

Curated Digital Identities and Student Wellbeing: Examining the Psychological Impact of Social Media Filters

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Abstract: The rapid integration of digital technologies into higher education has significantly influenced students' mental health and overall wellbeing. Among these, social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat play a crucial role in shaping identity, self-perception, and social interactions. This paper explores the intersection between digital identity construction—particularly through augmented reality (AR) filters—and mental health within higher education contexts.

Drawing upon empirical insights and existing literature, the study examines how curated digital identities impact self-esteem, body image, and psychological wellbeing among students. It further evaluates institutional policies, pedagogical practices, and research perspectives aimed at promoting holistic wellbeing. The findings indicate a dual impact: while digital tools foster creativity and self-expression, they also contribute to anxiety, social comparison, and unrealistic standards.

The paper concludes by advocating for integrated mental health policies, digital literacy education, and student-centered wellbeing frameworks to address emerging challenges in higher education.

Keywords: Mental Health, Higher Education, Digital Identity, Social Media, AR Filters, Wellbeing, Policy, Self-esteem

1. INTRODUCTION

Instagram and snapchat have changed the way people represent themselves online. Among the most important tools transforming digital identities is the application of social media filters. The filters, from basic color adjustment to augmented reality ones, enable users to change their appearance, convey emotions, and stage their online personas. Filters help to construct identity through self-expression, increased perceived beauty, and conformity to certain cultural or social fashions. They also help to reinforce beauty ideals, shape self-perception, and affect the way others see users. Although these virtual tools provide freedom of creativity, they also create issues regarding authenticity, self-esteem, and the psychological effects of filtered self-presentations. This dissertation identifies how social media filters aid identity formation, investigating their psychological, social, and cultural impact. Through

exploring their influence on self-conception, social relationships, and online identity formation this research seeks to shed light upon the changing connection between technology and self- presentation in the digital world.(2024, November 19)

1.1. Background and Relevance

The advent of photo-sharing platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat has altered human communication, experiential sharing, and presentation online. These social media leaders have done a departure from older text-focused sites by centering visual information in their platform architecture. These innovations have powerfully influenced contemporary visual culture in fashion and beauty trends, presentation and expression, as well as how people define and represent themselves.

Among the most revolutionary advancements in this visual culture is the arrival of augmented reality (AR) filters. These filters, enabling users to alter their look in real-time, vary from light-hearted augmentations (e.g., animal ears or cartoonization) to advanced beauty tweaks (such as facial reshaping and skin smoothening). AR-based filters give people new means of testing out their image, subverting conventional concepts of authenticity as they unlock novel creative avenues.

Understanding these filters is essential to gaining insight into identity development in the digital era. Through their interaction with such technologies, they tend to move between their offline self and their digitally embellished self, affecting how they both view themselves and are viewed by others. Filters can perpetuate ideals of beauty, define self-esteem, and even transform cultural standards for appearance. Through an examination of their influence, we can better understand the psychological, social, and cultural aspects of identity in a period when digital representation becomes ever more determining.

Defining Identity in the Digital World:

Identity is the way in which people view themselves and project themselves to others. Self presentation theories, including Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory, propose that individuals control their identity depending on social situations, similar to actors playing roles. In virtual settings, this process is intensified, as people can edit and present their digital identities more consciously than in face-to-face interactions.

Digital identity is distinct from offline identity because it is often highly curated and selectively presented. Social media and online platforms enable users to enhance photos, filter information, and frame narratives, creating an idealized or strategic rather than an authentic representation of the self. In contrast with offline identity, informed by chance interactions and bodily presence, digital identity is created through deliberate decision-making about what to post, exclude, or alter. This carefully constructed online presence can produce inconsistencies between digital identities and actual experiences, which affect self-concept and social relationships. Filters are more than virtual upgrades; they are potent vehicles of self-representation that enable users to recast the way they appear before the world. For subtle improvement or radical overhaul, filters provide a means by which users can test out a range of different appearances, feelings, and even identities.

For instance, beauty filters smooth out skin, enhance facial features, and add virtual makeup, presenting users with a polished and idealized version of themselves. Whimsical overlays, such as animal ears, humorous distortions, or animated effects, bring humor and playfulness, enabling individuals to show their playful and creative aspects. Cultural or thematic filters allow users to enter other personas such as donning virtual traditional clothing, emulating cinematic styles, or even taking on aspects of fantasy or historical figures.

These filters are more than superficial appearance; they form digital identity, affect self-image, and act as a medium for storytelling, creativity, and personal branding in the online realm.

Filters, especially social media filters, have strong social and psychological effects on individuals. They have the ability to influence self-perception, confidence, and how people pursue social validation.

Filters will change how someone looks by brightening features, smoothing out the skin, or altering facial ratio. This is usually followed by a comparison effect, whereby one compares their natural self to the idealized digitally enhanced self. This will contribute to lower self-esteem in the long run because individuals feel that they do not naturally live up to the standards created by their filtered pictures.

Moreover, as social media approval (likes, comments, shares) is usually appearance-based, individuals might be compelled to utilize filters to obtain acceptance. This third-party

endorsement may then form a vicious circle where self-value tends to be more and more dependent on virtual acceptance instead of true self-acceptance.

The “dual Nature of Filters

Filters are not necessarily bad. They can be a means of self-expression, creativity, and even identity experimentation. For instance, fantasy or playful filters enable individuals to try out various appearances, artistic styles, or even non-human identities. This can be liberating, particularly for those experimenting with gender identity, fashion, or personal style in a secure virtual environment.

But the drawback is that most of these filters propagate narrow beauty ideals tends to prefer light skin, sharp jawlines, and petite noses. This leads to homogenization, wherein individuals feel obliged to conform to one ideal standard instead of appreciating diversity of looks. These filters, used excessively, tend to result in body dysmorphia and further dissatisfaction with real-world appearances.

This fact explains how the application of digital filters on social media is determined by cultural standards, gender expectations, age groups, and other factors. N. C. Z. (2024).

1.2. Impact of local trends in filter preference while interacting with global platforms :

a. Cultural Influence on Filters

Unique beauty ideals exist across different cultures, influencing the application of filters. For instance:

In East Asian cultures, filters often emphasize pale skin, large eyes, and a slim face, reflecting traditional beauty ideals.

In Western cultures, filters may focus more on tanned skin, sharp jawlines, and fuller lips, aligning with trends influenced by celebrities and influencers.

In Middle Eastern cultures, beauty filters often highlight defined eyebrows, contoured faces, and dramatic eye makeup, consistent with local beauty aesthetics.

b. Age-Based Differences

Different generations use filters for various reasons:

Gen Z (Teenagers & Young Adults) Play with filters in an imaginative manner, tending to use AR (Augmented Reality) features such as cartoon faces, animal ears, or over-the-top distortions for entertainment.

Millennials (Mid-20s through Late 30s) Employ filters to subtly improve attractiveness, softening skin or tweaking lighting to look refined on professional or social media sites.

Older Generations (40+) Employ filters judiciously, tending to opt for light touches such as softening wrinkles but stopping short of over-altering.

c. Gender-Based Trends

Women make use of filters enhancing features (smooth skin, larger eyes, makeup effects).

Men can use filters to create a sharp look, facial hair, or change the lighting for a more “masculine” appearance.

Non-binary users could use filters to test out gender presentation, utilizing effects meeting or defying conventional gender expectations.

d. Global Platforms vs. Localized Trends

Social media sites such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat have worldwide reach, but filter use is influenced by local trends:

Global Trends: Certain filters become viral globally based on celebrity usage or meme culture.

Local Preferences: In China, Meitu apps provide very stylized beauty filters, whereas in Western economies, natural-appearing enhancements are favored.

Cultural Sensitivity: Certain filters can be criticized for cultural symbol appropriation (e.g., filters that imitate traditional clothing or facial characteristics).(2024, October 7)

1.3. Examples which reflect the complex challenges and moral questions raised by the use of AR filters in shaping digital identity:

- a. **Authenticity** AR filters and digital alterations have the potential to manipulate reality, making it increasingly difficult to discern between real and manipulated appearances.

This poses issues regarding self-perception, online identity, and truthfulness in digital communication.

- b. **Mental Health** The excessive use of beauty filters and idealized AR appearances can lead to body image concerns, low self-esteem, and unrealistic beauty ideals, especially among young users. Research has associated excessive social media usage with higher anxiety and depression.
- c. **Commercialization of Identity** Numerous AR filters are branded, commodifying personal expression as a marketing strategy. This may obscure the distinction between native content and advertisement, raising concerns over consumer manipulation and the sale of personal looks.

In effect, while AR promotes creativity and participation, it also poses ethical questions regarding authenticity, mental health, and the impact of business interests on individual identity.

This declaration implies that the initiation of your research should finish with precisely detailing the main questions your analysis will answer. In particular, your research will examine:

- 1. **How filters enable or limit expression of identity** This question examines the ways in which digital filters, such as social media filters, affect the manner in which people present themselves.

Do these filters allow people greater liberty for expressing themselves, or do they limit freedom by furthering some standards of beauty or norms?

What role societal expectations have in filter use This query looks into the way cultural and social norms influence filter use. Do individuals utilize filters in order to satisfy beauty standards, professional requirements, or social expectations? Or do they defy these expectations using filter selection? (2024, May 21).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The rise of online platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram, self-presentation and creation of identity have changed significantly in cyberspace. Among various features provided on these websites, AR filters stand out as basic features that go beyond improving the appearance of

visual material to becoming instruments that affect the way users feel about and portray themselves in the digital sphere. Academics increasingly saw the relevance of such filters to the understanding of modern-day self-expression, examining their role in identity curation, psychological effects, and cultural context. In a review of different views, the following literature review questions the intricate effects of AR filters, offering insight into how they can merge creativity, social norms, and one's own identity. From maintaining conformity to bodily ideals of beauty to facilitating carefree experimentation, AR filters condense the contingencies of living in the digital and embodied realms of selfness.

Filters on social media sites like Snapchat and Instagram have immensely shaped the ways people build and present themselves on the internet. Scholars have increasingly become interested in the convergence of digital technology, identity construction, and self-presentation in mediatized settings. *May 2024*. (n.d.).

2.1 Filters as Identity Curators

Social networking sites, in Marwick and boyd's (2011) view, are not where one comes to network, they're platforms upon which individuals perform constructed identities. Individuals do have an option for how they'd prefer to be read because they craft their online identity as actors casting roles for a mob. Filters are front and center. They enable individuals to change the appearance of their faces, smoothing, outlining features, or adding effects to correspond to how they wish to be read. Tiidenberg and Gómez Cruz (2015) describe filters as cyber makeup, technology that makes it possible for one "to dress up" the face so that one can meet beauty standards that govern virtual life. Filters are not merely a witty afterthought of an order beneath which people are being coerced to action by the manner in which they show up and appear via the "ideal" image. People apply filters in order to create what they would like to be seen, once again under regimes of beauty that surround. (2025, February 14)

2.2 Augmented Reality and the Ideal of Beauty

The AR filter craze, particularly on social media platforms Snapchat and Instagram, has redefined beauty as it appears and is idealized on the internet. The filters trick up facial features, smooth, arch the brows, pout the mouth to create an idealized notion of beauty. But the playful look hides a more profound effect: such digital makeups come with a streamlined, homogenized conception of beauty rooted in Eurocentric standards and thinness. As Boucher (2020) goes on to explain, AR filters produce a form of visual "sameness" that diminishes

natural variation between human faces. AR filters cause humans to conform to an algorithmic concept of beauty where natural faces fall short compared to the definition given by the app. Individuals might eventually use such filtered faces as their self-concept in the long term, embracing what the app sees as beauty as their sense of self. This social pressure-triggered phenomenon has everyone relying on filters as a means of self-improvement and surveillance. Nemer & Tassi (2021) authors specify that this is among the factors driving mental issues such as dissatisfaction with one's body and poor self-esteem. Even the syndrome is being referred to as "Snapchat dysmorphia" where individuals are taking the extreme step of getting cosmetic surgery so that they resemble their filtered self-portraits (Ramphul & Mejias, 2018). What is constructed in virtual play is translated into a feedback loop in which filtered-out attractiveness is not only expected but reinforced, maximizing the manner in which individuals perceive themselves and others perceive them. (2025, April 7).

2.3 Identity play and performance

Filters are not merely aesthetic; they provide a means of identity experimentation as well. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat provide filters through which one can experiment with different aspects of themselves. For Jurgenson (2019), the ephemerality of features like 24-hour stories provides users with a liberty to play, try out new looks, and discover new personas without being bound by any of them. This is very similar to Erving Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory, in which life was compared to a stage and individuals playing many various roles based on the audience. On social media, with different audiences and frequent switching, individuals are bound to change the manner in which they present themselves. Filters are another theatrical twist: one will be of a glamorous one, another of a funny or silly one complete with fantasy elements or animal ears. These are not false tests. Instead, they examine for a more complex sense of self, one which would consider oneself as not fixed or singular, but in transit and becoming. This is consonant with postmodern assumptions that the self is in transition, constructed, and on the move. (S. N. (2020).

2.4 Psychological Impact and the Filtered Self

The spread of the application of beauty filters has been causing concern among psychologists and researchers. The features, which are meant to soften the skin or change facial features, allow one to present a better version of themselves on the internet. But constant exposure to

that supposedly perfect, filtered face can start to affect people's perception of their real, unfiltered self. Studies by Chae (2017) and Raj et al. (2021) have shown that multiple usage of beautification filters has been associated with body dissatisfaction. The more one uses a filter to look at themselves, the more they experience as if they are losing their real appearance. The virtual "ideal self" and offline "real self" paradox will at some point contribute to high-level internal conflict. This gap can cause low self-esteem, heightened anxiety, and negative body image. One of the more extreme effects is "selfie dysmorphia" when individuals undergo reconstructive surgery to craft their real faces from photo-retouched selfies. It speaks volumes about how online filters can impact offline psychology and behavior. In addition to individual harm, the filters also assist in a global cultural problem. They sustain unreal standards of attractiveness and ensnare people within loops of difference and unhappiness. The more unattainable and the greater the overstatements of standards are, the lower group self-esteem. (Warlop, L. (2021).

2.5 Culture, Gender, and Filters

Filters don't hover just above the surface of beauty; they also regulate how people do gender and cultural identity. Instagram and TikTok encourage customers, especially women, to craft their own "brands" that are natural-looking but highly constructed. Banet-Weiser (2018) argues that filters make this possible by offering pre-made constructs of beauty that can be imposed on a user's photo. To all women, it will mean highlighting features that fit perfect, Western notions of beauty: flawless skin, large eyes, small nose, full lips. It might appear to be expression, but it is actually helping maintain impossible and monolithic standards. Filters can highlight being neat and feminine all day long so that natural just won't cut it anymore.

But filters also have cultural significance. Others permit customers to pay respects to tradition, heritage, or community in overlays of symbolic imagery or traditional dress. It is empowering and liberating for subordinated groups. But it is double-edged. They also diminish or co-opt rich cultural identities, decontextualizing them and rendering them trendy treatments. Lastly, while filters enable us to communicate in new languages with our bodies, they also force individuals to enact gendered and cultural norms. Empowering or constraining will depend on how they are programmed and used and on the politics of pixels consciousness. (2015, November 18).

2.6 AR Filters and Identity in the Digital Age

With youth and young adults aged between 18 and 25 years, AR on Snapchat and Instagram is not about game culture and entertainment; it is key to the building of digital identity. Filters enable the ability to modify one's face, not simply to look prettier, but to convey personality, creativity, and even affiliation with groups. To the naked eye, filters might seem like goofy extras. They are however closely related to the ways in which people think about presenting their online self. Consumers will balance idealization and authenticity to be themselves and also to be there in a social media-conscious way. Filters allow people to feel more confident, reach beauty standards, and convey to others that they are part of the same club. But filters also open up the door to creativity. Others use creative effects, virtual make-up, or animated photographs to be heard or to send a message. This opens up the door to self-expression and exploration, where identity is not constructed but fluid and in the process of being made. All this said, tension still exists between constructed online identity and offline identity. Filters make it possible for one to become the editor of who one portrays oneself as being but, equally, how one uses filters is actually going to create more work in feeling confident in being oneself off-stage and without them. The question then is one of wanting authenticity in addition to life backstage and in opposition to backstage presentation, as young adults continue to find their way in the world of social media. (2021, December 22).

AIMS

To examine how social media filters contribute to digital identity construction and to analyze their impact on mental health and holistic wellbeing among students in higher education.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the role of social media filters in shaping digital identity and self-presentation among students in higher education.
2. To analyze the impact of filter usage on students' mental health, particularly in relation to self-esteem, body image, and emotional wellbeing.
3. To explore the relationship between digital identity practices and holistic wellbeing within the higher education context.

Research Methodology

What is Research Methodology?

Research methodology is the method adopted for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data to respond to research queries. It includes the selection of effective methods of data collection, the assurance of accuracy, and the interpretation of findings. The methodology determines how research is carried out and ensures validity. The methodology determines the tools and techniques used to substantiate conclusions. It assists in keeping research consistent and reliable.

Types of Research Methodology:

1. Qualitative Research
2. Quantitative Research
3. Mixed Methods

What Is Quantitative method?

Quantitative methods are those which work with numbers, measures, and statistical analysis in order to examine phenomena. It is concerned with gathering measurable data and applying mathematical, statistical, or computational methods to represent that data.

- **Objectivity:** the goal is to be as objective as possible.
- **Repeatable:** it is now able for another individual to repeat the process again and they have to come up with the same outcome.
- **Predictive:** it has a tendency to predict future occurrences based on patterns that have been observed from within the data.

Methodology Approach

This research uses a quantitative approach to investigate the role of social media filters in the formation of user identities on social media such as Instagram and Snapchat. A standardized questionnaire will be administered to recruit a large, diverse sample of users and gather data on frequency of filter use, most frequently used types of filters and perceptions of online

identity versus offline identity. The questionnaire will also have demographic variables of age, gender, and social media usage habits to enable comparative analysis. Statistical analysis, such as descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis, will be utilized to find patterns and correlations between filter use and digital identity construction. This approach enables a consideration of how filters might manipulate users' self-presentation and self-conception, which can yield objective and generalize evidence for the involvement of visual alteration tools in identity building on social media.

Data Collection Methods

The main data for this study will be gathered using a survey questionnaire that will be made available online.

The survey will consist of two categories of questions:

1. Open-ended questions.
2. Closed-ended questions.

Questions that the participants will be asked include:

- A. How do you think using filters on Instagram or Snapchat influences the way you present yourself to others online?
- B. Can you describe a time when a filter made you feel more confident, more like yourself, or less like yourself? Why?
- C. In what ways do you think filters affect how others perceive your personality, lifestyle, or identity on social media?

The survey indicates that although filters are favored by younger users (18–24), particularly on Instagram and Snapchat, they are used seldom because people want to be authentic. People have ambivalent attitudes, mentioning positive aspects such as entertainment as well as negative aspects such as social pressure and self-esteem. Filters are widespread overall but are considered with reservations, with reservations regarding their effect on identity and beauty ideals.

Research Design

The research design to analyze how social media filters assist in forming users' identities on Instagram and Snapchat will employ a mixed-methods design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods. A survey of active users between 16 and 45 years Above of age will be used to gather quantitative information regarding filter use behavior, reasons, and perceived influence on self-perception and identity representation. In-depth interviews and focus groups will supplement this by delving into personal experience, emotional reaction, and the social effect of filter use more extensively. Content analysis of sampled user profiles and filtered photographs will also be used to explore visual trends and repeated identity themes. This mixed-methods approach will enable a nuanced appreciation of how digital filters are involved in identity construction within modern social media contexts.

Sampling Method

Sampling and Its Types:

Sampling is the process of choosing a sample of people from a population to collect data. It allows us to represent the population without having to survey everyone.

Types of Sampling:

1. Probability Sampling:

Each person has a known probability of being chosen, with random selection (e.g., random sampling).

2. Non-Probability Sampling:

Not everyone has a probability of selection. It is more subjective and employed for targeted or smaller units (e.g., convenience sampling, purposive sampling).

Why Non-Probability Sampling

Non-probability sampling works for this research because the investigation is concerned with comprehending precise behaviours and experience show people build their identity through filters on Instagram and Snapchat more so than generalizing to the overall population. Identity construction is subjective and complex, so the study needs participants who actively use filters and can deliver detailed information. Non-probability techniques such as purposive

sampling enable the researcher to intentionally choose these information-rich individuals, enabling one to investigate intricate social and psychological dynamics that would not be revealed through random sampling.

What is Purposive sampling?

Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where the researchers select participants knowingly on the basis of specific traits, experience, or information relevant to the subject matter. Rather than picking participants randomly, the researcher employs judgment to determine the participants who will yield dense, descriptive, and informative data. This approach is particularly valuable in qualitative research, where the intention is not to generalize observations to a population, but to develop an in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon.

Why is Purposive Sampling?

Purposive sampling is used in this topic because the study aims to explore how social media filters are engaged in the construction of identity among users on Instagram and Snapchat, which requires in-depth information from individuals who actively use these platforms and engage with filters. By specifically selecting participants who have the appropriate experience and are reflective about their online self-presentation, the researcher is able to gain rich, textured data that otherwise would be inaccessible through random sampling. The method ensures that the sample comprises users who are likely to provide informed opinions about how filters affect their digital personas.

Target Audience

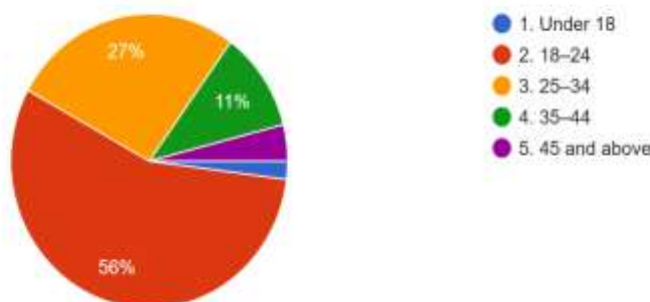
Filters applied within social media for the Instagram and Snapchat apps constitute an important force in identity-building among users, especially across the very engaged, visually descriptive segment of age ranges between 18 and 45 years old online. Not only do filters beautify one's physical look, but also enable individuals to try on different personas, moods, and new looks, impacting the way they present themselves to the world. To a majority in this age group ranging from young adults to middle age is a source of creative expression of oneself, one's self-making, and social validation via likes, comments, and shares. Thus, filters help construct and form both social and individual identities, frequently obscuring the distinction between real and constructed selves.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Survey results

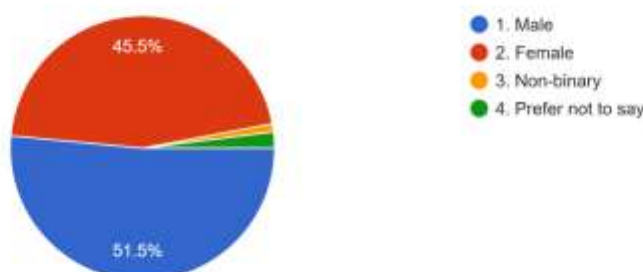
Survey Results on Impact of selected age group using filters :-

1. Which age group do you belong to?
100 responses



The pie chart illustrates the age distribution of 100 respondents to a survey across five different age groups. The largest, at 56%, is aged between 18 and 24, which reflects that the survey mainly sampled among young adults. The next biggest group is between 25 and 34 years, at 27% of the responses. This is followed by the 35–44 cohort with 11%, while the 45 and above cohort and below 18 cohort account for a much smaller percentage of respondents, each holding a small slice of the graph. This proves to be proof of a very high youth domination of the sample in the survey, with almost no involvement by older citizens and minors

2. Which gender do you identify with?
101 responses

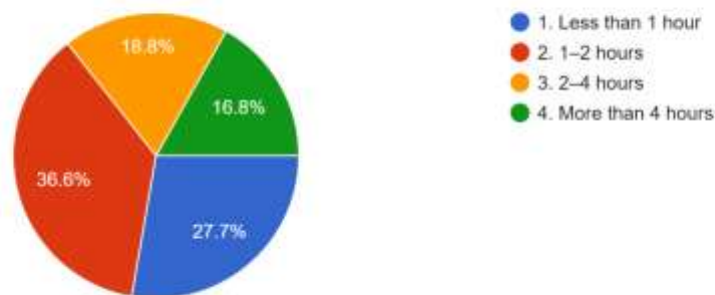


The pie chart in the graph shows the answers to question "Which gender do you identify with?" of all the 101 participants. The respondents were dominated by males, 51.5%, as can

be seen from the blue part of the chart. The 45.5% of the female respondents are shown in red. Not many participants defined themselves as non-binary (orange), and even fewer selected "Prefer not to say" (green). The results indicate that the survey had a nearly even distribution of male and female participants, with very little non-binary representation and individuals who do not want to identify their gender.

3. Average daily time spent on Instagram or Snapchat ?

101 responses



The pie chart shows statistics for the average daily usage time of 101 users on Instagram or Snapchat. From the chart:

The biggest slice, 36.6% of users, use 2–4 hours each day on the platforms.

The second-biggest slice, 27.7%, uses 1–2 hours daily.

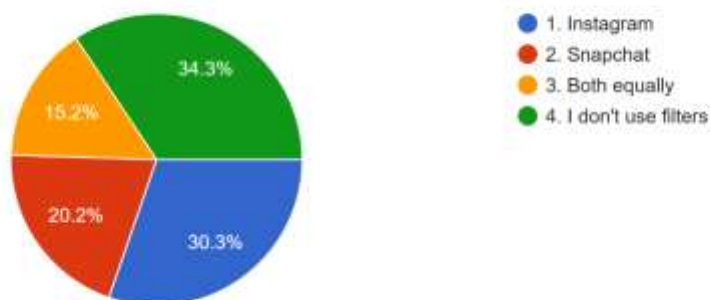
A lesser percentage, 18.8%, uses the apps for over 4 hours a day.

The lowest group, 16.8%, uses less than 1 hour.

These data show that more than half (about 64.3%) of respondents report spending 1 to 4 hours daily using Instagram or Snapchat, emphasizing high to moderate engagement with social media. Most merely use under 1 hour of it.

4. On which platform do you use filters more frequently?

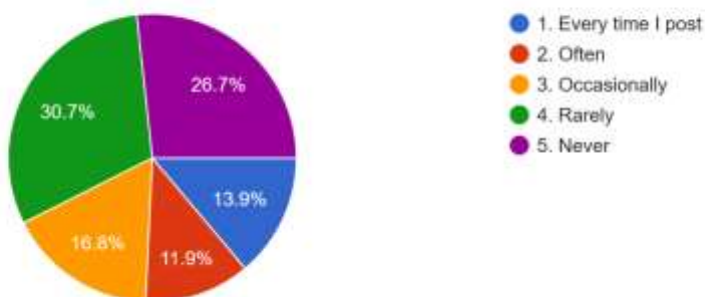
99 responses



The pie chart shown in the figure presents a summary of answers to the query, "On which platform do you use filters more often?" from 99 respondents. The chart shows that the largest percentage of respondents, 34.3%, replied that they never use filters. In second position, 30.3% said they use filters more often on Instagram. Snapchat was chosen by 20.2% of the participants, whereas 15.2% reported using filters on both platforms equally. This information indicates that even though a majority of users do not use filters, Instagram has a slight advantage over Snapchat in usage by users who do use filters, with a less extensive group sharing their use between both platforms equally.

5. How frequently do you apply filters on Instagram or Snapchat?

101 responses

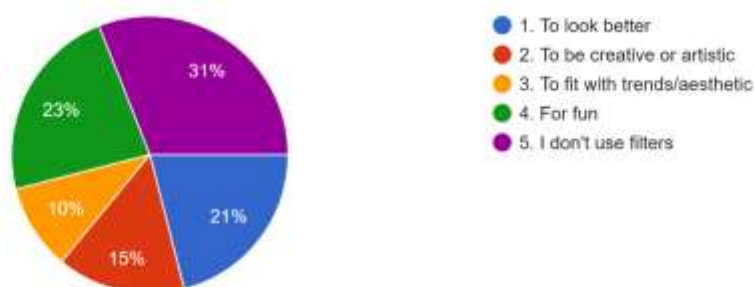


The pie chart displays the outcome of a survey question: "How often do you use filters on Instagram or Snapchat?" with 101 responses. The biggest section, 30.7%, showed that they seldom make use of filters, with the next being 26.7% who also said that they never use them. This indicates that most users either do not use filters at all or do so less often. Concurrently, 16.8% indicated that they make use of filters from time to time, exhibiting a moderate

frequency of engagement. Just 13.9% use filters whenever they post, and 11.9% indicated that they use filters quite often. All in all, the figures portray a general movement towards infrequent or selective utilization of filters across the respondents.

6. Why do you use filters? (Choose the most appropriate option)

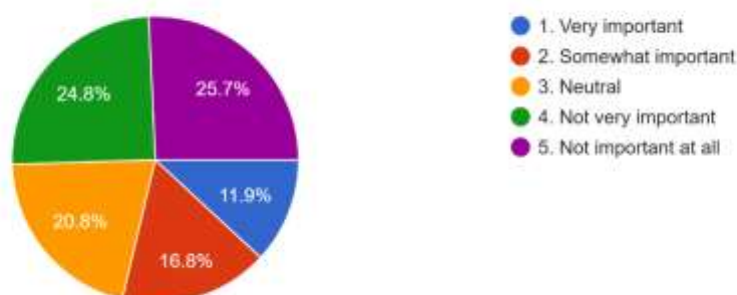
100 responses



The pie chart "Why do you use filters?" shows the feedback of 100 respondents for their main reasons for applying filters. The biggest section, 31%, replied they never use filters, showing that a large number of people like to represent themselves as who they really are without any digital modifications. On the other hand, 23% of the respondents replied they use filters for entertainment purposes, which shows a somewhat relaxed and leisure-oriented attitude. Another 21% use filters to appear more attractive, indicating self-enhancement as a primary driver. Creative or artistic purposes account for 15%, and 10% use filters to be trendy or keep up an aesthetic, indicating the impact of social media conventions. This varied distribution indicates diverse motivations, with a strong focus on authenticity, enjoyment, and appearance.

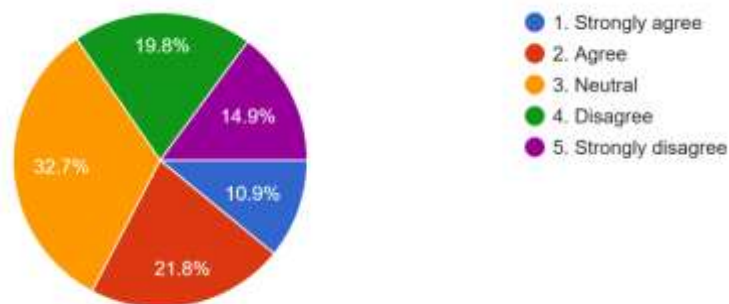
7. How important are filters to your overall social media identity?

101 responses



The pie chart on the picture shows the answers to the question: "How important are filters to your overall social media identity?" of 101 answers. The division is highly diverse, with a staggering percentage of answers that say filters are "Not important at all" to their social media identity (25.7%), and 24.8% answered filters are "Not very important.". Conversely, 11.9% view filters as being "Very important", and 16.8% view them as being "Somewhat important". The rest of 20.8% selected "Neutral", neither for nor against filters being important. Overall, the statistics indicate that although a minority view filters as important, the majority either do not view filters as important or are neutral regarding how they affect social media identity.

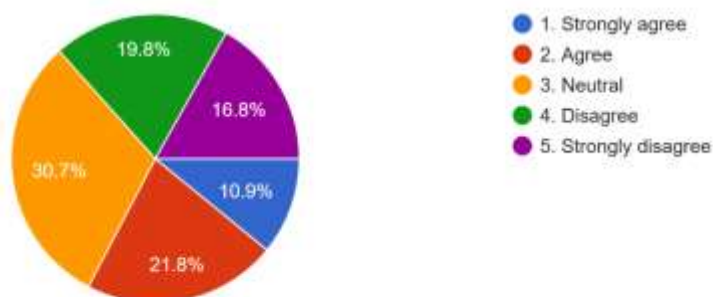
8. Filters help me express different parts of my personality.
101 responses



The pie chart demonstrates answers to the statement, "Filters help me express different parts of my personality," with 101 participants' input. The most responses came from those with a neutral attitude (32.7%), representing uncertainty or balance of opinion over whether filters match their personality. The second-highest response came from those who agreed with the statement (21.8%), and 10.9% strongly agreed, which implies that almost a third of participants felt that filters did assist in expressing their personality. Conversely, 19.8% disagreed and 14.9% strongly disagreed, demonstrating a significant section that does not view filters as a form of personal expression. Generally, opinions tend to be diverse, with a bias towards neutrality or mild agreement

9. Do you select filters in relation to the way others are supposed to think of me?

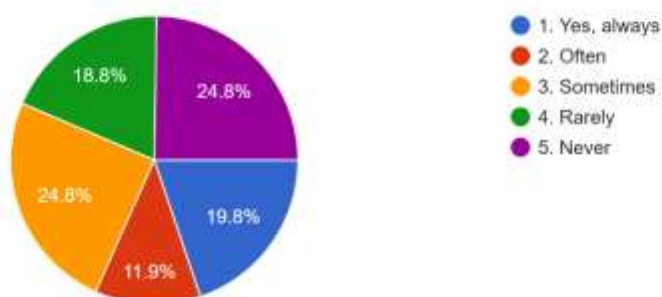
101 responses



The pie chart displayed provides the responses to the question, "Do you select filters based on how other people are supposed to think about me?" and consists of a total of 101 responses. The largest slice, 30.7% of the respondents, responded with "Neutral," meaning that many of the participants did not agree or disagree with the statement. This was then followed by 21.8% who said "Agree" and 19.8% who said "Disagree," showing that views are quite split. By comparison, 16.8% "Strongly disagreed" and a paltry 10.9% "Strongly agreed," showing that there were fewer who placed themselves resolutely at either end. Overall, the results show a mixed spectrum of views, leaning toward neutrality and middle ground consensus or opposition as opposed to being firmly of an opinion.

10. Do you ever feel more self-assured with photos and filters?

101 responses

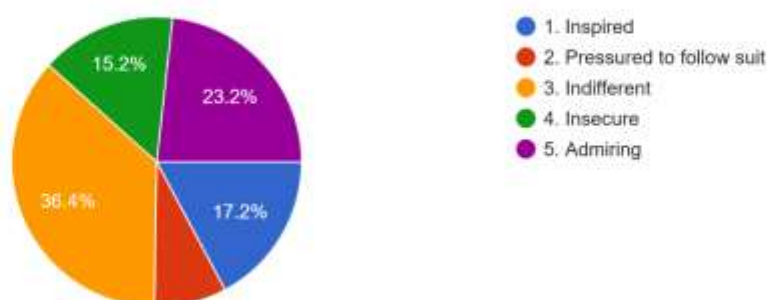


The pie chart below is of responses to the question, "Do you ever feel more self-assured with photos and filters?" from 101 respondents. The data indicates a divide: 24.8% of the respondents answered "Never," and another 24.8% answered "Sometimes," indicating that a majority of individuals either don't feel more confident or only sometimes feel more

confident with filters. Meanwhile, 19.8% of the respondents chose "Yes, always," showing a frequent over-reliance on filters for self-confidence. Another 18.8% replied "Rarely," and only 11.9% replied "Often," showing that frequent confidence surges due to filters do not occur often. Overall, though there is a large percentage that gains benefit from filters when it comes to self-confidence, most never or hardly ever feel the same.

11. What do you think when others employ filters?

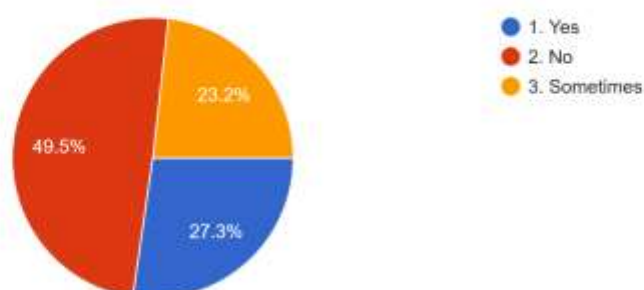
99 responses



The pie chart above shows the answers to the question, "What do you feel when others use filters?" by all 99 participants. The most frequent response, which constituted 36.4% of the responses, is feeling "Pressured to follow suit," and it reflects that many people feel pressure to use filters themselves when they observe others using filters. This is followed by 23.2% of the respondents who are "Admiring," indicating a positive perception of other people's filtered looks. "Indifferent" follows at 17.2%, indicating that some people remain unaffected

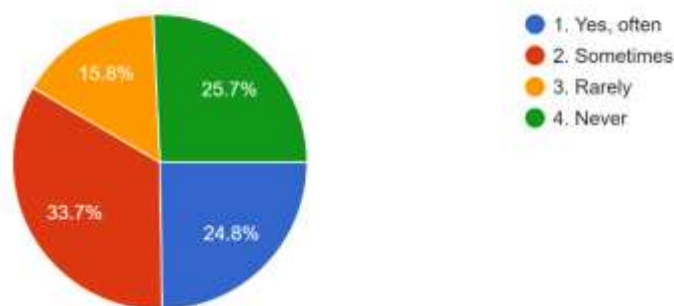
12. Have you ever edited your real-life appearance (makeup, hairstyle, etc.) based on how you look with filters?

99 responses



The pie chart illustrates the answers to the question: "Have you ever edited your real-life look (makeup, hair, etc.) based on how you look with filters?" Out of the 99 participants, the largest group, 49.5%, said "No," meaning that they have not edited their real-life look based on filtered photos. Yet, 27.3% confessed doing so, saying "Yes," and 23.2% said "Sometimes," implying occasional influence from filters. This information indicates that although filters do have a discernible effect on the way some people view and alter their appearance, a large percentage is not affected by them in their actual-life decisions.

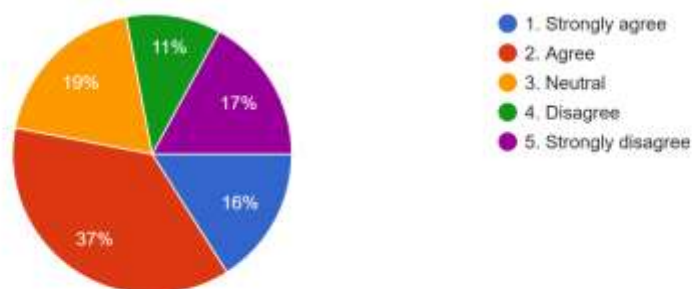
13. Do filters help you hide features you're insecure about?
101 responses



The pie chart below shows answers to the question: "Do filters help you hide features you're insecure about?" among 101 participants. The majority, 33.7%, chose "Sometimes," meaning most people use filters from time to time to conceal their insecurities. This is followed by 25.7% who said "Never," indicating a substantial amount do not use filters for this at all. In contrast, 24.8% answered "Yes, often," signaling a subgroup that uses filters consistently to conceal features they lack confidence about. Finally, 15.8% chose "Rarely," which indicates occasional but low use. In total, the statistics show that most participants actually do use filters from time to time to cover up insecurities, and a smaller proportion does not use them at all.

14. Do you think filters contribute to unrealistic beauty standards?

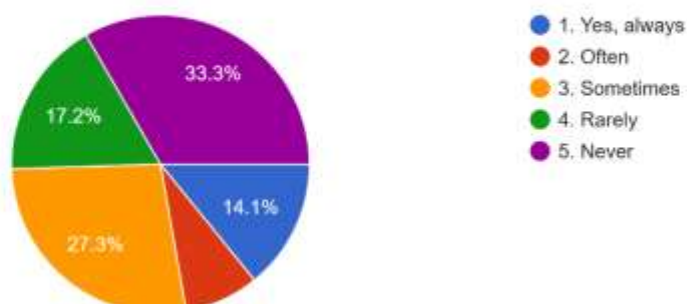
100 responses



The pie chart in the graph is similar to the survey question, "Do you think filters contribute to unrealistic beauty standards?" Of 100 responses, the majority of participants (37%) concurred that filters do contribute to unrealistic beauty standards. This is followed by 19% of respondents who were uncertain on the issue, indicating some degree of uncertainty or neutrality. On the other hand, 17% strongly agreed with the statement further establishing the point that a high percentage of respondents view filters as problematic in shaping beauty standards. At the other end of the spectrum, 11% strongly disagreed and 16% disagreed, showing that a smaller part of the population does not view filters as an influential factor on beauty standards. Generally, the findings suggest that more than half of the participants believe that filters play a role in promoting unrealistic beauty expectations.

15. Have you ever received more attention or likes when using filters?

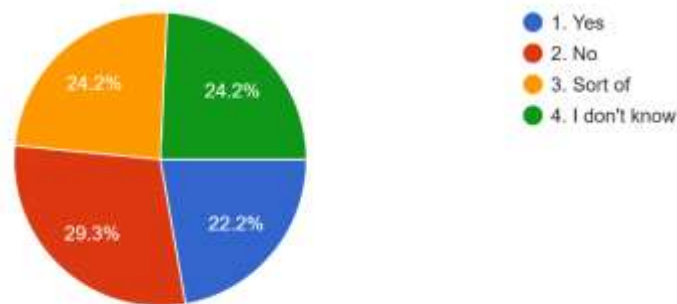
99 responses



The pie chart on the image shows responses to the question: "Have you ever received more attention or likes when applying filters?" Among 99 responses, the majority of participants (33.3%) responded that they never received more attention or likes when applying filters. This is then followed by 27.3% of respondents who said they sometimes received more attention, and 17.2% who said it happened rarely. A smaller proportion, 14.1%, responded that they always received more likes when they used filters, and the lowest, 8.1%, responded with often. This analysis shows that while filters may have some impact for some users, a great many do not perceive that there is a repeated increase in attention or likes due to filter use.

16. Do you think your filtered photos look like you in real life?

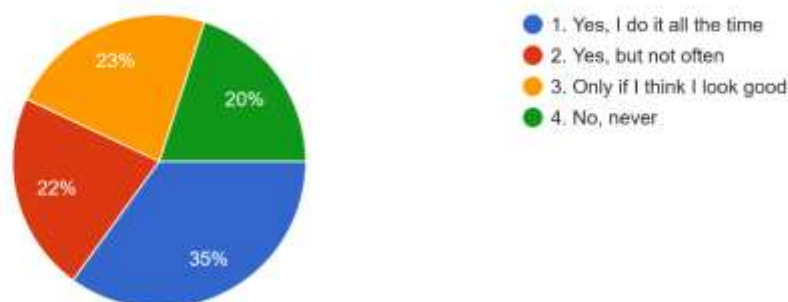
99 responses



The pie chart shows the result of a survey question: "Do you believe your filtered photos resemble you in real life?" with 99 respondents. The responses are quite evenly divided among the four options. The highest percentage, 29.3%, responded "No", which indicates that most respondents believe that their filtered photos do not represent their real-life appearance. This is followed by "I don't know" and "Sort of", both at 24.2%, showing a level of uncertainty or partial agreement from most respondents. Lastly, only 22.2% replied with "Yes", showing that a minority think their filtered pictures are a true representation of how they look in real life. Overall, the data shows that most people either don't feel they are accurately represented by filtered images or are uncertain to what extent these photos look like them.

17. Would you share a photo that isn't filtered?

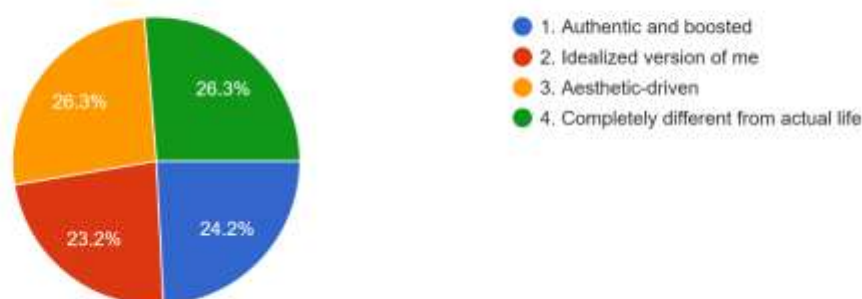
100 responses



The pie chart demonstrates the answers to the question: "Would you post a picture that isn't filtered? " from 100 participants. The most frequent answer, selected by 35% of respondents, was "Yes, I do it all the time," meaning that a substantial number of people feel okay about posting unfiltered pictures all the time. After that, 23% of respondents said they would post an unfiltered photo "Only if I think I look good," indicative of conditional self-confidence. Next, 22% replied "Yes, but not often," indicating a mixed willingness to share such photos. Finally, 20% responded with "No, never," indicative of an important minority that is completely reluctant to post unfiltered photos. This distribution is indicative of an overall openness towards authenticity in picture sharing, along with a combination of selective and guarded attitudes.

18. How would you define your online identity when using filters?

95 responses



The pie chart shows the answers to the question, "How would you define your online identity when using filters? " of 95 participants. The information is quite evenly spread over the four choices, indicating a varied set of views towards filtered online identities. The highest chosen

answer, with 26.3%, is "Completely different from actual life," reflecting that a significant number of respondents believe that filters make a virtual image that differs from their actual real-life image. This is followed closely by "Aesthetic-driven," at 26.3%, indicating that looks play a significant reason for applying filters. "Authentic and enhanced" was selected by 24.2% of the participants, indicating that some feel filters enhance their true selves without significantly altering them. Finally, 23.2% selected "Idealized version of me," which suggests that many perceive filters as a means to present an improved or idealized version of themselves. Generally, the answers reflect an even combination of opinions regarding the effect of filters on online identity, with a slight leaning toward either significant aesthetic alteration or full transformation.

Data Analysis

The survey, comprising 99–101 respondents, offers a comprehensive understanding of users' attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions regarding the use of filters on Instagram and Snapchat. The sample is largely youth-oriented, with 56% of respondents aged 18–24 and 27% aged 25–34, indicating that the findings primarily reflect the experiences of young adults.

In terms of platform engagement, a majority of participants (64.3%) reported spending 1–4 hours daily on social media, demonstrating moderate to high usage levels. However, filter usage appears comparatively limited, with 30.7% stating they rarely use filters and 26.7% never using them. Only a small segment (13.9%) reported consistent use, suggesting that while filters are popular, they are not universally adopted.

The motivations for using filters are diverse, ranging from entertainment (23%) and enhancing attractiveness (21%) to creative expression (15%) and following trends (10%). Despite these motivations, nearly half of the respondents (49.5%) indicated that filters do not influence their real-life appearance, although a notable proportion (27.3%) acknowledged some level of impact.

From a psychological perspective, the effects of filters are mixed. While some users reported increased confidence when using filters, many experienced only occasional or no change. Similarly, filters are sometimes used to conceal insecurities (33.7%), but a significant portion of users do not rely on them for this purpose. Social influence is evident, as 36.4% of respondents reported feeling pressured to use filters when others do, and 37% believed that filters contribute to unrealistic beauty standards.

A noticeable disconnect exists between digital and real-life identity. Only 22.2% of participants felt that filtered images accurately represent their real appearance, while a larger proportion expressed doubt or disagreement. At the same time, 35% of respondents reported regularly posting unfiltered content, suggesting a growing inclination toward authenticity.

Overall, the findings highlight a complex and nuanced relationship with filters. While they serve as tools for self-expression and enhancement, users remain critically aware of their psychological and social implications. Additionally, differences between platforms suggest that the role and impact of filters may vary, making broad generalizations challenging.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of augmented reality (AR) filters in shaping digital identity on social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat. The findings confirm that filters are not merely visual enhancements but active tools in constructing, curating, and performing identity. While they enable creativity, self-expression, and confidence, they also contribute to psychological concerns such as body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and the growing gap between real and idealized selves.

The study also reveals a paradox: although users are aware that filters promote unrealistic beauty standards, many continue to use them for social validation and self-presentation. Additionally, filters function as both empowering tools and mechanisms of commodification, where identity is influenced by cultural norms, algorithms, and commercial interests.

However, a key research gap remains in understanding the long-term mental health impact of filter usage, especially within higher education contexts. Existing studies largely focus on self-presentation but lack integration with holistic wellbeing, policy frameworks, and institutional responsibility.

The study is limited by its focus on selected platforms and a restricted sample, indicating the need for broader and more diverse research. Future studies should explore longitudinal effects, cross-cultural perspectives, gender identity expression, and the role of AI-driven filters and algorithms in shaping identity and wellbeing.

In conclusion, AR filters are powerful digital tools that reflect both opportunities and challenges of the modern digital age. Addressing their impact requires a balanced approach that promotes digital awareness, mental health support, and responsible platform practices.

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