

Looking Good – Doing Good: The Effect of Physical Appearance Improvements on Prosocial Behavior

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Abstract

Physical appearance is an important part of one's identity. Interestingly, efforts to improve appearances are often perceived as a self-centred behavior. Hence, one might expect people who engage in physical improvements to be less prosocial. We hypothesized, by contrast, that improving one's appearance would increase prosocial behavior as a result of heightened public self-consciousness (SC). Physical improvement followed by donation giving behavior reflects people's desire to present themselves favourably to others. In Experiment 1, we found that a manipulation of adding a flattering Instagram filter to a selfie increased donation giving. In Experiment 2, this effect was replicated using a hypothetical makeup scenario. In Experiment 3, public SC mediated the relationship between physical improvement and donation giving, beyond the effect of positive mood. During a time when the beauty market is on a constant rise, these results have important implications.

Keywords: *physical appearance; prosocial; public self-consciousness*

Track: Consumer Behaviour