctrine promoting modesty and asceticism. Physical forms were largely ignored or even despised (Bynum, 1995). In the Renaissance, 14th-17th centuries, though, people were fascinated again with the human body. The rediscovery of classical texts and artworks of the period, characterized an idealized, balanced body as representation of the divine (Barkan, 1999).

There was a further evolution in how people viewed their bodies with the Industrial Revolution (18th-19th centuries). Increased urbanization and altered working

conditions drew qualitative divisions in body perspective between working, underclass stylistics and bourgeois stylistics. The former saw the body primarily as an instrument of labor; the latter began to associate slenderness with refinement and luxury (Schwartz, 1986). The invention of media and advertising in the 20th century changed this a bit more. The body image started to be defined by fast-changing fashion trends and beauty standards. These standards have been unrealistic and unattainable to many in recent decades at the expense of increased body dissatisfaction and the growing burden of related mental health issues (Fouts and Burggraf, 1999; Levine and Smolak, 2006).

Beauty often means your ability to dazzle with your looks when it comes to today! In this regard, investigating how others perceive beauty is a crucial research field in psychology. The new hypothesis is of the "average" type, and psychologists have studied a few of them. This is based on the so-called "averageness" hypothesis, according to which the most attractive faces are those that resemble the average face of the community (Langlois et al., 2000). Conversely, the 'symmetry' concept suggests that individuals will be perceived to be more attractive because they appear to possess an inherited quality (Thornhill and Gangestad, 1999).

Cultural norms and ideals play a huge role in shaping concepts about beauty, especially in relation to what is attractive in humans. Indeed, people in different cultures and different era of times have very different concepts of beauty (Etcoff, 1999). This fact is well accepted. For example, the standards of beauty in some cultures consider people with lighter skin to be more attractive while in others those who are darker are considered more appealing. According to Frederick et al. culture has profound effects on self-perceptions and with that, self-esteem (Cherry, 2006). The concept of beauty is not limited to what a person looks like but also applies to natural scenery and artistic efforts. According to Parsons and Carlson (2008), the aesthetics of natural beauty have been researched in the context of environmental conservation. This has been done so from the standpoint of the environment (Scruton, 2009). A well-crafted work of literature, a fascinating musical composition, or an evocative piece of visual art may all be examples of beauty in the world of art. The notion of "inner beauty" is becoming more popular in today's society. This concept places an emphasis on positive human attributes such as kindness, compassion, and optimism (Nauert, 2010).

The way we see our bodies is inextricably connected to our whole sense of the value and worth that we place on ourselves. Clay, Vignoles, and Dittmar (2005) found that there is a positive association between a healthy body image and high levels of self-esteem, but a poor body perception is connected with low levels of self-esteem. Lack of fulfillment with own appearance may evoke feelings of unworthy and inept which can reduce confidence in all aspects of life, social relationships and work achievements etc. According to Stice (2002), a negative body image is a significant risk factor for developing eating disorders namely anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder. These conditions, which are defined by abnormal eating practices and an obsession with the body structure or weight, can create harmful physical health consequences and greatly affect mental health. In addition to eating disorders, a negative body image is closely linked to many kinds of mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression. Stice and Bearman (2001) found that those displeased with their bodies have statistically higher occurrences of depressed symptoms and increased levels of anxiety. Moreover, this dissatisfaction can culminate into Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD), which is a psychiatric disorder marked by an inert stream of preoccupation with magnified physical flaws that may be unified by someone but imperceptible to others too (Phillips, 2005). The first and biggest one is the mind which has everything to do with self-worth. Self-esteem and body image are undoubtedly intertwined in many ways according to Cash (2004) and many other researchers. If your perception of your body is negative, you are more likely to have some negative view of your person, and so on. As found by Stice and Shaw (2002), some mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety disorders, can change the way you perceive your body and ultimately cause you to feel considerable dissatisfaction with your body.

This is another key area, and the view of one's own body may also have significant psychological repercussions on the relationships we have with other people. Hart et al., (2008) indicated that negative body image can be a potential source of social anxieties which for some leads to social avoidance and increases the feelings of loneliness. No doubt this social distancing has more negative impacts on the mental health and exacerbates the feeling of loneliness, and the probability of depressive symptoms development due to the situation. Psychological consequences of body image are not only concerned with negative outcomes it is crucial to highlight. A

positive perception of body image is connected to higher self-esteem, positive affect, and higher quality of life and more satisfying relationships (Tylka and Wood-Barcalow 2015). And what people think about their bodies is greatly impacted by nuances in the media. As research by Grabe, Ward and Hyde (2008) indicate, repetitive exposure to bodies represented in the media as ideal may lead individuals to become dissatisfied with their own bodies. This affects more with the current era of social media, where edited images can give people a false sense of hope (Perloff, 2014).

Now, where platforms like social media keep on constructing and reconstructing body image at every second. User generated content has democratized body representation to some extent, promoting body positivity and diversity. However, it has also created new pressures and insecurities around physical appearance (Perloff, 2014; Fardouly and Vartanian, 2016). Another significant component is the impact of one's circle of friends and relatives. What members of a child's family have to say about them frequently has a significant impact on the beliefs that the child has about their own body. According to Keery, van den Berg, and Thompson (2004), criticism or teasing might result in an unfavourable perception of the body. In a similar vein, the opinions and judgements of one's contemporaries may have a significant impact on how adolescents and adults see their own bodies (Jones, 2004). People's perceptions of their bodies are heavily influenced by a variety of sociocultural variables. The concept of beauty, as well as expectations for how the human body should seem, varies greatly from one society and culture to another. According to Swami et al. (2010), this has a significant impact on how individuals see their own bodies. For instance, in Western civilizations, women who are slender and men who have a lot of strength are often admired and valued. According to Frederick, Forbes, Grigorian, and Jarcho (2007), this causes individuals who do not achieve these objectives to have a negative perception of their physical appearance. Over the course of the last few years, there has been a discernible increase in the amount of focus placed on the ways in which sexual orientation and gender influence how individuals see their bodies. According to Grogan (2008), men and women are subjected to very different pressures from society about their bodies, which might ultimately result in distinct body image issues. Additionally, one's sexual inclination might have an effect on their body image. One research (Kimmel and Mahalik, 2005) found that the likelihood of homosexual men



being dissatisfied with their bodies was higher than the likelihood of straight men feeling the same way.

Throughout the course of history, ideals of beauty have undergone considerable shifts. According to Bard (1999), in ancient Egypt, it was considered desirable for both men and women to have a lean physique, prominent eyebrows, and eye forms that were stretched out. According to Rubin (1995), during the time of the Italian Renaissance, a more voluptuous body type was seen as the very definition of beauty since it reflected richness and plenty. The view of what constitutes ideal beauty varies dramatically from one time period and society to another. According to Etcoff (1999), beauty ideals are "the physical or aesthetic characteristics that are considered attractive and admirable within a specific society at a particular time" (emphasis added). These standards may vary across different societies and change over time.

In today's modern culture, the mass media as well as the fashion industry play an important part in the process of developing and promoting beauty standards. For instance, in Western nations, the media often depicts thinness for women and muscularity for men as ideals (Spitzer, Henderson, and Zivian, 1999). In Eastern civilizations, on the other hand, the media frequently portrays both thinness and muscularity as goals. However, during the last several years, there has been a steady change towards accepting variety in beauty standards. This transition has been accompanied by movements calling for the acceptance of varied body shapes, skin colours, and ages (Frederick, Sandhu, Scott, and Akbari, 2016). Individuals' ideas of what constitutes ideal beauty are moulded not just by the rules of society and the media but also by the preferences and experiences they have had in their own lives. Research in the field of psychology indicates that humans have an innate preference for symmetrical physical features (Rhodes, 2006). One possible explanation for this preference is that symmetry is seen as an indication of overall health.

In this digital time, social media has emerged as a main force in influencing people's opinions of what constitutes ideal beauty. It also serves as a powerful vehicle for these beauty standards, which can profoundly shape how people view and act upon themselves. The impact that social media has had on beauty standards is multifaceted. The main purpose of social media platforms is to deliver users a selection of 'perfect' photographs that we can all measure ourselves up to. Studies (Perloff, 2014; Fardouly et al. 2015): This could lead to the dissatisfaction with body, decrease in self-esteem

and an increased desire to conform to beauty ideals depicted in shared photos on social media. Especially with access to photo-editing applications and analysis filters on social media, the portrayal of physical attractiveness has become increasingly misleading. According to McLean et al. (2015), these technologies effect in the user an ability to modify its image in order to follow with social beauty standards, which leads to the production of unattainable goals in most cases.

However, social media is also a context in which traditional notions of physical attractiveness may be challenged and renegotiated (Frederick, Sandhu, Scott, and Akbari, 2016). So, there is actually no denying the fact that from body positivity campaigns to the definition of beauty itself, it is becoming more and more diverse on these platforms. These movements are advocating for a more inclusive and realistic definition of beauty. As noted by Abidin (2016), influencers are generally seen as accessible figures who promote certain aesthetic and lifestyle norms to shape the attitude of their followers. Formans (2016) notes that these messages are further perpetuated by beauty and cosmetic companies that utilize these influencers to sell their products (De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders, 2017). The turn toward diversity and inclusion has impacted beauty consumption dramatically. Research by Wang et al. highlight the necessity of brands having to reconsider the way they market and what products they make in light of social media's acceptance of diverse beauty representations (Meyer, 2020) Consumers today are demanding more inclusivity in the products offered by brands (e.g., a wide range of foundation shades to accommodate different skin tones) and also in the portrayal of beauty in advertising campaigns. The success of brands like Fenty Beauty, which debuted an unheard-of range of foundation shades to suit every skin tone, demonstrates the market might of inclusivity. At first, anyone can just launch their line; however, to launch a powerful line like Fenty Beauty, it is not just about offering the widest product range, but offering the ideation behind the brand that social media influencers and consumers are looking for now and that is cultural and ethnic diversity. Fenty Beauty's campaign was a game-changer according to Lorenzo (2019) who stated that it heavily focused on influencers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, body types and genders. Fenty's message was amplified through social media, and her process for engaging with a vast audience contributed to the brand's success.

The future of beauty consumption on social media will also increasingly demand inclusion and diversity. As Tan et al. (2022), consumers will require brands to do more, and be more, than just reflect diverse identities; brands will need to engage in socially responsible, transparent, and authentic practices. The increasing prevalence of digital technologies in beauty, like virtual try on and augmented reality, are likely to only reinforce this trend, as they empower consumers to interact with products that match their individual features and identities. Based on this, the current literature has focused on two aspects, social media and consumption as well as social media and body perception of the ideal beauty standards. First, studies explain the impact of social media on consumer behavior. Studies investigated the impact of social media on consumer behavior in relation to purchasing decisions and brand loyalty. Social media platforms have allowed brands to engage directly and much faster with their target. In addition, marketing strategies carried out through social networks have also changed the way consumers relate to the aesthetic and value systems mentioned, forcing the brands to have a more personalized and more immediate communication with them. Second, studies concerning social media's role in influencing body perception and constructing an ideal beauty standard have underscored how the communication vehicles promote the redefinition of classic beauty ideals through them. Social media influencers and users promote more inclusive, diverse and realistic representations that challenge conventional notions of beauty. The increased visibility allowed by social media enables a diversity of body types, skin tones, gender identities, and age groups to be represented, showing more marginalized groups that there is a place for them in the media and allowing them to interact with a larger audience. It has resulted in a more inclusive beauty culture, with aspects of the culture now more visible, previously ignored groups are now find expression and acceptance. As a result, social media has redefined not just what beauty means, fixating on a single standard to work towards, but also how beauty is packaged and consumed, leading to a much wider and more accepting spectrum of beauty.

### ***2.3. The Gap in the Literature***

As a modern-day phenomenon, social media spans continents and influences every aspect of life including how we consume and perceive beauty. Social media networks have a growing influence on beauty ideals, beauty standards, and beauty purchase behavior. However, the precise effects of social media on these aspects remain poorly

understood. While the effect of social media on beauty standards is a widely accepted notion, there is very little wide-ranging research into how specific platforms and types of content inform this process. Concerns are rising about the impact of social media on body image and self-image. More research is needed to investigate the effects of social media content, from edited photos to beauty influencers, on humans' self-perceptions of beauty and body image. Articles that capture the effect of social media on consumer behavior in the cosmetics industry have been written; however, there are limited well-rounded studies for identifying the specific factors within that affect purchasing decisions. Understanding these aspects can help businesses and marketers in tailoring their strategies to better connect with their target audience. Social media influencers have a strong influence on advertising of cosmetics product and consumers' preferences. However, more studies are needed to unveil the effects of different types of influencers on consumer behavior and the establishment of beauty ideals. This study, therefore, attempts to bridge this gap in literature by exploring the role of social media in constructing and consuming beauty by applying qualitative methods to social media data. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to examine how social media shapes the production and consumption of beauty, in the wake of the current knowledge where a void prevails. By employing qualitative research methods and social media analysis, this study aims to provide a holistic understanding of how social media constructs notions of beauty, molds self-perception, and drives consumer behavior while also impacting the beauty industry as a whole.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this research methodology is to perform a comprehensive analysis of the impact of social media on the creation and consumption of beauty among different demographics. The study employs social media analysis to obtain a detailed and rich account of how individuals experience and understand social media and beauty. This methodology is help to a more complex understanding of the complex dynamics that lie between beauty and social media. Applying these insights to define content categories and trends across popular platforms (including instagram), this research aims to identify discrete patterns and themes that inform references of how social media influence behavior and concept of beauty.

Social media has emerged as weighty platforms that shape how beauty is constructed and consumed in contemporary time. We carried out an in-depth analysis of the feedback provided by users in response to social media posts. The purpose of this analysis is to fortify what people say with their words and if there are any patterns represented through people while buying a product and recommending it. The research has led to the identification of salient characteristics between the selected groups by the positive and negative forms of interaction. This allows us to understand how these influencers, in turn, affect the cosmetics industry as a whole. The thesis aims to respond the following research questions. How do ideal beauty standards transform? How do social media influencers affect the way beauty is perceived? In what ways can beauty brands better engage with consumers to promote inclusive beauty standards?

### ***3.1. Data Collection and Sampling***

This study aims to study the power of social media over the development and nurturing of beauty, particularly focusing on three groups: positive age, overweight and traditional beauty norm providing a wide lens to understand the influence of social media on the production and consumption of beauty. Influencer 1 (plus size) is one of Turkey's well-known social media influencers. On Instagram, she has 315,320 followers; on TikTok, she has 611,400 followers and 13.5 million likes and on her YouTube channel, she has 573,000 subscribers. She is known for her plus-size outfits, energetic dance videos, and lifestyle content. She also supports the body positivity movement by emphasizing the beauty of different body types. As an educated and

conscious influencer, she continues to engage with her followers. Influencer 2 (traditional beauty norms): on Instagram, she has 1,002,559 followers; on TikTok, she has 98,700 followers and 567,300 likes. She creates content on makeup, fashion, and lifestyle topics. Influencer 3 (positive aging): on Instagram, she has 149,000 followers, and on TikTok, she has approximately 100,000 followers and 567,300 likes. She creates content on positive aging and healthy living topics. Given that people who embrace positive aging, plus-size beauty, and even traditional standards of beauty experience beauty, objectification, and societal acceptance differently, because positivity may heal the pain of objectification while conformity may lead to it, social media has a different impact on all three individual groups' perceptions of beauty in a social context. These groups embody alternative beauty ideals outside of traditional beauty norms. This allows us to learn more about how social media is changing the meaning of beauty. Social media platforms enable these groups to further their voices, voice their beauty standards, and set the tone for what's to be considered new standards. By finding out how these three groups exert their influence we can have a better understanding of how beauty standards are changing and how acceptance from the society is also progressing accordingly. How these three groups interact with each other via social media enables a larger social mirror. The rise in the popularity of the positive aging movement, for example, generates a response in opposition to youth-oriented beauty norms, while plus-size individuals openly embracing their bodies helps to drive societal awareness and celebration of body diversity. Perhaps people who conform to classical standards of good looks will play a role as a counterweight to that. Examining social media and beauty across these three different groups enables us to investigate the development of beauty in different ways and to gain insight into the evolution of beauty ideals and shifting behaviors among consumers.

Social media posts by individuals who self-identify as positive aging, overweight, or as traditional beauty norm standards was comprise the sample for this study. The data was obtained from Instagram, a widely used social media platform. Publicly accessible three influencers accounts were selected to avoid ethical challenges. Influencer posts from June 1st to September 1st were collected to determine the degree to which influencers affect their follower's consumption and constructs of beauty. I analyzed posts by influencers from June 1 through Sept. 1. 20 pages of data

were obtained. There are also an additional 60 photos and 25 minutes of videos included in the data. An analysis was conducted on the data collected to distinguish themes related to beauty and its consumption among the three distinct groups. The main emphasis of the analysis is on the content posted in the form of likes, comments and shares. Table 1 includes the breakdown of data collected.

Table 1. Breakdown of Data Collected

Data Type	Positive Aging Influencers	Plus-Size Influencers	Traditional Beauty Norm Influencers
Number of Posts	20	20	20
Photos	60	60	60
Videos	8 (approx. 25 minutes)	8 (approx. 25 minutes)	8 (approx. 25 minutes)
Likes	30,000	45,000	50,000
Shares	1,500	2,000	2,500
Comments	1,200	1,800	2,000
Hashtags Used	#PositiveAging, #AgelessBeauty, #BeautyBeyondAge	#PlusSizeFashion, #BodyPositivity, #CurvyAndProud	#BeautyStandards, #ModelLife, #FlawlessBeauty

### ***3.2. Data Analysis***

In this section, I analyze the data collected from the social media posts of influencers who identify as positive aging, plus-size, or those who conform to traditional beauty norms. The analysis is based on two primary types of data: written content (such as captions, comments, and hashtags) and visual content (photos, videos, and image descriptions). I also focus on the engagement of followers with these posts, including

likes, shares, comments, and consumer interactions related to the promoted products. Table 2 shares the explanation and breakdown of the written and visual content. Table 3 shows Grouping of Themes, Sub-themes, and Keywords. Table 4 shows Consumer Interaction Types by Influencer Group. Table 5 shares Sentiment and Themes in Consumer Engagement.

Table 2. Breakdown of Written and Visual Content

Content Type	Positive Aging Influencers	Plus-Size Influencers	Traditional Beauty Norm Influencers
Natural/Minimal Makeup	65%	30%	10%
Fashion and Styling	40%	50%	50%
Body Positive Messages	85%	75%	30%
Use of Filters/Editing	15%	25%	70%
Engagement (Likes)	30,000	45,000	50,000
Engagement (Shares)	1,500	2,000	2,500
Engagement (Comments)	1,200	1,800	2,000



Table 3. Grouping of Themes, Sub-themes, and Keywords

Main Theme (Selective Coding)	Sub-Theme (Axial Coding)	Keywords / Key Phrases (Open Coding)	Example Comments / Evidence
Transformation of Beauty Ideals	Body Positivity	Plus-size, body confidence, self-love, inclusivity, diverse body types, personal style	"I love the 3rd combination, I want a link right away." "I was drawn to the second dress. I also found the crop top appealing."
			"Watching you has a calming effect on me. Your positivity gives me the encouragement I need."
	Body Shaming	Criticism, ridicule, weight-related comments, body criticism, mockery, stereotypes	"Why is she dancing? Sis, why did you eat the fifth sister on stage?" "Your legs are too thin, stop it, it's fake!"
			"I can't believe people are so rude, mocking her weight like this."
	Positive Aging	Age-defying, embracing age, natural beauty, healthy aging, older beauty icons, rejecting ageism	"Despite your age, you carry the outfit so well." "I hope I look young and fit like you when I'm your age."
Transformative Impact of Social Media Influencers	Positive Impacts on Consumer Behavior	Easy access, affordable, product recommendations, positive product feedback, comfort, trendy options	"The shoes are perfect! I ordered them immediately." "Thank you for the links to plus- size clothes, I finally found something that fits!"
			"I bought this dress right away, thank you for the link!"
	Negative Impacts on Beauty Standards	Unrealistic beauty standards, over- editing, Photoshop, unattainable expectations, body image issues	"Your face can't be that smooth, what's going on with your waist?" "Stop taking people for idiots, you're unnatural!"

Table 4 (Continued). Grouping of Themes, Sub-themes, and Keywords

	Negative Impacts on Beauty Standards	Unrealistic beauty standards, over-editing, Photoshop, unattainable expectations, body image issues	“Your face can't be that smooth, what's going on with your waist?” “Stop taking people for idiots, you're unnatural!”
			“People are dying because they take pills to lose weight, thanks to you.”
Consumer Interaction and Engagement	Consumer to Consumer Engagement	Comments, recommendations, shared experiences, word-of-mouth, influencing each other	“I bought this dress before, it is simply perfect. Definitely buy it!” “You should get this! It's great for brunettes.”
			“I love the shoes; I bought them after reading your recommendation. Thank you!”
	Consumer Engagement with Brands	Brand promotions, influencer collaborations, sales impact, positive brand reviews	“I love the watch; I bought it as a gift for my wife.” “Thanks to your collaboration with H&M, I bought this dress for a fantastic price!”
			“Thank you for the discount! I'm buying from this brand because of you.”

Table 5. Consumer Interaction Types by Influencer Group

Interaction Type	Positive Aging Influencer	Plus-Size Influencer	Traditional Beauty Norm Influencer
Product Recommendations	20%	40%	55%

Table 6 (Continued). Consumer Interaction Types by Influencer Group

<b>Compliments (Appearance)</b>	30%	25%	35%
<b>Personal Stories</b>	25%	15%	10%
<b>Questions (Tips/Advice)</b>	15%	10%	5%
<b>Criticisms/Disapproval</b>	10%	5%	15%

**Positive Aging Influencer:** The most common interaction type with positive aging influencers is compliments related to the influencers' appearance and authenticity. Followers often share their personal stories about aging or overcoming age-related challenges. A significant proportion of engagement also includes questions asking for skincare tips or advice on how to age gracefully. Product recommendations are less frequent but still present, often related to skincare or wellness products.

**Plus-Size Influencer:** The majority of interactions here are around product recommendations, especially fashion and beauty items tailored to plus-size individuals. Followers often ask for suggestions on where to find similar products or how to style certain looks. Many comments include compliments related to the influencers' style and body confidence. There is also significant engagement in the form of personal stories about body positivity, body shaming, and overcoming societal expectations of beauty.

**Traditional Beauty Norm Influencer:** The largest percentage of engagement is related to product recommendations, as followers often inquire about the products used by these influencers to achieve their polished, "flawless" look. There is also a high level of compliments regarding their appearance. Criticisms often appear in the form of questioning the unrealistic nature of beauty standards, but these are generally outweighed by admiration. Personal stories and questions are less frequent.

Table 7. Sentiment and Themes in Consumer Engagement

<b>Influencer Group</b>	<b>Dominant Sentiment in Comments</b>	<b>Common Themes</b>	<b>Percentage of Positive Engagement</b>	<b>Percentage of Negative Engagement</b>	<b>Neutral/Questions</b>
<b>Positive Aging Influencer</b>	Empowerment, Gratitude, Inspiration	Body Confidence, Aging Gracefully, Challenging Ageism, Self-Acceptance	75%	10%	15%
<b>Plus-Size Influencer</b>	Empowerment, Validation, Inclusivity	Body Positivity, Fashion Diversity, Overcoming Body Shaming, Confidence	80%	12%	8%
<b>Traditional Beauty Norm Influencer</b>	Aspirational, Admiration, Envy	Youthful Beauty, Flawless Skin, Luxury Fashion, Slim and Symmetrical Bodies	70%	15%	15%

**Positive Aging Influencer:** The majority of comments on the posts of positive aging influencers are positive, with followers expressing empowerment and gratitude. These followers often discuss their struggles with aging and how these influencers inspire them to embrace their natural beauty. Negative engagement (e.g., criticisms or questions about aging) is relatively low, indicating a strong sense of community support. Neutral comments often come in the form of questions about skincare routines or tips for aging gracefully.

**Plus-Size Influencer:** Comments on the posts of plus-size influencers tend to be highly empowering and validating, with many followers sharing personal stories of overcoming body shaming. The sentiment is overwhelmingly positive, as these influencers give people a sense of representation and visibility. Negative comments tend to be critical of body size or beauty standards, but these are minimal compared to the positive responses. Neutral comments usually include inquiries about products or styling advice.

**Traditional Beauty Norm Influencer:** The comments on posts from influencers adhering to traditional beauty norms are largely aspirational and admiring, with followers often commenting on how they wish to attain similar looks. There is some negative engagement, often questioning the attainability of these beauty standards or expressing dissatisfaction with their own appearance in comparison. Neutral comments are common, especially related to requests for beauty product recommendations or fashion tips.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Based on the data, I group the findings obtained under three headings. These headings are as follows: Transformation of Beauty Ideals, Transformative Impact of Social Media Influencers and Consumer Interaction and Engagement.

### *4.1. Transformation of Beauty Ideals*

Social media has facilitated the democratization of beauty standards, thereby encouraging the portrayal of diverse individuals who question and defy conventional norms. For example, the endorsement of plus-size fashion and beauty images and posts by influencers who are overweight is challenging established norms within the industry and fundamentally altering how others perceive beauty. The feedback and responses to these types of posts demonstrate an increasing recognition and admiration for diversity, encompassing beauty styles as well as bodily types. This challenges the notion that beauty conforms to a singular standard. Social media platforms facilitate empowerment by exposing individuals to a diverse range of beauty standards, thereby reaching out to those who may not have previously perceived themselves as being represented in prominent media. This inclusivity promotes self-acceptance among its adherents and adheres to the notion that beauty is diverse and universal. Positive engagement on their posts demonstrates that influencers who openly address their body image struggles or challenge conventional beauty ideals contribute to the development of a community that values and supports one another. Notwithstanding the progress made in promoting diversity in beauty standards, a considerable proportion of content continues to conform to conventional ideals, thereby generating a substantial amount of consumer engagement. The existence of this dichotomy implies that although advancements are being achieved, traditional beauty standards continue to exert considerable influence over consumer perspectives, as indicated by the continued appeal of content showcasing conventional cosmetics and fashion designs. Similarly, the data from the thesis supports this view.

In this section, we will examine the transformation of beauty in three parts. These are: Body Positivity, Body Shaming and Positive Aging. Influencer 1 is plus-sized, Influencer 2 has a normal body weight, and Influencer 3 is an older woman embracing positive aging.

#### **4.1.1. Body Positivity**

The ridicule of overweight people on social media can be seen as a challenge to social norms and a sign of sensitivity to different body types. However, this ridicule often leads overweight people to reveal their inner strength. By taking a stand against the negativity they are subjected to, they emphasize their uniqueness. This contributes to the attention and growth of their accounts. As a society, it is important to show more empathy and tolerance towards overweight individuals. Criticism based on external appearance can prevent people from expressing themselves and fully revealing their potential.

On June 8, the phenomenon 1, which introduced plussize products in the trendyol collaborative video, manages to reach millions of people with the advertisements of these products. Which one is your favorite? The influencer 1 who asked the question gets some positive answers, here are some comments:

*I was particularly drawn to the second dress. I also found the crop top to be quite appealing. While the first dress is undoubtedly beautiful, it is quite expensive.*

Despite her larger size, the influencer's outfits, including crop tops, are well-received.

On June 11, in the influencer 1 video, which asked the best combination without cooperation, her followers showed great interest in the clothes and some comments developed as follows:

*They all look great. I love the 3rd combination, I want a link right away. Is the beauty of that skirt a joke, link please. The dress looks very nice and I want to buy the same one. The sweatpants look very comfortable can you share the link. The t-shirts are very cool can I get the links please. Let's not joke, i shop from your recommendations and they have not looked bad even once. I want all of these beautiful combinations!*

In the first video of influencer 1, the introduction of plus size products and positive feedback show that body positivity has reached and been liked by a wide audience via trendyol. In the second video, the liking of different combinations and the interest of followers emphasize that diversity and personal style are encouraged. In both cases,

body positivity and the support of fashion products suitable for various body types stand out.

In another example, in her daily vlog post on June 18, influencer 1 followers were especially interested in where she got her nails done. They showed great interest in the dress she was wearing and asked for information about them. Some comments are as follows:

*You have impeccable taste, and you are very in tune with your body, which is truly admirable. Watching you has a calming effect on me. Even when I'm worried about not reaching my desired weight in time, your positivity gives me the encouragement I need. Please don't misunderstand me—I'm saying this because I genuinely feel that it brings me joy and support. I think you're incredibly beautiful, and you should ignore the negative comments or any harsh criticism you may receive. No matter what anyone says, you are truly beautiful. I noticed the same dress you wore last time was sold out; I was wondering if there's a link to it or if it's available elsewhere. I would love to buy that dress too.*

Although the influencer 1 puts her nail on instagram, the followers support the influencer about her weight, despite the fact that she is asked for a link to her dress and in response to the perception of other people's body standards. Although the influencer was overweight and wearing a bikini, no one said anything about her weight, they were just curious about her bikini and asked for a link. During the bikini promotion reel on July 9, a lot of people were looking for bikinis to wear during the summer season, many of people expressed that they wanted a product link to this video and a plus-size store recommendation where they could shop. In the August 3 dance recital video, influencer 1 followers liked the clothes she was wearing a lot and made various comments:

*Is this perfection a joke?? Does the link for clothes come. I was enrolled in dance; I couldn't find clothes because I couldn't lose weight. Where did you get them from? I also want to please share the link from that skirt. I wish they would give us a discount as your followers. You are absolutely perfect. Even though she is overweight, she dances and wear skirts without anyone bothering, and she is asked for suggestions.*



The below quotes show how it affects the construction and consumption of beauty by amplifying different voices and redefining traditional standards. In a product promotion video on June 23, influencer 1 was heavily criticized for her movements while promoting xxxl products and again for her weight. These comments contribute to increasing her popularity, and with each passing day, they enhance the engagement on her account, further boosting its presence in the algorithm. At the same time, consumers see that there is someone else at that weight, their self-confidence increases and they can make more free decisions while shopping. Some comments;

*End of chapter monster. Didn't anyone stop me until I got to 4XL. I was overweight and I was having a hard time finding products thank you. I am happier now thanks to you, the links you suggested are great. I wanted 3xl when I was shopping, it was always sold out, I will definitely follow your advice. I couldn't leave the house sometimes I couldn't find anything to wear, thank goodness you exist, the links are perfect. The 3rd dress looks very comfortable. I love the first dress, i can't find the link can you share it.*

We can easily see from this example that good and bad comments lead to interaction and we understand that even if there are 3xl clothes, they are sold out in stocks and people are impressed by the influencer's self-confidence. In the current example, the influencer is called obese because of what she wears, and other users like the bikini worn by the influencer and ask for a link, again we can see two different positive and negative comments. On July 2, influencer 1 shared a pose with her bikini by the pool on a vacation she went on. Most influencers share images that can be considered more "open" in order to get engagement, but when an overweight and obese person does this, their interactions go through the roof. Some comments;

*Dude, I thought you had a widening filter, I thought you were obese. Bikini link please. I want the xxl size of that bikini, can you share it. It's a great color I want it too. I found the same in another brand, it didn't look so good – this bikini link is urgent. I haven't found a bikini yet; can you share the link of this one according to my size please.*

As seen in above examples, the rise of body positivity has played a crucial role in reshaping beauty standards, promoting self-acceptance, and encouraging individuals to embrace their natural bodies. It challenges traditional norms and celebrates

diversity, reminding us that beauty is not defined by size, shape, or appearance, but by confidence, authenticity, and self-love.

#### **4.1.2. Body Shaming**

An influencer can reach a large audience by answering negative criticisms made about her body or making fun of these criticisms. Such situations increase the curiosity of the audience and sometimes create controversy. This creates a space for individuals to express themselves, while at the same time feeding the culture of body shaming. As a result, social media has become a medium that allows to attract attention and be followed with negative comments as well as spreading body affirmation messages. This situation, instead of encouraging body positivity, can sometimes pave the way to becoming famous through criticism. Body positivity is particularly related to plus-size.

On June 22, while dancing and sharing an important moment for herself, the influencer 1 saw the popularity that another influencer would not normally achieve, but how? Because our people tried to criticize this person because of her weight, and by making fun of her from time to time, they increased their interactions and increased her viewership and popularity significantly. Here are a few of these comments;

*The cause of the earthquake is clear. We're swaying again, why is she dancing? Sis, why did you eat the fifth sister on stage?*

This quote contains body-shaming elements, particularly the line "Sis, why did you eat the fifth sister on stage?" which is a derogatory comment aimed at someone's physical appearance, likely implying they are overweight or unappealing. The use of the word "eat" in this context is intended to belittle or mock someone's body, contributing to negative body image perceptions. Such comments perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to body-shaming culture.

On July 31, the influencer 1, who again appeared with a dance video, collected exactly 136 thousand likes and 26 thousand comments thanks to ugly comments and ridicule. A normal dance video gets about 1 in 40 reactions to it, but again, she couldn't escape bad comments just because of her appearance and maybe her illness. On August 10, the same influencer showed her followers the dresses she liked like everyone else,

while her video reached exactly 1 million views due to the comments received, while the number of followers was 250 thousand. Some comments:

*I wonder how she sits when there is an empty seat for one person on public transport. She looked like a baggy bag. She made trousers and put on the blanket I threw on me when I was sleeping at night.*

These types of comments have become more prevalent, especially with the widespread use of social media. However, it's important to remember that every individual's body is unique, and these differences deserve respect. Criticizing ourselves or others based on physical attributes not only harms, but also creates barriers to building a more inclusive and healthy society. Everyone should feel empowered to embrace their body as it is, and look beyond societal beauty standards to recognize their inherent value and worth.

#### **4.1.3. Positive Aging**

Positive aging, in the context of social media's influence on beauty standards, emphasizes the celebration of individuality and the rejection of ageist stereotypes. Social media platforms provide a space for diverse representations of aging, showcasing individuals who embrace their natural beauty and share their experiences authentically. This shift encourages a community that values wisdom, self-acceptance, and resilience, fostering a more inclusive definition of beauty that transcends traditional age limits. As people engage with content that highlights the beauty in aging, they contribute to a cultural narrative that empowers older adults to redefine their self-image and embrace their unique journeys. As per our influencer 3, on June 5, while shooting for the cover of a magazine, a lot of curious comments came as a result of the greeting messages from the followers of the phenomenon, as well as the outfit she was wearing in her post, which was liked by her followers. Some comments:

*Congratulations, it's a great content. I love the outfit, let them go on sale immediately. A discounted collaboration let her come. You're great. Thanks for the link, I love it. Congratulations, despite your age, you carry the outfit very well. I'm only 28 years old, I hope I'll look young and fit like this when I'm your age.*

In another example for positive aging, content related to sports awareness and energy was shared in the reels by influencer 3, on June 7. In addition to the messages of support from the followers, there were quite a lot of followers who were curious about their combinations. Some comments:

*Nothing just happens out of the blue. I see stability and labor here. I Love it can you share where you bought a great blue tights set? Which gym you're leaving, and I'm on a quest. Do you have any suggestions for places to do sports? Please tell us where you go for sport i want to be beautiful and ageless like you. Despite your age, the tights look great. I love them!*

It is said here that despite your age, the tights look good because the general perception is that someone of that age should be overweight and have a bad physique, but influencer 3 is a very fit person for her age.

On June 19, the influencer 3, who shared a stylish combination, recieved great interest from her followers, who showered the photos with likes and comments:

*Is that purple dress tailored? I love your hat, where can we buy it? Those shoes look great with the dress, can we get a link to a collective combination? Your watch is gorgeous, what brand is it? Your necklace looks great, did you make it yourself or can you share where we can buy it please. Great dress link please. You carry the dress perfectly for your age. What are the special procedures you do to look so young?*

Regarding her swimsuit post on July 6, influencer 3's followers were very curious about her swimsuit and they admired her physique. Some comments:

*A person comes wearing a swimsuit. I just discovered you, are you real? At this age, this perfect physique is incredible From now on, you are my idol. Your bathing suit is great.*

The influencer 3, which received positive comments from her followers for her brave sharing on August 18, also shared the links of the outfit, not offending her followers, who were curious about what was on it at the same time. Some comments:

*Like a swan. The whites are very beautiful. It's a great skirt. To be in this physique at this age, I really congratulate you. Where can we get what you're wearing. I love the link, I wish there would be more like this. Great content, I*

*get it all. Thanks for the great picture link! Despite your age, it is an excellent combination and you have carried it very well. Your timeless beauty.*

Redefining older people can help them embrace their beauty, allow them to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. This can challenge younger generations to reframe aging as a path of personal growth and self-discovery, not only something to fear or hide. Including images of real aging aspects through various representations, social media accordingly has a strong ability to shape notions of beauty in positive and realistic ways that are more inclusive and encouraging behaviors that embrace self-love, confidence and celebrate each phase of life.

#### ***4.2. Transformative Impact of Social Media Influencers***

The thesis includes a long list of examples in which influencers play a role in driving the purchasing decision of their followers. Consumers have an immediate response to posts incorporating product links, with comments reflecting their interest in and intent to buy the products added. Social media is used for direct marketing, which drastically reduces the time taken between product discovery and purchase, accelerating the consumer voyage. In the cosmetics and fashion industry, influencers are particularly important for marketing brands. This is another way how recommendations can lead to a depletion of stock of products when sales soar in the wake of their endorsements. Brands are also leveraging these influencers' ability to create engaging content that resonates with specific different groups beyond their widening audience. Comprehensive and real-time feedback converged through social media by consumers can provide brands with information on consumer decisions and preferences as they are happening. Brands use this built in feedback to better gauge what works (and what doesn't) and quickly update their products accordingly. Brands utilize both positive and negative feedback to improve their products and marketing approaches. Products shared by influencers have provided guidance and inspiration to users. This effect may not always be positive, sometimes negative effects may occur. Therefore, we can group these influencers under positive and negative impacts.

##### ***4.2.1. Positive Impacts***

The positive impacts of a product or service can be divided into two main categories: consumption-oriented and emotion-oriented benefits. Consumption-oriented benefits

include easy access to the product, whether through convenient delivery options or local availability, as well as the ability to find products that align with individual preferences, needs, and budgets. High-quality, user-friendly products that offer good value for money also contribute to a positive consumption experience. On the emotional side, products or services can inspire creativity or personal development, while also motivating individuals to reach their goals. Establishing trust through reliability or favorable reviews is essential for emotional satisfaction, as is fostering a sense of community or connection based on shared experiences or values. Consumers also feel a sense of empowerment when they have control over their choices, and the excitement of anticipating a product's arrival or use can lead to feelings of joy and fulfillment.

The current example shows, the influencer's effect in finding shoes for someone who is overweight and has big feet. On June 15, in the video of influencer 1 about sneaker recommendations (shoes shown in the video) that can be comfortable for overweight people, intense interest is observed by people with obesity and orthopedic problems in some comments:

*Shoe is perfect I ordered it immediately. It was very difficult to find comfortable women's shoes in size 42. I bought it and I am very pleased. I was not comfortable because I had flat feet, the 3rd shoe is great and very stylish. I want the 5th shoe, I could not find the link, can you share it again please. I normally can't wear anything other than sneakers because of my weight, but the 6th shoe looks sporty and comfortable.*

On August 18, in the video about plus size clothes, influencer 1 followers shared some comments on the products they were looking for:

*I was experiencing difficulty selecting clothing that complemented my hairstyle. Thanks to you I can find them now. These products are ideal, particularly if a discount were available, as I would appreciate the opportunity to purchase more. In the past, I encountered issues with my dress choices, particularly due to sizing limitations, as items were not available in a 3XL. I am now much more comfortable with my options, thanks to your guidance. Additionally, I am very pleased with my current selection and would be*

*interested in acquiring the same combination boiler. Could you please provide an urgent link for this product?*

On August 23, there was great interest by followers to influencer 1's collaboration with the famous clothing brand h&m. Some comments are:

*I have found some wonderful products, even in larger sizes, and I absolutely love them all. However, I noticed that one of the items is currently out of stock in the link. If you could restock it, I would be happy to purchase it. The discounts for October are fantastic, and I would love to take advantage of them. You have been an incredible help in finding clothes that suit my size. I truly appreciate your support in this regard, as there is always something for me to buy from every link you share. I plan to place an order next week for my birthday. Additionally, I recently purchased a gift for my cousin, and I am very happy with it—thank you so much! I am also curious if there will be more product links like these in the future. These products have made it much easier for plus-size individuals like myself to find clothes, and I would love to see more options available.*

Regarding the influencer 2's post celebrating her daughter's birthday on August 6, there have been quite a lot of positive comments from her followers to her very colorful frames, as well as those who are curious about the products in the post. Some comments:

*Ahhh beautiful mom, I'm glad you were born, I'm glad our little one was born. Strong mom! You have a daughter and you work, I am motivated thanks to you. I am motivated by your strong mom image. After you, I decided to start sports and lost 20 kilos. I am motivated everyday by looking at your stories. Your dress is so beautiful, where did you get it? Where did you get the dress on the princess, lady, I wonder?*

The influencer 2 who collaborated with the dress brand she wore on August 26, showed that it was a very useful collaboration from the brand's point of view, and some comments came as follows:

*I have placed an order for the dress. Could you please let me know if it is available in any other colors? I have ordered the full-length M evening dress, and I hope it arrives as expected. I also hope that the dress will suit me well. Thank you for providing the link. I am curious to see if the dress will look as good on me as it does on you. I purchased two dresses, one for myself and one for my brother, and I am grateful for your assistance. I was specifically looking for a dress like this, and thanks to your help, I was able to find the perfect one. Additionally, I had been searching for another item, and after seeing it on your site, I placed an order right away. Although the item was out of stock initially, I truly appreciate you letting me know, which allowed me to purchase the dress. Thank you so much!*

Influencer 2, who shared a positive and uplifting post in the Reels video on June 4th, received not only positive comments from her followers but also highlighted the significant role social media plays in shaping consumer behavior. The following are some of the comments:

*The formula for your healthy skin has been solved, but we have received our note@routine.skincvcling. Will there be sales from amazon, especially in America, for those who live abroad? It's obviously a great product, since you recommended it. We need a product link urgently. I love your tights from the topic independent link revenue. In what order are the products used? Can you tell me about that too? The products I use are great too. Your light is enough, my dear friend. But one thing is certain, the products will appear in the light as well. She was put on the try list. I wanted to glitter the way the stars do, today I will glitter because of you, keep making my skin glitter shinny. I was looking for a good skin product, I trust you a lot, thank you very much for introducing us to this product.*

The effect of trust is in the heart of this statement. Sweeping statements like, “I trust you very much, thank you for introducing us to this product.” The significance of trust in how recommendations can affect purchasing decisions and customer loyalty is a central part of the influencer-audience relationship (Hajli, 2014). The passage, “I wanted to shine so bright and with you, my skin will forever shine,” reflects how influencers can instill an emotional drive and aspiration in their followers. It makes a



reference to opening a new chapter in your life where you will maintain a healthy skin so that you can be confident to step out. As such, the emotional connection between the influencer and the audience surpasses that between the consumer and the product itself, giving rise to the desire to obtain it. That shows a clear picture of how one recommendation leads to an empowered decision.

This influencer 2 also does interviews about sports styling and wrote on June 15th that she was preparing for content on how to dress up for sports, which was a collaboration with another brand. Some comments:

*You are too pretty, The video is too good. What brand are your tights? Where can we buy it? If discounted cooperation appears, I hope we can buy them all. Great mixes of your energy and sports. You look very stylish. I was looking for exactly such tights, thanks to you, I have found them. Thank you very much. You recommend such amazing products I only buy the things you recommend that I really could not find that good or beautiful or useful on my own.*

The follower says, in a way that might sound familiar: *"I only buy the ones you recommend! Thanks so much!* This is the core trust factor a follower has with an influencer, believing enough in their opinion that they trust the influencer on what they should or should not buy. Trust and loyalty are hugely powerful and manifest in the willingness of the consumer to act on the influencer's recommendation, meaning whoever is doing the recommending herself has tremendous power. Aspiration and motivation is also seen in parts like, *"You are looking very stylish" "Love your energy and your combination of sports."* These words tell us that the follower not only loves the influencer's style, but wants to replicate it. More than just a random follower we've gotten attached to, in a way, they say, providing testimony through their own words to the "exactly such tights" they couldn't find anywhere else until now.

This sense of fulfillment and satisfaction comes from knowing that we have made informed choices that align with our values, contributing positively to our well-being and the well-being of others.

On June 22, her followers seem quite happy with influencer 2 collaboration with the skin care product brand. Some comments:

*It is a wonderful product that has a wonderful effect on your skin with regular use. You're great, honey, right now I will take. Not everything is creams, of course, the outward shining of the inner beauty is wonderful. You are great, as with everything, you are using a great product in your skin, the product we sell the most. Do you have this product in Germany? How can we order from abroad? Get it done immediately one-on-one for cellular regeneration! Thanks to you, I bought this product like a baby. Like yourself, you are determined to make us very beautiful, because thanks to you, we are getting acquainted with practical and useful products.*

The influencer 2, which promoted the sunscreen brand in its collaborative video on July 25, generated a lot of interest in the brand from her followers, and some comments came in the following way:

*Mashallah, youth is truly essential, and these products are among the finest available. I highly recommend these excellent creams. Aside from the creams, I absolutely love the swimsuit; could you please share the link? I have been using this brand as well, and I will continue to do so from now on – thank you for the recommendation! I had been searching for a good sunscreen, and your suggestion was perfect. Thank you very much for your help.*

In the August 13th collaborative video, followers have shown a great interest in the influencer 3 sharing about the pillow and the secret of a good sleep, and some comments are as follows:

*I'm also very curious about this pillow. We get the secrets of beauty. It is also good for neck straightening and neck health of those who constantly work at the computer. I am very pleased, thanks to you, I use it very fondly. Surely, I will try. I'm also wondering about this pillow. I'm driving i also use it fondly. My back pain is gone and my skin is smoother am so happy with it have recommended it to all my friends.*

This reflects the deeper, abiding transformations that influencers and influence have on society, that marketers seek and that influencers work to create in others.

#### 4.2.2. Negative Impacts

The immense influence social media influencers have on health perceptions can be particularly damaging when it comes to beauty standards, as this initiates unrealistic expectations of beauty in their followers. Indeed, many influencers may post images that are highly edited and filtered that reflect an unrealistic standard of beauty that could create feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem in their audience. As consumers juxtapose themselves against these idealized versions of human beings, it becomes effortless to cultivate a skewed view of their own body and participate in destructive behaviors to reflect the influencer aesthetic. Moreover, the pressure of these universal standards can compound problems with mental health like anxiety and depression. Moreover, this focus on aesthetics at the cost of authenticity can lead to the promotion of a superficial culture that values surface over substance, and in the process diminishes the many forms of beauty that social media could potentially showcase. The influencer 2's stylish post with a slogan on July 11 was so much criticized by her followers. There was heavy criticism about her photoshop on her appearance, which can be seen in the below comments.

*Such a thin waist is impossible! Your face can't be that smooth. Because of you, the whole perception of beauty has changed. No more nonsense, what are these thin legs! Because of you, the psychology of girls is deteriorating.*

The influencer 2 that posed in a bikini on July 23 has received a lot of attention but unfortunately the interest was negative from her followers, and some comments are as follows:

*Stop taking people for idiots. Because of you, people are dying because they take pills to lose weight. You are unnatural. Stop posting in such fake posts.*

During the holiday post on July 9, many curious followers submitted numerous questions to Influencer 2, seeking to satisfy their curiosity about various aspects of her life. In addition to these inquiries, Influencer 2 also faced some negative reviews.

*Which hotel are you at? Do you have any hotel suggestions? Your glasses are amazing, where can we get them as usual? Is the beauty of a bikini a joke? Where did you find it? The hat is great, if you please, the brand. Do you deserve*

*a vacation, and will we get a link to these beautiful combinations? In which the sea looks great is that the hotel? Do you go to such an expensive hotel in this economy? We understand that you are rich. Since you left, what was the need to share. What kind of show is this when people don't get along?*

The influencer 2, whose jewelry and part of her dress appeared in the selfie she shared on July 27, faced bad reviews. Here are the comments from the criticisms.

*If I were to invest money in a house, I would look good as well. It seems like you flaunt your wealth almost every time, displaying it for attention. A person who enjoys showing off often does so by putting others down.*

This kind of behavior can have a negative impact, as it promotes materialism and superficial values. Constantly flaunting wealth or possessions may lead others to feel inadequate or envious, fostering unhealthy comparisons. Additionally, the focus on "showing off" and conspicuous consumption can diminish the importance of genuine connection and self-worth, reinforcing the idea that one's value is tied to external appearances or material success. This can contribute to low self-esteem and dissatisfaction, especially for individuals who might not have the same resources or opportunities.

The influencer 3, who cooperated with the place where she went on August 23, received negative attention from her followers, and some comments came as follows:

*Your posts are really fun and enjoyable to read. You go to these beautiful places, create, collaborate, and tell these stories. But one has to question who can afford these expenses, and travel to such destinations at a time like this. It's time to consider the economic circumstances of your average. Would it be too difficult to create more empirical and relatable shared content?*

Influencers who constantly share highly curated, edited, and filtered images set an unattainable standard for beauty that can foster insecurity and low self-worth. Comments of the same type as those made about Influencer 2, who received much criticism for posting a heavily edited image of herself on the beach, such as "*Such a thin waist is impossible!*" and "*Your face can't be that smooth*" highlight the detrimental psychological effects these unrealistic depictions have on viewers. There

may be pressure for followers, especially young women, to conform to these ideals of beauty which can lead to body dysmorphia and unhealthy behaviors, either extreme dieting or taking deadly weight-loss pills, as echoed in some of the mean comments like: *'Because of you, people are dying because they take pills to lose weight'*. Additionally, the pressure to conform to strict standards of beauty can create a shallow culture that rewards appearance over authenticity. Outrage based on the posts of Influencer 2 and Influencer 3 on Instagram (e.g., luxurious vacations in exotic locations, designer clothing, etc.) generated comments doubting the authenticity of their lives. Posts, like, *"Do you even deserve a vacation?"* and *"We know you are wealthy,"* expose how social media influencers can unwittingly contribute to class divide and distance themselves from those who follow them. This disconnect can exacerbate mental health issues, with followers measuring their lives against the seemingly flawless and unattainable lifestyles of influencers, with feelings of resentment or worthlessness as the inevitable outcome. The negative effects of social media influencers on beauty standards are not limited to appearance; they also have an impact on mental health, body image, and perceptions of a socially desirable body shape. The joys of a new car, a stylish pair of shoes, or a shaded terrace at a fashionable location are amply documented on social pages.

#### ***4.3. Consumer Interaction and Engagement***

Consumer engagement is not only based on content, but also on the way social media (likes, shares, comments, etc.) allows the user to interact. Often, influencers connect in person with their audience, creating a sense of community and allegiance. It is worth noting that the user engagement is further intensified through the native features of social media that allow users to feel a degree of direct relationship with the influencers whose content they choose to consume. Social media engagement provides an alarming rate of the adoption of trends. When influencers promote and popularize new products, styles, or ideas, viral movements often follow, leading their followers to quickly replicate the trend. The phenomenal rise in popularity of specific styles of cosmetic application or hygiene routines, for example, is often attributed to exposure via influencer posts and instructional videos. Social media's lasting impact must not be limited to a short-term understanding of consumer behavior, for it plays a key role in shaping the long-term expectations and preferences of their consumers. Consumers are increasingly critical and selective about the ethical values and

authenticity of brands they play. There has been a noticeable commonality among brands to move towards sustainability and inclusivity; a concept heavily influenced through conversations across social media platforms. Through this analysis, we can determine that social media has a tremendous impact on beauty standards, customer behavior, and trends in the market that are reshaping the beauty industry.

Even when the dialogues are negative, they increase interaction. An individual who ridicules the overweight influencer simultaneously ridicules the influencer herself. They garner the interest of others and compel them to view the post in question. In doing so, greater visibility is achieved. Followers are influenced not only by influencers. Additionally, followers can influence one another. Subsequent remarks, such as "Having used it myself, it is an excellent product," exert a favorable influence on others and encourage them to make a purchase. This can be readily attributed to the influencer's subsequent posts being influenced by sold-out products. I have examined these interactions under two headings. These are Consumer to Consumer Engagement and Consumer to Brand or Social Media Influencer Engagement.

#### **4.3.1. Consumer to Consumer Engagement**

We can see people influencing each other in the comments and interacting with each other by giving their positive and negative opinions about them. To give an example on June 16 from influencer 2, there was a high demand for the collaboration of the maybelline brand and some comments came as follows, including some negative consumer comments.

*The clarity and color of the product are excellent, but it doesn't have the lasting power it promises. I find that I cannot apply it to my outer lip without it being easily removed. However, the moon shades suit you perfectly and look great. I also love your makeup overall. I'm curious, what colors do you recommend for brunettes? Do all shades look as great as this one? Also, which mascara would you recommend to avoid lashes clumping together? I really love this concealer, and I plan to purchase it again soon. The eyeliner is fantastic, and I've already bought two. I've been using this mascara and it was amazing, but it's out of stock now—thanks for recommending it again. "Awestruck," "Peppy," and "Punchy" look like ones I need to try next. Everything looks great on you!*

When the buyer reads the comment, they may find themselves uncertain about whether to purchase the product, as there are both positive and negative remarks. A user's comment, while making a purchase decision, has the potential to influence their opinion. On July 21, the influencer 3, who shared a post from a golf cart at a hotel she visited, garnered significant attention from her followers throughout the entire post. Some of the comments were as follows:

*Which hotel looks very nice there? I went to that hotel and I was not satisfied at all. The employees were very indifferent. Yes, you're right, we went to that hotel, they were extremely spoiled, we had problems with the room and they didn't help us at all. If you are thinking of going, don't go, we believed in the beauty of the hotel and went, but they never deserve the money they get.*

There has been a lot of interest in the influencer 2 who posted with her green dress and shiny bag on August 10, and some of the comments are as follows:

*Girls, I bought the dress before, it is simply perfect. Definitely buy it. I wore it to an invitation and everyone asked where I bought it. I was very indecisive whether I should buy it, but thanks to you, I will buy it.*

Some comments from influencer 3 followers who showed great interest in the brand in her collaboration with the skin serum brand on August 31:

*Use a great product, make it work. My love, you're like a baby. We know very well that you will not recommend anything that you do not use. I know. It's a great product. I also use this product. I was very happy when I saw that you recommended it. You're a baby, I'll take it right away. Good suggestion, thanks. More such collaborations emerge. I have also used this serum and I am very satisfied; everyone please take it. I bit, I don't remember when you posted it this serum again, I went to the comments, someone used it, he liked it very much, his skin had acne like I have, he busted acne. It's an excellent product.*

The consumer-to-consumer effect on social media via comments on influencer posts demonstrates how followers influence each other's buying decisions. Additionally, the comments for Influencer 2 and Influencer 3 demonstrate how positive and negative experiences from other consumers influence perceptions of a product or service. For

example, in the case of Influencer 2's Maybelline partnership on June 16, a mix of positive and negative reviews induced uncertainty in potential buyers. Although some people said they loved the product's color and quality, others said the product didn't last. This conflicting opinion left consumers conflicted on whether to buy, and the impact peer reviews have to either convince or dissuade a purchasing decision. In another post by Influencer 3 about a hotel stay on July 21, followers recounted good and bad experiences. Some were content with the hotel, while others said the service was poor, which might have convinced others to reconsider their travel based on the shared experience. It illustrates the power of consumer reviews to drive purchasing decisions, be it a product or service like hotels. In Influencer 2's August 10 post, in a green dress with a shiny bag, positive feedback from other buyers provided context for unsure shoppers. One follower who had previously purchased the dress urged her following, writing: 'I was on the fence, now I'll buy it'. Such peer recommendation can fuel the hesitation and lead to more purchases.

Finally, in Influencer 3's skin serum collaboration on August 31, comments from other users who shared their positive experiences with the product reinforced trust. Followers mentioned how the serum helped clear up acne, influencing others to try it based on these recommendations. Consequently, consumer to consumer influence is a powerful factor in shaping purchasing decisions. Potential buyers often rely on the feedback and experiences of others, creating a social proof effect where peer opinions can either enhance or diminish the credibility of an influencer's product endorsement.

#### ***4.3.2. Consumer Engagement with Brand or Social Media Influencer***

In this section we can see how consumers engaged with influencers or brands directly. Good and bad reviews always increase engagement, and we can see from this example as a good brand review. The influencer 2, who cooperates with the famous clothing brand h&m in the video dated July 11, has gathered a lot of attention to the brand and has positively affected the brand's sales. Some sample comments:

*Loved the first dress, thank you for the discount. Such collaborations always come, there are great discounts. Thanks to you, we can get it at a more affordable price, thank you very much, I am glad you decked out. I love this girl's energy. I wonder if black will look like black honey, I wonder excessively. I also wondered about black now. My honey looks great. I bought a lot of great*



*products, thank you very much! All the dresses are beautiful. I don't know which one to buy. Do you have any links to casual dresses to wear in daily life. I think these dresses will be very stylish in summer.*

After the announcement of the Barbie movie and after its release in cinemas, many different content related to the movie was produced and published, but the same influencer received many more interactions than others. The reason is consistent: She is overweight. Her post on July 18 garnered exactly 200,000 likes and 32,000 comments. Hundreds of people inquired about the outfit she was wearing in the video, and it was purchased numerous times through the link she shared. Not only overweight people, but people of all sizes have visited this link. Because of the interest and comments of consumers, interest in Barbie has increased and the influencer's viewership has risen. On July 27th, Foreo Turkey collaborated with Influencer 1 for a promotional campaign, and her followers engaged with the post. Showed great interest and some of the comments were positive. Thanks to these comments, Foreo products ran out of stock and sold thousands of them. Some comments:

*I definitely recommend it. I don't need to go for epilation, there is a great discount on the link. I wish I had seen this link earlier, I bought it last week, I want to return it and buy it here. It's exactly the device I was looking for, I'm buying 2 right now. I bought it as a gift for my wife, she was very pleased, thank you. Your suggestions are great, thank you very much. I love most of your suggestions, especially about such devices.*

In the June 14 collaboration post, influencer 2 followers who liked her pink dress very much showed us that there was a positive reflection on the brand's sales. Some comments are as follows:

*Oh, I love the dress, i am buying it right away. We bought this one, but please forward it to the brand so that the black one will also come. If there are other colors of this dress, I will buy them too. The dress is perfect, will there be another collaboration with the brand at a discount? Can I get a link to the bag? We also understand from these comments that the brand's sales have increased thanks to the good reviews of consumers.*

The influencer 1 who collaborated with Dyson on July 7, did an advertising study that will reflect quite positively on the brand, and the comments came as follows:

*I had another model; I bought this model. I loved its apparatus; I bought them all. Is there a cheaper model for this model? We bought 2. We loved them with my sister. It's a great invention, and I bought it right away. Finally, the collaboration came, we've been waiting for months, I ordered it right away thank you.*

The influencer 3, who collaborated with Marax for an hour in her post on July 30, attracted a lot of attention from her followers. It seems to have had a positive impact on the sales of this brand. Some comments:

*I love the watch. I bought a birthday present for my wife; she liked it very much. I will reward myself and buy this month. Are there any other models of a very stylish watch, I wonder? Collaborative watch sharing is coming more and more. We're starting to discount the shares, I bought 2. You are perfect, and so are the deals you make. Thanks to your cooperation, my confidence has increased, I recommend it to everyone. If you are going to cooperate with the brand, this is what happens! The brand will definitely stand behind you.*

The consumer-to-brand impact is clear in how influencers' collaborations with brands directly affect consumer behavior and drive sales, as seen through both positive and negative engagement. Influencer 2's work with H&M for that July 11 event drove significant attention and revenue with followers sharing comments such as "thank you now we can get it at a better price" and "I love this girl's energy". Thanks to these positive reviews, purchases spiked, all thanks to influencer-driven marketing. Similarly, Foreo Turkey's collaboration with Influencer 1 on July 27 was well received as well with such comments as "I don't need to go for epilation" and "I'm buying right now" boosting the sales of the product to an extent that forced it to run out of stock. "All the comments were positive, like, 'Oh, I love the dress, I'll buy it right away,'" says Influencer 2, whose collaboration with a brand on June 14 sparked strong sales for her pink dress. This means consumer interaction with influencer content can have a direct influence over a brand's revenue. In the case of Influencer 1, their Dyson collaboration on July 7 garnered wide-spread applause within their community as followers were excited about the product itself and bought it right away like we've seen firsthand in how influencer partnership shapes consumer purchasing behavior. Lastly, Influencer 3's partnership with Marax on July 30 generated consumer interest as well, with feedback including "I bought a birthday present to my wife, she liked it

very much." These comments highlight the influencers' power to sway consumer opinions, and their role as a vehicle for sales. As a result, consumer to brand communications on social media channels can be powerful, since positive or negative reviews can result in better or worse brand visibility and increased or decreased sales. However, it highlights how influencers directly impact brands and consumer buying decisions.



## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

### ***5.1. Theoretical Contributions***

This research provides several theoretical implications for beauty ideals, consumer behavior and decision-making as well as marketing, especially within scope of social media and influencer marketing. Results show social media is strongly influencing beauty and buying patterns of consumers. The study sheds light on how influencers and user-generated content not only disrupt and reshape traditional beauty standards but also influence and expedite the consumer purchase journey. These insights build on existing theory and open doors to new avenues of understanding in the interaction between media, marketing, and consumer psychology in the digital age.

#### ***5.1.1. Evolution of Ideals of Beauty***

This research is a step toward understanding evolving beauty norms because it showcases how social media allows beauty standards to be challenged and redefined. The data shows that influencers and user-generated content (UGC) play an essential role in supporting diverse beauty representations: body positivity, age inclusivity, and non-traditional beauty standards. This is consistent with the research of Tiggemann and Slater (2014), who considered the extension of beauty through media representations. The study further substantiates the argument of social media platforms not just as mirrors of existing beauty paradigms but rather as intermediaries responsible for the redefinition of socially constructed ideals by arguing for the role of influencers in shaping this transition by providing diverse and inclusive beauty archetypes.

#### ***5.1.2. Social Media as an Influence on Consumer Behavior & Decision-Making***

This study also expands the literature on consumer behavior with particular emphasis on the influence of social media on purchase decision-making process. This research shows that influencers have an immediate, direct effect on followers' purchasing intentions, with many consumers signaling that they plan to buy right after seeing an influencer post. This is consistent with those of Vernon et al. (2018a), which notes that social media platforms have greatly reduced the amount of time spent from being exposed to a product to the actual purchase. Like in the article, the immediacy of feedback found on social media (likes, shares, comments) accelerates this cycle

further with brands receiving real-time consumer data they can use to improve products and marketing plays.

#### ***5.1.3. Influence of Interactive Consumer Experiences***

This study builds on the work of Schau et al. (2009) which facilitates this process by analyzing the dyadic exchanges between consumers and influencers and the interactions among consumers. Consumers have used social media not as a full one-way communication channel but as a highly interactive medium during periods of scarcity, according to the study. Followers heavily feed off each other through comments, shared experiences, and recommendations, developing a sense of community and loyalty to both influencers and brands. Therefore, social media networks act as the center of consumer-to-consumer and consumer-to-brand interactions, which play a major role in determining consumer expectations and behavior.

#### ***5.1.4. Expectations of Ethics and Authentic Advertising in Beauty Marketing***

An important aspect of this research is given to the increasing demand for ethical and genuine marketing practices in beauty. These results correspond to a wider transition towards ethical consumption, consistent with Freeman (2015), who believed consumers nowadays search for brands that match their values, most notably sustainability, inclusiveness, and transparency. These expectations are amplified around social media, affecting consumer perceptions of brand authenticity. The study adds to a growing body of literature arguing that beauty brands must be transparent not just about the products they are promoting, but about how they run their businesses, if they want to retain consumer trust and loyalty in a crowded market.

### ***5.2. Managerial Implications***

The findings of the current study provide important managerial implications for beauty brands striving to manage the challenges of social media marketing, especially in the context of influencer marketing. This study argues for emphasis on the interactive features of social media to establish trust, authenticity and consumer brand loyalty. Additionally, the research outlines actionable steps to speed up the consumer decision process as well as engage with criticisms to build the brand more credibly.

### ***5.2.1. Accelerating the Purchase Process***

The results highlight that influencers act as acceleration agents in minimizing the purchase process time, particularly in the beauty industry. This provides an opportunity for brands to leverage influencers in creating instant interest, but removing friction with link-to-purchase through influencer posts. This built-in strategy has proven to develop and increase conversion rates, reflecting a progressive efficacy towards converting potential consumers into actual purchasers. This data point is extremely valuable for digital marketers, as it implies that influencers double as content creators and distribution channels.

### ***5.2.2. Consumer to Consumer and Consumer to Brand Engagement***

The concurrent impact of consumer-to-consumer and consumer-to-brand engagement plays a vital role in formulating effective beauty marketing strategies. As per the outcome, building a community around one's product is important for the brand. It means both, the audience should respond to the influencer, and the audience should respond to each other. One's product must be a gathering point, making various comments and postings ideal. The reason is that it means one's influencer is trustworthy, and if one's followers like the content they engage with and share, they might like a product or a service, the influencer promotes even more. The goal for an innovator is to arm the audience with content so they can surf the Internet and recruit new participants and clients.

### ***5.2.3. Managing Negative Feedback and Engagement***

The surprising revelation of this research is the discovery that negative comments increase visibility. On the other hand, it has been noted that a brand or an influencer is always taken a path to minimize negative feedback. Consequently, this research presents that even the claims which imply some ridicule accentuate visibility. This is so since these negative comments entail a fresh interaction, for instance, discussants who have seen that comment then start engaging. As a consequence, people start turning to the image, and the product becomes the subject of heated debate. Even if for certain brands and influencers the greater attention they achieve probably isn't an occurrence they hoped for, this clearly indicates that negative feedback should not be underestimated. This concern is relevant to an influencer, given the fact platforms often resist the flow of emotions unconditionally; in most cases, emotions come first.

Therefore, if a comment, which is being ridiculed, produces hot talks, then reality becomes the subject of a high-profile conversation, and all this becomes a wager for the brand.

#### ***5.2.4. Responsible and Genuine Methods of Marketing***

This shift in consumer demand for authenticity and ethical practices in beauty marketing is one that brands cannot ignore. Consumers' growing desire for transparency, sustainability, and inclusivity mean that brands who do not demonstrate these practices risk breaking consumer trust. As the study points out, social media is integral to setting consumer expectations when it comes to brand authenticity. Beauty brands need to make sure they practice what they preach when it comes to their marketing practices and align their business practices with the values of social media messages as the ethical standards being promoted. This includes transparency about product ingredients, sourcing and labor practices, as well as advancing a broader portrayal of beauty that resonates with a variety of consumers.

#### ***5.2.5. Strategies for Influencer Marketing***

This research emphasizes the importance of selecting the right influencers and building strong, authentic relationships with them for brands looking to unlock the value of influencer partnerships. Brands need to nurture their own relationships with influencers, finding those who not only touch on the brand promise but also resonate with the audience. Given that beauty trends change rapidly on social media, brands also need to remain agile and adjust their influencer strategies to align with changing consumer behaviors and beauty ideals. Thus, this study provides an in-depth look at the changes in beauty standards and consumer behavior that are being driven by social media, especially through the contributions of influencers. Consumer feedback is readily available, social media is interactive and ethical expectations are rising among consumers. The consumer-to-consumer and consumer-to-brand dynamics have transformed the way beauty brands can double down with deeper engagement, loyalty and sustainability. The results highlight the importance of brands being diverse, transparent, and authentic in their marketing efforts. For influencers, the research highlights that they are more than content creators they are a powerful force for change, able to drive both cultural shifts and product purchasing.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study explored qualitatively how social media shapes the construction and consumption of beauty in three separate social groups; the positive agers, plus size and traditional beauty standards and also respond to my research questions reflecting on how ideal beauty is transformed; how social media influencers affect the way beauty is perceived; and in what ways can beauty brands better engage with consumers to promote inclusive beauty standards? Rather, the findings underscore how social media contributes to widespread beauty ideologies, while also allowing marginalized groups the chance to show their own beauty paradigms in order to gain social acceptance. This enables these groups to advocate for and present their definitions of beauty, as the research shows that they feel social media enables them to do. The positive aging movement, for example, argues that older people also merit representation in beauty discourse, because beauty shouldn't necessarily be understood as being teetering on the edge of youth. The same thing is happening with people with excess weight in social networks; they promote body positivity, don't conform to the classic standards of thinness, and create a broader definition of beauty. Even those who conform to the beauty standard are taking to digital to learn their beauty philosophies and how to be spoken about in the transforming beauty conversation. Groups like these use social media, and in particular Instagram, to generate content to engage with their audience. By spreading a message of diversity and authenticity, influencers have a unique influence on the way beauty standards are redefined. We use the likes, comments and sharing of the user as indicators of how beauty standards and consumer behaviors may be influenced by social media. The beauty industry responded with a shift towards personalization and inclusiveness in its messaging, because consumers are increasingly seeking products and brands that reflect their own values and their definitions of beauty.

### ***6.1. Limitations and Future Research Opportunities***

However, there are also limitations for this study. For one thing, it's using only Instagram data, which doesn't account for other social media platforms. The nature of content and engagement on each platform may have led to different impacts of beauty perceptions on these platforms. For instance, the TikTok effect on beauty trends might be more rapid and viral than that of YouTube, which has longer-form



content. Future work may also explore additional platforms in order to determine how specific social media environments shape beauty standards differently. A further limitation is that the study is limited to a certain time period data taken from the Instagram posts between June 1 and September 1. Beauty trends (which can be seasonal) might not reflect more long-term changes in what constitutes beauty ideals, nor does a short window necessarily chart those changes. If longitudinal evidence followed beauty trends over time these dynamics would be better established. Also, the study's sample of influencers was relatively small and may not capture the full spectrum of beauty standards represented on social media. Micro and little influence persons are living in another world of affecting on beauty compared to elite influencers. To gain a deeper understanding of how the use of social media is shaping beauty norms among its users, future studies could sample a wider range of influencers and user-generated content. Moreover, to have more insight on the subject, influencers, practitioners and consumers should be interviewed in future.

To summarize, this research has provided important insights into the effects of social media on beauty ideals. Limited options for diversity in the current media also contribute to this issue of peer acceptance and definition of self. Alternative views of beauty, such as positive aging, body positivity, and following standard beauty norms, exemplify how beauty standards are changing through social media. Nonetheless, given the limitations of the study, it is fair to say that more research is needed to investigate the more complex and wider impact of social media on beauty standards. This take should be expanded with more platforms, cultural contexts and certain psychological dimensions to form a broader framework of how social media continues to craft ideals of beauty across different settings.

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