

Models with cosmetic surgery don't make the cut

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Credit: Massey University

While cosmetic surgery is becoming increasingly common in the world of advertising, chasing beauty ideals by going under the knife does not necessarily make a model more attractive to consumers.

Massey University Ph.D. graduate Dr. Pornchanoke Tipgomut conducted a series of studies in her home country of Thailand to better understand if [cosmetic surgery](#) makes models more effective in advertising imagery.

"I'm not making any judgments about whether cosmetic surgery is good or bad—I think it's a personal decision," the Massey Business School marketing lecturer says. "But, as a marketer, I would like to know if a [model](#)'s cosmetic surgery influences consumers' purchase intentions."

Can consumers detect cosmetic surgery?

Dr. Tipgomut's first study tested whether consumers could even tell if a model had undertaken cosmetic surgery. She found only a small number of consumers recognized if a model had a minor surgery, but once three or more modifications had been made to the face, recognition increased to over 50 percent.

Subsequent studies analyzed how this affected consumers' perception of the model's attractiveness and the effectiveness of the model's image in advertising material.

"I found that once participants recognized that a model had undertaken cosmetic surgery, the model's perceived attractiveness declined," Dr. Tipgomut says.

The impact on purchase behavior

She says previous social comparison jealousy research shows that attractive models in [advertising campaigns](#) can create two responses in female consumers.

"Feelings from social comparison jealousy can make women less likely to purchase the product being advertised, or they can find attractive models aspirational and want to buy more," she says.

"My [research data](#) supported the latter, but once consumers perceive a model has had cosmetic surgery, they find them less attractive. This leads to lower advertising effectiveness because consumers feel less positively towards the advertisements and their purchase intentions decline."

The same did not hold true for male [consumers](#). "While men also had the ability to detect cosmetic [surgery](#), they didn't find the models less attractive and it had no impact on their purchase decision making," she says.

Provided by Massey University

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