

Beauty, the Self, and Consumption: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Indonesian Young Adults' Experiences in the Age of Social Media

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Abstract

This study explores how Indonesian young adults experience and make meaning of beauty and how it relates to the self and consumption within social media contexts. While previous research has addressed these dynamics, it has relied predominantly on quantitative approaches that leave the subjective, lived dimensions of these experiences largely unexamined. To address this gap, the present study focuses on how young adults understand beauty and how these understandings shape their sense of self and consumption practices, with social media serving as a key context through which these meanings are influenced and negotiated. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three Indonesian young adults who actively engage with beauty-related content on social media. The analysis yielded three interconnected master themes: beauty as intertwined with social belonging and care practices, social media exposure as a strong influence on how individuals see and present themselves, and a tension between being critical of beauty culture while still participating in it. Together, these themes illuminate the complex ways in which social media mediates beauty, the self, and consumption for young Indonesian adults, and point toward the psychological and social functions that beauty culture has come to serve in their everyday lives.

Key Words: *Beauty, self-identity, consumption, social media*