



# The Effects of TikTok Topic “Make Peace with Your Make-Up Free” on Participants’ Social Appearance Anxiety

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**Abstract.** With the popularity of the social media platform TikTok and its increasingly powerful beautification features, more and more netizens are posting beautification photos of their daily lives to attract others’ attention. When some Internet users see other people’s looks better than their own, they will feel social appearance anxiety, and even extremely unsure of their own makeup. Therefore, TikTok launched a new topic “Make peace with your make-up free” aimed at this phenomenon to let people with facial anxiety accept their no-makeup by releasing videos of themselves without makeup. This paper mainly focuses on the influence of this topic on these participants through quantitative research and whether it can effectively solve this problem. According to the survey, even though this topic on TikTok has brought some positive effects to some participants, its ultimate goal has not been achieved in a real sense. For many participants, the phenomenon of social appearance anxiety has not been alleviated, it’s getting even aggravated, which also proves that they have not successfully reconciled with their natural appearance.

**Keywords:** TikTok · Social appearance anxiety · Make-up

## 1 Introduction

As the social platform TikTok entered the online market in 2018, it has gradually become an important social platforms for people of all ages to share their lives and publicize something. In fact, one of the main reasons why TikTok has become so popular is that it implements “customer customization”. Through big data, TikTok has a great extent to understand the video viewing preferences of each user. This proves that it can easily control users’ preferences and feed users more videos that match their tastes, so that people are hooked on them and spend many hours every day, in their free time, such as after they wake up and before they go to bed, and even on the way to work or school to watch the videos that TikTok has recommended to them. That’s why TikTok has high viewing rates, and these large numbers of visitors also generate huge publicity and attraction for TikTok, People often launch interesting and meaningful topics on it to attract other users to participate.

When it comes to a very engaged TikTok topics recently, the topic of “Make peace with your make-up free” can be one of them. Facial anxiety has been a highly discussed concept in recent years, with many netizens saying that they fall into a kind of appearance level anxiety, which makes them feel annoyed and confused. Facial anxiety arises when people feel less confident about their appearance in an environment that amplifies the horizontal effect of appearance. Therefore, under such pressure, more people try to change their appearance through various ways such as makeup, plastic surgery and beautification, so that they can be more confident in facing others. A report has shown that through a since the media do more than twenty thousand copies of questionnaires, only one percent of the people felt happy and confident with their looks, so a lot of careful online users started to realize that social appearance anxiety has become a severe confusion that people face every day. However, it is a problem worthy of attention of the society, so Internet users started to launch the topic of “Make peace with your make-up free” on TikTok. One of the purposes of this topic is to let more people who are anxious about their appearance get rid of the burden of beauty and accept their natural appearance, because in this way can they be the unique themselves.

In other words, the topic “Make peace with your make-up free” also hopes to break down the stereotypes that people often have about beauty. It is not mean that the perfect facial features under the plastic surgery or the perfect body shapes under the face are called beautiful; on the contrary, uniqueness and imperfection are often the embodiment of beauty, which comes from confidence, from nature, and from accepting your own imperfections. Therefore, this topic on the platform TikTok gives these facial anxiety patients an opportunity to re-face their appearance, accept the natural self, and share their simple and true appearance with everyone bravely.

## 2 Literature Review

As the new media gradually become developed and the phenomenon of facial anxiety is widespread, scholars have carried out research on it. The research of investigation on secondary school students of the relationship between their self-esteem and social appearance anxiety has shown that children with low self-esteem were more affected by appearance anxiety, and a large part of that effect came from the media. When they see models with a high level of body image, they feel even less confident about their looks, which can be malignant [1]. Similarly, the research the impact of social media use on appearance self-esteem from childhood to The attribute also indicates that the low self-esteem caused by people’s appearance is not due to their own lack of confidence in their appearance, but to external oppression. More and more idealized photos on the Internet are causing facial anxiety to start at a younger age, and more and more children are even starting to feel facial anxiety [2]. In fact, the decline of self-esteem due to looks shows that people are less and less confident about their looks. In the article of Fiona Monro and Gail Huon, they also found that people’s lack of confidence is largely due to the oppression of idealized photos on the Internet [3].

Besides the influence of idealized photos, the article social appearance anxiety, perfectionism, and fear of negative evaluation: distinct or shared risk factors for social anxiety and eating disorders? has shown that another part of people’s anxiety comes

from external perceptions of their appearance, they lose confidence in their own appearance when others talk about them in negative terms. The authors of this paper believe that in this case, a good way to reduce their anxiety is to reduce negative evaluations [4].

Nigel Barber Ph.D., excluding the media, looked at why women often feel anxious or dissatisfied with their looks. She found that women’s anxiety about their appearance was largely due to “lookism” by men. Therefore, many women no longer dare to face the society with their makeup free, but choose a variety of clothes, cosmetics and even the way of plastic surgery to make themselves more delicate. In other words, it seems that the way they please others give them a sense of superiority themselves [5]. From the point of view of the current society, a big transformation of their appearance is also the risky method is called plastic surgery. In Yuxin Yao’s article, she has stated that more and more people are sacrificing their health in order to become more beautiful and compensate for their appearance anxiety. In this era of new media, many plastic surgery shops notice this phenomenon and increase their advertisement: “People who have not had plastic surgery are not perfect” [6]. In fact, this raises a series of social questions: Is it true that only processed beauty can be truly beautiful? Is it beautiful to sacrifice one’s health for the sake of pursuing beauty blindly? Can only such an extreme solution solve people’s facial anxiety once and for all?

In recent years of many articles published by scholars also focused on the relationship between media and appearance anxiety and even body anxiety. In the article of the Link Between Social Media and Body Image, it states that Media bring more negative effects on people’s appearance anxiety. Many people become beautiful by controlling their diet and deforming their facial features, and a very high percentage of people said they don’t like the way they look [7]. Regarding diet control, the article of Social Media Use and Body Image Disorders: Association between Frequency of Comparing One’s Own Physical Appearance to That of People Being Followed on Social Media and Body Dissatisfaction and Drive for Thinness also mentioned that people are dissatisfied with their Body and appearance, so they have the motivation to become beautiful and thin, so they go on a diet blindly, which leads to health damage and unbalanced diet [8]. Anxiety, Appearance Contingent Self-Worth, and Appearance Conversations with Friends in Relation to Disordered Eating: The survey of the moderators Models article [9] also yields the same results as in the previous article [8]. Moreover, CoinYuppie’s article suggests that people are largely anxious because they have spent so much time in the Internet age presenting themselves to others with airbrushed images that they find it hard to accept when they take off all the ‘packaging’ and look back in the mirror at their authentic selves [10].

Although social appearance anxiety has been a hot, often studied and discussed topic for a long time, many people are also actively looking for ways to make peace with humans’ make up free. However, previous literature and studies had not linked these two. Therefore, this article has well filled the research gap and deeply explored the real meaning of reconciliation with no makeup and its impact on social appearance anxiety. This is a research gap that needs to be filled in, because even when people know why they feel facial anxiety, they often don’t have a solution; even when they try to make peace with their natural looks, they can still often be influenced by external comments and other people’s looks. Therefore, it is necessary to take a rational and comprehensive

view of the real meaning on the topic of “Make peace with your make up free”, whether it aggravates or weakens the phenomenon of facial anxiety should be explored by scholars, too. Because this can not only help people understand the relationship between these two terms and their mutual influences, it can also help scholars explore the psychology of those who want to make peace with their makeup free, so as to better help these certain group solve their existing confusion. Therefore, this article will take TikTok users as a group to explore the psychological impacts of the topic of “Make peace with your make up free” on TikTok on the participants, and whether these participants feel more anxious about their make-up free by participating in this topic, or it helps alleviating some of their facial anxiety problems.

### 3 Methodology

Since this paper mainly studies the impact of a topic on platform users, it uses quantitative research methods. This article mainly adopts the way of questionnaire investigation. Firstly, it mainly used the app of “questionnaire star” to design the questionnaire investigation, and this questionnaire mainly includes nine questions that are relevant to this research topic “The effects of TikTok topic “Make peace with your make-up free” on participants’ facial anxiety”, it was then posted under the topic “Make peace with your make up free” on TikTok to collect users’ responses.

This questionnaire will be distributed on TikTok for 168 h (7 days), from 6 pm on March 31 to 6 pm on April 7. Therefore, it can be regarded that the answers completed within this time range will be effectively collected. During the entire seven-day period, 355 questionnaires were collected. After the user submits the questionnaire, the client can check the number of people who complete the questionnaire and the answer of each questionnaire. At the same time, in the process of collating the answers, not all the answers collected are valid. Among the 355 answers, 20 of them chose the same option in all the questions, and 5 of them had obvious regularity. Among them, three of them chose option A and B consecutively, and two of them chose option C and D consecutively. Therefore, these 25 answers are regarded as invalid questionnaires and will not be used as data in results.

In addition, since this questionnaire is targeted at TikTok users who have personally participated in the topic of “Make peace with your make-up free”, the answers completed by users who have not participated in the topic in the third question of the questionnaire are also regarded as invalid. In the process of collecting the answers, the data showed that 66 questionnaires were answered by people who had not participated in the topic, so these answers were also counted as invalid. Thus, on the whole, 91 questionnaires are invalid. As for the result, the answers of the remaining 264 valid questionnaires will be used as data reference.

### 4 Result

The results of each question were presented in 264 valid responses collected during the survey. The results of the first question, “Do you have social appearance anxiety?” showed that 251 people chose option “Yes”, while only the rest of the 13 people chose

option “No”. This extreme disparity shows that appearance anxiety is a problem which suffers by most people. The second question has asked: “When you post a video or image of yourself on social media, to what extent do you post your image after the process of beauty?” It turns out that only two people chose option 0–25%. And more than 85% of the choices went to option 50–75% and choice 75–100%. This indicates that fewer and fewer people want to face others as their make-up free. The third question “Have you participated in this topic on TikTok of ‘Make peace with your make-up free?’” as discussed in Methodology part, all 264 valid questionnaires are selected as option “yes”, and the questionnaires which chose the option “no” were excluded from the valid questionnaire.

Focusing on the purpose of these participants, the fourth question is “What is the purpose of your participation in releasing videos on this topic?” Of the four choices, 12% of participants chose option “Gaining popularity for your videos”; 32% of participants chose option “Borrow this opportunity to accept yourself originally”; of those, 53% chose option “They want to gain more confidence by receiving encouragement and praise from others for their make-up free”; the remaining 3% of participants chose option “Other reasons”. Therefore, most people choose to participate in the topic because they want to gain confidence in wearing no makeup through themselves and others. The fifth question focused on participants’ feelings after they participated in the topic: “If you participated in this topic, did your appearance anxiety increase or decrease after you posted the video?” Of all participants, 20% chose the option “A lot of aggravation”; 42% of the participants chose option “More aggravation”; 21% of you chose option “There is no change”; only the remaining 17% of participants chose options “reduce in some extent” and “reduce in a large extent”. So, as people can see, the challenge didn’t seem to be particularly effective in reducing the participants’ facial anxiety, but rather, in some ways, increased it.

After this, questions 6 and 7 were designed for different answers to question 5. The sixth question asked the participants who had increased or not changed level of facial anxiety in the fifth question: Could you explain why your level of facial anxiety increased or did not change after posting the video under the topic? A whopping 96% of participants chose option “My make-up free have been criticized by netizens”; and option “Seeing other participants look better without makeup than I do”. Question 7 is aimed at the people selected in question 5 who have reduced the level of facial anxiety: Please explain the reason why facial anxiety increases or does not change after posting the videos. A whopping 88% of participants chose option “Received praise from netizens to my appearance so I feel confident”. In response to both questions, the results suggest that people’s appearance anxiety is often based on how others perceive their appearance.

The eighth question participants were asked was: “How do you feel when you see other people’s make-up free, and why?” The results showed that 93% of the responses chose the first two choices. One was to make participants feel more confident because they thought other people looked less attractive than they did without makeup. Another was to make participants feel inferior because they perceived other people as superior to them without make-up. The final question focused on asking participants what they thought of the phrase “make peace with your make-up free”: “Do people need to make peace with their make-up free?” The results showed that only 12% of participants chose

option “Everyone needs it”; Only 3% of participants chose option “Not at all”; again, only 14% of participants chose option “There is no conflict between us and our make-up free”; however, 71% of participants chose option “This question needs to be tailored to the individual, it’s necessary for people who don’t have a good looking, but not necessary for people with good looking”.

## 5 Discussion

The original purpose of the topic “Make peace with your make-up free” hopes to help people release the level of their social appearance anxiety, so this article mainly discusses about whether this TikTok topic has reached the effects of its’ expectation or not. According to the results, what seems to influence people’s appearance anxiety isn’t how happy they are with their looks, but what others say about them using a social media platform like TikTok. It seems that their facial anxiety is more external than internal. Then such a result is an important reason why people in this era of social media developed has been used published some photos with beautification to win more attention and other network users like, so they hope that through the glory of others for themselves without makeup to peace with their own make-up free. In other words, most of these participants in this topic have a utilitarian purpose.

The results also showed that a significant proportion of participants’ satisfaction with their own looks and the levels of their social appearance anxiety were based on other people’s looks. This part of the participants’ hope is to get a sense of superiority by such a way. When they think their looks without make-up are better than others, their self-esteem will be greatly improved, and they will gain a sense of self-identity. Therefore, their appearance anxiety phenomenon can be alleviated. On the other hand, after another group of participants posted videos on the topic, they often saw other participants looking better without makeup than them. For example, other people still have big eyes, a high nose and a small mouth without makeup, while they did not have these delicate features. In this case, even if they participate in the TikTok topic of “Make peace with your make-up free”, the original intention of the topic does not apply to this group of participants, instead, it even made them feel more anxiety about their appearances than they would have done without makeup.

In addition, the results show that most of the participants believe that people who are originally with a better looking without make-up do not need to reconcile with their own make-up free. Instead, they just use this topic on TikTok platform to gain praise from others for their make-up free, further improving their satisfaction with their make-up free. For those who are not so outstanding without make-up, they will not only be criticized negatively by Internet users after posting videos, but also their self-esteem will be reduced in the process of constantly comparing their make-up free with other people’s, thus making them more dissatisfied with their looks without make-up. However, the purpose of the TikTok topic “Make peace with your make-up free” itself is to encourage those participants who are not so outstanding without make-up, those who are anxious about their appearance and those who are not satisfied with their make-up to reconcile with their make-up. However, after the results and analysis, this goal was almost not achieved; at worst, the topic may even be counterproductive in helping the purpose it is trying to accomplish.

The result of such discussion shows that in fact, it is a pity that the TikTok topic “Make peace with your make-up free” has relatively more negative impact than positive impact on participants. Even if some people are happier with their make-up free, it’s more about the fact that they were satisfied with their appearance originally than it is about how the topic has changed them. For most of the participants who were supposed to ease their appearance anxiety, the topic put them under a lot of pressure from negative comments on the Internet. In other words, the participants who wanted to ease their appearance anxiety gradually lost their sense of selves to others’ comments and to others’ make-up free. As they became less and less satisfied with their original looks, they sought praise to boost their confidence and satisfaction, so some of these participants may have deliberately altered their looks to mimic those of online users who were favoured without makeup. In this process, they will resort to all kinds of means, such as beauty treatment and plastic surgery.

In fact, addressing the root of this problem should eliminate the stereotype of “beauty” and let people understand that beauty is diverse. So as one of the most attractive social media platforms, TikTok can revise the topic “Make peace with your make-up free” into “Embracing beauty in Diversity”. In this way, those who suffer from social appearance anxiety can understand that the true beauty is not about changing your appearance, but preserving the most unique part of your appearance. If everyone had plastic surgery to change their looks into Internet celebrities and even changed their natural makeup to look similar to others in order to cater to the public tastes, there would be no diverse beauty on the Internet and even in the society. On the contrary, everyone would no longer be so beautiful, but more and more ordinary. When people understand this, they will bravely show the most unique part of their face or even body, and the initial propaganda purpose of this topic can be achieved.

## 6 Conclusion

The main research target group of this article is the participants of TikTok topic “Make peace with your make-up free”, and the internal changes after they posting videos were discussed. There was a polarizing difference in how participants felt about their natural appearance: those who were already more satisfied with their natural appearance are feeling more confident about their natural appearance after posting their videos under the topic, while those who were less satisfied with their natural appearance reported feeling lower self-esteem. This result is because they are more or less affected by the external evaluation of them, leading them to generally believe that the public opinion of beauty is the real beauty. With the popularity of social media platforms, the increasing publicity power of TikTok, and more and more people choosing to participate in the topic “Make peace with your make-up free”, the participants who want others to praise their make-up and looks have lost their identity. In other words, they even lost the value of exploring beauty, and instead, they regard beauty as vanity, glorification and pandering to popular tastes. Their idea of beauty is based on what other people think. Obviously, this research result shows that TikTok topic “Make peace with your make-up free” does not achieve the purpose and effect it hopes to achieve, that is, to let more people with facial anxiety and people who are not satisfied with their own look to relieve their facial

anxiety level by participating in this topic. Thus, TikTok could retain its original intention of designing the topic and change the name of the topic – from “Make peace with your make-up free” to “Embracing beauty in diversity”. Because only in this way can people solve their inner shackles, so that their sense of value and self-identity could improve.

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