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Echoes of Beauty: A Comment Analysis of YouTube Makeup Content Through the Lens of Body Image and Appearance Ideals

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ABSTRACT

Aim: This study aims to explore the psychological effects of YouTube makeup tutorial videos by analyzing user comments through the lens of body image and appearance ideals, with a particular focus on themes related to body dysmorphic disorder (BDD). **Method:** A mixed-methods research design was used. A total of 2,000 comments were collected from the 10 most-viewed English-language makeup videos. The data were analyzed through thematic content analysis and sentiment analysis. Six major themes were identified: beauty admiration, negative self-comparison, cosmetic/behavioral intent, emotional reactions, opinion on content, and other. Each comment was also categorized as positive, neutral, or negative in sentiment. **Results:** The most frequent themes were “beauty admiration” and “opinion on content.” Comments praising appearance and makeup skills had the highest positive sentiment scores. Co-occurrence of subcodes, such as praise and envy, revealed emotionally complex reactions among viewers, suggesting an interplay between admiration and self-critical comparisons. **Conclusion:** While beauty content can foster inspiration and engagement, it also has the potential to heighten body dissatisfaction, promote harmful comparisons, and reinforce appearance-based validation. These findings highlight the importance of socially responsible beauty content and the need for mental health-supportive strategies on digital platforms.

Keywords: Body dysmorphic disorder, Body image, Makeup videos, Social media, YouTube

ÖZET

Amaç: Bu çalışma, YouTube’deki makyaj eğitimi videolarına yapılan kullanıcı yorumlarını beden imajı ve görünüş idealleri açısından inceleyerek bu içeriklerin psikolojik etkilerini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Özellikle beden dismorfik bozukluk (BDB) ile ilişkili temalar ön planda tutulmuştur. **Yöntem:** Araştırmada karma yöntemli bir tasarım kullanılmıştır. En çok izlenen 10 İngilizce makyaj videosundan toplam 2.000 yorum toplanarak nitel içerik analizi ve duygu analizi yapılmıştır. Tematik analizde altı ana tema belirlenmiştir: güzelliğe hayranlık, olumsuz öz karşılaştırma, kozmetik/davranışsal niyet, duygusal tepkiler, içeriğe dair görüşler ve diğer. Her yorum ayrıca olumlu, olumsuz ya da nötr olarak duygu analizine tabi tutulmuştur. **Bulgular:** En yaygın temalar “güzelliğe hayranlık” ve “içeriğe dair görüş” olarak öne çıkmıştır. Dış görünüme ve makyaj becerilerine yönelik övgüler en yüksek olumlu duygu puanlarına ulaşmıştır. Alt temalar arasında yer alan övgü ve kıskançlık gibi ifadelerin birlikte görülmesi, izleyici etkileşimlerinde çelişkili duygusal tepkilerin olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. **Sonuç:** Makyaj içerikleri kullanıcılar arasında pozitif etkileşim ve ilham sağlayabilirken, aynı zamanda beden memnuniyetsizliği, olumsuz karşılaştırmalar ve dış görünüme dayalı onay ihtiyacını da artırabilmektedir. Bu bulgular, güzellik temalı içeriklerde sosyal sorumluluk ve dijital platformlarda ruh sağlığını destekleyici stratejilerin önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Beden dismorfik bozukluk, Beden imajı, Makyaj videoları, Sosyal medya, YouTube

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INTRODUCTION

YouTube has emerged as a leading global platform for content creators, enabling them to connect with millions of viewers worldwide. Beauty and makeup tutorials are among the content categories, yielding substantial audience engagement. These videos frequently showcase influencers illustrating makeup techniques, delivering beauty advice, or evaluating cosmetic products. Although these videos can offer entertainment and valuable insights, they may also affect the mental health of the viewers, especially regarding body image.

A significant psychological issue linked to beauty-focused content on social media is body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) (1), a mental health condition characterized by a distorted self-image regarding physical appearance. BDD may result in compulsive grooming, social isolation, and emotional turmoil (2).

BDD likely arises from a complicated mix of genetic factors and stressors in the environment. Family and twin studies indicate that heritability varies between 37% and 49%, with non-shared environmental factors, such as peer victimization, contributing to the residual variance, whereas shared family factors, including parental socioeconomic status, seem to exert a lesser influence (3). So far, no genome-wide association studies have found

specific genetic variants that cause BDD. Suggested environmental risk factors encompass peer victimization and childhood trauma (4); however, current studies are constrained by cross-sectional designs and insufficient control for genetic confounding, which is crucial considering potential gene–environment correlations (5). Future research that is prospective and informed by genetics is necessary to elucidate the causal role of environmental factors and to validate heritability estimates in clinically diagnosed populations.

Social media platforms, characterized by constant exposure to idealized and curated images, can worsen these vulnerabilities by reinforcing appearance-centric self-schemas and triggering repetitive comparison mechanisms. Studies indicate that appearance-oriented online behaviors—such as posting selfies, following beauty influencers, and interacting with appearance-focused content—correlate with increased body dissatisfaction and dysfunctional appearance beliefs (6). These results indicate digital mechanisms that may facilitate the internalization of unattainable beauty standards, which could worsen BDD-related symptomatology.

But the evidence is still mixed. A recent three-wave longitudinal study involving 2,500 Czech adolescents aged 11–16 revealed that appearance-focused social media engagement

did not necessarily elevate body dissatisfaction six months later (7). Cross-sectional correlations between appearance-related activities and body dissatisfaction were identified; however, no within-person causal relationships were established, nor were the mediating roles of social comparison and ideal internalization validated. These findings indicate that the association between online appearance engagement and body image is more intricate than previously thought, potentially influenced by individual and contextual variables, including content interpretation, creator relatability, or platform type. YouTube's longer-form content and comment sections create a more interactive space for people to show their admiration, criticize, or think about themselves. This gives us a rich but not well-studied look at how beauty standards are made up by society.

Sanzari et al. (8) conducted a comparative analysis of two undergraduate cohorts from 2015 and 2022 to investigate the relationship between social media usage patterns and body image as well as disordered eating behaviors. In 2022, individuals indicated heightened body image disturbances, more prevalent disordered eating behaviors, and an increased engagement with image-centric platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat. The results importantly showed that the kind of content people watched, not how much time they spent or how many platforms they used, was a better predictor of negative body image outcomes. Exposure to weight loss content correlated with diminished body appreciation and heightened fears of negative

appearance evaluation, whereas body positivity or neutrality content exhibited no protective effects. These results highlight the significance of content type as a potential intervention target and emphasize the necessity to examine how exposure to beauty-related media may influence viewers' perceptions and self-assessments.

There is a lot of research on social media and body image, but not many studies have looked at how people talk about appearance-related content, especially in the comments section of YouTube videos. These comments not only show how viewers feel and think, but they also show what people think is attractive and real and how to present themselves. Analyzing comment discourse facilitates an ecological comprehension of body image processes as they authentically manifest within online communities, rather than depending exclusively on self-reported data. Furthermore, the integration of qualitative and quantitative analytical methods may clarify both the prevailing sentiment patterns and the complex meanings inherent in viewers' language.

The best ways to understand how YouTube makeup tutorials affect people's minds are through Social Comparison Theory and Objectification Theory. Festinger's (9) Social Comparison Theory posits that individuals possess an inherent drive to evaluate their attributes through comparison with others. In the context of digital media, viewers often engage in upward social comparison by contrasting their physical characteristics with those of influencers who frequently represent idealized beauty standards (10). The intimate,

high-def nature of makeup tutorials allows for a more direct comparison of facial features than older forms of media. This can be problematic; when viewers see a stark contrast between their own appearance and the heavily filtered or professionally polished looks of the content creator, it can lead to feelings of inadequacy regarding their own bodies.

Objectification Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how media consumption influences self-perception. Fredrickson and Roberts (11) suggested that self-objectification develops when people are exposed to media that prioritizes physical appearance, leading them to internalize an external observer's perspective on their bodies. Makeup tutorials often dissect facial features, highlighting elements that demand improvement or modification, including skin quality, lip form, and nasal structure. This approach can inadvertently foster a tendency for individuals to view their own characteristics as discrete components warranting constant examination and alteration. Such self-objectification can exacerbate the preoccupation with perceived flaws, particularly in those susceptible to body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), turning a typical beauty routine into a source of clinical suffering and compulsive behaviors centered on appearance.

This study aims to examine how self-objectification and upward social comparison are expressed in YouTube comment sections, using these two concepts together: To comprehend how video-sharing platforms may reflect or amplify the cognitive distortions

associated with BDD, an analysis of these discourses is necessary.

Despite the growing body of research examining the relationship between social media use and body dissatisfaction, the findings remain inconclusive, primarily due to the reliance on self-report surveys and a focus on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (12). These investigations frequently overlook the spontaneous, real-time expressions of distress that occur within digital environments. Analyzing YouTube comment sections offers a unique perspective; unlike static image-sharing platforms, YouTube tutorials are procedural in nature and specifically address perceived shortcomings. These comment sections function as a digital reflection of authentic conversations, illustrating how beauty standards are internalized through language that mirrors the characteristics of body dysmorphic disorder (BDD). This study bridges the gap between digital behavior and clinical symptoms by prioritizing the content of discourse over the duration of its use.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by performing a mixed-methods analysis of comments on widely viewed YouTube makeup videos. We specifically analyze [1] the thematic content of viewer comments concerning beauty, body image, and appearance ideals; [2] the overall sentiment expressed in these comments; and [3] the possible manifestation of body dysmorphic disorder-related concerns within audience discourse. This study aims to enhance comprehension of how beauty-centric YouTube content may influence, reinforce, or contest modern standards of appearance through the

combination of content and sentiment analysis. We posit that comments will primarily exhibit admiration for beauty transformations and the internalization of appearance ideals; however, indications of appearance anxiety and comparison may also surface, reflecting potential cognitive patterns linked to BDD risk.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Data Collection

Data collection took place in June 2025, using YouTube's public search feature. To minimize the impact of personalized algorithmic recommendations, the search was conducted in an incognito browser window, without a logged-in user account. The search term "makeup tutorial" was used, and the results were organized by "Relevance," reflecting the default ranking system a typical user would encounter. Only videos created by individual content creators were included, meaning brand-related or sponsored accounts were left out. Furthermore, duplicate uploads, compilation videos, and videos with disabled comment sections were omitted from the dataset.

The final dataset included ten videos uploaded between 2018 and 2025, with view counts ranging from 5.8 million to 47 million. The first 200 "Top Comments" from each video were systematically collected for analysis, resulting in a total of 2,000 comments. The choice of ten videos and 200 comments per video was based on the idea of theoretical saturation (13). Initial thematic analysis showed that no new major categories appeared after the first 1,500 comments. Therefore, a final sample

of 2,000 was considered sufficient to provide a complete and representative view of the discussion while still being methodologically practical.

We used R Studio (Version 4.3.2) (14) to collect comments. This program lets you import, access, change, and model data for analysis. We used the YouTube Data API to get comment data and the base R *sample()* function, which does simple random sampling without replacement, to pick comments at random.

Before the analysis, a two-step process was used to find and remove spam and bot-generated comments. First, automated keyword filtering found possible spam by looking for things like URLs, repeated emoji strings, too much capitalization, and promotional phrases like "check my channel" and "free giveaway." The R packages *textclean* and *tm* were used to do this step. Second, the first author checked the flagged comments manually to make sure they were correct. Also, comments that only had emojis, links, or ads that weren't relevant were taken down. We only kept comments that were in English and directly related to the video. The result of this process was an analytic dataset of 2,000 real viewer comments from the ten chosen videos.

Regarding ethical considerations, we have clearly stated that all usernames were removed, comments were reported in an anonymized form, and only publicly available data were analyzed.

Theme and Subcode Assignment

Comments were analyzed using a predefined coding framework based on

preliminary data inspection. The coding process included the following steps:

- A codebook was developed, containing both main categories and subcodes.
- Comments were coded manually.
- Six primary thematic categories were used:
 1. Beauty Admiration
 2. Negative Self-Comparison
 3. Cosmetic/Behavioral Intent
 4. Emotional Reactions
 5. Opinion on Content
 6. Other

The coding methodology utilized six primary thematic categories, each designed to align with the clinical features of BDD. To maintain diagnostic accuracy, "Negative Self-Comparison" was operationalized to identify recurrent cognitive patterns wherein individuals evaluated their appearance against that of the creator, mirroring DSM-5 Criterion B. The designation "Cosmetic/Behavioral Intent" was employed to identify discussions concerning grooming habits, the use of makeup to conceal perceived imperfections, or intentions to undergo cosmetic procedures, all of which exemplify the repetitive behaviors characteristic of BDD. Furthermore, "Emotional Reactions" were coded to encompass feelings of shame, anxiety, or hopelessness, which are consistent with Criterion C (clinical distress). Categories such as "Beauty Admiration" and "Opinion on Content" established a foundation for general engagement; however, the integration of comparison, behavioral intent, and emotional distress facilitated a nuanced identification of

BDD-related discourse within the naturalistic context of YouTube comments.

In addition to thematic coding, each comment was evaluated for sentiment polarity (positive, neutral, or negative). Sentiment scoring was conducted using both manual classification and automated techniques. While the valence of individual linguistic markers was anchored between -1 and +1, the final sentiment values were calculated as cumulative intensity scores. This methodology allows for aggregate scores to occasionally exceed the ± 1 range (e.g., 1.09) in cases where a comment or thematic category contains a high density of multiple, high-intensity emotional markers. Average sentiment scores were calculated for each thematic subcode to reflect the overall emotional weight and intensity of the discourse.

RESULTS

The Classification of Viewer Comments by Themes and Subcodes

To better understand the impact of YouTube makeup videos on viewers' body image perceptions, we analyzed the comments on the top 10 most-viewed makeup videos worldwide. Two hundred comments, in English, were collected from each video randomly and classified into thematic categories and subcodes. These included the following themes and subcodes.

1. Beauty Admiration

The predominant theme in the comments was appreciation for the beauty exhibited in the makeup tutorials. Audiences

consistently praised the aesthetic appeal of both the creator's appearance and the makeup techniques showcased in the video. This theme was significant as the beauty showcased in these videos captivates the audience and provokes intense emotional responses. Subcodes of the theme included the following:

Compliments on appearance

Negative comments on appearance

Praising inner beauty

Praise for makeup skills

Unnecessity of makeup

2. Negative Self-Comparison

This theme relates to instances in which individuals engage in unfavorable comparisons with others, resulting in feelings of inadequacy or envy. These behaviors frequently correspond to aesthetics, achievement, or material possessions, and they can influence self-esteem and body image. Subcodes of the theme included the following:

Feeling inferior

Envy

3. Cosmetic/Behavioral Intent

This category, though less frequently discussed, indicated viewers' interest in purchasing makeup products and experimenting with new cosmetic techniques. From the perspective of body image and BDD, such statements may indicate a desire to modify or improve one's appearance in the quest for perceived beauty standards. The demonstrated interest in products and techniques may be viewed not only as consumer behavior but also as a coping mechanism for dissatisfaction

related to appearance. This highlights how beauty content may both address and sustain viewers' anxieties regarding their physical attributes, potentially promoting maladaptive appearance-related beliefs in those who are vulnerable. Subcodes of the theme included the following:

Product Interest

Desire to Try

Cosmetic Suggestion

4. Emotional Reactions

This theme focuses on the emotional responses and support that individuals express towards others. These comments are often centered around promoting positive feelings, offering sympathy, or validating someone's emotions, particularly in relation to appearance, struggles, or personal challenges. Subcodes of the theme included the following:

Empowerment/Motivation

Reaction to Emotional Expression

Sympathetic Response

5. Opinion on Content

The video content generated numerous comments, featuring both positive and negative feedback concerning its effectiveness, structure, and overall quality. From the perspective of body image and BDD, these comments may significantly influence how individuals assess and perceive their own appearance. Critiques of content regarding its visual presentation or clarity, particularly in beauty-related videos, may reinforce perfectionistic standards and the belief that appearance must be carefully controlled and publicly confirmed. For

individuals prone to BDD, this environment of frequent aesthetic assessment may intensify concerns regarding perceived imperfections and lead to increased self-examination. Subcodes of the theme included the following:

General Praise

Specific Praise

Critique of Makeup Quality

Critique of Concept or Purpose

Question on Content

Wish for Content

Defense of Content

6. Others

This category captures comments that don't directly fit into the other themes or are more neutral in nature. Subcodes of the theme included the following:

Irrelevant

Sarcasm

Relatable Experience

Hostile/Hate Comment

INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS

Sentiment Analysis of Viewer Feedback

The dataset obtained offers valuable insights into the nature of user comments, focusing on various categories of feedback, their average sentiment scores, and number of likes.

Analysis of Top 10 Themes by Occurrence with Sentiment and Likes

The dataset reveals that *opinion on content* is the most frequent theme, appearing

732 times with a moderate mean sentiment of 0.23 and a neutral median sentiment of 0. This theme also accumulated a substantial number of likes (1,853), reflecting its central role in viewer engagement (Table 1).

Next, *beauty admiration* stands out with 653 occurrences and a notably high mean sentiment of 0.76 and median sentiment of 0.75, alongside the highest total likes (2,543). This suggests that positive aesthetic appreciation drives significant positive emotional responses and audience approval.

The *others* theme ranks third in frequency with 471 occurrences but has a relatively low mean sentiment (0.12) and median (0), indicating a more neutral tone overall, yet still garnering 2,133 total likes.

Less frequent themes like *cosmetic/behavioral intent* (99 counts) show moderately positive sentiment (mean 0.47), though with fewer likes (31), suggesting niche but engaged discussion.

Themes such as *emotional reactions* and *negative self-comparison* have smaller representation but maintain mildly positive mean sentiments (around 0.27-0.30), indicating nuanced emotional expressions within the dataset.

Overall, the findings highlight that themes related to opinion and *beauty admiration* dominate user comments, both in frequency and positive emotional engagement.

Table 1. Analysis of Top 10 Themes by Occurrence with Sentiment and Likes

Theme	# of Comments	Mean Sentiment	Median Sentiment	# of Likes
Opinion on Content	732	0.23	0	1853
Beauty Admiration	653	0.76	0.75	2543
Others	471	0.12	0	2133
Cosmetic/ Behavioral Intent	99	0.47	0.40	31
Emotional Reactions	26	0.27	0.23	55
Negative Self Comparison	19	0.33	0.25	66

Top 10 Subcodes by Highest Mean Sentiment with Total Likes and Frequency

The analysis of the top 10 subcodes ranked by their average sentiment scores revealed clear patterns of positive engagement within the dataset (Table 2). The subcode *praising inner beauty* led the list with the highest mean sentiment of 1.09, despite its relatively low occurrence (4 comments), reflecting a strong positive emotional response from viewers. This suggests that comments emphasizing intrinsic qualities resonate deeply, even if less frequent.

Following closely was *compliments on appearance* (mean sentiment = 0.87, total likes = 974, count = 469) and *praise for makeup skills* (mean sentiment = 0.86, total likes = 1,237, count = 173), indicating that outward appreciation—both for looks and technical skill—is highly valued by the audience, as reflected by both sentiment and like counts.

Other subcodes such as *general praise* (0.82), *specific praise* (0.78), and *empowerment/motivation* (0.73) also demonstrated strong positive sentiment scores, though with varying frequencies and likes. Interestingly, *unnecessity of makeup* (0.72) reflects a positive stance promoting natural beauty or makeup skepticism, showing the diversity of positive audience attitudes.

Subcodes with moderate positive sentiment include *feeling inferior* (0.65), *wish for content* (0.61), and *cosmetic suggestion* (0.52), indicating more nuanced emotional tones and viewer engagement levels.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of both intrinsic qualities and technical/artistic appreciation in driving positive viewer sentiment and engagement in online makeup related content.

Table 2. Top 10 Subcodes by Highest Mean Sentiment with Total Likes and Frequency

Subcode	Mean Sentiment	# of Likes	# of Comments
Praising inner beauty	1.09	472	4
Compliments on appearance	0.87	974	469
Praise for makeup skills	0.86	1237	173
General praise	0.82	170	133
Specific praise	0.78	277	54
Empowerment/motivation	0.73	17	16
Unnecessity of makeup	0.72	304	88
Feeling inferior	0.65	71	24
Wish for content	0.61	8	31
Cosmetic suggestion	0.52	22	47

Top 10 Subcodes Based on Total Likes: Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis of comment subcodes based on total like counts revealed noteworthy patterns in audience engagement and emotional tone (Table 3). The most liked subcode was *critique of concept or purpose* (total likes = 1,423, mean sentiment = -0.02), indicating that critical evaluations of the idea video based on, despite a neutral to slightly negative emotional tone. Similarly, *praise for makeup skills* garnered 1,237 likes across 173 occurrences and had a notably positive sentiment (mean = 0.86), suggesting high appreciation for technical expertise.

Irrelevant comments ranked third in popularity (1,159 likes), yet their average sentiment remained near neutral (0.11), possibly reflecting confusion, off-topic content, or ambiguity. Meanwhile, *compliments on appearance* not only occurred frequently (n = 469) but also received 974 likes and exhibited a

high mean sentiment (0.87), reinforcing the strong emotional importance of appearance-based praise.

Less frequent but highly effective subcodes such as *praising inner beauty* (mean sentiment = 1.09) and *specific praise* (mean = 0.78) showed that positively framed personal attributes and specific appreciation can provoke intense emotional reactions, even with limited occurrences. Interestingly, *sarcasm*, often associated with critique or humor, appeared 129 times with a relatively low like count (160) and modest sentiment (0.23), suggesting mixed audience reception or varied interpretation.

These findings illustrate that both affirmative expressions (e.g., praise, compliments) and critical perspectives (e.g., conceptual critiques) can attract engagement, yet the sentiment embedded within them varies considerably. This highlights the complex nature of viewer interaction with makeup transformation content on digital platforms.

Table 3. Top 10 Subcodes Based on Total Likes: Analysis and Interpretation

Subcode	# of Likes	# of Comments	Mean Sentiment
Critique of concept or purpose	1423	307	-0.02
Praise for makeup skills	1237	173	0.86
Irrelevant	1159	270	0.11
Compliments on appearance	974	469	0.87
Relatable experience	785	88	0.26
Praising inner beauty	472	4	1.09
Unnecessity of makeup	304	88	0.72
Specific praise	277	54	0.78
General praise	170	133	0.82
Sarcasm	160	129	0.23

Co-occurrences of Subcodes

To explore thematic intersections in user comments, we conducted a subcode co-occurrence analysis based on subcode 1 and subcode 2. Codes were transformed to lowercase and treated as unordered pairs, allowing us to detect meaningful co-mentions across comments (Table 4).

1. Praise of appearance alongside the unnecessity of makeup

This recurring association of *compliments on appearance* and *unnecessity of makeup* indicate a conflicted attitude regarding changes to appearance with makeup. Viewers appreciate the final appearance while also questioning the necessity of cosmetic enhancement. This may indicate internal conflicts regarding natural and altered beauty ideals from a body image perspective. Individuals susceptible to BDD may experience increased confusion regarding

self-presentation due to mixed messages, which can intensify feelings of inadequacy regarding their natural appearance while simultaneously suggesting that enhancement is inauthentic or unnecessary.

2. Skill appreciation intersects with beauty admiration

Compliments that address both beauty (*compliments on appearance*) and technical skill (*praise for makeup skills*) promote the notion that appearance can be attained through mastery and effort. This may strengthen the notion that "looking good" constitutes both a skill and a responsibility. Individuals experiencing body dissatisfaction or tendencies toward BDD may face heightened pressure to conform to specific appearance standards and to acquire the skills necessary for self-transformation.

Table 4. Co-occurrences of Subcodes

Subcode 1	Subcode 2	# of Co-occurrences
Compliments on appearance	Unnecessity of makeup	52
Compliments on appearance	Praise for makeup skills	34
Product interest	Question on content	18
Critique of makeup quality	Sarcasm	17
Critique of concept or purpose	Sarcasm	12
Feeling inferior	Praise for makeup skills	12
Critique of concept or purpose	Question on content	9
Critique of makeup quality	Negative comment on appearance	8
Compliments on appearance	Envy	7
Cosmetic suggestion	Critique of makeup quality	6

3. Consumer interest associated with information-seeking

Questions (*question on content*) regarding product names (*product interest*) and tutorials highlight a consumer-oriented inclination to reproduce aesthetic results. This illustrates that beauty is frequently perceived as an attainable commodity in the realm of body image. Individuals at risk for BDD may engage in compulsive behaviors, including excessive grooming, frequent purchasing of products, or ongoing efforts to rectify perceived imperfections.

4–5. Sarcasm associated with critical perspectives

The simultaneous presence of sarcasm and critique indicates indirect or concealed forms of judgment based on appearance (*critique of makeup quality* and *critique of concept or purpose*) Such comments can induce

a harmful evaluative atmosphere, wherein humor serves to mask strict standards. For individuals vulnerable to BDD, such ambiguous critique can intensify self-consciousness, shame, and anxiety regarding negative evaluation.

6. Insecurity combined with beauty admiration

Experiencing feelings of inferiority (*feeling inferior*) alongside recognition of makeup skills (*praise for makeup skills*) indicates upward social comparison, wherein admiration for others correlates with negative self-assessment. This dynamic can undermine self-esteem from a body image perspective. For individuals at risk for BDD, this may reinforce maladaptive cognitions, such as the belief that one can never achieve a certain level of appearance, thereby intensifying distress related to appearance.

7–8. Critical tone combinations

When viewers question a video's intent (*question on content*) or critique its aesthetic outcomes and structural elements (*critique on concept or purpose*), it indicates a skeptical perspective regarding the legitimacy or authenticity of beauty content. This could induce skepticism regarding appearance-enhancing practices. For individuals with a vulnerable body image, such skepticism may increase existing doubts regarding self-worth or provoke an intensified focus on perceived imperfections.

9. Admiration accompanied by envy

The combination of praise (*compliments on appearance*) and envy reveals a conflict between favorable evaluation and internal discontent. This is consistent with social comparison theory, which posits that observing individuals deemed more attractive can negatively impact body satisfaction. In susceptible individuals, such mixed emotional responses may contribute to the symptomatology of BDD, reinforcing feelings of inadequacy and unattainability.

10. Suggestions combined with criticism

Proposing alternatives (*cosmetic suggestions*) alongside critiques of results (*critiques of makeup quality*) illustrates the way viewers participate in prescriptive aesthetic judgment. This dynamic suggests the existence of a "correct" or superior standard of appearance, thereby reinforcing strict beauty norms. Individuals at risk for BDD may experience heightened obsession with

perceived flaws and engage in perfectionistic appearance behaviors when exposed to such discourse.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the way viewers interact with makeup tutorial videos and how these interactions signify underlying processes associated with body image, self-perception, and social comparison. Qualitative content analysis of YouTube comments revealed several interconnected themes that clarify the duality of beauty admiration and the psychological mechanisms driving appearance-related feedback.

The central theme of beauty admiration emphasizes the viewers' fascination with the aesthetic appeal showcased in these videos, often articulating sincere praise for appearance.

Compliments on appearance can boost someone's self-esteem and contribute to positive body image, especially when the compliments feel genuine. However, excessive or superficial compliments may also contribute to an individual placing too much value on their appearance, potentially leading to over-reliance on external validation. In addition, research shows that receiving compliments regarding appearance may result in increased body surveillance and dissatisfaction, particularly among individuals with elevated self-objectification (15), indicating that even supposedly positive feedback can unintentionally worsen maladaptive body image issues.

Statements highlighting the *unnecessity of makeup* can be empowering by developing self-acceptance and motivating individuals to embrace their authentic appearance. Still, these messages may unintentionally impose pressure to conform to the standard of "natural beauty." Individuals who appreciate makeup or use it to enhance their self-esteem may experience insecurity or fear of judgment in response to such remarks, potentially resulting in internal conflict regarding their aesthetic decisions (16).

Praise for makeup skills can promote creativity and confidence in those who enjoy makeup, which can enhance self-esteem and social attractiveness. Excessive praise of makeup skills could encourage the belief that makeup is essential for attractiveness or acceptability, thereby reinforcing unrealistic beauty standards. The duality of admiration illustrates that although encouragement can empower individuals, excessive focus on appearance and makeup skills may result in self-objectification and increased reliance on external validation, particularly when makeup application conforms to societal beauty standards (17).

The existence of *negative comments regarding appearance* within this theme highlights the potential damage that critical or insulting comments can cause to individuals' body image and self-esteem, making them feel inadequate. This aligns with existing literature that associates negative online feedback with heightened risks of body dissatisfaction and disorders like BDD (18). The subtheme of

praising inner beauty acts as a protective counterbalance, reinforcing the value of personality and kindness over physical appearance. It helps people recognize their worth beyond just external traits and can support healthy self-esteem. However, it can sometimes be interpreted as a subtle suggestion that one's outward appearance isn't as good or important, depending on the context.

The theme of *negative self-comparison* highlights how social media may trigger feelings of inadequacy and envy, possibly worsen psychological distress, and contribute to maladaptive body image issues. This occurs when individuals engage in negative comparisons with others—often concerning appearance, achievements, or material assets—ultimately impacting their self-esteem and mental well-being. *Feelings of inferiority* frequently arise from societal expectations or idealized standards of beauty and success, which might reduce the feeling of self-worth and lead to negative body image or other psychological issues. Likewise, *envy* may cause emotional instability, including anger, bitterness, or sorrow, developing discontent with one's physique or life situation. In instances of BDD, jealousy might get worse with obsessive ruminations regarding modifications to one's appearance to conform to idealized representations. These findings confirm previous research highlighting the negative effects of upward social comparisons in digital contexts, especially among adolescents and young adults (19).

The *cosmetic/behavioral intent* theme, while less common in user comments, offers significant insight into viewers' interactions with beauty products and cosmetic techniques, emphasizing the commercial aspects of online makeup content. *Interest in beauty products* frequently stems from habitual personal care routines or the aspiration to improve one's appearance. Excessive fixation on cosmetics can cause an over-dependence on these products, leading to feelings of inadequacy when without any makeup. Such tendencies are often influenced by dominant societal beauty norms and internalized self-perception issues. The expressed *desire to try* new beauty products or treatments could indicate serious motivations tied to self-expression and personal style. However, this tendency may also be influenced by external factors such as social media, celebrity culture, and idealized beauty standards, which can intensify dissatisfaction with one's natural appearance (20). In more severe instances, this desire might indicate underlying body image disorders or a compulsion to conform to culturally approved aesthetic standards. *Cosmetic suggestions*, although frequently aimed at aiding, can unintentionally reinforce limited notions of physical idealism. Frequent exposure to such recommendations may strengthen the belief that one's natural appearance is inadequate, thereby increasing the pressure to conform to external beauty standards.

This dynamic can affect individuals who may not initially desire cosmetic changes

but get influenced by common societal expectations.

The *emotional reactions* theme includes the affective responses and expressions of support individuals communicate to others regarding appearance or personal difficulties. Such statements frequently create positive emotional experiences, empathy, and validation, thus enhancing a supportive online atmosphere. *Empowering and motivational statements* are essential for improving self-esteem and creating a positive body image. By promoting self-acceptance and highlighting intrinsic strengths beyond physical appearance, these statements can be especially advantageous for individuals struggling with self-doubt or body image issues. They function as validations of value and courage, reducing negative self-perceptions. Reactions to emotional expressions may enhance individuals' feelings of acknowledgment and understanding, which are vital for mental wellness, especially regarding body image issues and BDD. This validation reduces feelings of isolation and rejection frequently encountered by individuals struggling with negative body perceptions. Social support and a sense of connection improve emotional processing and enable individuals to manage distressing thoughts about their appearance more effectively. When individuals feel that their emotions are recognized and accepted, it frequently results in improved mental health and a heightened sense of belonging (21). *Sympathetic response* offers comfort and emotional stability in challenging situations, thereby improving stress

management capabilities. Furthermore, these displays of empathy may diminish isolation and promote open, healthy expression of body-related anxieties within the community. Therefore, supportive and sympathetic responses function as crucial protective factors in the emotional recovery and resilience of individuals experiencing body image issues and BDD (22).

The *opinion on content* theme may suggest how the interactive nature of social media, especially sites like YouTube that rely heavily on peer feedback and visual content, can affect people's mental health and body image. Comments from viewers on videos that show how makeup changes are a good example of these dynamics: Constructive *critiques regarding makeup quality* or *video concepts* may enhance creativity and facilitate improvement; however, severe or appearance-centric criticism may diminish creators' self-esteem and worsen body dissatisfaction. This corresponds with theoretical frameworks indicating that social media influences body image via mechanisms including negative social comparison, peer influence, and the internalization of appearance standards. People who are more likely to be vulnerable, such as those who are prone to body dysmorphic tendencies, may be especially sensitive to feedback that is critical or focused on appearance. This can make them obsess over perceived flaws and reinforce unhealthy body image concerns (23).

Sarcasm, though frequently amusing, can adversely affect individuals' body image

and self-esteem, especially when aimed at physical appearance or individual goals. Misunderstanding sarcasm can result in confusion or stress, increasing vulnerability to body dissatisfaction and symptoms of BDD.

Revisiting the central research inquiries, this investigation reveals that YouTube makeup tutorials function as more than just entertainment; they act as a "digital mirror," reflecting and exacerbating the cognitive patterns associated with BDD. While prior studies have predominantly examined image-focused platforms like Instagram, our research offers a fresh perspective by emphasizing the significance of procedural and instructional content in relation to body image distress. Through the analysis of naturalistic discourse, rather than relying on self-report surveys, we have determined that the instructional character of these videos fosters a distinct "responsibility to transform," wherein viewers internalize beauty as a skill they can acquire. This study addresses a critical void in digital body image research by documenting how specific linguistic markers, such as flaw fixation and camouflage-seeking, reflect clinical BDD symptomatology within a real-world digital environment. Consequently, these findings are essential for the development of targeted media literacy initiatives designed to address the specific psychological triggers inherent in video-sharing platforms.

Overall, these results show how mixed digital beauty engagement can be. On the one hand, online beauty communities can encourage creativity, connection, and self-expression. On

the other hand, they can also reinforce the need for validation based on looks and social comparison. Based on theories of objectification and social comparison, this study emphasizes the necessity for media literacy initiatives and supportive online practices that foster critical awareness of beauty standards. Subsequent research may build upon these findings by investigating the influence of algorithmic exposure, influencer culture, and user demographics on the relationship between beauty admiration, self-objectification, and mental health in digital environments.

Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional and observational design prevents any causal interpretation of the relationships identified between comment content, sentiment, and indicators of body image concern. The results indicate associations rather than causal relationships and should be interpreted with caution. Second, the qualitative coding was mainly done by one researcher, which could have made it less objective even though the researcher tried to make it more credible by doing iterative coding and audit checks. Subsequent research may utilize several independent coders to enhance interrater reliability. Third, the dataset was restricted to

English-language comments, limiting the cultural generalizability of the results and potentially failing to represent the views of non-English-speaking audiences. Fourth, YouTube doesn't give detailed demographic information

about commenters, so it wasn't possible to see how age, gender, or location might have affected the content of comments. Fifth, a significant limitation of this research lies in its inability to correlate YouTube comments with the commenters' clinical status or psychiatric backgrounds. The analysis is restricted to naturalistic digital interactions; therefore, the results should be interpreted as reflections of appearance-related communication behaviors, rather than a measure of clinical prevalence or individual susceptibility to BDD. Subsequent research utilizing standardized clinical instruments in conjunction with qualitative data is essential to authenticate these discursive markers. Lastly, YouTube's video ranking system may have had algorithmic biases that affected which videos were most visible and thus included in the sample. Subsequent research must tackle these constraints by integrating cross-cultural samples, demographic metadata, and longitudinal or experimental methodologies to enhance the understanding of causal relationships between social media engagement and body image issues.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of comments on makeup tutorial videos reveals a complex interplay of admiration, self-perception, emotional support, and critique. While beauty-related content may encourage creativity, confidence, and community involvement, it also poses risks linked to appearance-based validation, harmful self-comparisons, and exposure to negative

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feedback. Content creators and mental health professionals must recognize these dynamics to promote healthier engagement with beauty media. Encouraging fair dialogues that emphasize both internal characteristics and appearances, while creating supportive environments, might reduce the adverse effects on viewers' body image and self-esteem. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of such content and assess intervention

strategies to enhance positive psychological outcomes in social media contexts.

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