

A Study on the Self-Presentation of Male Beauty Influencers on Douyin

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Abstract. With the continuous advancement of the internet and the evolution of mobile technology, the media landscape has experienced significant changes. Short video platforms have gained popularity due to their engaging content format and wide reach, leading to new directions in mobile social media. Beauty content on short video platforms aligns well with the current trend of "appearance value." Contemporary males exhibit characteristics different from those of previous eras, as male beauty influencers on platforms like Douyin use short videos to present diverse images and find new avenues for growth. The strong gender fluidity associated with the combination of men and beauty has entered the public eye frequently, and the self-presentation behaviors of male beauty influencers have garnered much public attention. This study aims to discuss concepts related to male beauty influencers and self-presentation, analyze the themes of male beauty influencer videos, and provide suggestions for their self-presentation, contributing to research in this area.

Keywords: Douyin, Male Beauty Influencers, Self-Presentation.

1. Defining Key Concepts

1.1. Male Beauty Influencers

In the context of contemporary society, cultural influences from abroad have softened traditional ideas, and gender awareness and aesthetic views have advanced. When people mention male beauty influencers, they often think of impeccably groomed, attractive young men from television. Compared with Western countries, China has a broad development prospect for the beauty market, accompanied by the flourishing of related industries. In the past, female beauty influencers dominated the beauty industry^[1-3]. As more male celebrities endorse beauty products, the rise of male beauty influencers has become more acceptable. Their gender-profession contrast, distinctive personal characteristics, and good personal image attract attention from brands and the public, granting them influence among younger consumers. Currently, there is no authoritative definition for male beauty influencers, but individuals with a significant follower base, professional ability, and capacity to drive product sales in the beauty field can be called beauty influencers.

1.2. Self-Presentation

The concept of "self-presentation" is closely linked to Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory. In his classic work "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life," Goffman analyzed self-presentation behaviors in modern society from a theatrical and stage perspective. He focused on how individuals manage the impression that others have of them, using the metaphor of actors performing on stage, with roles divided into the "frontstage" and "backstage." The frontstage is where people wear masks to play roles that fit the social setting, while the backstage is a private space for relaxation^[3-4]. The boundaries between the two are clearly defined.

2. Themes of Male Beauty Influencer Videos

The video themes of male beauty influencers on Douyin demonstrate a diverse range of professional content, mainly divided into four categories: beauty tutorials, transformation makeup, product reviews, and educational content (Figure 1). Each of these categories attracts a large audience with unique appeal.

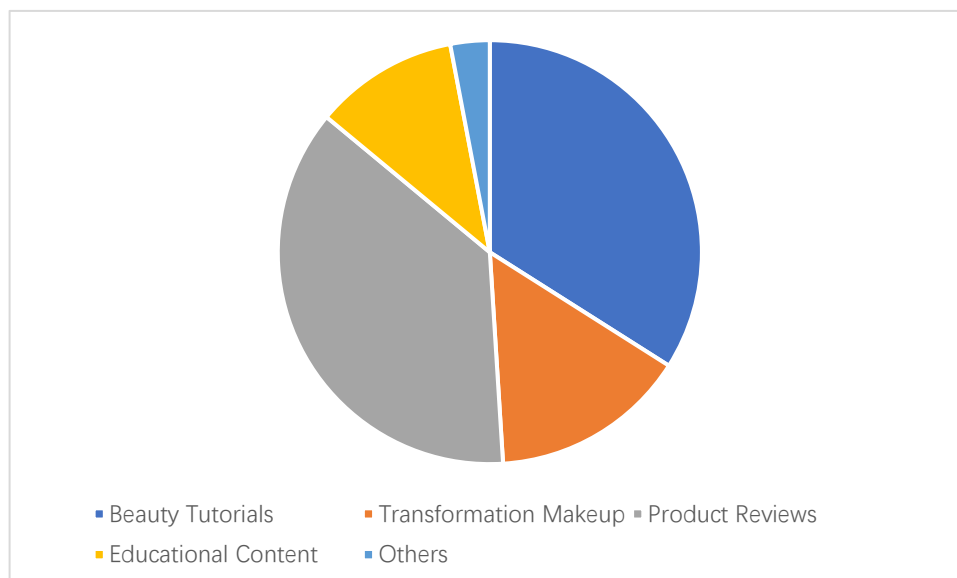


Figure 1. Proportion of Different Types of Videos

2.1. Beauty Tutorials

Makeup techniques are varied and complex, making them challenging for the average person to master. Choosing the right look and overcoming misconceptions are significant needs for makeup enthusiasts. Male beauty influencers play an important role in this regard, and their makeup tutorials are well-received. Unlike traditional classroom-style tutorials, male beauty influencers employ humorous, entertaining language to engage viewers. These tutorials often feature themes like "Small Eyes to Big Eyes" and "Disappearing Nasolabial Folds," providing practical guidance. They also cater specifically to male audiences with videos like "Natural Makeup for Straight Men" and "Atmospheric Handsome Makeup," meeting personalized demands for male makeup^[5].

Male beauty influencers often incorporate storytelling elements into their tutorials, making the content more relatable and easier to understand. For instance, they may share personal anecdotes about overcoming skin issues or experimenting with different looks, which resonates well with their audience. The incorporation of humor and everyday scenarios allows viewers to feel more connected to the influencer, encouraging them to try out the beauty techniques themselves.

2.2. Transformation Makeup

Transformation makeup refers to using makeup techniques to modify facial features, achieving a look similar to the person being imitated. This technique accurately captures the features of the person being imitated and applies them to makeup^[6]. Male beauty influencers often showcase these techniques in short videos, focusing on visual impact rather than instruction. Influencer Didila received recognition for his transformation skills, including a video where he successfully recreated the look of a "chaebol," capturing key elements of the look with stunning before-and-after transformations that offered viewers a captivating experience.

Transformation makeup content often extends beyond simple entertainment. It plays a significant role in enhancing creativity, as influencers use their skills to explore different personas and characters. This creativity inspires viewers to experiment with their looks, leading to increased engagement and interaction on the platform. By taking on the personas of famous characters or celebrities, male beauty influencers break away from traditional beauty standards, creating a broader and more inclusive definition of beauty.

2.3. Product Reviews

With the intense competition in the beauty market, brands continuously innovate to meet diverse consumer needs. In this environment, beauty influencers who can accurately evaluate products and offer buying suggestions become highly popular. These influencers often recommend products they have personally tested, listing "best and worst products." This approach adds credibility to their recommendations and effectively drives consumer purchases. Luo Wangyu is a well-known influencer in the beauty industry who exemplifies this strategy, providing detailed product recommendations based on in-depth knowledge and firsthand experience.

Product reviews by male beauty influencers often include comparisons between similar products, highlighting the pros and cons of each. This comparison allows viewers to make informed decisions, especially when choosing between high-end and budget-friendly products. By addressing the specific needs of different skin types, influencers provide personalized advice, further enhancing the trust between the influencer and their audience^[7]. Additionally, these reviews often feature "unboxing" segments, where influencers showcase the packaging and first impressions, adding an element of excitement for viewers.

2.4. Educational Content

Educational content shares similarities with product reviews but places more emphasis on the influencer's personal experience. These videos are typically more specialized. Male beauty influencers introduce products, explain scientific principles, and provide expert guidance on makeup and skincare. Tsinghua University graduate Wang Zhi is a representative of this type of influencer. When introducing skincare products, he includes supplementary information like effective ingredient details and improvement charts, thus encouraging viewers to make informed purchase decisions.

Educational content often extends to discussing the science behind skincare, such as understanding skin types, ingredients, and their effects. By explaining complex topics in a simple, engaging manner, male beauty influencers make skincare knowledge accessible to a broader audience. They may also address common skincare myths and misconceptions, providing scientifically-backed information to help viewers make better choices for their skin. This type of content not only promotes products but also empowers consumers with knowledge, enhancing their ability to care for their skin effectively.

3. Positive Values of Male Beauty Influencer Self-Presentation

3.1. Challenging Gender Norms

The media today plays a key role in shaping people's thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors. Short video technology allows real-time interaction and breaks geographical barriers. As one of the symbols of consumption, gender in short video content reflects traditional gender constraints. Historically, beauty has been perceived as the exclusive domain of women, while men were left unaddressed. As men enter the beauty space, it signifies a reconsideration of male representation in society. Male beauty influencers abandon symbols of patriarchy and embrace rights previously reserved for women^[8-9]. This shift encourages women to challenge traditional feminism and inspires men to adopt more respectful, equitable behaviors.

Male beauty influencers also contribute to diversifying beauty ideals by breaking away from conventional notions of masculinity. By showcasing themselves applying makeup, these influencers normalize makeup use among men, promoting gender inclusivity. This normalization encourages viewers to feel more comfortable expressing themselves through beauty products, regardless of gender. In turn, this shift helps dismantle rigid gender stereotypes, contributing to a more open and accepting society.

3.2. Enhancing Subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being represents an individual's perception and experience of their life quality, including overall satisfaction and emotional experiences. Male beauty influencers build affinity-based communities for their audiences around "hobbies" and "emotions," offering avenues for identity recognition. Influencers establish fan groups across platforms like Douyin, WeChat, QQ, and Weibo, creating a space for interaction and emotional exchange. In this virtual space, members strengthen their social ties, building new relationships both online and in real life. This emotional fulfillment improves viewers' subjective well-being, thereby enhancing their quality of life^[10].

The formation of such communities also allows individuals to find like-minded people who share similar interests, providing a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging can be particularly important for individuals who feel isolated or struggle to connect with others in their offline lives. By participating in these online communities, viewers can find emotional support, share their experiences, and gain a sense of purpose, all of which contribute to improved mental health and well-being.

3.3. Stimulating "His" Consumption

In recent years, the internet has popularized the term "men's beauty economy," which refers to the creation and marketing of male aesthetics to attract consumers and generate value. Traditionally, women were the primary consumers of male beauty, purchasing products based on physical appearance, charm, or character traits. "His economy," or male consumption, has been gaining traction. In response, many cosmetic brands have launched men's lines, including previously women-centric products like foundations, lip balms, and primers (Figure 2). The increasing sales of male makeup products are driving the growth of related industries.

Male beauty influencers are playing a crucial role in shaping and promoting this trend. By openly discussing their skincare routines, favorite beauty products, and grooming tips, they normalize beauty practices for men, encouraging more men to invest in their appearance. This shift is not only expanding the beauty market but also creating a broader acceptance of male grooming^[11-12]. The rise of "his consumption" demonstrates a growing recognition of men's desire to care for their appearance, challenging outdated stereotypes that associate grooming and beauty solely with women.



Figure 2. Male Cosmetic Products

4. Recommendations for Male Beauty Influencer Self-Presentation on Douyin

4.1. Maintaining Authenticity

In recent years, the content created by beauty influencers has become highly favored by brands. Influencers achieve precise brand positioning and create content that feels genuine, making it easier to resonate with audiences. Unlike celebrities, influencers engage more actively with viewers, fostering trust and acceptance of their recommendations. Before endorsing a product, beauty influencers must ensure it aligns with their personal brand. They should also maintain communication with brands and provide after-sales support, ensuring product quality and authenticity.

Authenticity is key to maintaining long-term relationships with viewers. When influencers are transparent about their experiences—whether positive or negative—audiences are more likely to trust their opinions^[13]. This transparency can be achieved by sharing both the strengths and weaknesses of a product, discussing any challenges faced during use, and providing honest feedback. Authentic influencers who prioritize their followers' interests over brand sponsorships are more likely to build a loyal and engaged fan base.

4.2. Platform Support for Quality Content

Douyin's sophisticated algorithms provide a major advantage, driving the platform's operations. However, many influencers use attention-grabbing content to gain views, which diminishes the visibility of high-quality content, leading to distorted developments in male beauty videos. While technology should remain neutral, its misuse can have unintended effects. As a cultural entity, the short video industry is responsible for promoting culture and positivity. Douyin should play an active role in promoting high-quality beauty content through topic creation, boosting trending discussions, and nurturing positive influencers (Table 1).

To further support quality content, Douyin could implement initiatives such as "quality content grants" to reward influencers who produce educational, original, and meaningful content. By prioritizing the visibility of content that aligns with positive values and promotes inclusivity, the platform can ensure that valuable content reaches a wider audience. Additionally, Douyin could establish partnerships with beauty brands to sponsor content that showcases authenticity and professionalism, setting a benchmark for other creators.

Table 1. Specific Practices for Providing Traffic Support to High-Quality Beauty Videos

Measures	Specific content
Limit low-quality content	The beauty videos involving vulgar, false propaganda, malicious hype and other bad content should be restricted to reduce their exposure opportunities
	A content review mechanism is set up to strictly review uploaded beauty videos to ensure that the content complies with platform regulations and laws and regulations
Open up relevant topics	Open hot topics and challenge activities around the field of beauty makeup to attract user participation and attention
	The topic page displays high-quality beauty videos to improve the convenience of users to discover and browse high-quality content
Strengthen hot spot boosting	The platform algorithm is used to intelligently recommend high-quality beauty videos to improve their exposure on the user's home page
	In the hot list of the platform, the proportion of beauty videos is increased, so that high-quality beauty videos have the opportunity to get more attention
Cultivate excellent IP	Explore and support original, professional and influential male beauty bloggers, and provide them with more exposure opportunities through platform resources
	Cooperate with excellent beauty bloggers to launch exclusive content and improve the quality of content and user engagement on the platform

4.3. Enhancing Regulatory Frameworks

To properly regulate short video platforms, the government must play a guiding role. Regulatory measures should include establishing higher-level, enforceable industry standards. While some regulations, like the "Management Norms for Online Short Video Platforms," exist, enforceable laws are still lacking. Government should be mindful not to over-regulate, which could stifle content creation, but instead employ flexible regulation that suits the characteristics of the industry. Government agencies, industry leaders, and content producers should collaborate to ensure effective governance of the short video sector.

The establishment of an independent regulatory body to oversee the content on short video platforms could further enhance accountability. This body would work with platforms like Douyin to monitor content, ensure adherence to community guidelines, and address violations in a timely manner^[14]. Such a regulatory framework would create a safe environment for creators and audiences alike, ensuring that content promoting harmful stereotypes or misinformation is minimized.

5. Conclusion

In recent years, as the beauty market has grown, beauty content has become increasingly valuable. Male beauty influencers have emerged as important figures in this landscape, generating significant influence within a short period. Compared to traditional female beauty influencers, they have an edge in content, format, and reach. Their emergence has challenged gender norms and created economic opportunities within the beauty sector. The growth of male influencers has injected fresh vitality into the beauty industry, with men increasingly focusing on their appearance, leading to a rise in makeup usage and overall well-being.

Male beauty influencers on Douyin are contributing to societal progress by challenging stereotypes, building supportive communities, and encouraging inclusive consumption. Their self-presentation behaviors, video content, and interactions with audiences demonstrate the potential of social media to reshape perceptions of gender and beauty. As the beauty industry continues to evolve, the role of male beauty influencers will likely expand, further influencing consumer behavior and fostering a more diverse and inclusive beauty culture.

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