

Digital Technology Age: Images and Filters in Relation to Self-Representation on Social Media

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Abstract: This essay will deal with the following aspects of the question that explore the implications of the development of digital images and filters for the social media and software, how people's self-presence reflects images and filters on social media and technology photo editing tools, and explore the self-representation related and determined by images and selfies.

Keywords: Filters; Selfies; Digital Image; Self-representation

1. Introduction

Manovich (2013) demonstrates that 'In the 1990s, a single term came to stand for the whole range of new technologies, new expressive and communicative possibilities, new forms of community and sociality that were emerging around computers and the internet' [1]. This term called 'digital'. The concept of 'digital' has invaded in almost every aspect of our lives and it is a revolution from tradition to modernity and the new. The process of evolving media into digital media has largely changed and affected the culture of society and people's life. However, software tends to be the core of digital media, which can determine the interface, content, form and data of media. Puschmann (2015) highlights that one of the functions of digital media is it make easier and simpler to change the content of the media's products. One of the characteristics of digital media is digital image [2]. Digital image processing is using computer or software essentially to change the content of the images and a series of operation on the images. However, it is necessary to examine the influence of self-representation to the use of technological tools and social media in order to produce images and filters and analyze the meaning, results related with them.

2. Selfies Become a Display of Self-Expression

Self-representation could help people find, understand, change themselves with the great

development of electronic technology, it becomes a strong voice associate with that at the present time. Early sources of self-expression come from diaries, people write down the details to record their life, for example, to record what they have done or eaten today, and express their thoughts and experience from one moment or the book they have read. The evolution of self-expression has changed from textual content to visual culture. This change in form has also proved to some extent that the development of digital technologies has changed the way of human self-expression and meaning. In the digital age, self-expression is a kind of openness and willing to sharing with others or even explored to public. For example, people will self-portrait through social media such as Instagram to spread out. Thus, Selfie culture tend to be a good form of self-expression and taking selfie has become a popular trend for the mainstream phenomenon of contemporary society. Walker (2014:01) demonstrates that 'Selfies are descendants of visual artists' self-portraits, and the quantitative modes of lifelogs, personal maps, productivity records and activity tracking and to-do lists' [4].

Selfies, as one of the contents of digital images can be considered as an information of people's self-expression. Share ability and interactivity is the core of digital image content in contemporary social networks, especially for social networks which relying on delivering and sharing images, such as Instagram, Snapchat. Through the pictures, it can be closer to a person's identity. On the contrary, people are accustomed to shows self-expression into self-representation. For example, if our friends shared their selfies on social media. As for us, when we see the images of theirs, we tend to be more concerned with the social relations or functions of the images or the information conveyed by the images themselves, such as locations, figures, and the content of the pictures or so on. We do not really regard someone else's picture as a self-expression. Therefore, people

focus on the self-representations of themselves rather than others. Moreover, it seems to prove the reason that why people always focus on their small defect or insufficient aspects of themselves, but other people do not really notice and care. On the contrary, if people themselves share the pictures or selfies online, it might be much easier for us to consider the action is kind of self-representation. In a word, it is essentially a way for us to express our own inner thoughts and actions.

3. Filters Have an Impact on Self-Perception

Instagram as a social application that offers free online photo browsing and editing and video sharing. Users can change the filters which they applied after taking the pictures and share photos and post on Instagram interface or other social networks associated with Instagram. Text and images are two of the essentially ways to achieve express self-presentation. As a result, it also enables the fundamental features of social media holds which is communication and interaction when users sharing their life with digital text and images on Instagram. A rising problem is that Instagram gives us a space in which people and strangers can see each other's 'self-expression', imitation is a human nature, in this open and shared space, for almost every individual, the self-expression will affect each other in physical and mental aspects to a large extent.

Some image processing software specifically provides the simulation function of some of the traditional analog filter effects such as Instagram. Filters can be seen as a derivative along with the development of digital images and also a part of visual culture as well as digital images. Images and filters could distort or beautify to shape and to represent who we are, also can expound and explore a better or worse society. Filters, not just as a digital technology, it already has become an important part of our visual culture. Filters let us feel strange and unfamiliar to the real world, we start to get inspiration and material from the real world, then, through the filters, create a more fantastic, colorful, retro or distorted sense of the world. The filters give people a special form of art to express themselves or indicate the experience of the world. In addition, based on the reality of strangeness, filters help individuals to shape and build this world with an invasion of ideology.

Meituxiuxiu as a Chinese popular image

processing software which has picture effects, filters, simply images operation and other functions. Filters function on Meituxiuxiu allows users to quickly acquire the visual effects which they want to add to the original images, through its color adjustment, makes the images have more quality and aesthetic effect. Another feature of Meituxiuxiu reflect on the image adjustment, it has abrasive skin, skin whitening, face-shaping, removal spots, acne and other effects, generally used in the persons' body and selfies. The effects could easily help users to cover the defects of their appearance or completely change the appearance and body. People do not even need to do cosmetic surgery to change the appearance, but only need to move their fingers and then a perfect body and face show up. These effects filter out the physical and mental defects allow people to portray themselves become different and perfect. As Sontag (1973:20) demonstrates that 'the filter anesthetises our everyday lives' [3]. However, it is too seriously to say filters 'anesthetises' our daily life, but filter gives the courage to people and encourages us to express and share ourselves bravely or even an imaginative and unreal self. The original selfies may be the closest to our true self, but by filtering, cover up their imperfections, it does not mean filters make them lose or take place people's real self.

In Walkers' book (2014), he states an example about the bias to colored people that related to images and selfies in the early 20 centuries. 'Early camera film was calibrated to provide good detail for white faces, but the light sensitivity was so narrow that faces with darker skin were shown with hardly any detail, with eyes and teeth often the only discernable features. Lighting and balance were calibrated by using 'Shirley cards' images of a pale skinned woman with dark hair against a white background. It is only in the last couple of decades that calibration cards have reflected all skin tones, for instance by including images of a range of people with different skin tones, as well as objects in a range of colours' [4].

Earlier photographic techniques were not effective in capturing the dark skins faces so much, they even could not restore a real face through the camera and picture. One possible reason is that camera did not have that function to adjust the originally dark area to a visible color automatically. Therefore, it tends to be a barrier for dark skin people, to self-expression

through images. In today's digital era, filter helps to make darker objects appear brighter as the function by increasing the exposure and saturation of images. Moreover, a simple survey found that on Facebook, Instagram or other social networking platforms, people who have darker skin tends to be more dependent on the whitening effect of the filter. Although filters cannot completely change dark skin into white skin, however, it changed its original color to a greater extent. People who have dark skin are more willing to share their photos on social platforms after photo editing. This move can be seen as a positive benefit of filters embedded in the visual culture which helps people become more self-confident, beautiful and brave in expressing themselves online.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the development of digital technology in the era of digital media shows that the development of digital technology has a significant impact and change on people's lifestyles and habits. With regard to the influence and function of images and filters in the digital media, a great deal of description has been made on the evolution and significance of the ways on how people express themselves from the traditional forms to the new, and show that people's self-expression in social networks and filters under the presentation of the form and

ideology. The technical development of digital pictures allow picture can be an unlimited modification, the relationship between texts and pictures as a form of self-expression at different times, and Selfie becomes an important form of self-expression through images which have the more interactive narrative. Filters could help people cover up part of the defects or the real so that to achieve a perfect society or an imagined self.

Therefore, people can express themselves by the forms of images and filters, with the continuous innovation of digital media and tools, some new forms of technology products that enable people to express themselves will continue to be created in the future.

References

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