

A behavioral economic approach to the effects of makeup-based social contexts on attractiveness judgement

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Faces with light makeup are consistently perceived more attractive as compared to those with heavy makeup or those without makeup. Given behavioral economic research, however, human judgment regarding the attractiveness of others depends on the visual similarity among them. This study examined whether an evaluation of the attractiveness would depend on the visual similarity based on the degree (no/light/heavy) of makeup among target faces. In Study 1, I made stimulus images comprising no-makeup, light-makeup, and heavy-makeup women. For these images, participants correctly perceived the degree of makeup, and furthermore evaluated the light-makeup women as more attractive than the heavy-makeup or no-makeup women. In Study 2, I manipulated the social context based on the visual similarity of the degree of makeup. More specifically, two light-makeup women and 1 heavy-makeup woman were simultaneously displayed under a light-makeup-dominant condition; that is, two light-makeup women were similar to one another with respect to the degree of makeup. On the other hand, under a heavy-makeup dominant condition, two heavy-makeup women and 1 light-makeup woman were displayed. Participants were required to choose the most attractive women among those targets. Under the light-makeup-dominant condition, participants chose the light-makeup woman more likely than the heavy-makeup woman, whereas the heavy-makeup woman was chosen more likely than the light-makeup woman under the heavy-makeup-dominant condition. These results suggest that the attractiveness judgment does not depend merely on the degree of makeup, but also on the visual similarity (or social context) based on the degree of makeup.