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**AFRO-OCCIDENTAL BEAUTY; A STUDY ON THE PORTRAYAL, PERCEPTION
AND EFFECTS OF BEAUTY AMONG THE YOUTH, A KENYAN CASE STUDY.**

Corvinus University of Budapest
Doctoral School of Sociology and Communication Science
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Doctoral dissertation

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GLOSSARY: Definition of Key Terms

Afrocentric beauty ideals

These refer to widely held beauty ideals across different African communities, they are characterized by a woman having wide hips, small waist, big buttocks, dark skinned, African natural hair, big legs, long arms, slender fingers and decently dressed (Kaziga 2021; Tete et al. 2017; Byrd 2015; Bryd & Tharps 2014; Capodilupo & Kim, 2014; Bryant, 2013; Awad et al. 2015; Gordon et al. 2010; Overstreet et al., 2010).

Occidental beauty ideals

These refer to widely held beauty ideals among Caucasian women in western societies, they are characterized by a thin and toned woman who has a symmetrical face, a thin nose, full lips and high cheek bones (Tolentino, 2019).

Afro-Occidental beauty ideals

These refer to a hybrid of Afrocentric and Occidental beauty ideals held by women of African descent. They are characterized by an obsession for cleanliness, stress-free haircare practices and protective hairstyles. They are also characterized by the adoption of occidental beauty practices such as cosmetic use, minimalistic accessorizing, selfcare practices, weight loss and weight management practices, pursuit for perfect and youthful appearance and a heavy reliance on scents and beauty products.

Beauty

This is a concept that refers to an outstanding and harmonious comparison of elements, symmetry, appropriateness, exactness, proportionality and physical attractiveness (Plato cited by Pappas 2016; Aristotle 1996; Grube 1927). Beauty is twofold, outer beauty that refers to external physical appearance and inner beauty which refers to internal attributes that are admirable by the society (Dimitrov & Kroumpouzos 2023; Stearns 2002; Matiza 2013; Muhammad 1993).

Broad conceptualization of beauty

This refers to the acceptance of a wide range of body shapes and body weight as beautiful, irrespective of whether these appearances are modifiable or not (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow (2015c).

Benign envy

These refer to negative emotions that individuals feel when they compare themselves with members of the society (i.e SMIs) who they deem have a social, economic or physical advantage. These emotions are characterised by a desire to increase personal effort so as to achieve the portrayed success or beauty (Crusius & Lange 2014; Crusius & Mussweiler 2012; Van de Ven Zeelenberg, & Pieters 2011c; Schaubroeck & Lam 2004).

Influencer Marketing

This refers to marketing strategies adopted by organizations to build profitable relationships with their consumers through leveraging the existing relationships between SMIs and their audiences to promote their products and services (Leung, Gu & Palmatier 2022).

Malicious envy

This refers to negative emotions experienced by individuals when they compare themselves with members of the society (i.e. SMIs) who they deem have an underserved social, economic or physical advantage (Crusius & Lange 2014; Van de Ven et al. 2011c;). These emotions are characterised by hostile and resentful behaviour (Duffy et al. 2012; Salovey & Rodin 1984).

Objectified body consciousness (OBC)

These refer to the internalization of cultural standards of viewing the body as an object that needs to be gazed at and the beliefs that underwrite this experience (McKinley & Hyde 1996; Spitzack 1990).

OBC-appearance control beliefs

These refer to the belief that individuals can control their appearance hence comply with perpetuated cultural beauty standards (McKinley & Hyde 1996).

OBC-body shame

These refer to negative feelings about the body attached to the inability to attain societal beauty standards (McKinley & Hyde 1996)

Parasocial relationships

These are social and emotional connections between SMIs and their audiences over a period of time which lead to a long-lasting relationship between the SMIs and their audience (Aw & Labrecque 2020, Dibble et al. 2016; Giles 2002; Nordlund 1978; Horton & Wohl 1956).

Social media influencers (SMIs)

These refer to digital content creators, who have a large community of followers that exceeds their friends and family (Booth & Matic 2011), who can shape or influence their followers through self-branding (Khamis et al. 2017) that have adopted a professional approach (Hou 2019) and with an intention to make money from their content (Abidin & Ots 2016).

ABSTRACT

Beauty ideals vary across different cultures. Beauty for women of African descent lie on a continuum, with Afrocentric ideals on one end and Occidental beauty ideals on the extreme end. Thus, beauty ideals for women of African descent are neither Occidental nor Afrocentric but Afro-Occidental beauty ideals. The media is rife with a display of diverse beauty ideals which has contributed to an internalization of beauty ideals. Social media is more potent at conveying ideal beauty standards compared to broadcast media. Social media influencers are critical in modelling these standards. Parasocial relationships between social media influencers and their followers leads to upward comparison which consequently leads to feelings of envy; malicious or benign and purchase of beauty products. Therefore, this thesis sought to investigate the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty ideals by social media influencers, perception of the youth on these beauty ideals and mediating effects of body shame, parasocial relationships, benign envy, malicious envy, appearance control beliefs and broad conceptualization of beauty on purchase intentions. The study adopted a mixed method research design; a content analysis of four Kenyan beauty social media influencers' YouTube channels to assess the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty, and a Netnography of their comment section to assess the perception of the youth on Afro-Occidental beauty ideals portrayed by these social media influencers. Lastly a survey (N = 201) was done to evaluate the effect of body shame, parasocial relationships, benign envy, malicious envy, appearance control beliefs and broad conceptualization of beauty on purchase intention. The results indicate that beauty work and parasocial relationships are the prevailing themes in Afro-Occidental beauty ideals. Parasocial relationships fully mediated the effect of body shame on purchase intention, benign envy partially mediates the effect of appearance control beliefs on purchase intention and broad conceptualization of beauty has no effect on purchase intention. The study had several limitations, it cannot be generalized to all African social media influencers, the comments were less than 10% of the viewership and the results of the survey based on a convenience sample were self-reported and therefore prone to reporter bias. The study has theoretical contributions to the conceptualization of beauty work, parasocial relationships and effects of body shame, benign envy, malicious envy, appearance control beliefs and broad conceptualization of beauty on purchase intention.

Keywords

Social media influencers, Afro-Occidental beauty ideals, beauty work, upward comparison, OBC-body shame, OBC-appearance control beliefs, Broad conceptualization of beauty, Parasocial relationships, benign envy, malicious envy and purchase intentions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Beauty standards vary across different cultures. In western cultures thinness among females is considered attractive while in Africa fatness was a sign of fertility, health and wealth (Kaziga et al. 2021; Frederick, Forbes & Berezovyaskaya, 2008). Western beauty also known as *Occidental beauty* is characterized by a thin and toned woman who has a symmetrical face, a thin nose, full lips and high cheek bones (Tolentino, 2019). On the other hand, African beauty also known as *Afrocentric beauty* is characterized by a woman that has wide hips, small waist, big buttocks, dark skinned, short hair, big legs, long arms, slender fingers and decently dressed (Kaziga et al. 2021). Beauty standards continue to change and are influenced by urbanization, globalization, changes in socioeconomic status, pop culture, education and exposure to broadcast media and social media. Popular culture depicts a beautiful woman of African descent as one who is light skinned, has straight hair (relaxed hair or wearing straight or wavy wigs), practices hair removal, medium breasted, has a small waist and big buttocks (Lee & Watkins 2016; Avery 2017). This thesis hypothesizes that the ideal beauty standards that women of African descent now hold are neither '*Afrocentric beauty standards nor Occidental Beauty standards*' but rather *Afro-Occidental beauty standards*. These beauty standards will vary from person to person depending on the degree to which they hold on to Afrocentric or Occidental beliefs. This thesis therefore seeks to explore the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty.

The media significantly contributes to the internalization of beauty norms; the beauty images displayed provide a blueprint for ideal beauty standards (Dye, 2016; Galioto & Crowther, 2013; Warren 2008). Social media, a channel through which intrinsically private and external information from individuals, organizations, industries and the society are propagated (Lundmark et al. 2017) is more potent at conveying ideal beauty standards compared to broadcast media (Cohen & Blaszczynski 2015). This is because social media continues to perpetuate a flawless appearance as synchronous to beauty (Almaki et al. 2023). Existence of filters on social media also foster the internalization of makeup use to cover flaws (Miller & McIntyre 2022). Research also shows that social media users who spend a lot of their time on social media had a higher chance in comparing their physical appearance with others which leads to feelings of envy, rise in shame and body surveillance (Alfonso-Fuertes 2023; Chancellor et al. 2016; Wick & Harriger 2018).

Statistics show that social media plays a crucial part in the lives of many Kenyans especially the youth. Kenya had the highest internet penetration rate in Africa in 2020 with 87.2% of the population connected to the internet (Sang, 2021) and is leading in the continent in smart phone penetration with 96.1% mobile subscription (Namunwa, 2019). The total number of social media users as of January 2025 was 15.1 million (Datareportal, 2025) with individuals spending at least 3 hours per day on social media (Namunwa, 2019). Social media users spend at least 44 minutes on YouTube, 35 minutes on Facebook, 33 minutes on Instagram, 32 minutes on TikTok and 10 minutes on Twitter (Wise, 2022). Kenyans use social networking sites for entertainment, education, job related issues, to access current affairs, business purposes and other social issues (Kanyi, 2020). Research studies on beauty in social media have focussed majorly on Instagram (Mwangi and Buvar 2024), however other platforms such as YouTube have the potential to perpetuate beauty ideals similarly to what broadcast media did in the past. This thesis therefore seeks to investigate the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty on YouTube.

Although social media offers individuals opportunities to interact with family, friends and peers these interactions may also lead to sexual objectification of women and social comparison (Alfonso-Fuertes 2023; Luo 2019). In instances where individuals compare themselves with peers they feel are better than them, they experience body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem which encourages the adoption of unhealthy practices (Klier, Rommerskirchen & Brixius 2022; Ratwatte & Mataccola 2021; Cohen et al. 2019). Some of the peers that individuals compare themselves with are social media influencer (SMIs). Social media influencers (SMIs) refer to individuals who: have amassed a large following on social networking sites, able to create digital content about their lifestyle, in the form of videos, text and images, influence attitudes and perception of their followers and who have an intention to make money from it (Enke & Borchers, 2019; Abidin, 2015; Hou, 2018; Abidin & Ots, 2016). Their role therefore in modern day cannot be ignored. One of the ways they persuade their audience and followers is through modelling. They encourage their followers to participate in activities, purchase products, change their way of life, introduce new ideas, suggest adoption of a set of behaviour among many other things. Kenya boasts of over 200,000 social media influencers (SMIs) (Intellifluence, 2022) who are engaged in daily or regular production of digital content.

SMIs are instrumental in influencer marketing. In 2024, the influencer Marketing industry was appraised at \$24 billion, 26% of brands in the world have allocated more than 40% of their marketing budgets to SMIs marketing (Kendall 2025). Reports show that 86% of consumers make at least one purchase in a year that has been influenced by a SMI (Kendall 2025). In a study carried out by Red Brick Africa, 59% of Kenyans would purchase an item that has been endorsed by a SMI (Njoroge 2023). This therefore shows that there is a significant number of individuals who trust the recommendations of SMIs. This thesis therefore sought to investigate the influence of SMIs on purchase intention of beauty products among the Kenyan youth.

Additionally, research on beauty in Africa is limited. Studies on beauty in Africa have assessed beauty contests in Nigeria (Balogun-Mwangi et al. 2023), South Africa as a site for exotic beauty practices (Falkof 2021), beauty among the English-speaking elites in Cameroon in 1960s (Mougoue 2019), celebrity culture and post-feminism (Glapka 2018; Motseki & Oyedemi 2017), outcome of educating HIV infected children on beauty and synthetic hair care in Uganda (Papi & Fiscarelli 2021; Faria 2020), skin bleaching in Zimbabwe (Nyoni-Kachambwa et al., 2016) and South Africa (Jacobs et al. 2016) among others. This thesis therefore adds to the body of work on beauty studies in social media in Africa in the wake of digitization and growth of social media use among the youth. The thesis used a mixed method approach to explore the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty by SMIs, perception of Kenyan youth on Afro-Occidental beauty and effect of SMIs on purchase intentions of beauty products.

The thesis aimed at answering the following Research Questions:

RQ1. How do social media influencers portray *Afro-Occidental* beauty standards and outcome expectancies on YouTube?

RQ2. What is the perception of the youth on *Afro-Occidental* beauty ideals portrayed by social media influencers on YouTube?

RQ3. To what extent do parasocial relationships mediate the impact of body shame on purchase intention?

RQ4. To what extent does benign and malicious envy mediate the effect of appearance control beliefs and broad conceptualization of beauty on purchase intention?

The above RQs are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 BEAUTY

Beauty can be defined in various ways in fact the concept has attracted great philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Immanuel Kant among many others to establish its exegesis and relevance (Ibanga 2017). Plato defined beauty as a “glorious, lofty, outstanding and harmonious comparison of elements” (Plato cited by Pappas 2016). On the other hand, Aristotle defined beauty as appropriateness, exactness and proportionality (Aristotle 1996). Beauty is also twofold; *outer beauty* and *inner beauty* (Dimitrov & Kroumpouzou 2023; Matiza 2013; Muhammad 1993). Outer beauty refers to the external appearance while Inner beauty refers to attributes that are admirable in society such as gentleness, grace, thoughtfulness, patience and virginity which signified purity and a woman’s ability to bear children among others (Dimitrov & Kroumpouzou 2023; Njoifor 2018; Matiza 2013;). This inner beauty improves with age while external beauty fades as an individual grows older (Ibanga 2017). Beauty standards are influenced by a people’s culture.

Occidental beauty standards include beauty standards held in European countries and Northern America. They lay emphasis on the value of a women being attractive, this is predominantly measured by how well they align with Occidental beauty standards (Carneiro et al. 2013; Wolf 1991). Western societies are also individualistic with an independent outlook towards self; hence individuals are responsible for their bodies (Anderson-Fye 2011). Beauty standards have changed over time from a focus on outer and inner beauty to more attention being given to outer beauty. In ancient Greece, a beautiful woman was characterized by unibrows, bleached curls and symmetrical body while during the Renaissance in Italy, a beautiful woman had a high forehead, blonde hair, virtuous and rounded physique (Dimitrov & Kroumpouzou 2023). During this era temperance, self-control and chastity were highly valued, which stemmed from the strong religious beliefs held by the populace (Stearns, 2002). In the 1920s beauty was characterized by a slender and flat chest, in the 1940s full breasted women also known as “sweater girls”, in the 1970s very thin supermodels and in the 1990s the rounded but thin models (Forbes et al. 2007). These beauty standards are ubiquitous in the media, consumer goods and in governmental offices (Marrinan 2019). Beauty in modern day in western societies is now characterized by blue eyes, slender nose,

slender lips, white or pale skin and a slim build (Carneiro et al. 2013; Bryant 2013). However western societies also glamorize a tanned skin tone as it is associated with a high social status exhibited by one's ability to afford holidays in warmer climates (Chen et al. 2017; Day et al. 2015; Jackson & Aiken 2000). Individuals therefore go to great lengths to style and shape their appearance in line with the predominant beauty ideals. This involves grooming, clothing, dieting, exercise and dyeing one's hair (Kuipers 2015).



Figure 1: Occidental beauty images (IMDb n.d; Fashion Beans. n.d.)

In the African society, beauty encompasses a pleasurable balanced appearance, restrained power, incorporated with living in harmony with the moral norms of the African society (Njoifor 2018). A woman who has external beauty but lacking good morals is despised by the society while the one with internal beauty but lacking external beauty is not often preferred by the elite in the society (Ibanga 2017). The woman with only inner beauty needs to use accessories and oils to improve her value, this is also known as beauty enhancement (Ibanga 2017). African society believes that external beauty, that is the appealing balanced proportions of a person's body is ratified by their adherence to an authentic moral life (Njoifor 2018). Therefore, a balance between external beauty and inner beauty is an important element for the African society and extreme external beauty is held under suspicion if does not match inner beauty (Matiza 2013). Beauty is also functional; it must serve a purpose in the African society (Gayle 1972; Matiza 2013). A beautiful woman in the African context is big, has big breasts and buttocks and black skin (p'Bitek 1986; Matiza 2013). This

signifies a well-developed body, that is indicative of fertility; her ability to bear children in marriage (Matiza 2013). Beauty also ought to communicate norms, values, morals and purpose; it must uplift and improve a community (Ibanga 2017). Individuals who do not hold the moral values of the African society are considered as ugly, because their behaviour leads to a conflict in the community (Njoifor 2018). Since the African society is collectivist in nature, the community is responsible for an individual's favourable or unfavourable appearance (Anderson-Fye 2011; Becker 2004; Markus & Kitayama 1991). While the above still holds true for many communities in Africa, the media has contributed greatly to a more uniform perspective on beauty with greater emphasis on external beauty. External beauty involves an assessment of the following: skin, body shape and size, hair, facial features and clothing. A detailed assessment of these elements is highlighted in the following paragraphs.

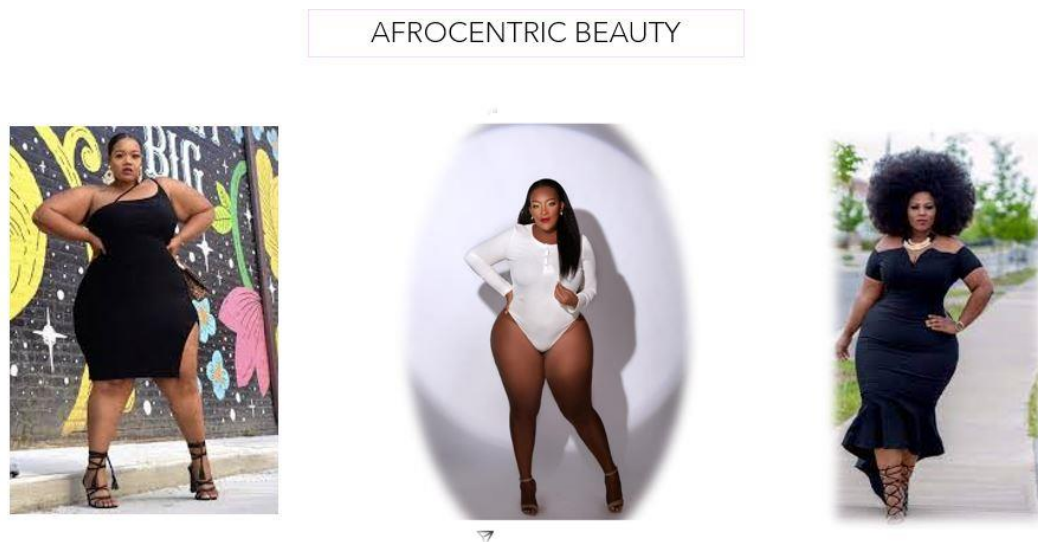


Figure 2: Afrocentric beauty images (Munyi [murugi.munyi], 2023; Divalocity, 2016)

2.1.1 Skin, Body shape and size

According to Robbins (2001), our personality, emotions and general health can be seen on the skin. Good skin is clear, flawless, smooth, polished, fragile and luminous and this is only evidenced at birth (Robbins 2001). Taking care of the skin helps to lessen and prevent the

inescapable effects of age such as biological wrinkles, age spots, loss of elasticity and discolorations (Hayman 1996).

There are more than five typical body shapes or forms of weight distribution namely pear, triangle, rectangular, hourglass, apple and diamond (Mason, Klerk & Ashdown 2012). The pear body shape has smaller shoulders and /or bust as compared to wider hips, thighs and buttocks (Rasband & Leichty 2006; Rasband 1994). The inverted Triangle body shape is characterised by wide shoulders, prominent bust, wide waist and narrow hips (Mason, Klerk & Ashdown 2012; Rasband & Leichty 2006; Rasband 1994). The Rectangular body shape is characterised by the shoulder and bust width being equal to the hips and buttocks without a clearly defined waistline. The Hourglass body shape is characterized by evenly aligned shoulders and hips and a clearly indented waist (Rasband 1994). The Apple body shape is characterised by rounded shoulders, bust, waist and buttocks. The Diamond shape is characterised by rounded shoulders, bust and buttocks but a wider bulging waistline (Mason, Klerk & Ashdown 2012; Rasband 1994).

2.1.2 Hair

There are four types of hair: straight, wavy, curly and kinky. The ideal hair standards for African women are greatly influenced and propagated by their families, culture and communities (Bryant, 2013; Tete et al. 2017). Occidental standards of beautiful hair which emphasize longer, straighter and blonde hair continue to affect women of African descent (Johnson & Bankhead 2014; Byrd & Tharps 2014; Ashe 1995). African hair is intrinsically curly due to its twisted form, and it has the appearance of a spring (Khumalo et al., 2000). This results to the knotting and intertwining of the hair strands making it difficult to manage (Etemesi 2007). African women are therefore forced to artificially straighten their hair to achieve the straight and flowing hair (Onwuachi-Willig 2010). Temporary hair straightening can be done using hair dryers, hot combs and flat irons Permanent hair straightening is done using chemical relaxers which has a longer lasting impact altering the basic hair shafts (Etemesi 2007).

Rosado (2004) found that African American women perceived good hair to be long, smooth and straight while short, curly and woolly hair was perceived as bad hair. Discrimination

against African hair by referring to it as wild, nappy, untamed, kinky, frightening and undesirable plays a crucial role in influencing women to straighten their hair (Ashe 1995; Tate 2007; Johnson & Bankhead 2014) or better still wear hair extensions (Hunter 1998) and wigs.

2.1.3 Facial Features

A woman's face can be oval, long, round, triangular, heart shaped or a square face (Robins, 2001). Neonatal characteristics which refer to large eyes and a small nose are suggestive of zest, vigour, open mindedness, friendliness and compliance are associated with youthfulness (Baudouin & Tiberghien 2004). The prominent eyes, high cheekbones, balanced nose, full lips and small chin become synonymous to femininity, increased fertility, and a desirable appearance from men (Baudouin & Tiberghien 2004; Thornhill & Gangestad 1999; Keating 1985). Facial skin-color in particular redness, lightness and yellowness, among Africans is a significant component on the assessment of facial traits (Coetzee et al., 2012). On the other hand, western societies emphasize a beautiful woman as one who has a symmetrical face, a thin nose, full lips and high cheek bones (Tolentino 2019). The more feminine the facial characteristics that a woman has the more attractive she is perceived (Rhodes 2006, Little et al. 2011; Foo et al. 2017). Additionally, attractiveness is also affected by facial symmetry and shape, hairstyle, mood and the use of makeup (Horace 2022).

2.1.4 Clothing and Accessories

Historically clothing and accessories played a significant role in Kenya as they signified an individual's gender, social status, marital status and age and varied across different ethnic communities. Accessories were made from natural resources available in the region that the community resided in (Isaac, Agordah, & Nehemiah 2024; Wambui 2020; Luling & Adam 2015). Dominant patterns in clothing in Kenya can be broadly categorized into three main periods (Hay 2004). The first period was prior to World War 1 which saw Kenyans experiment with clothing and ornaments from different communities in the markets such as coastal dressing that involved *Kanzus (a long loose fitting white shirt like robe)* for men and *buibui (long loose-fitting black frock covering most of a woman's body; including the hands and feet)* for women (Hay 2004). The second period was between World War 1 and World

War 11. This period saw the adoption of western clothing styles that reflected the proliferation of Christianity, growth of the labour market and growth in women's financial capabilities (Hay 2004). The third period lasted from the end of World War 11 to Kenya's independence. This stage was characterized by a predominant adoption of Western clothing and a moderate disappearance of traditional jewellery and clothing made of hides and skins (Hay 2004). The fourth period is after Kenya's independence in 1963 to modern day. This period has been characterized by an adoption of Western style of dressing, increase in imported clothes from Turkey and China, proliferation of second-hand clothes, African inspired clothing styles made of imported fabric from West Africa and traditional clothing worn to commemorate certain rites of passage such as weddings and circumcision (Hansen 2005; Sobania 2003; Rabine 1997).

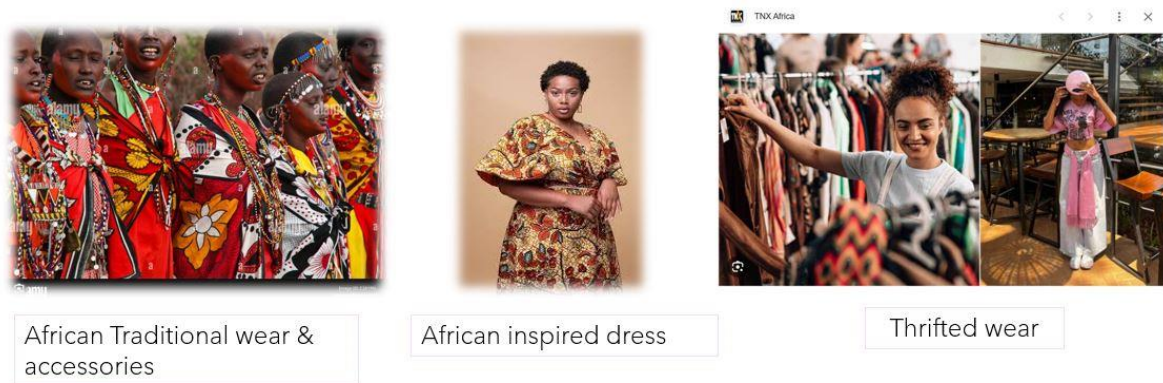


Figure 3: Clothing & accessories (Besida n.d; Ochwada 2025; Alamy.n.d)

2.1.5 Cosmetics

Cosmetic products refer to a compound that is applied on certain body parts such as nails, skin, lips, teeth and external genital organs for cleaning, perfuming, changing appearance, as a remedy for body odour, and for protection (Lambert, 2001; Pallington, 1998; E U regulations 1223/2009 Article 2.1a). Kenya ranked third in 2017, following South Africa and Nigeria in the use of cosmetic products in Sub-Sahara Africa (Africa Business Pages 2017). The beauty industry in Kenya is worth \$157 million, however only 30% of Kenyans from a population of over 47.6 million are using face care products (Kahongeh 2022). Kenya's beauty and personal care industry was valued at over \$2.3 billion in 2024 (Statista 2024). The cosmetic industry in Kenya is dominated by multinationals such as L'Oreal, Revlon, Unilever and Procter and Gamble (Africa Business Pages 2017). Some of the prominent regional

brands include Suzie Beauty, Marini Naturals, Keyara Organics and Pauline Cosmetics among others (Akoth 2024).

2.1.6 Beauty Work

Beauty work has been defined as beauty practices that individuals perform to obtain certain societal rewards (Kwan & Trautner 2009). Women spend a considerable sum of money, and time in altering their appearance using beauty products such as hair dye and cosmetics (Haynes 2017; Statista 2018). The society has encouraged women to meticulously discipline their bodies through restricted postures, skincare, diet, plastic surgery, Botox injections and make up (Lemperle et al. 2001; Wolf 2013). The youthful appearance is presented as universally desirable while aging is shunned (Aharoni & Ayalon 2024). Women have been primed to continuously preoccupied with their external appearance and to pursue perfection which is consistent with societal beauty standards (Kwan & Trautner 2009; Gimli, 2002). In this dissertation, beauty work is defined as the beauty practices that individuals engage in to attain and maintain beauty. These beauty practices are characterized by effort (Chang 2011), make up trends (Cardelliono 2015) and mundane haircare and cosmetic use that are time consuming (Samper, Yang & Daniels 2018).

Beauty work is closely associated with perceived morality. Individuals who have healthy meals and keep fit are seen as self-disciplined hence presumed to be moral (Baumeister & Exline, 2000; Whorton 1982). Women who wear makeup have often been perceived negatively and assumed to have lower morals as makeup is seen as a tool that enhances misrepresentation (Samper, Yang, & Daniels 2018; Bame 2017). However, for some women makeup contributes significantly to refining one's self-image, boost confidence, restoring one's original appearance especially in cases where one has suffered injuries that lefts marks on the skin or as a tool for self-expression (Smith et al. 2021; Tran 2020). Extensive beauty work is considered suspicious and attracts negative judgement from the populace since it is presumed to be aimed at misrepresentation. However, extensive beauty work such as skincare attracts social approval as it is presumed to have restorative features ((Samper, Yang & Daniels 2018).

2.2 BEAUTY AND THE MEDIA

The media is rife with a display of diverse beauty ideals such as a skinny look, toned and muscular bodies, an hourglass body shape, long and straight hair and wearing makeup which play a role in how women conceptualize beauty (Baker 2019; Bencosme 2017; Bryd & Tharps 2014). Society continues to perpetuate practices such as body surveillance, restricted postures, skincare, diet, plastic surgery, Botox injections and make up as essential elements of beauty (Wolf 2013; Bordo 2004; Lemperle et al. 2001).

2.2.1 Portrayal of Beauty in Traditional media

In a study by Mbure & Aubrey (2017) on the variations of skin tones displayed in Kenyan lifestyle magazines (*True Love, Drum, Eve, Viva, Trust and Parents*) between the colonial period (1955-1975) and post-independence era (2000-2010) reveals that models were darker in Kenyan magazines produced between 1955-1975 and lighter between 2000-2010. Colourism was also evidenced in print media, in a study by Otieno (2023) the findings revealed that 71% of the female models were light skinned while 11% were dark skinned. This therefore contributes to women's desire to change their skin colour. The history of occidental makeup and cosmetics is entrenched in skin whitening, especially cosmetics targeting the face and it dates to ancient Greeks (McMullen & Acqua 2023; Dyer 1997). Skin lightening has been rampant in Sub-Saharan Africa with a prevalence rate of between 40-72% (De Souza 2008; Lewis et al. 2011; Davids et al. 2016) due to the drive for fair skin (Dlova et al. 2014).

Popular culture depicts African American women as having long and straight hair, this reinforces the predominant notion that beautiful hair is long and straight and not natural (Bryd & Tharps 2014). Black female actresses in top television shows such as Gabrielle Union in *Being Mary Jane*, Kerry Washington in *Scandal*, Taraji p. Henson in *Empire* and Viola Davis in *How to get away with murder* mostly wore wigs or weaves and not their natural hair (Byrd 2015). Kenyan female National TV newscasters to date are expected to wear their hair in long, straight or wavy wigs or weaves. This long wavy hair is considered conventionally attractive. The Kenyan media has consistently portrayed good hair '*nywele nzuri*' as long, luxurious, silky often as hair extensions or as relaxed hair hence affecting how many Kenyan women view their African hair (Onyango 2022). The natural hair movement

which was invigorated between 2000-2010 brought a shift among Kenyan female consumers who have shunned away from chemical relaxers to embrace going natural. This has seen an increase in natural hair products produced by local stylists, imports and growth in salons solely catering to natural hair (Onyango 2022).

2.2.2 Portrayal of beauty in social media

Carr and Hayes (2015, pp.50) defined social media as

Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others.

Social media applications have various functions: give individuals an opportunity to disclose details about their identity, connect and converse with other like-minded individuals and groups, share content, help identify the availability or unavailability of other users through status updates and support the reputation of individuals and their content sometimes through endorsements (Lundmark et al. 2017; Carr & Hayes 2015; Kietzmann et al. 2011). The number of social media platforms in the world continues to grow. Research on beauty on social media has focussed on platforms such as Facebook, Pinterest, blogs, YouTube, Webo, We Chat however greater focus has been placed on Instagram, which is a photo sharing application (Mwangi and Buvar, 2024). This dissertation will focus on YouTube, a free video sharing application that allows individuals to upload and share videos, where viewers can comment, view and like the videos shared.

Social media platforms have given everyday people an opportunity to grow their audience and even acquire a celebrity status online. These individuals are known as Social media influencers (SMIs), they are characterized by a large community of followers that exceeds their friends and family (Booth & Matic 2011), an ability to influence their followers through self-branding (Khamis et al. 2017) have adopted a professional approach (Hou 2019) and have an intention to make money from their content (Abidin & Ots 2016). Their marketability is affected by their ability to nurture long lasting relationships with their audience and their pursuit in gaining expertise in certain fields (Hou 2018; Choi & Lewallen 2018). Social media platforms such as YouTube have become platforms for professionally

curated content that mimic the television (Hou 2018). SMIs can be categorized based on the platforms they use such as YouTubers, Vloggers and Instafamous (Hou 2019; Gomez 2019) or on the size of their audience see (Table 1) below

Table 1: SMI categorization

SMI categories based on size of their audience	Number of followers	Characteristics
Nano influencers	Less than 10,000	They often garner higher engagement rates, presumed authenticity, more open to non-monetary partnerships with brands in return for opportunities to network and heighten their social media exposure (Campbell & Farrell 2020).
Micro-influencers	Between 10,000 - 100,000	Highest engagement rate and with a specialty in certain topics therefore provide an earmarked following (Tilton, 2011; Ruiz-Gomez, 2019). Their followers tend to come from a limited geographical area and most of their income stems from sporadic partnerships with brands or affiliate link programs (Campbell & Farrell 2020). They are presumed to have greater authenticity, trust, and accessibility to their followers and more connected to their followers' interests and needs, hence garnering various brand partnerships (Wissman 2018).
Silver macro-influencers	Between 100, 000 - 500,000	

(Power middle user) (Gomez 2019)		
Macro advanced level influencers (Chen 2013; Booth & Matic, 2011)	Between 500,000-1 million	
Gold mega influencers (Gomez, 2019)	Between 1 million-10 million	
Diamond mega influencers (Hou 2018).	Over 10 million followers	

Research shows that social media is more potent at conveying ideal beauty standards compared to broadcast media (Cohen & Blaszczynski 2015). Greater social media use contributes to an increase in appearance comparison which leads to a desire for thinness among women (Boursier et al. 2024; Davalos et al. 2023; García-Ramírez et al. (2023). Social networking sites have a greater influence on internalization of beauty ideals than traditional media due to the various attributes of online information (Kvardova et al. 2025; Castellanos and Steins 2023).

2.2.3 The Social Cognitive Theory

According to the social cognitive theory (Bandura 1991) learning is affected by behavioural, cognitive and environmental factors. What an individual thinks can affect their behaviour and environment, behaviour can also affect their thoughts and environments and lastly environments can influence an individual's behaviour and thoughts (Schunk & DiBenedetto 2020; Bandura, 1986). Bandura (2001) notes that nearly all cognitive, behavioural and affective learning can be accomplished through observing another individual's behaviour and the consequences for such behaviour. Social media users are exposed to various sources of influence simultaneously, family, friends, peers and the media which have a profound effect

on influence as opposed to the various sources of influence effect in isolation (Lin et al. 2023). The internalization process involves the fostering of positive connections with the glamorized models displayed in the media (Zhang, Li and Chen 2024; Castellanos and Steins 2023). The content on social media represents beauty as equivalent to external beauty with an emphasis on the face hence enforcing and fortifying societal beauty standards (Loucas et al. 2024). The kind of beauty content readily available on social media includes makeup routines, skincare routines, plastic surgery and assessment of consumer goods from peers, SMIs, celebrities and other women (Loucas et al. 2024; Almalki et al. 2023; Castellanos and Steins 2023).

Social media users put significant effort and time into selecting and editing which involves using filters to enhance their looks before posting. Such filters improve one's skin tone and apply identical occidental make up across different social media users' images (Miller & McIntyre 2022). Such filters thereby contribute to the internalization of makeup use as synchronous to beauty, and a perpetration of Occidental beauty. Covid-19 pandemic saw an increase in social media use and a growth in fitness SMIs who focused on healthy and an active lifestyle. The ideal body represented by some SMIs is a slim, well-toned athletic body. Fitspiration refers to social media content that is geared towards a healthy, nutrition conscious and sporty lifestyle (Li et al. 2023). This kind of content includes nutrition, sugar free or low carb diets, before and after images, fitness, lifestyle and health and is often tagged as #fitspiration (Klier, Rommerskirchen and Brixius 2022). Beauty vlogs on YouTube contribute significantly to enhancing brand and products knowledge while also acting as a medium for transmission of technical beauty proficiency on haircare, skincare, nail care, make up use, and cosmetic procedures (Loucas et al. 2024; Kaur & Kumar 2022; Castillo-Abdul et al. 2021).

Social media is rife with images, especially selfies, which are self- portrait style photos (Mwangi and Buvar 2024). Social media continues to perpetrate idealized beauty standards such as a flawless appearance which can be achieved through make up application aimed at improving one's appearance (Almaki et al. 2023). There is also an increase in cosmetic surgeries such as the Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) that increases one's buttocks, among some Kenyan SMIs such as Pritty Vishy, Lydia Wanjiru, Gloria Ntazola and Naomi Kuria (Osoro 2025). This is aimed at achieving the curvaceous look. This is contrary to Occidental beauty

standards that have laid emphasis on weight, slender bodies with small buttocks (Overstreet et al., 2010; Capodilupo & Kim, 2014; DeLeel et al., 2009). However, this is changing with some SMIs such as Murugi Munyi, Kate Actress, Talia Oyando, Grace Msalame and Maureen Waititu taking up cosmetic procedures to get smaller bodies (Osoro 2025). Preference for lighter skinned women, long smooth hair, flawless appearance and a youthful appearance can be observed on social media based on the recognition that such individuals get from the public. Recognition on social media is observed by the number of followers that one has and social media features such as likes and emojis. The more followers one has or the more likes that one has indicates a higher social acceptance (Baker 2019). Bandura posited that vicarious learning was controlled by four aspects namely attention, retention, reproduction and motivation (Wood & Bandura 1989).

Social media users select their preferred SMIs based on their attractiveness, trustworthiness and authenticity among other factors (Kurt et al. 2018; Karandashev & Fata 2014). They then draw selective information such as desirable facial features, make up use, body shape, hair, clothing, accessories and beauty practices among others. Social media users then process the beauty information obtained; this beauty rules are then stored and formulate the mechanism through which beauty is evaluated. For example, skinny vis a vis curvy, lighter skin visavis darker skin tones. The next step is known as *reproduction* which refers to mimicking modelled behaviour while. Continuous exposure to SMIs leads to the adoption of some of the beauty practices portrayed such as exercise, body modifications, make up use, skin lightening and dieting among others (Weare & Feng 2021; Simpson & Suzanne 2016; Willis & Knobloch-Westerwick 2014).

Motivation mobilizes the individual to remain attentive, perform learned behaviour and retention of information (Wood & Bandura 1989). There are three types of outcome expectancies, physical effects that include feelings of discomfort or pleasure, social effects such as applause and social acceptance, and self-evaluation effects such as self-approval (Bandura 1997). Online community members often expect to achieve two outcome expectancies, escalating social acceptance and strengthening one's capability or competence (Wasko and Faraj 2005).

Research shows that make up use has positive and negative effects on users (Veçoso et al. 2024). Positive effects include its ability to reinstate one's original appearance, especially in unfortunate cases of skin damage, boost self-esteem and as a medium for self-expression (Smith et al. 2021; Tran et al. 2020). The outcome expectancies suggested by fitspiration content in women's health magazines and Pinterest were individuals feel good about themselves, feelings of happiness, enhancing attractiveness and obtaining or maintaining a sexual appeal (Willis and Knobloch-Westerwick 2014; Simpson and Mazzeo 2017). Beauty content on social media is not always negative. Social media has played a crucial role in the advancement of fat acceptance. Fatspiration refers to social media content geared towards providing a supportive environment for heavier weight people to confront weight stigmatization by encouraging self-acceptance, personal empowerment, holistic health and a lifestyle that values body positivity (Clark et al. 2021; Webb et al. 2017). Such content portrays fat as fashionable through stylish fashion for fat people and a display of revealing clothing on fat bodies as opposed to selfies only. Fatspiration also encourages inclusion of bigger sizes in fashionable clothing and promotes fat acceptance.

The Body positivity movement challenges the appearance of the thin ideal and portrays diverse body sizes, shapes, features, shapes and abilities aimed at promoting body appreciation and acceptance (Cwynar-Horta 2016). Positive body image encompasses a respect and love of the body while body appreciation refers to the respect of functionalities, features and general health of the body as opposed to major focusing on physical appearance (Koch et al. 2023). Social media channels have played a critical role in advancing the body positivity agenda with over seven million visual and written messages posted to date (Tiggemann and Zaccardo 2021). Body positive content includes unedited images, a display of diverse body shapes and sizes in revealing and tight clothes hence challenging the norm that sexy is a term analogous to thin bodies (Mwangi and Buvar 2024). Positive effects may therefore encourage SMIs followers to adopt beauty practices. On the other hand, the detrimental impact of makeup use includes presumed inauthenticity, feelings of insecurity due to external judgement and encouraging skin brightening among women of colour (Veçoso et al. 2024; Childs 2022; Weare & Feng 2021; Tran et al. 2020). Materialism, which refers to the belief that amassing material goods and finances leads to success and happiness, is also a negative effect of interacting with beauty content shared by SMIs (Belk 1985; Richins &

Dawson 1992). Negative effects may deter SMIs followers from following portrayed beauty practices.

Self-efficacy therefore plays a crucial role in establishing whether SMIs followers adopt the displayed beauty practices. The belief about one's abilities is based on an individual's possession of the necessary motivation, cognitive abilities and necessary resources to complete the task (Wood & Bandura 1989). By consistently watching SMIs display an ability to set goals and accomplish them acts as a motivation for followers to adopt the displayed behaviour. They are encouraged to set goals on skincare, selfcare, exercise, dieting to achieve desired outcomes. Gratification which could come through ability for one to fit into certain clothes, successful makeup application among other beauty practices heightens their beauty efforts (Bandura 1999). This thesis therefore sought to examine the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty by SMIs, this was exemplified in Study 1. To provide a complete picture of Afro-Occidental beauty the thesis also sought to examine the perception of the youth on the portrayed Afro-Occidental beauty ideals by SMIs, this was exemplified in Study 2.

2.2.4 Parasocial interactions and relationships

The extent of SMIs influence on their audience is also determined by the kind of relationship they have with them. Parasocial relationships are a one-sided illusionary face to face interaction or social interaction between the audience and the SMIs which takes place through mediated forms such as social media applications (Zabukovec & Fanagel 2024; Liebers & Schramm 2019.) There are several factors that contribute to the advancement of parasocial interactions, they include the following: consistency and frequency of appearance, conversational style, successful use of the formal characteristics of the media, the extent to which the audience considers them as realistic, friendliness, predictability, level of intimacy and amount of time spent together (Horton & Wohl 1956; Nordlund, 1978; Meyrowitz 1982).

SMIs can also have a social and emotional connection with their audiences which is built over a period which lead to a long-lasting relationship, also known as a parasocial relationship (Aw & Labrecque 2020, Dibble et al. 2016). Parasocial relationships can feel as intense and real as eyeball-to-eyeball relationships that comprise of essential elements such as understanding, friendship and self-disclosure (Aw & Labrecque 2020). Understanding helps the audience feel they are connected to the SMIs (Daneels et al. 2021) and heightens the

potency of a parasocial relationship (Tian & Hoffner 2010). Attractiveness, expertise, similarity and trustworthiness of SMIs positively influences strengthening of parasocial relationships between SMIs and their followers (Ashraf, Hameed & Saeed 2023; Zheng et al. 2022; Lou & Kim 2019). Friendship in parasocial relationships between SMIs and their audience is illusory and one sided, where the audience express their love, support, concern and expectations on this relationship, but this is not reciprocated by the SMI. Another important element in parasocial relationships is justice or fairness, these include: a) extent to which the audience benefits from the content shared by SMIs, this is also known as communication fairness (Yuan & Lou 2020; Thibaut & Walker 1975), b) the extent to which audiences have an opportunity to share their opinions with the SMIs also known as procedural fairness (Yuan & Lou 2020; Kees & Van Prooijen 2001) and c) the extent to which audiences feel they are treated respectfully throughout their interactions with SMIs also known as interpersonal fairness (Yuan & Lou, 2020; Bies 2005). Women who have parasocial relationships with SMIs express a desire to emulate the appearance of SMIs and belong to the same social group (Greenwood et al. 2008). Parasocial relationships significantly contribute to followers' purchase intention and are influenced by the follower's low self-esteem and empathy (Sokolova & Kefi 2020; Hwang & Zhang, 2018).

2.2.5 Social Comparison Theory

According to Festinger (1954) social comparison theory postulates that people have an intrinsic desire to gauge and viewpoint, in the absence of objective autonomous criteria people compare their viewpoints with other individuals and social comparison is made with other individuals who are similar. In a study conducted by Rafati et al (2021) women compared their appearance more frequently with images of their friends and fitspiration images of celebrities. However, there are instances where unsolicited comparisons may take place and with individuals who are not similar to an individual (Martin & Kennedy 1993). Social comparison also occurs in various aspects not limited to opinions and abilities such as success, status, physical appearance and eating behaviour (Buunk & Gibbons 2007; Wheeler & Miyake 1992). There are two types of social comparisons, upward comparison and downward comparison (Wheeler & Miyake 1992). Upward comparison refers to comparing oneself with individuals who one deems are better while downward comparison refers to

comparing oneself with individual one deems are worse off (Wheeler & Miyake 1992). Exposure to beauty content on makeup tutorials, Botox and skincare routine showed an increase in upward comparison among women (Seekis 2023). Social media users who spend a significant amount of time on social media such as Instagram had a higher chance in comparing their physical appearance with others (Alfonso-Fuertes 2023). This thesis therefore sought to examine the effect of body shame on purchase intention of beauty products.

Envy refers to a negative emotion experienced by individuals when they compare themselves with those, they deem successful or superior (Parrott & Smith 1993; Smith & Kim 2007). Upward comparison is common among followers of SMIs, because they are deemed to have desirable attributes, such as presumed success and beauty among other features. Envy features often in the relationship between SMIs and their followers. There are two types of envy: malicious envy and benign envy (Van de Ven et al. 2011c). Malicious envy refers to a negative emotional response from SMIs followers who desire that SMIs would lose their advantage. Malicious envy leads to resentful and hostile behaviour (Duffy et al. 2012; Salovey & Rodin 1984). Malicious envy occurs when SMIs followers feel that SMIs success and beauty is undeserved (Van de Ven et al. 2011c). On the other hand, benign envy acts as a motivation for SMIs followers to work towards attaining the success and beauty that SMIs have. Benign envy has positive effects on SMIs followers as it leads to an increase in personal effort (Van de Ven Zeelenberg, & Pieters 2011c; Schaubroeck & Lam 2004), propagate behaviour to achieve desired success and beauty (Crusius & Mussweiler 2012), and change the focus to the measures that SMIs followers need to take to achieve the desired success and beauty (Crusius & Lange 2014). Although benign envy has positive outcomes envy in itself is a negative emotion which eventually leads to a level of frustration (Crusius & Lange 2014). This thesis therefore sought to examine extent that benign and malicious envy influence purchase intention of beauty products This is exemplified in Study 3.

Upward comparison is presumed to negatively influence self-esteem while downward comparison positively influences an individual's self-esteem. Positive impact of downward social comparison includes boosting self-esteem, reduce anxiety and enhance feelings of happiness (Buunk & Gibbons 2007; Gibbons 1986; Amoroso & Walters 1969). Consistent

interaction with social media content on body positivity improved women's moods and their attitude towards their physical appearance, this is however higher for women who have internalized beauty ideals (Cohen et al. 2019). On the other hand, consistent interaction with images of thin women on social media leads to a greater dissatisfaction in their external appearance (Cohen et al. 2019). This implies that the more an individual follows certain SMIs the higher their chances of engaging in downward comparisons in instances where their self-respect and confidence is threatened as it allows individuals to feel better about themselves (Wills 1981). The mass media heightens the strain on individuals to match up to ideal standards of beauty than family and friends (Irving, 1990). Women who consider celebrities as a significant comparison group were more likely to engage in compulsive weight control behaviour than those who did not deem celebrities as a significant comparison group (Heinberg & Thompson 1992). YouTubers often display ostensible changes on their body after engaging in exercise such as achieving muscular bodies and reduced waist sizes (Li et al. 2023; Ratwatta & Mattacola 2021). Fitspiration contributes to an increase in body dissatisfaction, social pressure and a desire to achieve a perfect body image (Klier, Rommerskirchen & Brixius 2022). Some fitness SMIs have been found to encourage unhealthy behaviour to achieve athletic behaviour (Ratwatta & Maccicola 2021). This is detrimental as it only increases body dissatisfaction and adoption of unhealthy possibly life-threatening choices.

Comparison with SMIs leads to an increase in materialism which significantly contributes to compulsive shopping (Dinh and Lee 2024; Jameel et al. 2024). In an effort for SMIs followers to reduce the gap between their lifestyle and that shown by the SMIs, they tend to purchase brands or products endorsed by the SMIs (Moldovan, Bagozzi and Hofman 2024; Dinh and Lee 2024). This thesis therefore sought to investigate the extent that appearance control beliefs mediate the impact of body shame on purchase intention. This is exemplified in Study 3.

2.2.6 Objectification Theory

Social media provides users with opportunities for online interactions; however, these interactions may lead to sexual objectification of women. Since most social media applications are image focused, there is an emphasis on the physical appearance of an

individual. Online interactions include posting one's images or receiving requests to post one's photos (Luo 2019). Our culture is permeated with endless sexualization of females which occurs in various forms ranging from sexual evaluation to sexual violence (Hughes & Sandler 1988; Kaschak 1992). The most pervasive form of sexual evaluation is the visual examination of the body (Kaschak 1992). The sexualized gaze provides opportunities for sexual objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Sexual objectification takes place when a woman body, sexual functions and body parts are seen as separate from her person and ranked only as mere objects as though could represent her (Bartky 1988). When women are objectified, they are treated as bodies that subsist to please others (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997). The objectified gaze takes place in various ways, through interpersonal encounters, through the media that display interpersonal encounters and through people's interaction with visual media displaying body parts thus giving an inferred sexualized gaze (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: Mulvey 1975). Women's bodies are more often earmarked for sexualization than for men in magazines (Ferguson 1978), television programs (Copeland 1989), advertisements (Solely & Kurzbard 1986; Goffman 1979;), music videos (Sommers-Flanagan, & Davis 1993) and sports photography (Duncan 1990).

The objectification theory postulates that the cultural milieu of objectification therefore causes women to view themselves as items to be gazed at and examined (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997). Successful socialization starts with adherence to nominal but adequate external influence which starts off with interpersonal identification and later ends with individuals professing these socially acquired values and beliefs, often integrating them as a part of their self (Costanzo 1992). The external pressure stimulates women to be engrossed in an assessment of their physical appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997). A woman's physical attractiveness can translate to power (Unger 1979), where beauty acts as the principal currency for their social and economic achievement (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997). This therefore plays a crucial role in making women. Women are therefore social trained to predict the consequences of their physical appearance (Berger 1972).

McKinley (1996) posits that this experience on evaluation of the physical form as an item to be gazed at and the belief that reinforce this experience are known as Objectified body consciousness (OBC). According to Bartky (1988) and Spitzack (1990) OBC has three

components that are vital in women's physical body experience, body surveillance, internalizing of societal body standards and beliefs about one's ability to control their appearance. Body surveillance refers to constant self-monitoring, a preoccupation with one's physical appearance. A persistent body surveillance ensures that women observe societal body standards to mitigate societal retribution. When individuals focus their attention on themselves and are conscious of behavioural standards, they compare themselves to these standards and work towards diminishing disparity (McKinley & Hyde 1996). An acceptance and integration of societal body standards cause body shame (Bartky 1988). Studies suggest that an individual's body type is genetically and not environmentally determined (Bray 1981). Studies on weight loss reveal that many methods are unsuccessfully maintained over time and that maintenance reduces with a prolonged follow up period (Nunn, Newton & Faucher, 1992). Societal body standards are difficult to adhere to, women who internalize these standards attach their identity to accomplishing them, this then results to body shame (McKinley & Hyde 1996). The higher the internalization of societal standards the higher the levels of shame and vice versa (Bartky 1988).

Appearance control beliefs play a crucial role in enhancing women's competence and gives them the drive not to easily give up (Bartky 1988). Appearance control may contribute to heightened physical and psychological well-being and acts as a buffer when handling stressful issues (McKinley & Hyde 1996; Taylor 1989). On the other hand, appearance control beliefs may promote a desire to engage in restricted eating which induces weight gain leading to lifestyles diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure (Ernsberger & Haskew 1987).

Individuals with broad conceptualization of beauty perceive a wide range of appearances such as body shape, body size and weight, as beautiful. Beauty is not limited to internal characteristics but also encompasses external characteristics such as confidence (Behrend and Warschburger 2025). Research also shows that women of African descent have a broader conceptualization of beauty which is characterized by a higher appreciation of their body shapes than Caucasian women (Miller and Robinson 2021; Jones et al. 2021). Positive body image contributes to the following: psychological, social and emotional welfare, enthusiasm towards exercise, intuitive eating, quest for a health-conscious lifestyle, healthy dieting, reduced alcohol intake and smoking (Baceviciene, Jankauskiene and Trinkuniene 2022). This

thesis therefore sought to assess the influence of appearance control beliefs and broad conceptualization on purchase intention of beauty products. This is exemplified in Study 3, which sought to test the following hypothesis.

2.2.7 Hypothesis development

A higher engagement with appearance focused images leads to a higher internalization of beauty ideals which eventually leads to body image concerns (Piccoli et al. 2021). Inability to achieve internalized beauty ideals leads to body shame (McKinley & Hyde 1996; Alfonso-Fuertes et al. 2023; Seekis & Kennedy 2023). Exposure to beauty content on makeup tutorials, Botox and skincare routine showed an increase in upward comparison among women (Seekis 2023). Similarly, women who have strong parasocial relationships with SMIs would experience the need to watch their weight and change their body size due to appearance comparison. Parasocial relationships are positively related to followers' purchase intention (Hwang & Zhang 2018). Followers with stronger parasocial relationships with SMIs have a greater chance of purchasing endorsed products (Sokolova & Kefi 2020). Individuals with low self-esteem are more prone to compulsive shopping and engage in purchases of cosmetics, beauty treatments and luxurious products, as compensation for body dissatisfaction (Azavedo & Angela 2023). Similarly, individuals who exhibit negative body image have a higher purchase intention for accessories such as smart watches, since smart watches have a health-related value and give them visibility and a higher social status (Wang, Sun & Liao 2022). Consequently, we expect that body shame is positively related to the purchase of the products promoted by SMIs.

H1. Parasocial relationships have a mediating effect on the impact of body shame on purchase intention.

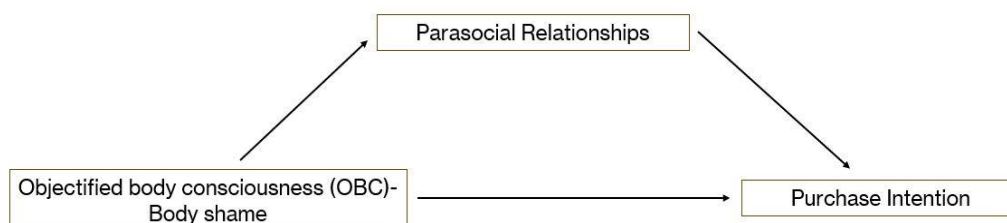


Figure 4:H1Model

Envy refers to a negative emotion experienced by individuals when they compare themselves with those, they deem successful or superior (Parrott & Smith 1993; Smith & Kim 2007). There are two types of envy: benign envy and malicious envy. Envy influences purchase intention through two mediated pathways; the attitude towards SMIs (brand user) and through their attitude towards the product (Singh & Ang 2021). Social media users experience a higher benign envy than malicious envy (Lin 2018; Lin and Utz, 2015). Benign envy increases consumption as individuals pursue to emulate the lifestyle exemplified by SMIs, celebrities and their peers (van de Ven, Zeelenberg, and Pieters 2009; Smith and Kim 2007). Benign envy also potentially motivates individuals to purchase superior products (Crusius & Lange 2014). Higher malicious envy reinforces the effect of wishful identification on purchase intention (Duan & Brechman 2024). Although benign and malicious envy are a strong predictor for purchase intentions (Lin 2018) benign envy has a higher likelihood of leading to purchase intentions than malicious envy (Ahn et al. 2018).

SMIs are an aspirational reference group for the youth, they are sometimes perceived more successful and attractive (Wheeler & Miyake 1992) due to their higher followership. Individuals who regularly interact with daily posts made by SMIs are more likely to envy their lifestyle (Chae 2018). Benign envy allows followers to use SMIs as a motivation tool to conform to beauty ideals displayed (Baker 2019; Crusius & Lange 2014; Crusius & Mussweiler 2012). Higher appearance control beliefs are strongly related to envy which in turn leads to higher purchase intention of cosmetic products, diet pills and cosmetic surgeries (Yang et al 2025; Arnocky et al. 2016; Arigo et al., 2014; O'Brien et al., 2009; Smith et al., 1999). Appearance control beliefs are strongly related to malicious envy when individuals feel they cannot control how they look (Briki 2019; Korte et al. 2015). This study is also the first of its kind, to the best of my knowledge, to investigate the indirect influence of benign and malicious envy on the impact of broad conceptualization of beauty on purchase intention.

H2. Benign and malicious envy have a mediating effect on the influence of OBC-Appearance control beliefs on purchase intention.

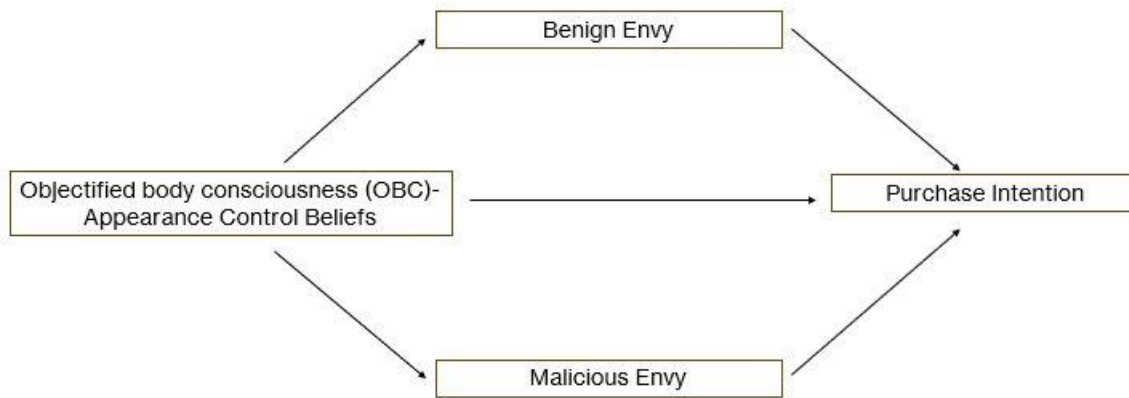


Figure 5: H2 Model

Women with a broad conceptualization of beauty engage in minimal upward comparison (Behrend & Warshburger 2025; Rousseau 2024; Modica, DiLillo & Swami 2023;) and hold lower attitudes on body surveillance, anti-fat attitudes and cosmetic surgery contemplation (Tylka & Iannantuono 2016). Broad conceptualization of beauty leads to an increase in positive body image which in turn leads to higher body satisfaction (Manning & Mulgrew 2022; Tylka & Iannantuono 2016). Therefore, women who have a broad conceptualization of beauty would have less envy and in turn lower purchase intention.

H3. Benign and Malicious envy have a mediating effect on the influence of Broad conceptualization on purchase intention.

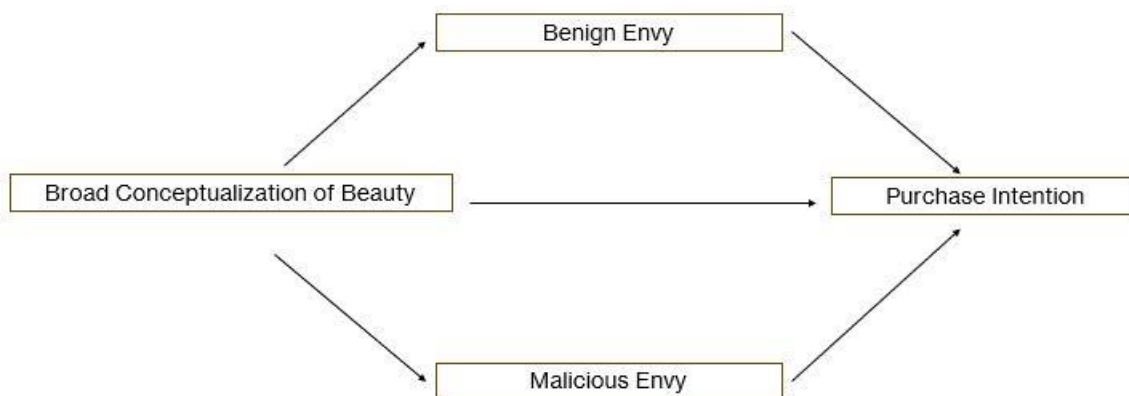
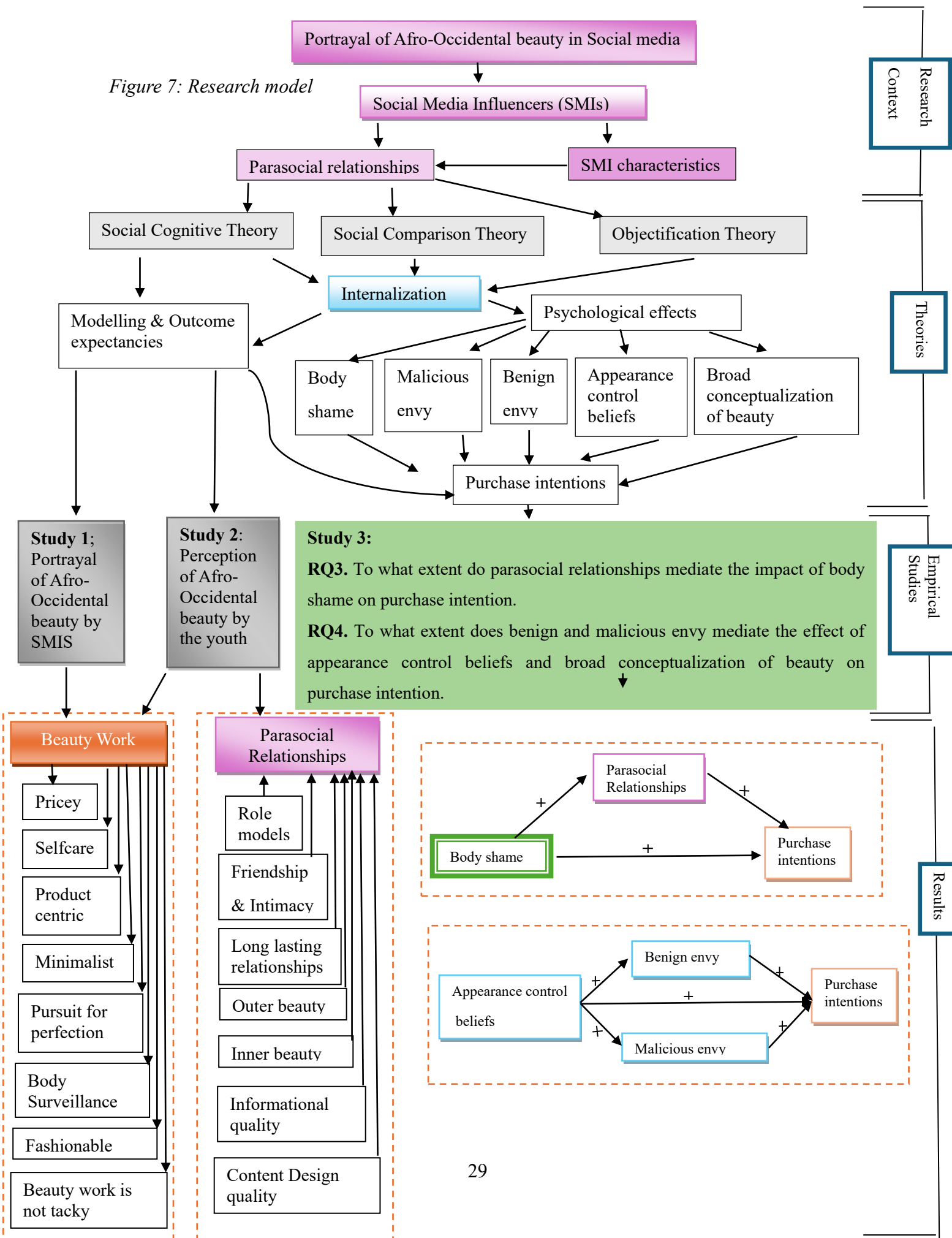


Figure 6: H3 Model

Figure 7: Research model



3. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES

This research aims at answering the following research questions:

RQ1. How do social media influencers portray *Afro-Occidental* beauty standards and outcome expectancies on YouTube?

RQ2. What is the perception of the youth on *Afro-Occidental* beauty ideals portrayed on YouTube?

The above research questions are exploratory in nature; the setting and context are important in laying a foundation to understand emerging themes in these areas. To draw meaning to these issues a Qualitative research design was selected. This is because qualitative research is an interpretive, pragmatic approach that gives researchers a comprehensive picture of the research topic (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). It is also crucial in understanding a social setting, its exploratory and descriptive rather than explanatory or predictive.

This research also sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ3. To what extent do parasocial relationships mediate the impact of body shame on purchase intention?

H1. Parasocial relationships have a mediating effect on the impact of body shame on purchase intention.

RQ4. To what extent does benign and malicious envy mediate the effect of appearance control beliefs and broad conceptualization of beauty on purchase intention?

H2. Benign and malicious envy have a mediating effect on the influence of OBC-Appearance control beliefs on purchase intention.

H3. Benign and Malicious envy have a mediating effect on the influence of Broad conceptualization on purchase intention.

Quantitative research design proves useful in testing the above stated hypothesis and helps us understand the relationship among various variables such as how parasocial relationships, body shame, appearance control beliefs, broad conceptualization of beauty and envy contribute to purchase intentions.

Mixed methods are helpful in addressing the limitations of each research design (Harvard catalyst nd; APA 2024; Creswell et al. 2018; Morgan, 2014). For example, obtaining the perception of the youth on the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty through a content analysis of the YouTube section is limited because less than 20% of followers leave comments. Therefore, a questionnaire helps to gather more information from individuals who may follow SMIs but are afraid of commenting on SMIs YouTube channels. Therefore, to fully understand the perception of the youth on Afro-Occidental beauty requires the use of a mixed method study. Secondly, to fully understand Afro-occidental beauty we need the perspectives of SMIs followers. Lastly, an assessment of the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty by SMIs is just as important as the perception of the youth on Afro-Occidental beauty. These are detailed in the research model (*Figure 7*).

3.1 STUDY 1

This study aimed at assessing RQ1 How do social media influencers portray *Afro-Occidental* beauty standards and outcome expectancies on YouTube? A deductive and inductive content analysis of four Kenyan beauty SMIs was carried out from the 5th of April 2024 to 19th July 2024. The study selected two macro influencers and two micro-influencers as they have a high engagement rate showcasing resonance with their audience and therefore have a higher chance to influence their followers than mega influencers. The videos selected were published between 2022 and 2023, this period was significant as it was shortly after the covid-19 pandemic that saw a rise in social media use and rise in SMIs (Dixon, 2022; Dukurs, 2022). A thematic analysis was carried out to examine emerging themes on Afro-occidental beauty. The section below addresses sampling, coding, data analysis, reliability and intercoder agreement in detail.

3.1.1 Methodology

3.1.1.1 Sampling of SMIs

This study espoused a purposive sampling of SMIs and the beauty videos to be analysed. Research shows that YouTube has over 50 million content creators, two billion active monthly users and YouTube users watch one billion hours of YouTube videos daily (Omnicores, 2020). Research also shows that generation Z and millennials mostly watch the following type of YouTube videos: tutorials, vlogs, and unboxing (Influencer Marketing Hub,

2020). Purposive sampling is described as the selection of knowledgeable individuals who can supply suitable and relevant information to a study based on their qualities (Etikan, 2016). Although there are various platforms that rank top SMIs in Kenya such as FeedSpot.com, starngage.com and modish.io they majorly rank them based on popularity or followership rather than on the topics that these SMIs focus on. So, these platforms are only helpful in identifying the SMIs, identifying the topics they focus on requires exploring their YouTube channels.

Micro and macro influencers have a higher engagement rate than mega influencers as they are presumed to have greater authenticity, trust, and accessibility and more connected to their followers' interests and needs (Gomez 2019; Wissman 2018). There are also very few mega beauty influencers in Kenya, although some post beauty content this is mostly on Instagram and very few have YouTube channels curated to address beauty related topics. The study aimed at comparing several influencers, to reduce chances of bias, it was necessary to identify SMIs that mainly focus on beauty or beauty related topics that also consistently post on their YouTube channels. This would therefore give a better understanding and interpretation of the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty by SMI and perception of Afro-Occidental beauty by the youth.

The criteria used to establish beauty SMIs for this study are as follows:

- 1) The SMI must be a beauty/ make up influencer on YouTube (This must be clearly stated in their YouTube channel description on their YouTube Banner).
- 2) The SMI must have posted beauty content regularly, monthly within the period of study. Their consistency in posting is an indication of their commitment to this topic. This is also because SMIs take social media breaks which would therefore affect the results of the study.
- 3) The SMI must be either a micro or macro influencer. This is because they have a higher engagement rate with their followers. This would greatly contribute towards assessing not only the portrayal but also the perception of Afro-Occidental beauty by the youth.
- 4) The SMI must be a Kenyan citizen. They understand the Kenyan audience and the cultural nuances that underpin the adoption of Afro-Occidental beauty ideals.

SMIs sampled for the study

Macro Influencers

- 1) Joanna Kinuthia (150,000 subscribers)



She is a YouTube content creator who creates content on Beauty. She is also an entrepreneur and the founder of Joanna K Cosmetics, a company established in December 2018 that produces and sells Lipsticks, Lip glosses, eyeshadow palettes and eyelashes. She joined YouTube in June 2015.

- 2) Natalie Tewa (110,000 subscribers)



She is a YouTube content creator focusing on Lifestyle, Hair and Fitness. She started her channel in February 2015. She is an Architectural Engineering graduate from the University of Leeds, UK.

Micro Influencers

- 1) Just a Bantu (58,000 subscribers)



This is a YouTube channel owned by Michelle Anyango, a blogger at *nywele* (Swahili word meaning hair) chronicles. She has been creating content on YouTube mostly focusing on hair since July 2017.

- 2) Geek on fashion (25,000 subscribers)



This is a YouTube channel owned by Nelly Wangechi Mwangi. She has been creating content on YouTube focusing on Fashion, Beauty and Lifestyle since March 2019. She is also a businesswoman, founder and creator of Geek Boutique, an online clothing shop that started in 2013 and Geek Hair where she sells wigs and weaves.

The criteria for selecting the videos for analysis were:

- 1) Videos must have been published between 2022 and 2023. The period was selected because the Covid-19 pandemic has had untold effects on individuals. The lock downs in 2020 contributed to an increase in social media usage due to the adoption of remote working and job losses which led to more time spent online. Noteworthy, social media use rose by 20% worldwide after the pandemic (Dixon, 2022). This in turn contributed to the growth in content creation and consumption (Dukurs, 2022) and therefore offering an excellent opportunity to study beauty content shared within this period.
- 2) Videos of the afore mentioned SMIs on beauty with the highest number of views. The number of views is an indication of the resonance of the viewers to the beauty content published.
- 3) The videos must contain beauty content which can be categorized into either of the following categories:
 - a) Beauty Videos (Make up tutorials, selfcare videos, product reviews).
 - b) Lifestyle content (hauls, Q&A, stories, tours/trips).

Table 2: List of videos sampled for study 1 and 2

SMI	Title of the Video	Length of the video	Number of Views	Date when the video was published
Geek on Fashion	VLOG NEW FRAGRANCES WALKING 5K TV SHOWS & <u>BOOKS, OUTFITS</u> Nelly https://youtu.be/dgeVcu59YAM?si=ua4m26ysuDlIEyyw	54.25 mins	15,419	Oct 26, 2023
Just A Bantu	Shopping for a new car and a lot of talking 🤔 https://youtu.be/1uWbak2RgT8?si=uKLDef3orsjH-kOg	23.08 mins	7,968	Oct 28, 2022
Just A Bantu	Camping at Lk elemtita Braiding my hair and lunch with girls https://youtu.be/3IA8oaDV3js?si=HOL620wHNe5bN93F	21.53 mins	6,391	Nov 5, 2022
Just A Bantu	I shaved my hair 🧔 a fresh start 😊 https://youtu.be/YU7rrgtBMyw?si=q-lln4RAimZYWk6r	14.40 mins	5,468	Nov 3, 2023
Natalie Tewa	Weekly Vlog It was a hectic <u>week</u> but I met TIWA SAVAGE 🤔🤔 https://youtu.be/3q6MrH-MtyA?si=Cpk3fqqSRqKsBK0x	18.23 mins	61,498	Nov 13, 2022
Natalie Tewa	Back after so long sorry guys 001 https://youtu.be/A_szA5AmCWo?si=HqBMp6yT9qmh49ev	20.50 mins	71,536	Apr 14, 2023
Natalie Tewa	A lovely trip to Diani after a rough <u>week</u> 003 https://youtu.be/MuGRAQWJv_g?si=DQs9WcYREkf6p0QY	22.37 mins	76,888	May 29, 2023
Joanna Kinuthia	THEY ARE MOVING! VLOG https://youtu.be/zVaE4BvLcvQ?si=ujHzCGIkx7hm4M4X	19.35 mins	26,269	May 2, 2023
Joanna Kinuthia	AM I THE PROBLEM?? VLOG https://youtu.be/jehGZHf4O_0?si=_lKEwKoDGBzvuvJu	46.46 mins	53,645	Aug 3, 2023

3.1.1.2 Coding

An assessment of the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty requires that the study investigates the external characteristics of beauty which are skin, body shape and size, hair, facial features, clothing and cosmetics evidenced in the SMIs YouTube videos. This informed the adoption of the following variables in the content analysis of the SMIs YouTube videos.

Table 3: Variables and their descriptions

Time stamp	Variable	Description
	Facial Features	Eyebrows, eyes, mouth and skin (discolorations, acne, pimples, wrinkles, marks).
	Makeup	Use of makeup (Yes or No).
	Hair	Natural hair or Synthetic hair (wigs, weaves, braids and dreadlocks).
	Nails	The length, colour and state of the nails (manicured, gel, acrylics, tips).
	Clothing	Clothing brand, Local or imports.
	Shoes	Brand, Local or imports.
	Handbags	Brand, Local or imports.
	Accessories	Number of accessories, brand, local or imports.
	Perfumes	Number of perfumes, brand, cost, local or imports.
	Product/ Brand	Sponsored or generic.
	Body Themes	Emerging themes on the body.

Generating initial codes involved developing codes from the data set (Krippendorff 2004). Codes describe a certain characteristic of the data set that is compelling to the researcher. This involved an assessment of each variable highlighted in Table 4 above. For example, while evaluating the variable (Hair) for Geek on Fashion it was clear that it was characterized mostly by wigs or texturized hair, it is on rare occasions that she wore her natural hair or even in corn rows. She only wore corn rows while at home or hidden under a cap. The semantic code here was beauty is foreign. This is because she consistently portrayed that synthetic hair is better than natural hair. This also indicates an inclination towards Occidental beauty

standards. The latent code is pursuit for perfection. An assessment was done for each variable and across all the variables highlighted in Table 4 for each video published by each SMIs where semantic codes were identified and followed by latent codes as highlighted in the example above.

3.1.1.3 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis involves six steps as follows (Braun & Clarke 2006).:

- 1) Familiarizing with the data set. This stage involved transcription of data, reading and rereading the data set and highlighting initial ideas. I watched the videos and transcribed the parts of the video that addressed beauty. I read through the statements made by SMIs to identify initial patterns in the videos.

- 2) Generating initial codes

This stage involved developing codes from the data set. Codes describe a certain characteristic of the data set that is compelling to the researcher. It also refers to the essential components of primary data evaluated in a concise way regarding the phenomena under investigation (Boyatzis 1998). There are two types of codes, semantic codes and latent codes. Semantic codes investigate the meaning at the surface level of the data. Latent codes explore the conceptual or implicit meaning of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Data extracts from the videos were coded manually and written on an excel file. I used different colours to highlight potential patterns.

- 3) Searching for themes

This phase involved broad analysis of the codes. The goal of this stage was to merge different codes to form an encompassing theme (Braun & Clarke 2006). At this stage, I looked through each variable to identify overarching patterns and indicated these below each variable column. I also looked through the patterns visible across the different variables to establish those patterns that could be merged into an overarching theme.

- 4) Reviewing themes

This stage involved revising themes, themes that don't have sufficient evidence were disregarded. This stage had two levels; level one involved an assessment of coherence in the themes identified while level two involved assessing the validity of the themes

to ensure a precise representation of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I reviewed all the themes I had identified from the dataset and ignored those that did not have sufficient evidence.

5) Defining and naming themes

This stage involved identifying what the themes were about and establishing what aspects of the data set each theme represented. This stage involved establishing overarching themes and subthemes. At this stage I highlighted the major themes and sub themes emerging from the data.

3.1.1.4 Reliability

To assess the validity of the study method, I recruited four coders to assist in coding the data set. The selection criteria for the coders were as follows:

- 1) Female, the study aims at assessing beauty among women.
- 2) Kenyan citizens, this would ensure that they understood cultural nuances in communication by SMIs.
- 3) Active social media users who enjoy watching beauty vlogs on YouTube.

Neuendorf (2002) recommends a skill verification through training which entails the following steps: Development of the coding scheme, practice coding, pilot reliability test, training and actual coding and reliability testing with a small sample of the data set.

I adopted the Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA) approach to develop a codebook suitable for analysis of the data set (Guest et al. 2012). Developing a codebook involved identifying the following:

1) Code Label

This is a short description of about 4-14 characters that assist the coder to easily distinguish codes from each other.

2) Short definition

This is a short description expression between 20 -80 characters that captures components of the theme that the code represents.

3) Full definition

- 4) This is a descriptive paragraph between 2-10 sentences that highlights the characteristics or features of the theme that the code represents. Cultural nuances and

dimensions, theoretical and conceptual dimensions are included to make it easier for coders to clearly identify the theme.

5) When to use

This is an explicit description of textual cues and context that denote the meaning of the theme.

6) When not to use

This is an explicit description of textual cues and context that help the coder assess overlapping codes or those that have the potential to confuse the codes being defined.

All the codebooks developed for this study can be found in Appendix 1.

3.1.1.5 Intercoder Agreement

The coders analysed the nine videos selected for the study, between 30th October 2024 and 21st November 2024, a percentage agreement was used to assess the intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability is important to mitigate any biases and is useful when human coding is employed (Neuendorf 2017). The percentage agreement was at 78% indicating an acceptable consistency in coding. Discrepancies among the coders were discussed and resolved.

3.1.1.6 Ethical considerations for Study 1 and 2

3.1.1.6.1 Active listening

This study espoused active listening. It involves assessing words, whether written or spoken and emotions (*GIFs, memes and emoticons*) expressed in conversations (Winter & Lavis 2020). This will allow the researcher to listen in to the feelings expressed using different words, hence considering their affective milieu. Active listening involves assessing context to establish nuances of speech and build thick descriptions (Dey 2001; Geertz 1973). It also involves an assessment of motivation for sharing posts/ content as well as their interpretation hence reducing instances for misinterpretation. It also involves listening to the comments made by the SMIs and not just evaluating the comments made by their followers (Winter & Lavis 2020).

3.1.1.6.2 Reflexivity and Positionality

Study 1 and 2 espoused reflexivity and positionality to assess how the researcher consciously assesses their predispositions and context and its effect on the research process (Olmos-Vega

et al. 2022). Personal reflexivity involved transparency in detailing the researcher's background and worldview (Wilkinson 2015; Braun & Clarke 2019 ;2022). It also entailed clearly stating the researcher's the level of shared experiences with the research participants (Dodgson 2019). Here similarities and differences were clearly outlined as this affects data collection and analysis (Berger 2015). It also entailed giving an account of how the researcher's world view which is not limited to social position, personal preferences and emotional responses among other issues affected the study and how the researcher capitalized on the same (Berger 2015; Teh & Lek 2018; Buetow 2019). On the other hand, methodological reflexivity entailed an elaboration on how and why these decisions were made. Similarly, contextual reflexivity entailed clearly stating how the researcher came to understand context, their relationship to the context and how they endeavoured to deepen an understanding of nuances (Olmos-Vega et al. 2022). Reflective writing included documenting the researcher assumptions, notes on moments of analytic observations (Birks 2008) and details regarding context (Lempert 2007). Reflexive writing also entailed weaving in reflexivity throughout the manuscript hence offering the reader a glimpse at the decisions made throughout the study.

3.1.2 Results

RQ1 assessed the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty by SMIs; the results reveal that the overarching theme is Beauty Work. Beauty is a concept that varies across different people groups and for the four SMIs in this study it varies with how closely or loosely they are inclined to Afrocentric or Occidental beauty ideals. Work refers to the beauty practices that each influencer must engage in to ensure they attain or maintain beauty. On one end is Just a Bantu who holds on more to Afrocentric beauty ideals while on the extreme end is Geek on Fashion who mostly holds on to Occidental beauty ideals.

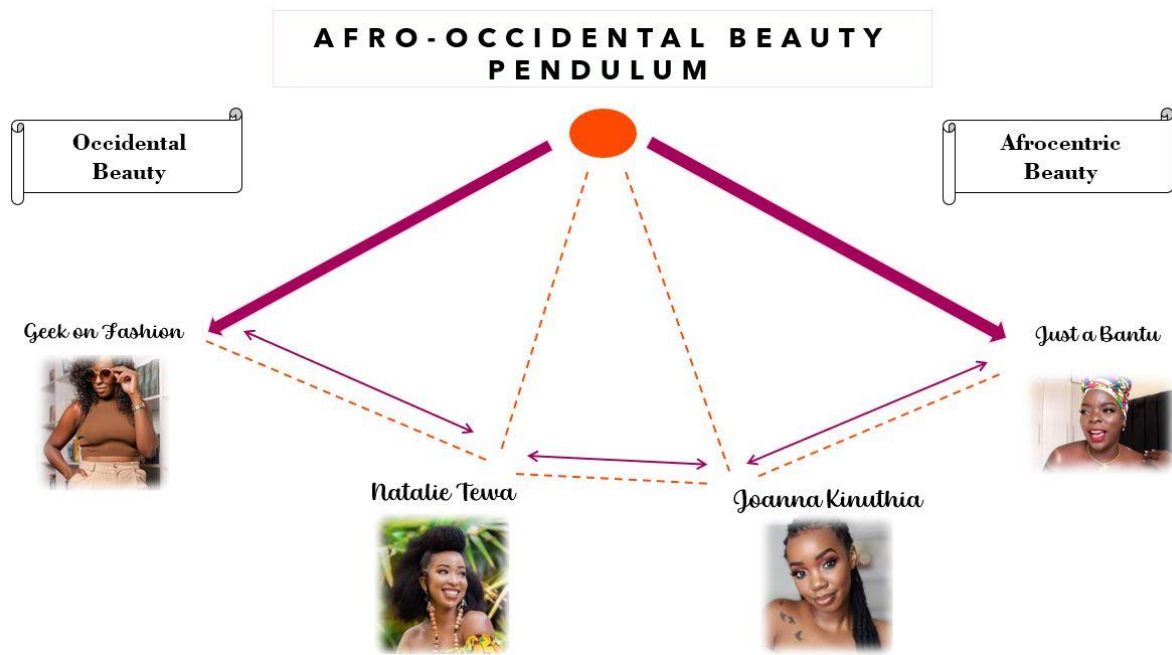


Figure 8: Afro-Occidental Beauty Pendulum

Beauty work is prevalent among the four SMIs irrespective of how closely or loosely they are inclined to Afrocentric or Occidental beauty ideals. Beauty work entails the following: body surveillance, selfcare, pursuit for perfection, scented, pricey and product centred. Other minor themes are minimalist, natural and synthetic hair. However, there is one theme, stress-free that is mainly in reference to hair maintenance, which is a contrast to beauty work but prevalent among two SMIs, Joanna Kinuthia and Just a Bantu. Outcome expectancies which refer to the rewards and consequences for engaging in various beauty practices act as the motivation for the pursued beauty practice. The elements of beauty work are interrelated and are summarized using a conceptual diagram as shown in (Figure 9) below.

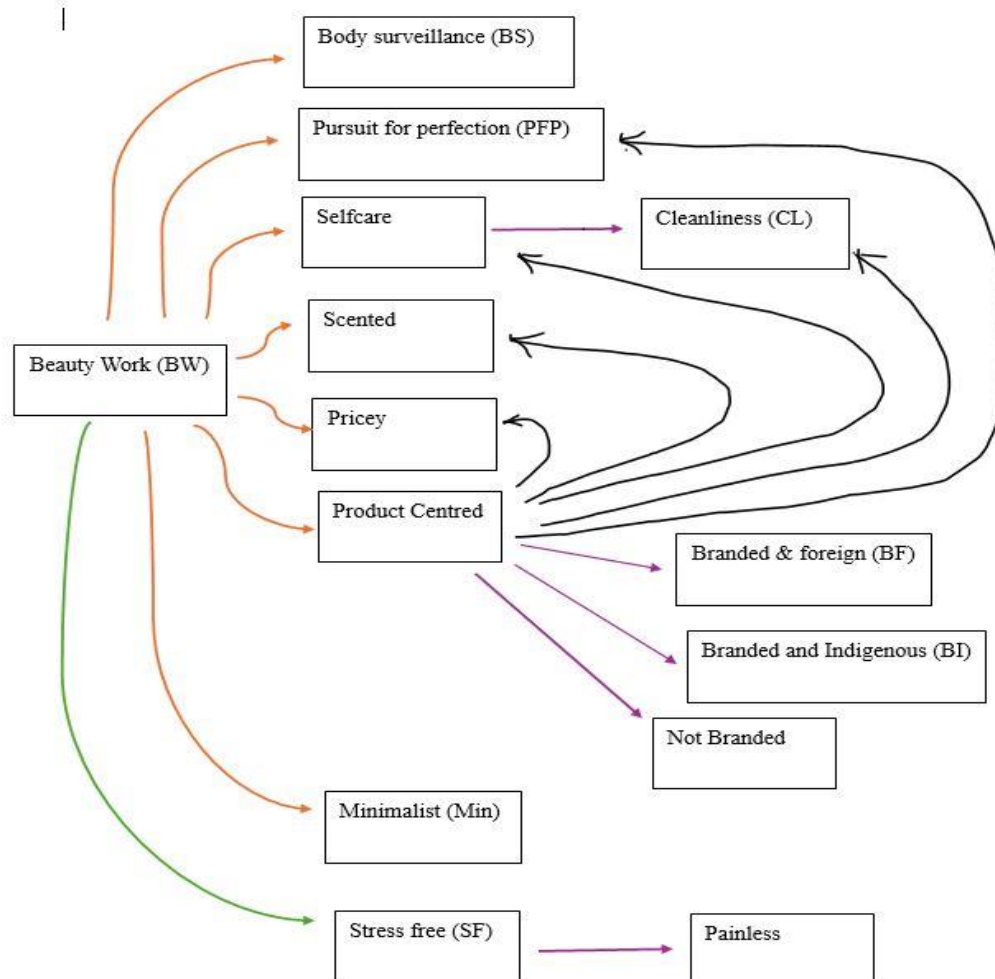


Figure 9: Beauty work

The section below investigates the beauty work sub themes and outcome expectancies in detail.

3.1.2.1 Body Surveillance

This refers to the habitual and constant monitoring of the body through dieting and regular exercises aimed at weight management and weight loss. It involves a constant focus on the physical appearance of the body.

Body surveillance was prevalent in three of the SMIs in this study; Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa and Geek on Fashion. These three SMIs regularly go to the gym. Kinuthia (2023) stated that "...I woke up early this morning to go to the gym at 6:30 a.m class...". This indicates

that she prioritizes exercise since it is one of the first activities that she performs in the morning. Kinuthia (2023) also stated that “...Since I have been seeing results in the gym, *tumbo cuts* are out (*tumbo* is a swahili word that means the belly, *tumbo cut* is a slang term used to refer to crop tops) ...” While referring to a thrifted white floral mini dress with a Queen Anne neckline Kinuthia (2023) stated that, “... I have really sucked in to be able to fit into it...”. Her quest to ensure that she has a flat tummy motivates her to go to the gym as it allows her to tighten her abdominal muscles. Many women are generally concerned about having a protruding belly and go to great lengths to achieve a flat tummy. Wearing a crop top is therefore a physical outcome expectancy for regular exercises at the gym. However, on one occasion after exercising at the gym she felt quite sick and regretted her decision. Her feeling of displeasure about exercising while unwell is a negative self-evaluation outcome expectancy. It however shows that she values exercise and is willing to risk her health to accomplish her body goals.

Tewa (2023) stated that...the gym is my backbone...I am thinking of going to the gym to celebrate... I am kidding...”. This shows that Natalie Tewa values exercise as an integral part of her lifestyle, she can even joke about going to the gym as a reward. She also stated that going to the gym helps her regulate her brain functioning. This shows that the ability to regulate her cognitive abilities motivates her quest for regular exercise.

Geek on Fashion (2023) also exercises at the gym regularly. She also participates in other activities such as a 5km walk at Karura Forest and a Zumba class for two hours all geared to achieving her daily target of 10,000 steps. She was especially proud of finishing her 5km walk in an hour. This feeling of pleasure for achieving her daily target of 10,000 steps during a 5km walk in an hour is a self-evaluation outcome expectancy. It acts as motivation for her to exercise regularly. She, however, also stated that she has been having pain in her shoulder which she suspects has been caused by the training she does at the gym. The shoulder pain is a physical outcome expectancy. Although physical pain is a negative outcome of exercise, it does not deter her from regularly exercising at the gym.

Body surveillance also involves food rationing, dieting and practicing intermittent fasting. Kinuthia (2023) stated that “...I am wondering whether I should eat dinner, coz now it’s kinda late. It must be 11 p.m. I am hungry because I ate so long ago. I don’t want to eat so

close to bed, so maybe I should just sleep...this is a better course of action...have broth or something...". This statement signifies that one should not eat late at night, especially close to bedtime. In addition, she would rather sleep hungry or take broth than indulge in a meal late at night. On other occasions she stated that she has been fasting for 18 hours and 20 hours and breaks her fast with broth. On another occasion, she is unhappy with her choice of food, Kinuthia (2023) stated that "...The food is here, I dint make the healthiest choice (deep fried chicken with breadcrumbs, fries and a tomato salad). After that I will reward myself with a cocktail, because why not...". This statement shows that Joanna Kinuthia is concerned about making healthy food choices. After this meal she ordered a Tiramisu and regretted it, she therefore considers it a cheat day. Her feeling of displeasure for making a poor decision on her meal and ordering dessert is a self-evaluation outcome expectancy. Her reference to this being her cheat day and a plan on rewarding herself with a cocktail are ways for her to pacify herself from the feelings of displeasure due to her inability to exercise self-control.

Tewa (2023) stated that, "... I normally fast, won't be eating until 11 or midday. I'm taking some left-over food from the previous day. I can't eat eggs for breakfast because they make me break out... I am not saying my diet is perfect. I have actually gained ten kilograms which is like wild. I am sixty-seven kilograms, the heaviest I have ever been...". This statement shows that intermittent fasting is a part of her lifestyle. She is conscious not only on what time she eats but also what she eats; she avoids eating eggs because they cause her skin to break out. Break outs are a physical expectancy that deter her from eating eggs. She is conscious of her weight, and this shows that she regularly measures and records her weight. She also stated that people advise her to take porridge for breakfast, but she needs protein & fats because that is what makes her satisfied. When she eats pancakes, oats and cereals she gets very hungry in a short time. Therefore, the feeling of satisfaction acts as the motivation for what she eats while feeling hungry in a short time deters her from taking cereals, oats and pancakes. The feeling of hunger or satisfaction are self-evaluation outcome expectancies.

Tewa (2023) also stated that

I am going to make some meatballs & beans. Baby gal loves beans...Bio hackers, are people who are trying to find the best ways to live longer, and have studied people who live long, top of that food is fibre, veggies, legumes. I prefer to eat the things that

I know are good... sometimes people shame eating *Kienyeji* food (*this is a slang term that refers to traditional, organic food*) but people in America are looking for that shit... best for you and your body...

She is keen on doing what she considers best for her body rather than fit in a societal mould. She prioritizes getting satisfied by eating leftover food, proteins and fats. Taking left over food is common among those living in rural areas and for many Kenyans that live in urban centres taking left over meals may be a sign that one is going through financial difficulties. Those who live in urban centres mostly eat bread, pancakes, cereals and eggs for breakfast. She also prioritizes eating healthy meals. Living long acts as a motivation for maintaining a healthy organic diet. Living long is a physical outcome expectancy. There are people who believe that eating an organic diet is a sign of lack, she is however not bothered by this. She is willing to forfeit getting societal approval, a social outcome expectancy, from the people who subscribe to this school of thought and prioritizes living a long life.

Geek on fashion (2023) also practices food portion control and intermittent fasting. She starts her day with lemon and ginger water. She prefers mini pastries over croissants because croissants are too big to finish. She is very conscious about her food portions. In fact, on one occasion after her 5km walk at Karura forest, she ordered pancakes, an omelette and potatoes. She, however, couldn't finish this meal and had to carry some left-over home. The feeling of satisfaction is a self-evaluation outcome expectancy that stops her from taking large portions of food. On another occasion when her husband takes her out for lunch, she takes a salmon because she had eaten oats earlier. She stated that oats keep her fuller for longer, this is a self-evaluation outcome expectancy that motivates her to take oats regularly.

3.1.2.2 Selfcare

Selfcare refers to any activity aimed at taking special care of the body. These activities range from showers, skincare and haircare routines, massages, spa visits to manicure and pedicure. Selfcare is prevalent among the four SMIs.

Kinuthia (2023) has an elaborate skin care routine she stated that, "...In case you haven't noticed my skin has been glowing. I am not gonna say drink water & Jesus (*there are many*

women who give this as the answer on what their skincare routine looks like, it's a statement made to avoid detailing what one does to achieve beauty, sometimes it's because they don't want to be judged harshly by the public while other times women say this so that they keep their skin care routine a secret) I mean those two contribute definitely...".

Kinuthia (2023) also stated that

...I wash my face in the shower although I know this is not good it can mess up your natural oils because when you are showering the water is like too hot for the face.... reduce the heat for the water to wash the face. This is a routine I do 3 or 4 days in a week not every single morning....

Joanna Kinuthia maintains a detailed skincare routine for three to four days a week. This is aimed at taking care of her face. She also confesses to using hot water from the shower to wash her face. This shows that selfcare involves taking special care of various parts of the body. Avoiding very hot water while washing one's face is an integral part of taking care of the face to avoid losing natural oils. Losing natural oils from one's face is a physical outcome expectancy that is aimed at deterring the audience from using hot water to wash their face.

Joanna Kinuthia also has a detailed natural haircare routine that involves washing, conditioning, treating and using nourishing hair food. This is after she uninstalls temporary dreadlocks that she had worn for nine months. She was concerned about what hairstyles to have that would protect her hairline after uninstalling temporary dreadlocks. One of the challenges that Kenyan women have is that many of the hairstyles pull the hair putting tension on the hair root, hence damaging the hairline. Temporary dreadlocks allow the women to protect their hair from heat and frequent manipulation which are crucial for protecting not only the hairline but the general health of the hair. Kinuthia (2023) stated that "...this is the hair...isn't it looking so healthy guys? This is in its shrunken state...my edges are intact...Its looking good. The hair is much longer than I thought..." Long and healthy hair with intact edges are physical outcome expectancies of installing temporary dreadlocks.

She also had a manicure and pedicure done while she was having the temporary dreadlocks uninstalled at the salon. Kinuthia (2023) stated that "...got home at 10:30 p.m. There was no one in the building as I left...lost some time because of the nails being done at the same time as the temporary locs removal...". It is a normal occurrence in many salons to have women

have their manicure and pedicure done while their hair is being plaited or unplaited. This allows the salon to make more money and saves the women time because they don't have to schedule a different day for their manicure and pedicure. However, for Joanna Kinuthia she leaves the salon at 10.30 p.m., which is quite late. Getting late is a physical outcome expectancy.

Tewa (2023) stated that "...I haven't showered, done anything so I am looking a bit rough. It's a long weekend I have permission to just relax. Not feeling guilty..." For many African women cleanliness is an integral part of selfcare. Showering is emphasized and there is a level of body guilt that women feel for not showering. Looking rough is a physical outcome expectancy for not taking a shower. This therefore shows that showering helps a woman look well put together. Her statement that it's a long weekend and she has given herself permission is aimed at pacifying body guilt for not showering.

Natalie Tewa also visits the spa while in Diani, which is a coastal city in Kenya. She stated that she prefers deep tissue massages to normal massages because normal massages don't have enough pressure but are relaxing. Relaxing is a physical outcome expectancy for having a massage and acts as the motivation for visiting the spa.

Just a Bantu (2022) stated that, "...If we are going camping and we are sleeping in a tent, how will I take a shower? Does that make sense. I doubt that we are going to take a shower. Should I still carry a shower gel..." She giggles as she talks about not showering while camping. The giggle is a sign of embarrassment at the thought of not showering. Individuals who do not shower in the African society are generally shunned by the community.

Geek on Fashion has a spa visit for a massage at 7.43 a.m. on a Saturday morning. This shows that she prioritizes self-care since this is one of the first activities that she engages in on that Saturday morning. She asks her audience whether they shower before they go in for a massage. She believes that people should always take a shower before they get a massage. Geek on Fashion (2023) stated that, "...I want to be clean for the lady who will rub me down..." Being clean for her masseuse is a social outcome expectancy. This acts as a

motivation for taking the shower before the massage. She also practices facial double cleaning using micellar water and LaRoche facial wash.

3.1.2.3 Pursuit for Perfection

This refers to the desire or quest to remove, clear or mitigate any pimples, marks, imperfections, uneven skin tones, discolourization, aging, fine lines, crooked and discoloured teeth. It involves a pursuit to achieve a youthful and flawless look.

Kinuthia (2023) stated that, "...These lashes are doing the most. The lighting when it's cold is harsh, it's making me look white. Is that just my make up making me look white? Whether it looks white or not I can't do anything right now....". The statement that the lashes are doing the most means that they are too big hence signifying she is not entirely pleased with them. She is unhappy that she has a white cast on her face. A white cast normally gives an individual an artificial look which is frowned upon by many. One of the main goals of wearing makeup is to have a flawless look. Her remark that she can't do anything about her makeup at that point is a sign of resignation to the fact that she has been unable to achieve her desired look. On another occasion Kinuthia (2023) stated that "...I am looking as cute as I looked a few minutes ago. I just can't ever bring myself to have make up on when I am in the house. People who have makeup on in the house, are you guys ok? Why would you do that...". This statement shows that make up is used as an appearance booster especially while in public. It's aimed at getting social approval which is a social outcome expectancy. She highlights her disdain for individuals that wear makeup while at home. This signifies that she assumes that people can maintain their natural appearance while at home without being afraid of harsh judgement from their families.

Kinuthia also wear braces to straighten her teeth. Kinuthia (2023) stated that, "...I usually wait in between my skincare steps. When I am waiting, I will brush my teeth because when you have braces you have to brush your teeth for soo long...when you tighten your braces your teeth are sensitive all over again. I am gonna have a proper nice last meal because for the next few days I won't be able to eat.... won't be able to bite in for the next 10 days..." Brushing her teeth for long, increased sensitivity after tightening her braces and being unable to bite into hard food for ten days are physical outcome expectancies. Although these are negative outcomes, they do not deter her from pursuing her goal of having straight teeth.

Tewa (2023) stated that “...my lips get dark when I am in the coast...” She uses lip balm with sunscreen to mitigate this issue. She also uses makeup while attending a MAC event, she stated that, “...I am so glad that makeup hides your sins...sickness and everything...” This indicates that makeup is not only an appearance booster but helps to hide one’s flaws.

Just a Bantu (2022) stated that, “...I don’t know why this make up is doing this to me? The one day I want my make up to look good is the day it doesn’t...” This is in reference to the makeup that she had while on her way for a lunch date with other Kenyan women that are dating Norwegian men. This statement indicates that she wanted to look flawless and appealing to these women. She is unhappy with how her makeup turned out. One of the main goals for using makeup is to obtain social approval from other people. This is a social outcome expectancy that motivates her to apply makeup. Although she doesn’t achieve the desired look, she does not remove the make. This signifies that wearing makeup that is not perfectly done may still be better than not wearing makeup at all.

Geek on fashion (2023) stated that, “...perfect when you want to hide your belly when out on a brunch...” This is in reference to a white minidress that she had bought. It indicates that she would like to maintain a flat tummy while at a brunch, where she knows she is likely to indulge in larger food portions than usual. This goes to show that having a flat tummy at all times is an integral element of beauty. She also uses hyaluronic acid, moisturizing cream and undereye cream at night to hydrates the skin and reduce fine lines. Hydrated skin and reduced fine lines are physical outcome expectancies that motivate her to use creams on her face in her pursuit to achieve a flawless appearance. She also stated that she used the skin pigmentation corrector on her lips to reduce skin discolourization and achieve even an even skin tone. An even skin tone on her lips is an outcome expectancy that encouraged her to use the skin corrector.

3.1.2.4 Scented

This refers to a pursuit for a pleasant body odour. It involves the use of deodorants, perfumes, and soaps to achieve a desirable scent.

This theme was prevalent among three of the SMIs, Natalie Tewa, Just a Bantu and Geek on Fashion. Tewa (2023) stated that, “...Kosassport deodorant gives off a clean, stain free, odour fighting...I stopped using deodorants with aluminium after reading how they affect the

hormones...” The clean scent and lack of aluminium from the deodorant act as motivation for using the Kosassport deodorant. A good scent ensures that one gets social approval, which is a social outcome expectancy. Natalie Tewa uses the Penhaligon, the coveted Duchess Rose and Tewa (2023) says the following about this perfume “...one of my favourites... very rosy, floral, very light. I like something light for the coast... perfume first then jewellery. Don’t spray perfume on your jewellery. Its gonna spoil...” She was using this perfume in Diani, a coastal region in Kenya, this area has a hot and humid weather. This shows that it’s important to get a perfume that has a great scent, but it must also be suitable for specific occasions and locations.

Just a Bantu (2022) uses YSL perfume because it smells great and stated that, “...have I ever told you I am allergic to perfumes. I have a serious sinus reaction...” She sneezes shortly after using the perfume. Sneezing is a negative physical outcome expectancy that would have deterred her from using perfumes. However, her quest to wear a great scent which would earn her social approval overrides the consequences of using the perfume.

Geek on fashion unboxes four of her latest collection of perfumes, Burberry Her, Valentino born in Roma donna, Amouage guidance and NYC Bond 9 Tribeca. Geek on Fashion (2023) stated that, “... Burberry Her... I like... it’s a creamy custardy strawberry kind of scent...” She also stated that, “...Valentino Born in Roma donna...its very floral, fresh, giving a bouquet of flowers, it’s giving me picnic vibes...” This indicates that this perfume would be suitable for a picnic. She also stated that Amouage guidance has a baby powder, very clean, very special, super niche and very luxurious scent. Geek on Fashion (2023) stated, “...NYC Bond 9 Tribeca...I love the fragrance, nutty and caramel, appropriate for date night or a cold day...it’s a beast...” This shows that this scent would be appropriate for a date night or worn on a cold day. While referring to some perfume samples she had been given by Cierra perfumes store, Geek on Fashion (2023) stated that “...Chanel Paris... smells nice, smells clean, smells like expensive soap...” These statements show that a good scent is nutty, powdery, floral and clean. Such scents are associated with luxury and meant for special occasions. A luxurious scent is expected to raise one’s image which would improve one’s social standing. A luxurious scent attracts social approval, which is a social outcome expectancy.

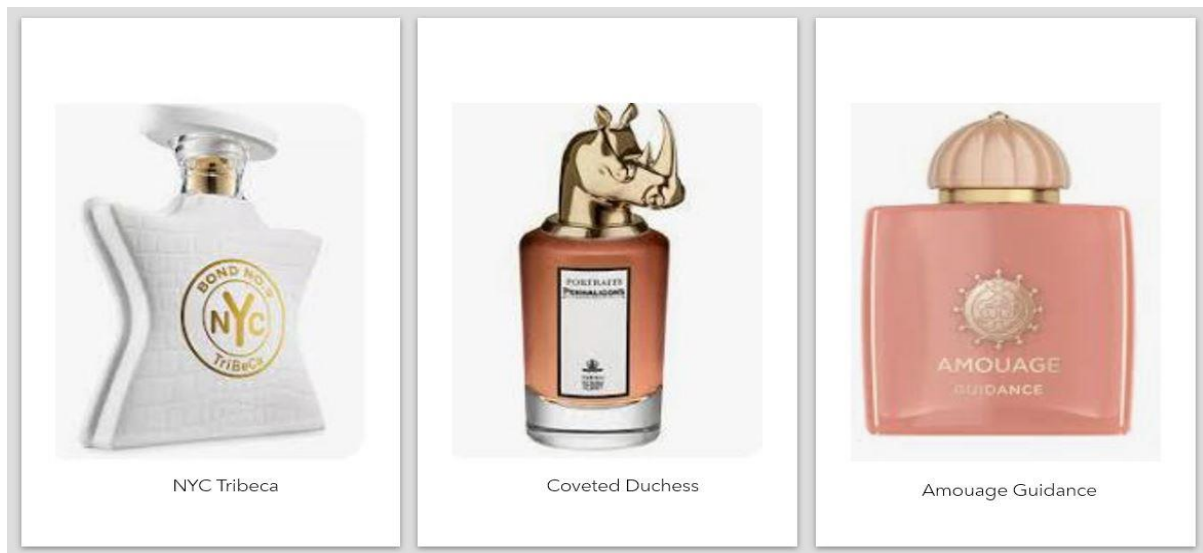


Figure 10: Perfumes (Scentfied n.d)

3.1.2.5 Pricey

This theme refers to the cost of beauty products and activities. It refers to the financial implications of investing in beauty products, clothing, shoes, accessories, handbags and hair. It also involves the cost of other resources such as time and effort that are necessary in attaining, maintaining and improving beauty.

Joanna Kinuthia's pursuit to achieve her body goals cause her to pursue intermittent fasting which are 18-20 hours long. Her quest to observe these dietary restrictions cost her comfort. On occasions when she is unable to maintain her diet, she struggles with body guilt. She goes to the gym even while sick, hence endangering her health. Photoshoots which are a part of ensuring that one maintains a favourable online presence with well-polished photographs are expensive and tiring. Installing braces to straighten her teeth is an expensive venture and also uncomfortable as she is unable to chew food for about ten days following the tightening procedure. Her quest to maintain well-manicured nails is not only expensive, but also time consuming. On one occasion when she had a manicure while having her temporary locks uninstalled, she left the salon at 10 p.m., which is quite late. It is not safe for a woman to be walking or even driving late in the night. Her skincare routine involves the use of at least nine beauty products that range from moisturizing creams, serums, facial wash, glycolic acid and sunscreen. Each of these products costs an average of \$20 and the total of all the beauty products averages several hundreds of dollars.

Just a Bantu also uses designer perfumes and make up which are expensive. Makeup application is a time-consuming activity; it could take a minimum of twenty minutes or even an hour. Haircare involves braiding or shaving and these hairstyles range between \$20 to \$50.

Natalie Tewa gets regular deep tissue massages which cost at least \$40. She also goes to the gym regularly; the cost of gym membership depends on the location of the gym and averages from \$20 to \$100 per month. She also uses imported beauty products; deodorants, designer perfumes, sunscreens and makeup which cost several hundreds of dollars.

Geek on fashion also attends the gym regularly, which is not only a time-consuming activity but also expensive. She also has regular massages that cost anywhere between \$50 to \$100. She purchases designer handbags, shoes and perfumes. Her latest haul on her perfume collection costs an average of \$800.

3.1.2.6 Product Centric

This refers to all the beauty products used to attain, maintain and achieve beauty. These products may be branded (*the name of manufacturer or store is clearly stated by the SMI*) or not branded (*the name of manufacturer or store not mentioned stated by the SMI*). Some of these products are locally produced while others are imported from Europe and the USA. Some of these products are sponsored (*the manufacturer or seller has paid for the promotion of the products on the SMIs YouTube channel*) or generic (*the promotion of these products has not been paid for by the manufacturer or seller*).

This theme was prevalent with all the SMIs. Joanna Kinuthia uses natural haircare products that have been locally manufactured, these include Mikalla charcoal detox shampoo, Mikalla hair conditioner, Mikalla leave in treatment and Mikalla nourishing hair food on her hair after uninstalling temporary dreadlocks. Kinuthia (2023) says that “...This is not sponsored. I have just realized they are all Mikalla. I hope they have not expired. I have had them for a long time. I have not used these in like a year plus. I am still gonna use them regardless...Mikalla hair food is the key to success when it comes to twists or twist out. You can use gel, but I feel like gel is heavy...” She is motivated to use Mikalla hair food because the product is light and effective for installing twists or twist outs. Excellent twists and twist outs are a physical outcome expectancy of using Mikalla hair food. She also wore an IKOJN sweater dress, a local handmade sweater for a photoshoot, temporary dreadlocks which are locally produced

and a pair of crocheted sandals from Angie's crochet, a local brand. Joanna Kinuthia also uses imported beauty products such as Simple moisturizing face wash, Ordinary serum, Garnier BHA charcoal serum, CeraVe moisturizing cream, LaRoche Posay sunscreen, acne.org benzoyl peroxide and Ordinary Glycolic acid. These products were a part of her skincare routine and are not sponsored.

Natalie Tewa also uses beauty products from internationally recognized brands such as Elta MD sunscreen, LaRoche Posay body sunscreen, Mac studio foundation, Lobello lip balm and Kosassport deodorant. She also uses Uncover, a product by a local company although the products are made in Korea. Her beauty products, clothes and accessories were not branded.

Just a Bantu wore an African printed Kimono, beaded wrist band with the colours of the Kenyan flag and a woven handbag. The products are neither branded nor sponsored. She also wore Darling (local hair brand) hair extension and braids. Her braids were installed at a local salon owned by a popular TikToker known as shirokareithi.

Geek on Fashion wore designer perfumes, Louis Vuitton and Fendi bags, ZARA and H&M clothes, Polo Ralph Lauren socks, Nike Airmax sneakers and YSL sandals. These products were from foreign brands and were not sponsored. She also uses LaRoche face sunscreen, LaRoche body sunscreen, Effeclar DUO, Effeclar purifying foaming gel, Dang ageless hyaluronic acid and Channel perfumes. These beauty products were sponsored; she got them as a PR package. She also uses Uncover beauty products which are produced by a locally owned company.

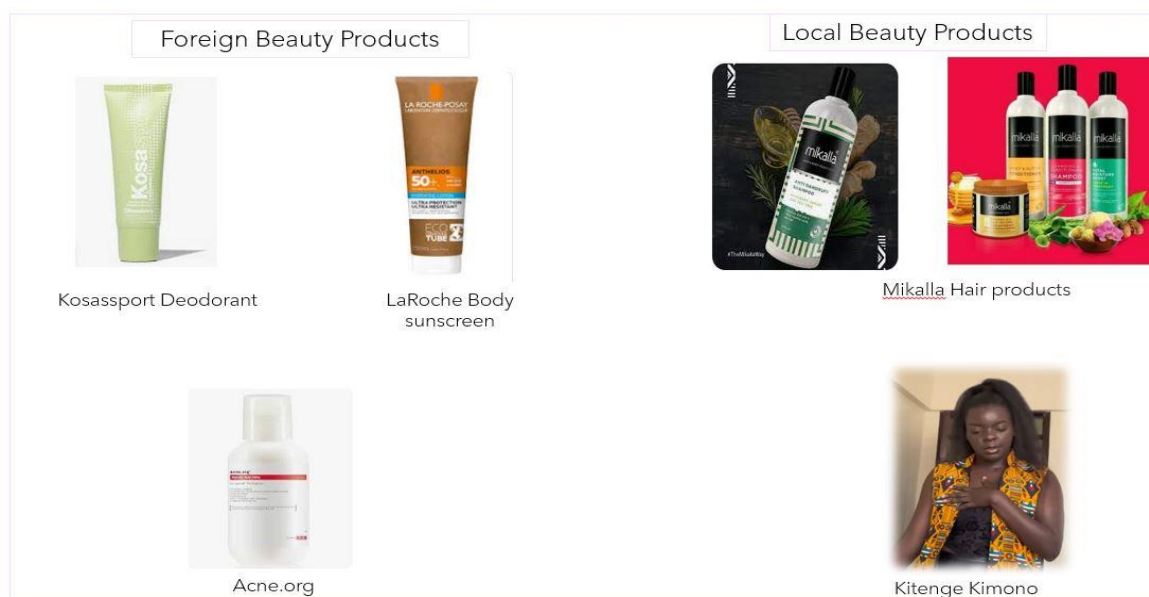


Figure 11: Beauty Products

3.1.2.7 Stress free

Although the prevailing theme regarding beauty is beauty work what became apparent regarding African hair was the need to have stress free hair. This theme refers to hair that is easy to manage, requiring minimal effort and that does not take long to have it plaited or taken care of.

This theme is prevalent among two of the SMIs, Joanna Kinuthia and Just a Bantu. Joanna Kinuthia (2023) stated that after uninstalling her temporary dreadlocks, “...After nearly 9 months, I am taking off the dreadlocks...I am gonna miss this hair...haven’t had to think about what hairstyles to have...”. One of the greatest concerns that Kenyan women have is what to do with their natural hair. Temporary dreadlocks can stay for a long time, and they are easy to manage. Generally Kenyan women change their hairstyles every two to four weeks depending on how soft or coarse their hair is. This is because soft hair becomes easily unkept while coarse hair can hold certain hairstyles for longer.

Just a Bantu (2023) stated that, “...Look at all this buildup (*referring to the dirt found at the root of the hair; it’s made up of oil & dust remains*). I was washing my hair, ooh use apple cider vinegar, I don’t want that. The whole point of getting dreadlocks is to have stress free hair...” This remarks clearly points out that she is unhappy with all the work that she needs to do to remove the build up from her hair. Just a Bantu (2023) also stated that my scalp has

been itching at the back the whole night...I don't want this hair anymore. ...maybe I am making a rash decision... it's just hair, it will grow back..." An itchy scalp and hair build up are negative physical outcome expectancies that motivated a haircut. Her remark that it's just hair it will grow back is her way of pacifying her fear of cutting the hair. Just a Bantu (2023) also stated that "...my partner does not want me to cut it. He really likes it when I have long hair. But I want short hair. He says he is going to support me regardless of what I want..." Although social approval is an important element in the pursuit for beauty, especially from one's romantic partner, the negative outcome expectancies outweigh her desire for her partner's approval. Just a Bantu (2023) also stated that, "...I love how easy it is to take a shower. How I don't have to stress about combing my hair. How does my hair look..." This indicates that hair should be easy to wash and comb.

On another occasion Just a Bantu installs braids which are a protective hairstyle. It took less than four hours to have them installed. Beauty work is time consuming. Hair braiding takes between three to eight hours depending on how many hairdressers are available and their speed in installing these braids. She also asked the hairdresser to plait only a few braids so that they are easy to hold. Although hair braiding is a time-consuming exercise, braids are easy to manage since women don't have to worry about combing and styling their hair daily.

3.1.2.8 Minimalist

This theme refers to the moderate use of accessories. This involves wearing dainty accessories and a minimal number of accessories at a given time.

This theme was prevalent among the four SMIs. Joanna Kinuthia mostly wore a nose ring, dangling earrings or small earrings. Natalie Tewa wore sunglasses, a necklace, small earrings, dangling earrings, a ring and a watch. Just a Bantu did not wear accessories often, but when she did, she wore a beaded wrist band with the colours of the Kenyan flag and a watch. The accessories worn by Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa and Just a Bantu were neither branded nor sponsored. Geek on Fashion wore her wedding ring, a necklace, a watch, sunglasses, Michael Kors earrings, and a Valentino belt. Her earrings and belt were branded while the rest of the accessories were not branded. None of these accessories were sponsored.

3.1.2.9 Natural or Synthetic Hair

Natural hair refers to African hair in its natural form, hair that has not been chemically altered. Synthetic hair refers to wigs, weaves, hair extensions, braids and temporary dreadlocks that have been made from yarn.

The four SMIs influencers had synthetic hair on various occasions. Joanna Kinuthia wore temporary dreadlocks for nine months. She wore her hair in flat twists and twist outs after uninstalling her temporary dreadlocks. Kinuthia (2023) stated that,

...What hairstyle can I do that is still cute, I can go out with it. This is most especially for the gym. If I want to wear the hair different, I just unravel them. I can easily rock a wig on top of this... I sold all my wigs. I have to go borrow my sister's wig. Right now, she has temporary locks, so I can borrow her wigs...

Maintaining natural hair while going to the gym is challenging because when one sweats, the hair soaks in the sweat and tangles easily. Sweaty hair needs to be washed regularly to keep off the odour. She mostly wore flat twists while at the gym to reduce the chances of hair tangling.

Natalie Tewa kept her hair in its natural state while at Diani, a coastal town with hot and humid weather unlike Nairobi city where the temperatures are cooler. African hair needs to be well moisturized and hydrated to maintain its springlike appearance. This contributes to the work that goes into taking care of African hair. She also wore braids and a hairband wig to cover her natural hair which had not been washed, and she felt was unkept.

Just a Bantu also wore temporary dreadlocks but had to cut her hair because of an itchy scalp and a hair build up. Just a Bantu (2023) stated that,

...I think I cut my hair longer than this when I started my natural hair journey, back when I had heat damage... I was like, let me wait and cut it when I have some wigs, when I order some wigs. I have not ordered the wigs yet. I will order them maybe *kesho* (Swahili word that means tomorrow) ...

Short hair is one of the natural hairstyles that some Kenyan women keep. It's an easy hairstyle to maintain. Just a Bantu (2023) stated that, "...I love the way it's so easy for me to

wake up & go, take a shower from head. I had missed taking a shower from like head to toe...”

Going bald is a bold move for any African woman. This is because many women not only value their hair but are concerned about how they will look with short hair. Just a Bantu (2023) stated that,

...Ooh my God I look so different (says while giggling) but I know I will get used to it...the shape of my face changed when I shaved my hair. My head looks round... I never knew I had bumps, visible rows on my head... I don't know... I have never seen my hair bald, never seen my hair this short. Even when I shaved my hair in 2015. my hair was not this short guys...

Geek on Fashion mostly wore a wig apart from the time when she had relaxed her hair and when she went for a walk at Karura forest. While on the walk she had corn rows hidden under a cap.

3.1.3 Discussion

The analysis of YouTube videos curated by the four SMIs (Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa, Just a Bantu & Geek on Fashion) revealed the prevalence of beauty work. Irrespective of how closely or loosely one holds onto Afrocentric or Occidental beauty they will participate in beauty work. Beauty work was characterized by body surveillance, selfcare, pursuit for perfection and product centric.

Body surveillance refers to a constant focus on physical appearance and habitual monitoring of the body through dieting, portion control, intermittent fasting and regular exercises aimed at weight management and weight loss. Physical outcome expectancies such as feeling good about being able to meet daily exercise targets and achieving a flat tummy, which allowed SMIs to wear crop tops, encouraged regular exercises (Simpson and Mazzeo 2017; Willis and Knobloch-Westerwick 2014; Bandura 1999). However, physical outcome expectancies were sometimes negative, for example, when regular exercises led to body pains, but this did not deter SMIs from maintaining regular exercise routines. These results were like Bordo (2004) who found that the media continues to perpetrate body regulation, and an increasing amount of time spent on caring for the body to fit the societal regulations on exercise, diets, makeup

and clothing. These results on body surveillance are also consistent with the results of Balogun-Mwangi et al. (2023) on body image among Kenyan women who although they idealized larger bodies, they preferred smaller bodies than their real body size. Similarly to studies that revealed how the society encourage women to discipline their bodies through skincare, cosmetic use and haircare among other ritualistic beauty practices (Samper, Yang & Daniels 2018; Lemperle et al. 2001; Wolf 2013) beauty work was also characterized by selfcare. Selfcare refers to activities aimed at taking special care of the body, they ranged from showers, skincare and haircare routines, massages, spa visits to manicure and pedicure. Selfcare for African women is characterized by an obsession for cleanliness with practices such as double cleansing the skin. This may be because of the historical perpetuation of blackness as immoral, dirty, unattractive, uncivilized and ugly and whiteness as lovable, virtuous and beautiful (Hill 2002; Owusu-Agyei et al. 2020; Rahiman et al. 2021; Dlova et al. 2014).

Beauty work was also characterized by a pursuit for perfection, which refers to the desire or quest to remove, clear or mitigate any pimples, marks, imperfections, uneven skin tones, discolourization, aging, fine lines, crooked and discoloured teeth aimed at obtaining a youthful appearance. A pursuit for perfection was accomplished through wearing makeup, braces and using beauty products to remove blemishes, hydrate the skin and reduce fine lines. Achieving an even skin tone, straight teeth and flawless skin acts a physical outcome expectancy that motivates a pursuit for perfection hence encouraging beauty work (Simpson and Mazzeo 2017; Willis and Knobloch-Westerwick 2014; Bandura 1999). Sometimes the makeup did not meet the SMIs expectations, for example when it turned out ashy, however wearing makeup was better than not having makeup. This may be due to the benefits of makeup use which are refining one's self-image, boosting confidence, restoring one's original appearance or as a tool for self-expression (Smith et al. 2021; Tran 2020). This was similar to studies that found that youthful appearance is presented as universally desirable while aging is shunned and a pursuit for perfection is consistent with societal beauty ideals (Aharoni & Ayalon 2024; Kwan & Trautner 2009; Gimli, 2002; Robbins 2001; Hayman 1996).

Beauty work is also product centric, beauty hinges on the use of cosmetic products aimed at attaining, maintaining and achieving beauty, these beauty products range from skincare, haircare and body care. Beauty products such as perfumes are aimed at attracting social approval which acts as the motivation for their use (Kwan & Trautner, 2009). Although perfumes may have negative effects on users who are allergic to them, social approval outweighs the physical discomfort. This is like the findings of Hayes (2017) who found that women spend a substantial amount of money, and time in altering their appearance using beauty products such as cosmetics. Most of the beauty products shared by these SMIs are internationally recognized brands. Locally manufactured products were mostly synthetic hair and natural haircare products. This may be because the key players in the cosmetic industry in Kenya are multinational brands (Africa Business Pages 2017). Similarly to findings that showed beauty practices are characterized by effort and are time consuming (Samper, Yang & Daniels 2018; Chang 2011). Beauty work was characterised by long hours spent at the salon, dedicated time for exercise such as walks, Zumba and gym sessions, expensive skincare, haircare and designer products that ranged from \$20 to \$800. However, there was departure from an emphasis on beauty work when some SMIs emphasized the need for stress free haircare maintenance practices. This involved adoption of protective hairstyles such as temporary dreadlocks, braids, cornrows, wigs and maintaining short hair. Historically, hair styles such as dreadlocks and cornrows were considered untidy, combative and dissident and did not fit school, social settings or normative work (Onwachi-Willig 2010; Bellinger 2007). However, in modern day they are considered as protective hairstyles aimed at reducing hair manipulation and the amount of time spent on haircare maintenance. The result is longer hair with intact edges; these serve as physical outcome expectancies for installing protective hairstyles.

Historically, accessories made by African communities were bold and vibrant, they were made of readily available materials in the region such as beads, clay, seeds, ostrich feathers and animal bones (Isaac, Agordah, & Nehemiah 2024). However, the SMIs mostly wore dainty and a minimal number of accessories at any given time. This shows a departure from Afrocentric beauty ideals on accessorization to the adoption of Occidental beauty ideals, which are minimalistic in nature.

3.2 STUDY 2

This study sought to assess RQ2. What is the perception of the youth on *Afro-Occidental* beauty ideals portrayed on YouTube? This was done through a Netnography of the comment section of YouTube videos published between 2022 and 2023 with the highest number of views, of the four Kenyan beauty SMIs. The data was collected between 29th August 2024 and 11th of September 2024. 419 comments were selected for this study. Data collected was then analysed through a thematic analysis. The section below addresses data collection, data analysis, intercoder agreement and ethical considerations in detail.

3.2.1 Methodology

This study involved a Netnography of four Beauty SMIs YouTube channels (Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa, Just a Bantu and Geek on Fashion) to assist in answering RQ2 which sought to investigate the perception of the youth on beauty. Netnography allowed the researcher to immerse themselves in the communities that these SMIs have created to establish the perception of their followers on the beauty ideals portrayed (Winter & Lavis 2019; Kozinets 2002).

Netnography involves five stages namely, *entrée*, data collection, analysis and interpretation, research ethics and member checks (Kozinets 2002). This study espoused four of the stages excluding member checks to establish the perception of the youth on beauty ideals. The *entrée* stage involves identifying research questions and an appropriate online community for the study. This stage involved sampling to establish the most appropriate online communities to study.

At the *entrée* stage, I took note of the number of comments from each SMI's beauty video selected for the study; Geek on Fashion had (47) comments, Just a Bantu (78), Natalie Tewa (179) and Joanna Kinuthia (115). I limited the selection of comments to the first comment from each follower and ignored discussions between followers since some were redundant and others were not discussions about the video. I also ignored comments by the SMIs as these were merely likes or an appreciation of the comments made by their followers. I did not categorize the community members into tourists, minglers, devotees and insiders (Kozinets,

2002), since YouTube community groups are open groups characterized by trans-parasocial interactions between the SMIs and their followers and minimal interactions between members. Secondly, my objective was to explore the perception of all their followers on the beauty ideals displayed and this would involve an analysis of all the comments that address beauty ideals. The comments selected from Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa, Just a Bantu and Geek on Fashion was done between 29th August 2024 and 11th of September 2024.

Data collected in a Netnographic study involves directly copying the data from the online communities and inscribing meanings and observations derived from the text messages (Kozinets 2002). A total of 419 comments was copied on an excel file and an evaluation on the relevance of the comment in assessing the perception of the audience on beauty ideals was evaluated. Comments that did not address beauty ideals presented were coded but excluded from analysis.

3.2.2 Data Analysis

Analysis and interpretation involved reading through each comment and reviewing the emojis to identify emerging themes from each comment. The salient themes were highlighted and noted in a separate row. The number of likes for each comment was taken into consideration because this is a response from other followers who were of the same opinion signifying its salience. After reading through all the comments for each SMI, salient themes were identified by comparing with the notes made. This process was repeated for each SMI.

Researchers are expected to disclose their presence to the virtual community during the research and include feedback from members of the virtual community. Researchers ought to seek consent from participants if they intend to quote the members directly (Kozinets 2002). However, some of these ethical considerations proposed by Kozinets, are limited to semi-private virtual communities and ethical considerations for content analysis can be relied upon in public media texts in communication research (Langer & Beckman 2005). The comment sections of these YouTube channels are considered as public media texts. It is unusual to seek consent to use direct quotations and disclose a researcher's identity in public media texts such as editorial opinions as this would endanger the research among those opposed to the study and heighten the chances of silence among hesitant users (Langer & Beckman 2005). This

study hence espoused ethical considerations for content analysis which are highlighted in the next section.

3.2.3 Intercoder Agreement

50% of the comments were coded by an independent coder after going through rigorous training on the codebook. Intercoder reliability is important to mitigate any biases and is useful when human coding is employed (Neuendorf 2017). The percentage agreement was at 81% indicating an acceptable consistency in coding. Discrepancies among the coders were discussed and resolved.

3.2.4 Results

RQ2 assessed the perception of Afro-Occidental beauty among the youth. Results of the comment section revealed the two overarching themes, parasocial relationships and beauty work. Parasocial relationships are influenced by SMIs attractiveness, expertise, information quality, authenticity, procedural and informational fairness. On the other hand, beauty work was characterized by selfcare.

Parasocial relationships are defined as the social and emotional connection between SMIs and their audiences over a period which lead to a long-lasting relationship between the SMIs and their audience (Aw & Labrecque 2020, Thompson 2006; Dibble et al. 2016; Giles 2002; Nordlund 1978; Horton & Wohl 1956). Parasocial relationships with SMIs takes various forms such as seeking counsel on various issues of life, perceiving SMIs as one's friends, perceiving one to be a part of the SMIs social world and a desire to meet the SMIs (Rubin, Perse & Powell 1985). This theme was prevalent among the four SMIs with various aspects of these parasocial relationships being highlighted by their followers in the comments section.

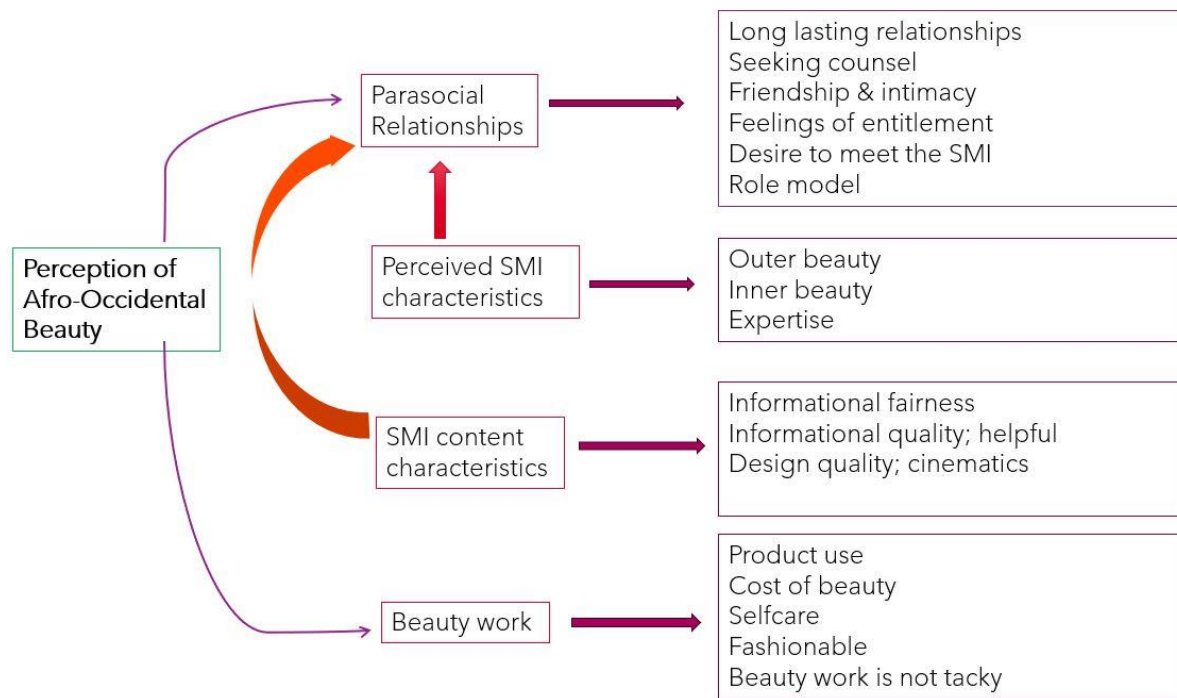


Figure 12: Conceptual diagram on the perception of beauty

These themes are discussed in detail in the section below.

3.2.4.1 Parasocial Relationships

3.2.4.1.1 Long-lasting relationships

This theme refers to an existing relationship between the audience and the SMIs that spans several years. This was evident among two SMIs; Joanna Kinuthia and Geek on Fashion.

Hilderjelimo7320 (2023) stated that, “...Out of all the channels I found like 4 years ago am stuck with Joanna K...” while ttmk627 (2023) stated that “...Hey joanna... an oldie in your channel...” Bettykago8131 (2023) stated that “...Hi, I started watching this channel *kitambo* (Swahili word that means a long time ago)...” while Maryanne-nimoh (2023) stated that “...From 2016 *tuko hapa* (Swahili words that we are still here) still ...” It is evident that some of Joanna Kinuthia’s followers have developed a long-lasting relationship with her content that spans across several years.

Gatwirikinyua5694 (2023) stated that, “...Nelly!!! I started watching you in my campus days ...” while Naomigatwiri8621 (2023) stated that, “...Aki the way I manifest your life for me,

keep unboxing been here for the past five years plus and gurrllllll!!!! Lots of Love always hooked to this channel...” These two followers have been following Geek on Fashion for a long time.

3.2.4.1.2 Seeking Counsel

This refers to instances when the audience seek beauty and lifestyle advice from SMIs. This may include product use, product availability, products cost or lifestyle choices. This theme was evident among three of the SMIs; Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa and Geek on Fashion.

Ttmk627 (2023) stated that “...Hey joanna... an oldie in your channel... can you do your current make up routine, your favorite foundation now etc., your shoot make up was fireeeee...” This follower is seeking counsel on Joanna Kinuthia’s makeup routine. They are curious to find out what foundation she uses and admire the makeup she had during her photoshoot. Catelynmutuku2058 (2023) stated that, “...Kindly do an updated skincare routine...” while Cookwithantonette (2023) asks, “...does locks get installed on short hair...” Lastly, Fridausshada1836 (2023) asks, “...Joanna where did you get the mini benzoyl peroxide? What page ...” These followers are seeking to find out Joanna Kinuthia’s skincare routine, where she purchases some of the skincare products that she uses and installing of temporary dreadlocks on short hair.

Makenainyingi9382 (2023) followers asks, “...Natalie, was this a solo trip? If so please give us tips on how you hack solo trips esp on choosing safe accommodation...” Natalie Tewa has several videos of solo trips to various countries. This follower is seeking counsel for getting safe accommodation while on a solo trip. One of the greatest concerns that some women have is the fear of sexual harassment while on solo trips; there have been several cases shared online by Kenyan women over the years. Sirflorian6685 (2023) asks “...what's the name of this accommodation? Any contacts...” This follower is interested in the details of the hotel Natalie Tewa was residing in while at Diani. Nginawinnie9185 (2023) follower asks, “...What’s the contact details of your therapist...” This follower is interested in the contacts of Natalie Tewa’s therapist because she had mentioned that therapy was helping her deal with her childhood trauma. Shirleejohns6618 (2023) asks, “...Kindly do hair growth tutorials...” This follower is interested in hair growth tutorials, which implies that she admires Natalie Tewa’s hair. Clarapsosper8642 (2023) asks, “...Hello Natalie,am from tz,naweza kupata wap

hyo elta md sunscreen? And kosasport deodorant, pls!...” This is a Tanzanian follower, a neighbouring East African country, and would like to find out where she can purchase the Elta md sunscreen and Kosasport deodorant that Natalie Tewa shared in her video.

Bettymesso-hq6il asks, “...Hw much the serum n hw can one get? You were to do a vlog on tax refund in Europe, or did I miss it.” This follower is interested in the cost of the Dange serum, a serum that plumps up the skin and helps reduce fine lines, and where to purchase it. She also wants to know how to get a tax refund from Europe. This is because Geek on Fashion had shared in the video some of her skincare products and she regularly imports items from Europe.

3.2.4.1.3 Friendship and Intimacy

This refers to a voluntary and illusionary mutual relationship between audiences and SMIs. The audiences have expectations of the costs and benefits of their interaction with SMI. It is characterized by affection, honesty, trust, care & support. This theme was prevalent among the four SMI; Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa, Just a Bantu and Geek on Fashion.

Beverlymutirua1656 (2023) stated that, “...I missed Joana. Big sis I pray that all is well...” This follower admires Joanna Kinuthia and perceives her as a big sister. She is also concerned about her and prays that Joanna Kinuthia is ok. This shows that Joanna Kinuthia is an important part of her social world; close enough to be a family member. Gakura-wambua (2023) stated that, “...Love her so much...” This follower is making a public declaration of her affection towards Joanna Kinuthia as one would do to a friend. Mercyprotas6356 (2023) stated that, “...Joanna aki I'm always looking forward to you posting on YouTube! Like your vlogs aki! Maybe you can do twice per week... that's how much I'm a fan, though a silent watcher...” This follower, although she considers herself as a silent follower, is not ashamed to declare that she is a fan and longs to watch her vlogs. This shows that Joanna Kinuthia is important to her and plays a crucial role in her social world. Ruthnairesiai2195 (2023) stated that, “...At this point I can't leave without your vlogs...” This follower implies that Joanna Kinuthia is an important part of her life, she feels like she cannot live without watching her vlogs. This shows her dependency on the relationship she has with Joanna Kinuthia.

Dorien5563 (2023) stated that, "...Sending my love to you babe x..." while Focusbartv (2023) stated that, "...love u for free..." Bongekabheng (2023) stated that, "...Looove u so much..." These followers are making a public declaration of their love for her. A gesture that indicates they perceive her as a close friend. Jawiorchar (2023) stated that, "...If you visit Mombasa anytime, I can show you how to prepare good chicken..." This statement shows the level of intimacy they feel they have with Natalie Tewa. They feel comfortable showing her how to make good chicken. This is a gesture that would be evident among friends, a desire to do something good to one another.

Two of Natalie Tewa's male followers state that she is their crush. This statement indicates that they don't just see her as a platonic friend but a potential romantic partner. Nothingheard (2023) stated that "...Are you engaged by any chance??..." This statement shows that the follower has been carefully watching Natalie Tewa and desires to find out if she is in a romantic relationship. This is a question that one would feel comfortable asking a friend because they are close enough to ask such private information. Seven followers of Natalie Tewa stated they have missed her indicating that they have a close relationship with her. Her absence online was visible, and they are happy to see her back online. Traesaki5401 (2023) "...Waited for your vlog mahn!just a happy fan, I pray you stay consistent akiii...love and light always" This statement shows that this follower is a fan, watches her videos consistently, happy to watch her vlogs regularly and prays that she is consistent in creating content.

Jelagatkoimuri1038 (2023) stated that, "... I love your content hun. To crown it, you are my birthday mate..." This follower calls her hun, a short form of the word honey, implying that she has a very close relationship with Geek on Fashion. Lydialaquinta5439 (2023) "...Whoop whoop ..yes!! Love the vlog and please, yes keep on unboxing we really love it and we get inspired Loved the perfume haul...omg!it's been long aki...We love you..." This follower is speaking as though on behalf of many other followers. She stated that they love her. This is a public declaration of her affection towards Gook on Fashion. She also implies that unboxing videos are a source of inspiration.

3.2.4.1.4 Feelings of Entitlement

This refers to instances where the audience feel they have a right to benefit from their social and emotional connection with SMIs. It is characterized by the use of strong words, display of strong emotions and intrusive questions. This theme was prevalent among the two of the SMIs Joanna Kinuthia and Natalie Tewa.

Dorkito00 (2023) asked, “hi JOANNA why did you remove the DOWNLOAD LATER to watch yr videos?” This follower implies that she believes that Joanna Kinuthia should ensure that her videos are downloadable. Mercyprotas6356 (2023) “Joanna aki I'm always looking forward to you posting on Youtube! Like your vlogs aki! Maybe you can do twice per week...” Although this follower does not use strong words, but she implies that she would like to have more videos from Joanna Kinuthia.

Nothingheard (2023) stated that, “This one-sided relationship is draining us How can you forget about us repeatedly? Are we not worthy?” This follower clearly describes how they feel about their relationship with Natalie. They accuse Natalie Tewa of repeatedly forgetting them and question whether she finds her followers worthy of her attention. Faithnjeruofficial (2023) stated that, “50,000 years later welcome back...” This statement is an exaggerated remark on how long she has been away. It signifies that the follower feels that Natalie has been away for a very long time but is happy that she is back. Missjackie254 (2023) “Yes since you found love feeling neglected welcome back though!!” Natalie Tewa recently got engaged and this follower feels that the followers have been neglected because she has found a new lover. This follower shares the feelings of a jilted lover. She considers Natali Tewa’s romantic relationship a threat to their existing parasocial relationship. Sheekaris9075 (2023) stated that, “It's about daamnnn timeNatalie hunny” This statement signifies that the follower considers her relationship with Natalie Tewa as very close, she uses the term hunny while referring to her. The follower uses very strong words that signify Natalie owes them her attention. Jeffcheta (2023) asked, “Where have you been????” This question signifies that this follower is unhappy that Natalie Tewa had not been online for a while, and she owes them an explanation. The use of several question marks is to lay emphasis on the question hence signifying the gravity of her mistake. Edwin...kitchendiaries (2023) stated that, “always ditching and coming back” Ditching is a slang term that means abandoning. This statement signifies that the follower also feels that Natalie Tewa is in the habit of abandoning her

followers. This statement signifies that this is not a healthy relationship because it's characterized by abandonment.

3.2.4.1.5 Desire to meet the SMI

This theme refers to the follower's desire to have a face-to-face meeting with SMI. This theme is prevalent among the two of the SMIs; Joanna Kinuthia and Natalie Tewa.

Mwndenyaga91 (2023) stated that, "...at this rate Joanna K, *tufanye* meet and great. Love your content xoxo..." This follower is asking Joanna Kinuthia to set up a session where she gets to spend time with her followers. This follower implies that she would like to meet Joanna Kinuthia in person. Several SMIs in Kenya have been holding events dubbed 'Meet & Greet' which gives SMIs an opportunity to interact with their audience at a designated location where they do live recording.

Connieamukwiyu1053 (2023) stated that, "...I have been Missing you on here, I am your biggest fan from Namibia... Love you Natalie, and I hope one day I will come to Kenya..." She makes a public declaration that she loves Natalie Tewa and is her biggest fan from Namibia. She also hopes to come to Nairobi, implying that she would like to meet her in person.

3.2.4.1.6 Role Model

This refers to the instances where followers admire, are inspired by, look up to and desire to emulate the SMI. This theme is prevalent among the four SMIs; Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa, Just a Bantu and Geek on Fashion.

Gakuru_wambui (2023) followers stated that,

I started using mikala because of you alooong time ago when i started watching your videos till date and i love love it i even influenced my friends my mum we all use mikala products..so Thankyou Joanna.

This follower's learned about Mikalla hair products from Joanna Kinuthia and adopted them in her haircare. She has also gone ahead and influenced family and friends to purchase Mikalla Hair products. This shows that she values the recommendations that Joanna Kinuthia shares on her YouTube channel. Bbw_anne (2023) stated that, "Jo with the good hair!! I'm

two months in with temporary locks heavily influenced by you and I'm tired I want to see how long my hair has grown already.” This statement implies that the follower values Joanna Kinuthia’s recommendations and even imitates her hairstyle.

Lizmwendwa4852 (2023) stated that, “Do you know you are my fashion icon, how many outfits I bought because of u ...gal keep inspiring from Dubai ” while Interskynairobi9407 (2023) states that “Natalia you are the best i like when you show us great place. You really inspired me on traveling thing. I NEVER USED TO GO ANYWHERE before bumped with your channel 2019.” Natalies followers admire her fashion sense and lifestyle. They are inspired to emulate her in how she dresses and travelling around the world.

Dorakirabo001 (2022) stated that, “...God is good kabisa...pray for me too to get a good white husband.” This statement shows that she looks up to Just a Bantu as an inspiration to get a Caucasian partner. For some African women getting married to a Caucasian man is highly regarded as it implies that they have a chance to live abroad. Living abroad is desirable as it implies that one is successful. Therefore, marrying a Caucasian man is a ticket to living a good life.

Gatwirikinyua5694 (2023) stated that, “...You have heavily influenced my fashion/how i dress in a feminine way. I look forward to days I will have extra chums to splurge on designer things/ fragrances.” This statement implies that the follower looks up to Geek on Fashion. Her sense of fashion has been inspired by watching Geek on Fashion. Although she can’t afford the designer items, she hopes to earn enough money someday and afford such a lifestyle. She also admires that Geek on Fashion is feminine. Margaretmugithi2205 (2023) stated that, “Not once I’ve bought something because geek on fashion said "girl!!" Yes to the unboxings.” This statement shows that she admires Geek on Fashion and listens to her counsel. She confesses that she has purchased items because Geek on Fashion recommended it.

3.2.4.2 Perceived SMIs characteristics

SMIs followers’ find them attractive. Attractiveness refers to the social or physical charming (outer beauty) or appealing nature of an individual (inner beauty) (Schiappa et al. 2007).

3.2.4.2.1 Outer beauty

This was characterized by an assessment of physical appearance of the SMIs such as their body, hair, skin, nails and teeth. This was prevalent among the four SMIs; Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa, Just a Bantu and Geek on Fashion.

Bbw_anne (2023) stated that, "... with the good hair!!..." while elleakenya (2023) stated that, "...Your hair is giving..." These statements imply that these followers find Joanna Kinuthia attractive, they admire her good hair. Mwaura.lilian03 (2023) stated that, "...Lovely vlog plus the nails my favourite..." This statement implies that the follower loves Joanna Kinuthia's nails, she finds them attractive. Sunshinegirleo (2023) stated that, "...You'll pink or lavender on the braces. Those were my favourite colours..." This statement implies that she loves Joanna Kinuthia's choice of colours, pink and lavender are her favorite colours.

Paulinekusiima (2023) stated that, "...Looking gorgeous as always, lol..." while another follower stated that, "...Super Gorge Nat..." These statements imply that these followers admire Natalie Tewa, and they find her beautiful. Wanjirunyambura2708 (2023) stated that, "Beautiful!! And your skin is goals". This statement implies that they admire Natalie Tewa's skin although it is acne prone. Mutheualfredbetty9433 (2023) stated that, "Yeeeeeeeees she's baaack bbygal looking hoooot" This statement shows that this follower is not only happy that Natalie is back online but also that she is looking exceptionally beautiful. Looking hot is a metaphor that some people use to imply that one looks stunning.

Diamong-ee5ti (2023) followers stated that, "...Looking cute..." while another follower stated that, "...You pull off both looks so effortlessly – with and without hair. You look amazing..." Several of Just a Bantu's followers find her attractive with short hair, they use terms such as beautiful, very nice, stunning, and looking dope. Clairekuria1950 (2023) stated that, "...Beautiful people and the beautiful Queen don't worry the makeup looked stunning..." She commends Just a Bantu's beauty and reassures her that her makeup looked good. This was in reference to Just a Bantu's sentiments on her makeup looking ashy, she confessed that the makeup had not turned out as she had anticipated.

Wendy_gachara (2023) stated that, "You are gorgeous" while Winrosewanjiku7439 (2023) stated that, "You are beautiful." Geek on Fashion's followers commend her for her beauty.

3.2.4.2.2 Inner beauty

These refer to characteristics such as boldness, vibrance, humour, authenticity, sincerity, politeness and gentleness. These qualities contribute to the SMIs likeability which in turn affect their parasocial relationships with their followers. These themes were evident among the four SMIs; Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa, Just a Bantu and Geek on Fashion.

Misswothayaevalyne24 (2023) stated that, "...You are such a vibe Joanna keeps my mood on..." This implies that Joanna Kinuthia has a likeable personality, she cheers up this follower. Dante-tx9vi (2023) stated that, "...I feel like the past few videos you're hyped, and I love that I really enjoy watching your videos..." This implies that the follower loves her upbeat nature in the last couple of videos, they are drawn to Joanna Kinuthia's personality. Fridahnzomo8638 (2023) stated that, "It's the self-motivation for me "That hair didn't want to stay on my head..." This statement was followed by two laughter emojis, they signify that the remark made by Joanna Kinuthia is funny. Fatmahassan9384 (2023) stated that, "Joanna is just unintentionally funny what do you mean drink water and Jesus" This is in reference to a remark that Joanna Kinuthia made when some women are asked to share their skincare secrets, they state that women should drink water and have a relationship with Jesus. This statement is normally used to avoid giving details about their beauty secrets sometimes out of fear of being judged or other times they just don't want to share their trade secrets. These followers are intrigued by Joanna Kinuthia's humorous nature.

Mutaicherobon6550 (2023) stated that "...Your videos are so relatable...I love Her..." This is in reference to Joanna's self-disclosure on the challenges she has had with her cosmetic business. Asgusheme (2023) stated that, "...Hee,,pause,pause, pausee",,you are so real. For sure those T-shirts are the best..." while Missmutugi (2023) stated that, "...The tshirt. I have a grey one that just refuses to go. Everytime i clean out my closet, it just somehow comes back ..." This follower highlighted that she also had similar challenges, where she was unable to dispose of her grey t shirt. Weightlosjourneywithretha7156 (2023) stated that, "...It was at the point where you showed us that your T shirt has holes that I knew I love you and your channel. Please keep being genuine and bless us with relatable content..." This implies that the follower is drawn to Joanna Kinuthia's sincerity and considers such relatable content as a blessing. Many SMIs share the best parts of their life and only a few are bold enough to share their wardrobe malfunctions.

Gracemaina1840 (2023) stated that, "...Beautiful and kindest soul I have ever met. Very humble. Keep up..." This follower perceives Natalie Tewa as a kind and humble person. Susanabalayo4358 (2023) stated that, "...Natalie you're such a natural babe keep doing you. Cheers to more wins in life!" This follower commends Natalie Tewa's authenticity. This statement implies that Natalie Tewa is real and not faking her lifestyle. Nyanga3827 (2023) stated that,

...very well said Natalie..Hao manyefnyef don't carry half the confidence and grace yet they run to show their insecurities on social media. Wakae parking please..Hawaitajiki..tuwatie kanjo was town wabebwe cause hawasaidi mtu ata kidogo.Kiherehere tu... You are such an inspiration ...love you

This follower stated that those fashion bloggers who criticize SMIs are not as confident or gracious as Natalie Tewa. The follower continues to state that these fashion bloggers should be ignored, in fact they should be arrested by the city council officials for being a nuisance. Biancanyambura7947 (2023) stated that, "... If you see an ever-polite lady ranting just know she has had enough of those bloggers shit....uko tu sawa shiro..." This follower commends Natalie for her polite nature. She acknowledges that fashion bloggers must have forced Natalie to rant online because it is not in her nature to be critical of other people.

Robertkenyanchef (2022) stated that, "...Yay! It's never a dull moment watching your video. My wife doesn't know much about cars, ..." This statement was made by one of Just a Bantu's male followers. This follower admires her bubbly nature and discloses that his wife doesn't know much about cars. This was in reference to the fact that Just a Bantu had taken one of her friends to window shop for a car and she confessed that they did not know much about vehicles. This follower finds her relatable as she shares characteristics with his wife, they all do not know much about vehicles. Tomh9315 (2023) stated that "...You look stunning!!! You cut off your hair with courage and confidence!' This follower acknowledges that Just a Bantu is a confident and courageous person. This is because African women are afraid of cutting their hair. Tin_wanjala (2023) stated that, "...You are so happy, and glowing after cutting..."

User-mx5hp6bf2i (2023) stated that,

...I am just trying to let you know that we come to this channel because of what you show us. For me, as long as the content is an honest rendition of who you are, I will continue to watch and I LIKE your unboxings, that I can't afford the high designer bags but, I enjoy watching so why stop?...

This follower commends Geek on Fashion for being honest about what she presents on her YouTube channel. Although she may not afford the lifestyle that is portrayed, she considers Geek on Fashion's lifestyle as an honest display of her day to day.

3.2.4.3 Expertise

SMIs Followers are also drawn to the SMIs expertise. Followers find SMIs ability to have mastered their craft attractive.

Jaberasami5901 (2023) stated that, "When Nelly talks about perfumes???? I sit down, cross my legs and pay ATTEEEEEENTION.... smelling good is mandatory." This statement implies that Geek on Fashion knows her craft as a beauty influencer; she is well versed with scents. She offers valuable information and so this follower pays attention to her reviews.

3.2.4.4 SMIs content characteristics

SMIs followers are not just drawn by the physical and personalities of the SMI but the kind of content that they produce. Followers are drawn by the quality of the content such as entertaining, inspirational, informational and design qualities. This theme was common among the four SMIs; Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa, Just a Bantu and Geek on Fashion.

Mwendenyaga91 (2023) stated that, "Joanna K you are the OG girl of quality content btw... Your vlogs are entertaining, and worth watching and lively." OG means old guard. It's a term used to refer to individuals that have mastered their craft and perfected it over the years. This follower commended her for the quality of her content. They share that they are drawn to entertaining and lively vlogs. Such entertaining content keeps them coming back for more since it is time well spent.

Interskynairobi9407 (2023) stated that,

Natalia you are the best i like when you show us great place. You really inspired me on traveling thing. I NEVER USED TO GO ANYWHERE before bumped with your channel 2019.

This follower confesses that she is inspired by Natalie Tewa. She shares that Natalie Tewa's trips have inspired her to travel something she did not do prior to following her YouTube channel. There were other followers who also expressed similar sentiments that Natalie Tewa inspired them.

Melissagifts (2023) stated that, "This was one of those subtle but giving content. Absolutely loved this one Tewa." Giving is a slang term used by Kenyans to refer to very good or beautiful. This follower enjoys this content because it is not a forceful but rather relaxed presentation of Natalie Tewa's lifestyle. Lucksonomarii4999 (2023) follower stated that, "With this wonderful content you deserve a million subscribers" This follower commends Natalie Tewa for her content and states that she deserves to become a Gold-mega influencer. Onlylucy2986 (2023) stated that, "finally chill content here we go, wacha kupotea sana." Chill is a slang term that Kenyans use to mean relaxing. This follower commends Natalie Tewa for producing content that is relaxing. Willbullock (2023) follower stated that, "...Great content videos ... need more, please You are always looking so gorgeous and represent your country so well..." This follower commends Natalie for her great content and asks for more. They also commend her for representing Kenya well.

Damslifestyle (2023) stated that, "amazing video thanks for sharing." This was in reference to her video on cutting her hair bald, she shared her challenges on an itchy scalp and her decision to cut her hair. This follower liked this video and is grateful that Just a Bantu shared this content with her audience. Nicolemwanda6785 (2023) stated that, "Nelly please do the unboxings and the reviews as well.... I really enjoy the whole process..." Catherinemutuku2867 (2023) stated that, "Yaaaay to long vlogs ...your content is soo nice I genuinely enjoy every bit." These followers clearly enjoy Geek on Fashion's content. Lydiaquinta5439 (2023) stated that, "Whoop whoop ...yes!! Love the vlog and please yes keep on unboxing we really love it and we get inspired" Geek on Fashions videos are a source of inspiration on the kind of lifestyle that her audiences can have.

Informational fairness refers to the extent to which SMIs share information in an honest and ethical way to their audiences (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Jelagatkoimuri1038 (2023) stated that,

I love your content hun. To crown it, you are my birthday mate. Feel free to show us what you are comfortable with. It's not like you are pushing any brand out there. What I pick from your content is that we can always have everything we want, just not all at once. Thanks for the gift of 54 good minutes. Many hugs.

This follower commends Geek on Fashion for her genuine reviews. She believes that Geek on Fashion is not promoting products but rather displaying items that are a part of her lifestyle. She perceives that Geek on Fashion has shown her audience that they can have anything they want if they plan and work for them. She considers the vlog a gift albeit long. This shows that she values her content.

Information quality refers to the presumed practical and helpful information presented by SMIs and their trustworthiness and notoriety (Caselo et al., 2020; Uzunoglu & Kip, 2014). Information quality is displayed through the creation of images, texts, posts and videos that appeal to social media users displayed on various social media platforms (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Lin et al., 2018). Wacharakibers (2023) stated that,

Your channel is informative and encouraging. When you unboxing and review it helps me make decisions on what to get and how the particular thing performs in our climate conditions especially fragrances. It helps to know how to care for the stuff especially for me who doesn't always read the instructions. It's encouraging you inspire me to buy quality, to be wiser on my spending and to plan and save. Most of all to work hard and live life.

This follower values the information she gets from Geek on Fashion. This information helps her in her purchase decisions since she struggles in reading product instructions. She especially appreciated Geek on Fashion's reviews on perfumes as she gets information on their performance in tropical regions. She has also learned to value making purchases on quality products, the importance of saving, spending money wisely and working hard.

Design quality refers to the perceived coordination and integration of graphics, audio, video and text (Al-Qeisi et al. 2014; Kim et al. 2012). Design quality is presumed to be high when the coordination of posts by SMIs appeals to their followers (Mohammad et al. 2020).

Fionamwende (2023) stated that, “The jet ski bit is absolute dreamy!! Love it.” Dorcasnjuguna3597 (2023) stated that “Drone shots kali sana.” Kali sana is a slang term that means very good or impressive. These two followers are impressed by the drone footage that Natalie shared on the Jet ski shots while in Diani. Meerajbiggie1712 (2023) stated that, “The videography in this is outstanding.” This follower is impressed by the videography as it is well done.

Technology quality refers to functionality, interactivity and user-friendly navigation (Al-Qeisi et al. 2014). One of the concerns held by several Joanna Kinuthia’s followers is that her videos were not downloadable. Lusterknyawira4530 (2023) stated, “I can no longer download your videos joanna what's wrong with you” while Staceyk_1 (2023) asked, “Hey, I can't download your videos.... wassup?” Lynnandife9586 (2023) stated that, “Download button please “I love watching later.” This is because several people watch YouTube from their phones, they download videos when they have access to data or at a location with free Wi-Fi and watch the videos later.

3.2.4.5 Beauty Work

This refers to the beauty practices that are geared towards attaining or maintaining beauty standards. It also involves the use of various beauty products that assist in caring for the hair and skin. It also involves highlighting the price that one must pay in their pursuit of beauty standards such as discomfort, consistency and discipline. These results are similar to the findings of Study 1 where beauty work was the major theme observed in the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty by SMIs.

3.2.4.5.1 Product use

This theme refers to the mention and use of beauty products such as skincare, haircare and perfumes. They include products such as moisturizers, balms, lotions, shampoos, sprays among others. It also includes types of synthetic hair such as temporary dreadlocks, braids, weaves, hair extensions and wigs. This theme was prevalent among three of the SMIs; Joanna Kinuthia, Just a Bantu and Geek on Fashion.

Gakuru_wambui (2023) stated that,

I started using mikala because of you alooong time ago when i started watching your videos till date and i love love it i even influenced my friends my mum we all use mikala products..so Thankyou Joanna

This statement shows how Joanna Kinuthia has influenced this follower's haircare purchases. She has adopted the use of Mikalla hair products, locally produced natural hair products, and has even influenced her friends and family to adopt the use of these products. She also expresses her satisfaction in the use of Mikalla hair products. Bettykago8131 (2023) stated that, "Hi, i started watching this channel kitambo and its good to see that you are still using mikala products." This follower commends Joanna Kinuthia on her consistent use of Mikalla hair products. This goes to show that a part of the beauty work is the consistent use of beauty products to achieve and maintain beauty standards. Mercymbula8653 (2023) stated that, "Joanna, you introduced me to mikalla products back in 2018 and I've never turned back. Their smell is amazing." This follower also uses Mikalla products because of Joanna Kinuthia's product recommendation. She has consistently used the product for over five years and is now a loyal consumer of Mikalla hair products. She mentions that she loves the scent of these products implying that beauty is scented; beauty products should have a great scent. Bbw_anne (2023) stated that, "Jo with the good hair!! I'm two months in with temporary locks heavily influenced by you and I'm tired I want to see how long my hair has grown already." This follower installed temporary dreadlocks because Joanna Kinuthia had the same hairstyle. She is tired of having the dreadlocks even though it's only two months since she installed them, beauty work requires patience, one must endure discomfort to achieve set out beauty goals. The main goal for having the temporary dreadlocks is to grow her hair but she can hardly wait to see the progress that she has made in those two months.

Bbw_anne (2023) stated that, "Have you tried the cera ve facial moisturizer, the one without spf instead of that heavy cera ve ceam on your face." This follower highlights that a part of the beauty work is understanding the best product to help one achieve optimal results. She highlights that using CeraVe facial moisturizer is better than using the CeraVe body moisturizer on the face since it is lighter hence appropriate for facial use. Sunshinegirlleo (2023) stated that, "That's the best moisturizer I've ever used." This follower highlighted that CeraVe moisturizer was the best product they had used. This shows that beauty work involves identifying the right beauty products that meet beauty needs.

Diamond_ee5ti (2023) stated that,

Looking cute, maybe the itching was caused by the synthetic hair or extension. For me personally, my hair itches when I have braids, weaves or other styles with extensions. I can only use specific brands. Or I use anti-itch sprays when I do my hair. If I have matutas or styles with only my natural hair I don't itch. The climate here is like there so it could also be the weather as well.

This follower highlights the effect of wearing synthetic hair. This has forced her to purchase only specific brands and to incorporate anti-itch sprays in her hair routine. She highlights that that she does not experience itching when she wears her hair in its natural state. These statements show that a part of beauty work is understanding the effect of haircare products on one's scalp and taking necessary measures to mitigate these side effects.

Wairimugitau2724 (2023) stated that,

So.. the flaking thing happened to me recently, went on for over 2 months despite all the washing and changing products. Mind you I have locs, so it's harder to get the flakes off my hair. I bought medicated shampoo made specifically for dandruff. Used it twice and the problem ishad! Also, you look good!

This follower also struggled with a flaky scalp even after changing her hair products. She stated that she has dreadlocks and only medicated shampoo meant for removal of dandruff cleared the problem. Bbold5733 (2023) stated that,

Stunning ... I had itchy scalp as well like for a whole year ... I had that unga unga stuff ... tried apple cider, alovera just everything you can find but it didn't work...a friend recommended medicated shampoo and i think its improving i haven't had the itchiness for a while now...am still using the shampoo I hope my scalp heals completely.

This follower also stated that they had struggled with an itchy scalp for one year. She tried different products but none of them worked until she used medicated shampoo. She has seen improvement after using the medicated shampoo. Beauty work is not a passive process, it involves an active engagement of beauty products, one must pursue appropriate haircare products that can mitigate any hair or scalp challenges.

Mokeiramosomi5228 (2023) stated that, “Lipikar Baume is heavily moisturizing! So good.” While Jacquelinesiayaogutu8670 (2023) stated that, “You should try the new Burberry Goddess, vanilla heaven.” These statements imply that beauty work is product centric. It is important for one to invest in a good moisturizer and perfumes.

3.2.4.5.2 Cost of beauty

This theme refers to the price, time and effort that one must invest in attaining and maintaining beauty. This theme was prevalent among two of the SMIs Joanna Kinuthia and Just a Bantu.

Weightlossjourneywithretha7156 (2023) stated that, “I see the discipline body coming through mama. Love it.” This statement shows a recognition of the work that goes into achieving the small waist. In the video Joanna Kinuthia had mentioned that she can now wear crop tops because her abdominal muscles have tightened due to consistent exercises at the gym. This statement also implies the need to have discipline to achieve body goals.

Sharonjemutai506 (2026) followers stated that,

You look so good girl! i love the red lip short hair look on you. I also want to shave because let's be honest staying natural is a lot of work!! And my head itches so much even when i don't use product. This gives me the courage to try cutting mine. I also notice i have lost density at the back of my head and it's looking like stress induced alopecia...so more reason to chop chop.

This follower admits that staying with natural hair is a lot of work. She admits that she has struggled with an itchy scalp and stress-induced alopecia which have motivated her to cut her hair. Beatricengunjiri1415 (2023) stated that, “I understand you Michelle, I had an itchy scalp, and it was so torturous that I had to shave off my hair.” She also stated that she had to cut her hair because of an itchy scalp. Tokyococo6996 (2023) stated that, “Temporary locs make my head itch so bad. Once I had to scratch with a knife. I undid them within 2 months after spending over 10k.” This follower stated that she could not stand an itchy scalp and although she had spent over \$100 on the hair (this quite expensive for some Kenyans this is the cost of their monthly rent or transport) she was forced to uninstall the temporary dreadlocks. This shows that a part of beauty work lies in establishing the most appropriate

hairstyle. Establishing an appropriate hairstyle involves an assessment of the benefits and consequences of each hairstyle.

3.2.4.5.3 Selfcare

This refers to any activity aimed at taking special care of the body. This involves activities such as long shower routines, massage, visit to the spa, manicure, pedicure and exercise. This theme was prevalent among the four SMIs; Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa, Just a Bantu and Geek on Fashion.

Staceyw.6833 (2023) stated that, “Heyy Joanna. I use the same glycolic acid toner, and it says in the instructions to avoid using it on your eye area so you might want to be careful with that. Great video as always.” This follower highlights the need to pay close attention to instructions on product usage. A part of the beauty work involves understanding how to use beauty products for optimum benefits and avoid any negative consequences of product use. This follower highlights that glycolic acid toner may cause damage to the eyes. Kik291 (2023) stated that, “You really are able to eat with braces...it’s literally my 4th day i can't bite well hope it gets better.” This follower highlighted the cost of beauty work. Although braces help to straighten one’s teeth, they make it difficult for one to eat especially immediately after installation.

Jamaaznyaboke9434 (2023) stated that,

Wow I love your attitude to food. Kienyeji ndio mwendo. You do your meatballs like me no eggs and flour. I put mine in the oven then afterwards in the sauce... Welcome to Amsterdam am just next doors.

This follower commends Natalie for having a great attitude towards organic food (*Kienyeji* means organic food). An integral part of beauty work is eating well; organic food is considered healthy food and contributes immensely to taking care of the body. Knowthyself_00 (2023) stated that, “Nice to see you back @Natalie please share your massage therapist contacts, I need that deep massage.” This follower highlights that they need to get a deep massage. In the video Natalie Tewa had mentioned that she finds normal massages relaxing but prefers deep tissue massages. This statement shows that a part of beauty work involves understanding how to take care of the body.

Musevekililian3977 (2023) stated that, “You pull off both looks so effortlessly – with and without hair. You look amazing. And there's something truly special about those bald moments in the shower.” This statement shows that short hair allows women to enjoy washing their head while taking a shower. Cleanliness is an integral part of beauty work.

Jaberasami5901 (2023) stated that, “When Nelly talks about perfumes???? I sit down, cross my legs and pay ATTEEEEEENTION.... smelling good is mandatory.” This statement shows that beauty work involves sitting under good counsel. It is important to invest in understanding different scents because scents are an integral part of beauty work. User-mx5hp6bf2i (2023) stated that, “our face is so clean! I don't if it's the result of using the La Roche Posay products or combination of those Dior and company beauty products, but your face looks super clean.” This follower admires Geek on Fashion’s clean face. This statement shows that a beautiful face is clean. It also shows that cleanliness is achieved using various beauty products. Cleanliness is therefore an integral element of beauty work. P_ke2367 (2023) stated that, “Kindly propose you break in the shoes you will use for the marathon mapema not day of...could end up blistering your foot.” This follower is concerned about Geek on Fashion’s feet. She advises her to wear her new shoes before the marathon to avoid injuring her feet while at the marathon. This statement shows that selfcare is an integral part of beauty work.

3.2.4.5.4 Fashionable

This refers to the ability for one to understand beauty and fashion trends. It also includes an ability to identify niche, expensive and luxurious beauty items. This theme was prevalent among the two SMIs; Natalie Tewa and Geek on Fashion.

Zuzu_40 stated that, “Natalie you're my number 1 content creator. Your fashion sense is 101%. I watch all your vlogs.” This follower considers Natalie Tewa as a fashion-conscious influencer. Lizmwendwa4852 (2023) stated that, “Do you know you are my fashion icon, how many outfits I bought because of u ...gal keep inspiring from Dubai .” This follower also commends Natalie Tewa’s fashion sense. She admits having purchased certain clothes because she was inspired by Natalie Tewa. Maliali (2023) stated that, “Gothic watu wakavaa formally. Ni sawa tu, tushazoea, there's a chance u're the only one who understood the assignment lmao.” This statement means that although the event that these SMIs were invited

to have a Gothic theme, many of them wore formal clothes implying that they did not understand what a Gothic look meant. This follower stated that it is very likely that Natalie Tewa was the only one that understood the Gothic theme. The above statements show that beauty work involves having a fashion sense. This means that one must understand fashion trends.

Gatwirikinyua5694 (2023) stated that,

Nelly!!! I started watching you in my campus days and i remember wishing i could be as sophisticated as you. You have heavily influenced my fashion/how i dress in a feminine way.I look forward to days i will have extra chums to splurge on designer things/ fragrances.

This statement shows that the follower admires Geek on Fashion's lifestyle. She desires to emulate Geek on Fashion's sense of style which involves dressing in a feminine way. Understanding fashion is an integral part of beauty work. Beauty work involves investing in fashionable clothes, designer items and perfumes. Patchdoodie1144 (2023) stated that,

Omg finally a Kenyan who knows Bond!!! You will never go back once you start on Bond fragrances. The real one similar to MFK is Bond -Greenwich Village. I actually think bond is more luxe (and expensive) compared to MFK. I've tried Bond - scent of peace, Madison square garden, Madison park(sweeter), Astor place, and Nomad (smells like rich people lol). I can't wait to see how you continue to explore and love bond fragrances. Very few people know of this line so you will smell like NOONE in Nairobi!

This statement shows that luxurious items are more expensive. An important part of being fashionable is in identifying niche products that are more expensive and luxurious. There are scents that are associated with the rich, and this is a part of beauty work goals. Beauty work involves an exploration of beauty items to identify suitable beauty items.

3.2.4.5.5 Beauty work is not Tacky

This theme refers to the lack of decorum, lacking gentleness, lacking feminine behaviour and exemplifying disorderly behaviour.

Tokyococo6996 (2022) stated that, “Don't overspray YSL Libre. 2 sprays are enough cos it already has a good projection. And not you rubbing your wrists. All in all, love your content girl . Your energy is everything!” This follower highlights that Just a Bantu did not apply her perfume appropriately. She sprayed too much perfume and rubbing her wrists was unnecessary. This goes to show that beauty work is a process that is learned through counsel from other individuals. Although SMIs may have a great personality they may be lacking in certain aspects of beauty work.

Julieouko672 (2022) stated that, “Only you can sneeze as such on camera...Nimechoka na wewe.” This statement was followed by a laughing emoji. Beauty work involves maintaining decorum. This follower was not pleased with Just a Bantu's behaviour; she however found it humorous. Saalyknight8954 (2022) stated that, “the way you were shoving the items inside your bag just get a toilet bag please.” This follower did not like the way Just a Bantu was showing items in her bag and advises her to buy a toiletry bag. This shows that beauty work involves being organized to maintain a neat look. It shows there is a right way to do beauty work by being gentle and feminine.

3.2.5 Discussion

The aim of this study was to establish the perception of beauty among the youth through an analysis of the comments section of the four SMIs: Joanna Kinuthia, Natalie Tewa, Just a Bantu and Geek on Fashion. There were two major themes, parasocial relationships and beauty work.

Parasocial relationships were characterized by an existing relationship between the follower| audience and the SMI that spanned several years (Aw & Labrecque 2020, Dibble et al. 2016; Giles 2002; Nordlund 1978; Horton & Wohl 1956). It also involved a pursuit to seek beauty and lifestyle advice from SMIs, this spanned from counsel on product use, product availability, products cost, make up routines, skincare routines, haircare routines and lifestyle choices such as tips on solo trips. Parasocial relationships are also characterized by friendship and intimacy, although these relationships are illusionary, their followers made a public declaration of their love and a commitment to support their content (Aw & Labrecque 2020; Rubin, Perse & Powell 1985). It also involved feelings of entitlement where followers demanded to know why some videos were no longer downloadable and they felt abandoned

when SMIs did not post content regularly. These remarks were made using strong words and sometimes exaggeration to express their displeasure. Followers also expressed their desire to meet SMIs in person and considered them as role models. SMIs inspire them in fashion and lifestyle choices such as romantic partners.

Beauty is an essential element that enhances parasocial relationships (Ashraf, Hameed & Saeed 2023; Zheng et al. 2022; Lou & Kim 2019; Bond 2018). Beauty was characterized by an analysis of outer beauty, which involved an assessment of the SMIs body, hair, skin, nails and teeth. Beauty was also characterized by an analysis of a SMIs inner beauty, this involved admirable attributes such as boldness, vibrance, humour, authenticity, sincerity, politeness and gentleness (Dimitrov & Kroumpouzos 2023; Stearns 2002; Matiza 2013; Muhammad 1993). These attributes enhance SMIs likeability.

The followers were also keen on evaluating the content characteristics of SMIs videos. Followers were drawn to entertaining and lively videos, inspirational content which spurs them to try out new lifestyle choices such as travelling, cinematic videography, user friendly navigation of their content, honest reviews on products and practical and helpful information on beauty products (Yuan & Lou, 2020, Caselo et al., 2020; Mohammad et al. 2020; Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Lin et al., 2018; Uzunoglu & Kip, 2014; Al-Qeisi et al. 2014; Kim et al. 2012). SMIs content characteristics are also crucial in enhancing parasocial relationships.

Beauty work was characterized by beauty products such as skincare, haircare and perfumes (Samper, Yang & Daniels 2018; Lemperle et al. 2001; Wolf 2013). included balms, moisturizers and lotions while haircare products included temporary dreadlocks, braids, weaves, hair extensions, wigs, shampoos and sprays. The cost of beauty was also noticeable among some followers who applauded SMIs body surveillance efforts and highlighted their challenges with synthetic hair. Although temporary dreadlocks are a protective hairstyle, they sometimes lead to an itchy scalp and are expensive to install (Samper, Yang & Daniels 2018; Chang 2011). Beauty work was also characterized by selfcare which involved the followers' emphasis on careful use of skincare products, healthy eating habits that involved incorporating organic foods into their diet and an emphasis on cleanliness. These three

elements of beauty work; beauty products, cost of beauty and self-care were like the findings of Study 1. An essential element of beauty work is understanding beauty and fashion trends, it also involves identifying niche products that are more expensive and luxurious. Lastly, beauty work involves maintaining decorum, displaying gentleness and a disdain for disorderly behaviour.

3.3 STUDY 3

This study sought to examine the following research questions:

RQ3. To what extent do parasocial relationships mediate the impact of body shame on purchase intention?

RQ4. To what extent does benign and malicious envy mediate the effect of appearance control beliefs and broad conceptualization of beauty on purchase intention?

This study employed an online survey distributed through WhatsApp groups, LinkedIn, TikTok and Instagram. 201 participants completed the survey. This study employed five well established scales: Parasocial Interaction scale (Rubin et al. 1985), Dispositional Envy Scale (Lange & Cruisius 2015), Purchase intention scale (Spears & Singh 2004). The Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBC; McKinley & Hyde 1996) and Broad Conceptualization of Beauty Scale (BCBS; Tylka & Iannantuono 2016). Mediation analysis using SPSS was carried out to establish the mediating effects of Parasocial relationships, Benign envy, Malicious envy, Body shame, Appearance control beliefs and Broad conceptualization of beauty on Purchase intention research method.

3.3.1 Methodology

3.3.1.1 Participants and procedures

This study employed an online survey which were shared through various WhatsApp groups, LinkedIn, TikTok and Instagram. The target sample were females of African descent that followed SMIs. Research participants had to indicate whether they followed any SMIs and highlight the name or Instagram handle of their favorite SMIs. Participants that did not follow any SMIs or did not indicate the name of their favorite SMIS were excluded from the study. A total of 245 participants filled in the survey, 44 participants were excluded from the study

because they did not finish the survey, the final sample was 201. Most of the research participants were between 25-34 years of age, single and pursuing their undergraduate studies. These details are shown in the tables below.

Table 4: Age of research participants

Age	No	Percentage
18-24	43	17.5
25-34	117	47.6
35-44	76	30.9
45-54	7	2.8
55-64	1	.4
65+	1	.4

Table 5: Education of research participants

Education level	No	Percentage
High school diploma	16	6.5
Undergraduate	150	61
Postgraduate- Masters	73	29.7
Postgraduate -PhD	6	2.4

Table 6: Marital status of research participants

Marital status	No	Percentage
Single	152	61.8
Married	73	29.7

Divorced	4	1.6
Separated	6	2.4
Widowed	2	.8
Domestic partnership	7	2.8
Prefer not to say	1	.4

3.3.1.2 Measurement

This study employed five well established scales detailed below, the response scale was a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 as strongly disagree and 7 as strongly agree. The scales can be found in Appendix 2. Questions were randomized on how they appear within each block, and how blocks appeared. Filler questions were set in the middle and end of the survey to check the respondent's attention.

- 1) The Parasocial Interaction scale (Rubin et al. 1985) is a 10-item scale. This scale evaluates the extent of the parasocial relationship between SMIs and their followers. Items adopted ranged from having a personal connection, desire to meet SMIs, how they feel about SMIs and mimicking behavior. Given the excellent reliability of the scale (α .88), the means of the items were calculated to create a single variable for Parasocial relationship, the mean score was 4.41.
- 2) Dispositional Envy Scale (Lange & Cruisius 2015) is a 10-item scale, only nine items were adopted. This scale evaluates the level of envy that followers have of their SMIs. There are two types of envy: benign and malicious.
 - i. Items on benign envy are inclined towards positive feelings towards SMIs such as, *If I notice that my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer is better than me, I try to improve myself and I strive to reach my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer's superior achievements* among others. Given that the scale has a good reliability of (α .79), the means of the items were calculated to create a single variable for Benign envy; the mean score was 3.75.

- ii. Items of malicious envy indicate hostile behaviour. Some of these items are *I wish that my favorite beauty/ lifestyle influencer loses her beauty & financial advantage* and *seeing my favorite beauty/ lifestyle influencer's achievements makes me resent them among others*. Given the excellent reliability of the scale (α .88), the means of the items were calculated to create a single variable for Malicious envy; the mean score was 1.58.
- 3) Purchase intention scale (Spears & Singh 2004). Three items of the scale were adopted and tailored them to assess beauty products (*skincare, hair care & perfumes*), clothing, shoes, handbags and accessories. Given the excellent reliability of the scale (α .91), the means of the items were calculated to create a single variable for purchase intention; the mean score was 4.38.
- These items are as follows:
- i. *I would definitely order the beauty (skincare, hair care & perfumes/ clothing, shoes & accessories) products that my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer uses.*
 - ii. *I definitely intend to buy the beauty (skincare, hair care & perfumes / clothing, shoes & accessories) products that my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer uses.*
 - iii. *I have a very high purchase interest in the beauty (skincare, hair care & perfumes / clothing, shoes & accessories) products that my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer uses.*
- 4) The Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBC; McKinley & Hyde 1996). This a 24 -item scale that evaluates how people especially, women look at their bodies especially in relation to societal standards. For this study, only the results of two scales: Body shame and appearance control beliefs were used.
- i. **Body shame-** This scale assesses feelings of inadequacy when the body doesn't meet societal expectations. This scale has eight items, some of the items are *I never worry that something is wrong with me when I am not exercising as much as I should** and *even when I can't control my weight, I think I am an okay person ** among others. Given that the scale has a good reliability of (α .72), the means of the items were calculated to create a single variable for body shame; the mean score was 3.45. Scoring was reversed for the afore mentioned items.

ii. **Appearance control beliefs-** The belief that one can control one's appearance. This scale has eight items. Some of these items are as follows; *I think a person can look pretty much how they want to if they are willing to work at it* and *I can weigh what I'm supposed to when I try hard enough* among others. Given that the scale has an acceptable reliability of (α .65), the means of the items were calculated to create a single variable for body shame; the mean score was 4.06. The scoring of six items in this scale was reversed.

5) Broad Conceptualization of Beauty Scale (BCBS; Tylka & Iannantuono 2016). This is an 8-item scale that assesses an individual's beliefs that may not necessarily be reflected by other people in society. All the items in this scale were adopted, some of the items are *A woman's confidence level can change my perception of her physical beauty*, and *I appreciate a wide range of different looks as beautiful among other among others*. Given that the scale has an acceptable reliability of (α .51), the means of the items were calculated to create a single variable for broad conceptualization of beauty; the mean score was 5.54. The scoring for one item was reversed; *I think that thin women are more beautiful than women who have other body types**.

3.3.1.3 Reliability of the survey

Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach Alpha coefficient, the minimal consistency coefficient is .70 (Whitley 2002; Robinson 2009). The survey had an internal consistency of .818, which indicates reliable and consistent scales were used.

3.3.1.4 Ethical Considerations

The survey embodied seven psychometric scales but only five scales were relevant for this study and some of the scales have the potential to cause emotional distress. This study espoused the following measures to mitigate potential emotional distress:

- 1) A statement in the Information and Consent form alerting the research participants that several questions in the survey had potential to cause emotional distress and emphasized that participants could drop out of the survey at any point without being penalized for doing so.

- 2) Trigger warnings in the sections with sensitive topics, dispositional envy and objectified body consciousness.
- 3) Contacts for mental health facilities where research participants could get free counselling services if any of the survey questions caused distress.

The objective of the survey was highlighted in the information and conclusion sections of the survey. The study sought to understand the relationship between the research participants and SMIs. This ensured that participants were clearly informed on the goal of the study. A consent form was attached at the beginning of the survey and clearly stated there was no monetary compensation and research participants were free to withdraw from the study at any point without suffering any consequences. All the data gathered for this study was stored in my laptop and google drive. Data was made available to my supervisors and research assistants. The research assistants signed a confidentiality agreement prior to undertaking data analysis. No names or identification has been included that could link the results to any research participant in this study. Results of this study shall be published in this dissertation and peer reviewed journals. The findings shall also be shared with the scientific community upon reasonable request.

3.3.2 Results

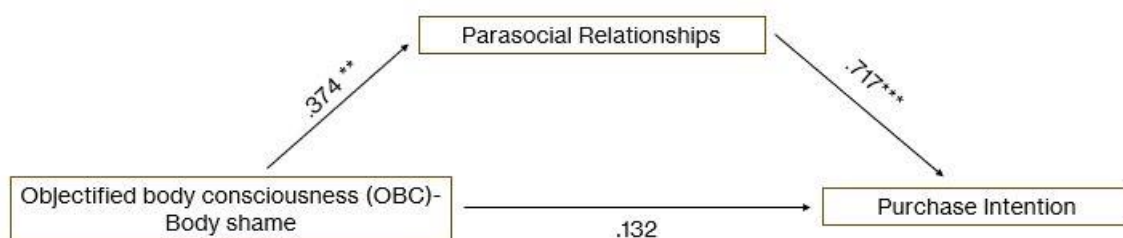


Figure 13: Model on the mediating effect of parasocial relationships on the influence of body shame on purchase intention.

A mediation analysis was conducted using SPSS Process Macro Model 4 with OBC- body shame, Parasocial relationships and Purchase intentions (Hayes, 2013). The method used 5000 bootstrapped samples to estimate the accelerated confidence intervals. The regression coefficient between OBC-body shame and parasocial relationships was (β .374) indicating that higher body shame is strongly related to parasocial relationships with SMIs. The regression coefficient between parasocial relationships and purchase intention was (β .717) indicating that stronger parasocial relationships are related to higher purchase intentions. The direct effect of OBC- Body shame on purchase intention (β = .132) is not significant, with a 95% (CI) it includes a zero [-.034, .298]. The results revealed that the indirect effect (β = .268, SE = .059) of Parasocial relationships was significant, with a 95% (CI) excluding zero [.154, .388]. These results signify full mediation. The influence of OBC-Body shame on purchase intention is conveyed through parasocial relationships.

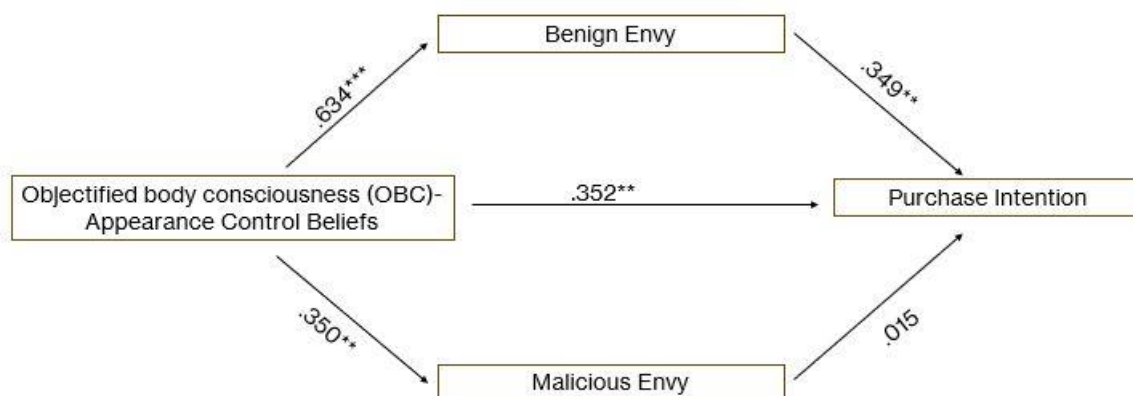


Figure 14: Model on the mediating effect of benign & malicious envy on the influence of OBC-Appearance control beliefs on purchase intention.

A parallel mediation analysis was conducted using SPSS Process Macro Model 4 with OBC-appearance control beliefs, benign envy, malicious envy and purchase intentions (Hayes, 2013). The method used 5000 bootstrapped samples to estimate the accelerated confidence intervals. The regression coefficient between OBC-appearance control beliefs and benign envy was (β .634). The regression coefficient between OBC-appearance control beliefs and malicious envy was (β .350). These results indicate that appearance control beliefs are

strongly associated with benign envy than with malicious envy. The regression coefficient between benign envy and purchase intentions was (β .349), the relationship is significant, with 95% (CI) excluding zero [.229, .469]. On the other hand, the regression coefficient between malicious envy and purchase intentions was (β .015), the relationship is not significant, with a 95% (CI) including a zero [-.1661, .196]. These results signify that purchase intentions are strongly associated with benign envy and not malicious envy. The direct effect of OBC- appearance control beliefs on purchase intention (β .352) was not significant with a 95% (CI) excluding zero [.149, .552]. The result revealed that the indirect effect (β = .221, SE = .060) of benign envy was significant, since with a 95% (CI) it excluded zero [.112, .351]. However, the indirect effect (β = .005, SE = .026) of malicious envy was not significant, since with a 95% (CI) it included zero [-.043, .065]. These results signify partial mediation through benign envy.

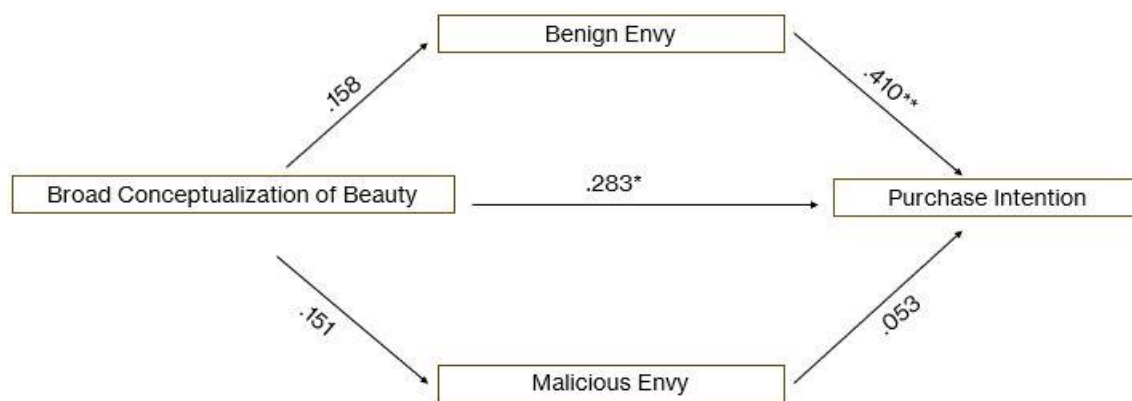


Figure 15: Model on the mediating effect of benign & malicious envy on the influence of Broad conceptualization of beauty on purchase intention.

A parallel mediation analysis was conducted using SPSS Process Macro Model 4 with broad conceptualization of beauty, benign envy, malicious envy and purchase intentions (Hayes, 2013). The method used 5000 bootstrapped samples to estimate the accelerated confidence intervals. The regression coefficient between broad conceptualization of beauty and benign envy was (β .158). The regression coefficient between broad conceptualization of beauty and Malicious envy was (β .151). These results indicate that broad conceptualization of beauty is

not associated with envy. The regression coefficient between benign envy and purchase intentions was (β .410), the relationship was significant with a 95% (CI) excluding zero [.291, .529]. The regression coefficient between malicious envy and purchase intentions was (β .053), the relationship is not significant with a 95% (CI) includes zero [-.131, .238]. The results revealed that the indirect effect (β = .065, SE = .076) of benign envy was not significant, since with a 95% (CI) it included zero [-.076, .226]. The indirect effect (β = .008, SE = .018) of malicious envy was also not significant, since with a 95% confidence interval (CI) it included zero [-.023, .052]. These results indicate that there is no mediation.

3.3.3 Discussion

The results indicate that OBC-body shame is strongly associated with parasocial relationships. Parasocial relationships are also strongly associated with purchase intentions. These results corroborate the findings of Sokolova & Kefi (2020) and Hwang & Zhang (2018) whose studies found a strong association between parasocial relationships and follower purchase intentions. The direct effect of OBC- body shame on purchase intentions was not significant. Previous studies have found conflicting results on the effect of body shame on purchase intention. Studies by Rieke et al. (2016) and Rosa (2008) found that individuals with a high body appreciation had a high purchase intention thereby implying that individuals with body shame would have a lower purchase intention. On the other hand, studies by Wang & Sun & Liao (2022) and Azavedo et al. (2023) found individuals with a negative body image had a higher purchase intention of accessories and compulsive shopping of cosmetic products, beauty treatments and luxury products respectively. The results also indicate that parasocial relationships fully mediate the relationship between OBC-body shame and purchase intentions. This means that as OBC-body shame increases, parasocial relationships strengthen which in turn influences purchase intentions.

Previous studies found that social media users are most likely to experience benign envy than malicious envy (Lin and Utz, 2015). The findings indicate that OBC- appearance control beliefs are strongly associated with benign envy and not malicious envy. These results corroborate the findings of Briki (2019), who found that individuals are more likely to feel malicious envy when they feel they are not in control over their external and internal state. When individuals feel they are in control of how their body looks, they are more likely to

experience benign envy. Results indicate that benign envy is strongly associated with purchase intentions similar to previous findings (Jungyi, 2022; Singh & Ang 2021; Lin 2018; Ahn et al. 2018; Crusius & Lange 2014; van de Ven, Zeelenberg, and Pieters 2009; Smith & Kim 2007). Appearance control beliefs are associated with higher purchase intentions. The indirect effect of OBC- appearance control beliefs on purchase intention is partially mediated through benign envy. The higher the appearance control beliefs the higher the benign envy which in turn affects purchase intention.

Results indicate that broad conceptualization of beauty is not associated with envy. This indicates that individuals who consider varied body sizes and looks beautiful feel less envious. The effect of broad conceptualization of beauty on purchase intentions is not mediated by envy. This may be explained by the fact that women who have a broad conceptualization of beauty engage in fewer upward comparisons and have a higher body appreciation therefore do not struggle with envy (Rousseau 2024; Manning & Mulgrew 2022). Since they are less envious of other women, they are unlikely to engage less in purchases so as to increase social desirability (Tylka & Iannantuono 2016).

4. GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research adopted three studies to assess the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty by SMIs, perception of the youth on Afro-Occidental beauty ideals portrayed by SMIs and the effect of body shame, parasocial relationships, appearance control beliefs, benign envy, malicious envy and broad conceptualization of beauty on purchase intention of beauty products. Study 1 examined the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty by SMIs through content analysis of YouTube videos produced between 2022 and 2023 while study 2 assessed the perception of the youth on Afro-Occidental beauty ideals portrayed in these videos. Beauty work was a common theme in how Afro-Occidental beauty is portrayed by SMIs and perceived by the youth although the characteristics of beauty work differed slightly.

Study 1 and 2 found that beauty work was characterized by selfcare, product centric and its costly. The society encourages women to discipline their bodies through selfcare which is characterised by cosmetic use, skincare, haircare and other ritualistic beauty practices

(Samper, Yang & Daniels 2018; Wolf 2013; Lemperle et al. 2001; Wolf 2013). SMIs exemplified selfcare practices through shower routines, haircare, skincare and dieting. An interesting finding is SMIs obsession with cleanliness as a selfcare practice. It is evident from this research that achieving beauty requires the use of beauty products irrespective of the cost (Samper, Yang & Daniels 2018; Chang 2011) and physical effects, social approval outweighs any negative consequences of their use (Kwan & Trautner, 2009). Haircare products were locally manufactured while other skincare and body care products were from international brands. Beauty work was characterised by effort, and it was a time-consuming exercise (Samper, Yang & Daniels 2018; Chang 2011). This was exemplified through long hours spent at the salon, dedicated time for exercise, expensive skincare, haircare and designer products that ranged from \$20 to \$800.

There were some differences in how SMIs portrayed Afro-Occidental beauty and how the youth perceived these beauty ideals. SMIs emphasised body surveillance which was characterised by dieting, portion control, intermittent fasting and regular exercises aimed at weight management and weight loss. This was consistent with previous studies that found that the media propagates body regulation through exercise, diets, makeup and clothing aimed at emulating societal expectations (Bordo 2004). Physical outcome expectancies portrayed serve as motivators for the adoption of beauty practices (Simpson and Mazzeo 2017; Willis and Knobloch-Westerwick 2014; Bandura 1999). However, the youth did not perceive this as an important element of beauty work.

SMIs also emphasised the pursuit for perfection such as achieving an even skin tone, straight teeth and flawless skin as an essential part of beauty work (Simpson and Mazzeo 2017; Willis and Knobloch-Westerwick 2014; Bandura 1999). This research found additional elements on the pursuit for perfection which include wearing makeup and using skincare products that hydrate the skin and remove blemishes. These are essential elements of attaining and maintaining youthfulness (Aharoni & Ayalon 2024; Kwan & Trautner 2009; Gimli, 2002; Robbins 2001; Hayman 1996). However, the youth did not pay significant attention to this element as an essential part of beauty work. This research also shows that there is a departure from an emphasis on beauty work in haircare practices among Kenyan SMIs, the belief is that haircare practices should be stress free. This was however not a significant element of beauty

work for SMIs followers. Lastly, SMIs emphasised wearing minimalist jewellery however the youth did not pay significant attention to this element as an essential part of beauty work.

In study 2, the findings show that the youth perceive beauty work to be characterised by a taste for fashion and niche products that are luxurious and expensive. Beauty work was also characterised by maintaining decorum, displaying gentleness and a disdain for disorderly behaviour. However, these are not elements that SMIs emphasised as integral elements of beauty work.

The findings of Study 2 indicate that parasocial relationships are critical in influencing SMIs follower purchase intentions. SMIs likeability is affected by their perceived outer and inner beauty (Otieno 2023; Onyango 2022; Kaziga et al. 2021; Thomas, 2019; Njiofor 2018; Ibanga 2017; Boepple & Thompson 2016; Awad et al. 2015; Matiza 2013; Overstreet et al., 2010; Stearns 2002). SMIs content characteristics such as cinematic videography, user friendly navigation of their content, honest reviews on products and practical and helpful information on beauty products are also crucial in enhancing parasocial relationships (Yuan & Lou, 2020, Caselo et al., 2020; Mohammad et al. 2020; Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Lin et al., 2018; Uzunoglu & Kip, 2014; Al-Qeisi et al. 2014; Kim et al. 2012). Therefore, inner and outer beauty and SMIs characteristics may influence purchase intention although this requires further investigation.

Since SMIs represent idealised beauty standards, their followers compare themselves to them which could lead to feelings of body shame (Klier, Rommerskirchen & Brixius 2022). The findings of Study 3 show that body shame is strongly associated with parasocial relationships since an increase in body shame strengthens parasocial relationships. In turn parasocial relationships contribute significantly to purchase intentions (Azavedo et al. 2023; Wang & Sun & Liao 2022). Parasocial relationships lead to social comparison between SMIs and their followers and this leads to envy; benign envy acts as tool for motivation on the adoption of beauty practices (Crusius & Lange 2014; Crusius & Mussweiler 2012; Van de Ven Zeelenberg, & Pieters 2011c; Schaubroeck & Lam 2004) while malicious envy leads to harmful and hostile behaviour (Duffy et al. 2012). On the other hand, malicious envy is experienced by individuals who feel they are not in control of their appearance (Briki 2019). This research confirms that individuals who feel they have control over how their body looks

are more likely to feel benign envy (Briki 2019) which in turn positively influences customer purchase intentions (Jungyi, 2022; Singh & Ang 2021; Lin 2018; Ahn et al. 2018; Crusius & Lange 2014; van de Ven, Zeelenberg and Pieters 2009; Smith & Kim 2007). Lastly individuals who appreciate diverse body shapes and body weight as beautiful do not struggle with upward comparison which in turn leads to a decrease in purchase intentions (Rousseau 2024; Manning & Mulgrew 2022; Tylka & Iannantuono 2016).

5. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY AND AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

This study adds to the body of work on Beauty work. Elements of Beauty work such as the cost of beauty, body surveillance and a pursuit for perfection have previously received attention in literature (Aharoni & Ayalon 2024; Isaac, Agordah, & Nehemiah 2024; Samper, Yang & Daniels 2018; Hayes 2017; Chang 2011; Onwachi-Willig 2010; Kwan & Trautner 2009; Bellinger 2007; Gimli, 2002; Robbins 2001; Hayman 1996). This research found that beauty work hinges on beauty products use. This is an important element that fuels the growth of the beauty industry and influencer marketing. Social comparison contributes to the desire to own the displayed beauty products and encourages SMIs followers to purchase these beauty products. One of the concerns with haircare products is the effect of synthetic hair on women's scalp, some of which are flaking and alopecia. We need further investigation into beauty products' safety and consumer protection especially in the Sub-Saharan region. It is sometimes difficult for women in Sub Saharan region to identify genuine from fake beauty products due to the proliferation of product imitations in the market. Further studies could also focus on the integration of exotic and natural ingredients as beauty products, commonly used by Cushite communities in Africa and some Asian countries. Since beauty work hinges on product use it encourages materialism, this could eventually have dire effects not just financially but also emotionally. Overdependence on beauty products could also lead to addiction to cosmetic use and further increase body dissatisfaction.

It is evident that beauty work is time consuming and an expensive venture, future studies could investigate the possible effects of beauty work on women's wellbeing. Future studies could also develop a beauty work measurement scale that would help women identify the

extent to which they are immersed in beauty work. This would be aimed at helping women identify that they need help or they need to slow down on beauty work to mitigate its effect on their overall wellbeing.

Selfcare, which involves regular maintenance practices, needs further investigation. Elements of beauty work such as cleanliness a sub theme of selfcare, minimalistic accessories and the need to have stress free hair practices for women of African descent are an addition to the study on beauty work.

Cleanliness is cultural, a glimpse at social media reveals differences in cleanliness practices across different communities. For example, on TikTok, we have #BlackTok where women of African descent share elaborate shower routines which are an integral element of beauty work. Other areas of future research include evaluating beauty work across different communities to identify differences in the conceptualization of selfcare, fashionable and feminine behaviour. Secondly the reconceptualization of ageist beauty among older SMIs. This study focused only on female millennial SMIs, however there is a rise in the number of international Gen X and older SMIs (@Carla Rockmore, @Marti_7447, @Baddie Betty, @Roz Kaur, @Ironmom40). These studies should broaden the research to include male SMIs, for example on TikTok we have male SMIs in their fifties and sixties known as the Silver Foxes.

Study 2 adds to the body of work on parasocial relationships. It provides evidence on elements that characterize parasocial relationships. Elements such as long-lasting relationships between SMIs and their followers, desire to meet the SMI, SMIs as a role model, friendship and intimacy have previously been addressed in literature (Aw & Labrecque 2020, Dibble et al. 2016; Giles 2002; Rubin, Perse & Powell 1985; Nordlund 1978; Horton & Wohl 1956). However, elements such as seeking counsel and feelings of entitlement are a great addition to deepening the understanding of parasocial relationships. Future studies should evaluate the effect and role of these characteristics of parasocial relationships in the adoption of beauty practices such as cosmetic surgery and other exotic beauty practices. Attractiveness and expertise are characteristics that play a crucial role in the adoption of certain behaviour such as purchase intention, among others. This study highlights

that an assessment of a SMIs attractiveness should go beyond simply evaluating outer beauty but involve an assessment of inner beauty since this also affects parasocial relationships and in turn affects adoption of behaviour. This study also adds to the body of work on SMIs content characteristics (Mohammad et al. 2020; Caselo et al., 2020; Yuan & Lou, 2020; Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Lin et al., 2018; Uzunoglu & Kip, 2014; Al-Qeisi et al. 2014; Kim et al. 2012) which are also crucial in deepening parasocial relationships. Future studies should evaluate the role of SMIs content characteristics in the adoption of fashion trends and beauty practices such as skincare, haircare, and body care.

Study 3 adds to the body of work on influencer marketing. Previous studies have found that parasocial relationships are strongly associated with higher purchase intentions of endorsed products (Sokolova & Kefi 2020; Hwang & Zhang 2018). The results of this study corroborate the afore-mentioned findings indicating that higher parasocial relationships are associated with higher purchase intentions. The results also indicate that parasocial relationships fully mediate the effect of OBC-body shame on purchase intention. As OBC-body shame increases, parasocial relationships strengthen which in turn influences purchase intentions. These results indicate the significant role of SMIs on their followers and audience.

It is evident that with the proliferation of beauty content in the media this leads to an upward comparison (Seekis 2023; Alfonso-Fuertes 2023). Upward comparison leads to development of envious feelings whether benign or malicious (Crusius & Lange 2014; Van de Ven et al. 2011c; Duffy et al. 2012; Schaubroeck & Lam 2004; Salovey & Rodin 1984). This study found supporting evidence on the association between envy and purchase intention similar to previous findings (Jungyi, 2022; Singh & Ang 2021; Lin 2018; Ahn et al. 2018; Crusius & Lange 2014; van de Ven, Zeelenberg, and Pieters 2009; Smith & Kim 2007). The study hypothesized that benign and malicious envy would mediate the effect of OBC-appearance control beliefs on purchase intentions. The results indicate that there is a partial mediation effect of OBC-Appearance control beliefs on purchase intention through benign envy. Individuals who feel they are in control of their body and looks do not struggle with malicious envy as much as those who struggle with feelings of being out of control (Briki 2019; Korte 2015). Therefore, benign envy increases with an increase in OBC-Appearance control beliefs which in turn positively influences purchase intention.

Study 3 hypothesized that benign and malicious envy would mediate the influence of broad conceptualization of beauty on purchase intentions. The results indicate that benign and malicious envy do not mediate the effect of broad conceptualization of beauty on purchase intention. This is because women who have a broad conceptualization of beauty, view diverse bodies and looks as beautiful they struggle less with upward comparison which in turn leads to less envious feelings and less purchase intention (Rousseau 2024; Manning & Mulgrew 2022; Tylka & Iannantuono 2016). Previous studies investigated the perception of beauty through a psychometric evaluation of broad conceptualization of beauty (Behrend & Warschburger 2025; Modica, DiLillo & Swarmi 2023; Junqueira et al. 2021; Tylka & Iannantuono 2016), the moderating effect of broad conceptualization of beauty on body positive content (Manning & Mulgrew 2022) and the effect of broad conceptualization on upward comparison, body surveillance and body appreciation (Rousseau 2024).

6. NOVELTY OF THE STUDY

There has been limited research on beauty in Sub Saharan Africa, this study goes a long way in addressing this gap. Although the nature of African tradition is mainly passed down orally, social media plays a crucial role in providing research material that help in the furtherance of beauty studies in the African continent. Some of the beauty practices are a part of African women lived experiences but quite foreign to the rest of the world. This study provided a glimpse into the portrayal of Afro-Occidental beauty, a term coined after careful investigation of literature and the beauty practices of African women in modern day. The first step lay in developing a code book for Afro-Occidental beauty, the first of its kind, to the best of my knowledge. The Afro-Occidental codebook, a methodological innovation, was developed using the framework provided by (Guest et al. 2012). This code book can be used by other researchers as a guide to develop beauty codebooks for other regions such as the Asia Pacific and Latin America. This is a great addition to the body of work on beauty studies because it provides digital African print that can be referenced in future studies. Previously most studies had been done in North America and the conceptualization of beauty among African American women (Teteh et al. 2017; Byrd 2015; Bryd & Tharps 2014; Capodilupo & Kim,

2014; Bryant, 2013; Awad et al. 2015; Gordon et al. 2010; Overstreet et al., 2010) are heavily influenced by racism which is not necessarily the case for African women.

The study also adds to the body of work on beauty work. This area of study is still developing and with the changes in beauty practices globally we need more studies in this area. It was also evident that irrespective of how loosely or closely one inclined to Afrocentric or Occidental beauty, beauty work is inescapable. There is a price attached to achieving and maintaining beauty (Samper, Yang & Daniels 2018; Chang 2011). This is an important addition to beauty studies as it shows the need to evaluate the effect of beauty work on women. It is evident that beauty work will eventually have physical, emotional, social and financial implications hence affecting women's general well-being.

This study adds to the body of work on parasocial relationships. Attractiveness plays a crucial role in strengthening parasocial relationships (Ashraf, Hameed & Saeed 2023; Zheng et al. 2022; Lou & Kim 2019; Bond 2018). These studies only focused on external beauty when they assessed attractiveness. The current study found that internal beauty is also an important element that strengthens parasocial relationships. Therefore, attractiveness should be redefined to include internal and external beauty.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research has various limitations; Studies 1 and 2 only incorporated videos from four SMIs. However, their diversity offers a comprehensive picture on Afro-Occidental beauty as they all lie at different points in the Afro-Occidental beauty pendulum. Secondly, these studies only assessed beauty and lifestyle videos with the highest number of views published between 2022 and 2023, videos produced after this period have not been included in this study. These studies also focused on videos produced on YouTube only, however, there are beauty videos on TikTok that could be a great addition to the study of beauty work.

The total number of comments assessed for Study 2 were 419, although this is a considerable amount of data it's less than 10% of the SMIs viewership. It is evident that although many viewers watch, they do not necessarily make comments on these videos. This therefore necessitated a third study to deepen the understanding of the effect of parasocial relationships

and body shame on purchase intention, the effect of appearance control beliefs on envy and purchase intention and lastly the effect of broad conceptualization of beauty on envy and purchase intention.

The effect of a long survey on mental fatigue of respondents cannot be ignored. The survey used for study 3 was quite long, however there were measures to mitigate this such as randomizing questions within the blocks and adding filler questions to test the participants' concentration. The study also employed convenience sampling to identify research participants, these results cannot be generalized to all the followers of SMIs. The study had a relatively low sample, only 201 finished the survey, some of the contributing factors to this was the length of the survey and the SMIs unwillingness to distribute the survey to their followers. Since this is a correlation study, it does not establish the cause and effect but rather highlights significance of relationships between variables. The survey was self-administered, which may lead to biased responses as respondents answer questions with the intention of being socially desirable. This study also only focused on female respondents of African descent; future studies should include African male participants. Studies can investigate the perception of male beauty, the effect of parasocial relationships and appearance control beliefs on body shame, body surveillance and purchase intentions among men. Studies can investigate the feminization of muscular beauty, where body surveillance trends on social media are pushing exercises for men and women that enlarge their buttocks. Studies can also investigate the adoption of cosmetic surgeries among men; we now see a rise in hair transplants and limb elongation among men. Lastly, studies can also investigate the reconceptualization of beauty among minority groups for example, we have a trend on TikTok called '*Ginger is the new Black also known as Orange is the new Black*'. This trend recognizes the challenges of Caucasian men and women with Ginger coloured hair, their marginalization and challenges our understanding of Occidental beauty.

8. CONCLUSION

The investigation of Afro-Occidental beauty standards among the youth highlights the significant role of SMIs in the conceptualization and internalization of ideal beauty standards. This research demonstrates that women of African descent conceptualize beauty as a continuum with an adoption of both Afrocentric and Occidental beauty practices. Beauty

work is an integral element of Afro-Occidental beauty standards. It is often characterised by effort and ritualistic beauty practices that are time consuming and expensive. The research expanded the definition of beauty work to include cultural nuances such as an obsession with cleanliness as a part of selfcare and the quest for stress free haircare practices such as short hair, braids and temporary dreadlocks. SMIs portray Afro-Occidental beauty as synchronous with body surveillance which is characterised by constant focus on physical appearance and discipline through stringent exercise. This is consistent with the objectification theory, and more so objectified body consciousness, where people perceive their physical bodies as objects that require surveillance and perfecting.

This research also underscores the significant role of parasocial relationships among SMIs followers. Although this is a one-sided illusionary relationship it contributes to the internalization of ideal beauty standards. Parasocial relationships are characterised by long lasting relationships between followers and SMIs, SMIs as a source of beauty and lifestyle advice, friendship and intimacy, a desire to meet SMI and feelings of entitlement. SMIs content characteristics such as the entertaining, inspirational, informational nature and cinematography also play a crucial role in enhancing parasocial relationships. Results from the survey establish that parasocial relationships fully mediate the effect of body shame on purchase intention. This means that as OBC-body shame increases, parasocial relationships strengthen which in turn influences purchase intentions.

Parasocial relationships also lead to upward comparison of the youth with SMIs which eventually leads to envy; malicious or benign. Benign envy acts as a motivational tool for self-improvement and is more powerful at driving consumer purchase behaviour than malicious envy. The higher the appearance control beliefs the higher the benign envy which in turn affects consumer purchase intention. On the other hand, individuals with a broad conceptualization of beauty engage in fewer upward comparisons, they have a higher body appreciation therefore do not struggle with envy and hence engage less in purchases.

This study therefore underscores the significance of social media in the internalization and perpetuation of beauty ideals. SMIs are significant conduits for these beauty ideals. Afro-Occidental beauty is characterised by extensive beauty work and parasocial relationships are potent in influencing consumer purchase intentions.

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Appendix 1: Codebooks

STUDY 1

Table 7: Afro-Occidental Beauty (Beauty Work)

Beauty Work								
Code Label	Body surveillance [BS]	Cleanliness [CL]	Pursuit for perfection [PFP]	Scented [SCT]	Self-care [SC]	Expensive Pricey	Stress free [SF]	Minimalist [MIN]
Short Definition	Constant focus on physical appearance.	State of being dirt free.	Free from faults defects.	Pleasant smell	Looking after the body	High price costing a lot of money or <u>taking</u> a long time.	Hair that is easy to manage.	Moderate use of accessories.
Full Definition	This refers to the constant and habitual monitoring of the body through activities such as exercise and dieting aimed at weight loss or weight management.	This refers to all activities aimed at keeping the body clean. It involves showering and washing different parts of the body such as the hair. It involves the use of specific products to ensure cleanliness	This refers to a quest or desire to ensure that the body is free from imperfections such as pimples, marks, discolourization, uneven skin tones, aging, fine lines and crooked or discoloured teeth. It involves a pursuit for youthful looks such as clear, hydrated [also known as plumping up the skin] smooth and	This refers to the use of any products [<i>oils, lotions, perfumes, deodorants, body sprays, body splash and soaps</i>] to remove body odour and achieve a desirable scent.	This refers to any activity aimed at taking special care of the body. This involves activities such as long shower routines, massage, visit to the spa,	This refers to any activity that is tedious, pricey, <u>time-consuming</u> aimed at maintaining and/or improving an individual's physical appearance. It also refers to the cost of purchasing or investing in beauty products, clothing, shoes, accessories, hair and handbags.	This refers to hair that is painless, easy to manage, <u>does not</u> take too long to have it plaited or taken care of. This includes activities such as chemical treatments, cutting the hair short bald,	This refers to the subtle moderate use wearing of dainty [<i>small, pretty & luxurious</i>] accessories. It includes wearing a single necklace, a pair of earrings, <u>watch</u> , wristband and anklet.
	medical reasons such as physiotherapy or activities that an individual participates in that are not aimed at weight loss or weight management.	cleaning activities which are not directly aimed at cleaning the hair & <u>body</u> .	furniture and linen in perfect condition reducing wear & tear.	the home, linen or furniture.	not directly related to beauty such as therapy, sleep & resting.	linen.	time an individual uses on home décor and/or house chores.	
Example	Daily target of 10,000 steps, walking 5km, Zumba classes, intermittent fasting, Keto, eating Low carbohydrates diet.	Showering before a massage, hair wash day, double cleansing the skin using micellar water & LaRoche facial wash.	Teeth straightening, Teeth whitening, Braces, hydrate to avoid fine lines, correcting skin pigmentation, <u>sun screen</u> , don't spray perfume on your necklace to ensure it doesn't spoil, waxing <u>etc.</u>	Perfumes, handwash, soaps, body sprays, roll on, oils, deodorant etc.	Massage, visit to the Spa, Thermal bath, manicure & pedicure	<u>Wig</u> costing USD100 & above, <u>Perfumes</u> costing USD50 & above.	Temporary dreadlocks, wigs, <u>weaves</u> , bald head	Dainty gold coated earrings, bangle, necklace

	medical reasons such as physiotherapy or activities that an individual participates in that are not aimed at weight loss or weight management.	cleaning activities which are not directly aimed at cleaning the hair & <u>body</u> .	furniture and linen in perfect condition reducing wear & tear.	the home, linen or furniture.	not directly related to beauty such as therapy, sleep & resting.	linen.	time an individual uses on home décor and or house chores.	
Example	Daily target of 10,000 steps, walking 5km, Zumba classes, intermittent fasting, Keto, eating Low carbohydrates diet.	Showering before a massage, hair wash day, double cleansing the skin using micellar water & LaRoche facial wash.	Teeth straightening, Teeth whitening, Braces, hydrate to avoid fine lines, correcting skin pigmentation, <u>sun screen</u> , don't spray perfume on your necklace to ensure it doesn't spoil, waxing <u>etc</u> .	Perfumes, handwash, soaps, body sprays, roll on, oils, deodorant etc.	Massage, visit to the Spa, Thermal bath, manicure & pedicure	<u>Wig</u> costing USD100 & above, <u>Perfumes</u> costing USD50 & above.	Temporary dreadlocks, wigs, <u>weaves</u> , bald head	Dainty gold coated earrings, bangle, necklace

STUDY 2

Table 8: Beauty Work

Beauty Work This refers to the beauty practices that are geared towards attaining or maintaining beauty standards.					
Code Label	Product use	Cost of Beauty	Selfcare	Fashionable	Tacky
Short Definition	Products used to attain or maintain beauty standards.	Cost of beauty practices and products.	Looking after the body.	Having a fashion sense.	Lacking gentle and feminine behaviour.
Full Definition	This refers to beauty products such as skincare, haircare and perfumes. They include products such as moisturizers, balms, lotions, shampoos, sprays among others. It also includes types of synthetic hair such as temporary dreadlocks,	This refers to the price, time and effort that one has to invest in attaining and maintaining beauty.	This refers to any activity aimed at taking special care of the body. This involves activities such as long shower routines, massage, visit to the spa, manicure & pedicure.	This refers to the ability for one to understand beauty and fashion trends. It also includes an ability to identify niche, expensive and luxurious beauty items.	This refers to the lack of decorum, lacking gentleness, lacking feminine behaviour and disorderly behaviour.

	braids, weaves, hair extensions and wigs.				
When to use it	Apply this code only to Beauty products [<i>for skincare and haircare- these include organic or synthetically produced beauty products</i>] and synthetic hair [<i>such as temporary dreadlocks, braids, weaves, hair extensions and wigs</i>]	Apply this code only to instances where the follower implies or explicitly refers to the cost of the beauty practice or beauty product.	Apply this code to any activity aimed at taking special care of the body.	Apply this code to the explicit and implicit mention of terms such as fashion sense, luxurious, niche products and an understanding of fashion trends.	Apply this code when the follower explicitly or implicitly refers to the SMI lacking good manners and being disorganized.
When NOT to use it	Do not apply this code to products that are NOT aimed at attaining or maintaining beauty standards.	Do not apply this code to any activity or products that is NOT aimed at attaining or maintaining beauty standards.	Do not use this code for any activities that are not directly related to beauty such as therapy, sleep & resting.	Do not apply this code to anything that is NOT beauty related.	Do not apply this code to anything that is NOT beauty related.
Example	Mikalla hair products, CeraVe body moisturizer, shampoo, aloe vera, braids, weaves, hair extensions, anti-itch sprays among others.	Reference to exercising such a disciplined body, cost of installing a hairstyle among others.	Massage, visit to the Spa, Thermal bath, manicure & pedicure	Sense of style, Gothic, Luxurious, fashion icon among others.	Over spraying perfumes, sneezing into the camera, shoving items in a bag, lacking feminine basics such as toiletry bags among others.

Table 9: Parasocial Relationships

Parasocial relationships They refer to the social and emotional connection between SMIs and their audiences over a period of time, they can feel intense and real.						
Code Label	Long Lasting Relationships	Seeking Counsel	Friendship & Intimacy	Feelings of Entitlement	Desire to meet SMI	Role Model
Short Definition	Existing for a long time.	Looking for advice.	Close relationship characterized by affection.	Right to benefit or privilege.	Longing for a face-to-face meeting.	Inspirational person.
Full Definition	This refers to an existing relationship between the audience and the SMIs that spans several years.	This refers to instances when the audience seek beauty and lifestyle advice from SMIs. This may include product use, product availability, products cost or lifestyle choices.	This refers to a voluntary and illusionary mutual relationship between audiences and SMIs. The audiences have expectations of the costs and benefits of their interaction with SMI. It is characterized by affection, honesty, trust, care & support.	This refers to instances where the audience feel they have a right to benefit from their social and emotional connection with SMIs. It is characterized by the use of strong words, display of strong emotions and intrusive questions.	This refers to the audience's desire to have a face-to-face meeting with the SMIs.	This refers to instances where the audiences admire, are inspired <u>by</u> , desire to emulate and look up to the SMI.
When to use it	Apply this code when the audience refer to how long they have had a social or emotional connection with the SMI.	Apply this code when the audience refer to seeking advice on beauty and lifestyle decisions from SMIs.	Apply this code when the audience refer to the costs, benefits, care, support and love that they have for the SMI.	Apply this code when the audience use words or phrases that imply, they have a right to certain information.	Apply this code when the audience use words or phrases that imply, they would like to have a face-to-face meeting with the SMI.	Apply this code when the audience use words or phrases that imply, admiration, inspired by, desire to emulate and look up to the SMI.
When NOT to use it	Do NOT apply this code to anything that does NOT refer to how long an audience have had a social or emotional connection with the SMI.	Do NOT apply this code to any information that is NOT beauty or lifestyle related.	Do NOT apply this code to any words or phrases that are NOT related to showing aspects of friendship and intimacy.	Do NOT apply this code to any words or phrases that are NOT related to the audience right to information or treatment by SMIs.	Do NOT apply this code to any words or phrases that are NOT related to having a face-to-face meeting with the SMI.	Do NOT apply this code to any words or phrases that are NOT related to admiration or desire to emulate the SMI.
Example	Following for long, following since 2016 among others.	Contact of therapist, cost of serum, tips on solo travel among others.	Love her, crush, affectionate words such as honey, pray for you among others.	Are we not worthy? Feeling neglected, ditching among others.	Meet and greet, love to come to Kenya among others.	Using beauty products that SMIs <u>use</u> , influenced my fashion style among others.

Table 10: SMIs characteristics

SMI's Characteristics			
Code Label	Outer Beauty	Inner Beauty	Expertise
Short Definition	Physical appearance.	Admirable behaviour towards self and others.	Showing special skill or talent.
Full Definition	This refers to explicit and implied statements referring to the physical appearance of the SMI. It involves an assessment of the skin, body shape, body size, hair, nails, teeth and facial features such as make up use.	This refers to admirable attributes that the SMIs possess which include how they treat themselves and those around them. It includes characteristics such as boldness, vibrancy, humour, authenticity, sincerity, politeness and gentleness.	This refers to a SMI's ability to have mastered the use of beauty products [<i>skincare, haircare, perfumes, clothing, accessories, handbags and shoes</i>] how and when to use them.
When to use it	Apply this code only to words or phrases referring to the physical appearance of the SMI.	Apply this code only to the admirable attributes that the SMIs possess such as boldness, vibrancy, humour, authenticity, sincerity, politeness and gentleness.	Apply this code only to words or phrases referring to the ability of SMIs to identify the most appropriate beauty products, how and when to use them.
When NOT to use it	Do NOT apply this code for clothing, accessories, handbags and shoes.	Do NOT apply this code to any attribute that does not refer to how SMIs treats themselves or others.	Do NOT apply this code to any activity or products that are NOT beauty related.
Example	Good hair, beautiful, looking Gorgeous, stunning among others.	Bold, vibrant, humorous, authentic, sincere, polite and gentle among others.	Paying attention to their beauty advice and fashion icon among others.

Table 11: SMIs content characteristics

SMI's Content Characteristics					
Code Label	Quality in General [QG]	Information Fairness [IF]	Information Quality [IQ]	Design Quality [DQ]	Technology Quality [TQ]
Short Definition	Nature of SMIs content; good or bad.	Nature of SMIs content; Honest & ethical.	Nature of SMIs content; Helpful & practical.	Appealing audio-visual content.	User-friendly nature of the content.
Full Definition	This refers to the assessment of the nature of the SMIs content. It refers to how good or bad the content is. It involves an assessment of adjectives used to describe the content.	This refers to the extent to which SMIs share information in an honest and ethical way to their audiences.	This refers to the presumed practical and helpful beauty information presented by SMIs. It involves an assessment of product reviews and discussions on the latest information about brands.	This refers to the use of words and phrases that signify excellent coordination and integration of graphics, audio, video and text that are appealing to the audience.	This refers to the functionality, interactivity and user-friendly navigation on SMIs videos.

When to use it	Apply this code to words or phrases that refer to how good or bad the SMIs content is.	Apply this code to words or phrases that refer to the honest and ethical presentation of information.	Apply this code to words or phrases that refer to helpful and practical information on beauty practices and beauty products.	Apply this code to words or phrases that refer to aesthetically appealing video shots.	Apply this code to words or phrases that refer to how easy it is to download, save or access videos from the SMIs YouTube channel.
When NOT to use it	Do NOT use this for words or phrases that are NOT in reference to the videos [such as <i>physical and personality attributes of the SM</i>].	Do NOT use this for words or phrases that are NOT in reference to the honest or ethical presentation of information.	Do NOT use this for words or phrases that are NOT in reference to how practical or helpful beauty information is.	Do NOT use this for words or phrases that are NOT in reference to aesthetically appealing videography.	Do NOT use this for words or phrases that are NOT in reference to the user-friendly navigation of the SMIs videos.
Example	Quality content, giving content, chill content among others.	Honest review, Honest rendition, genuine presentation among others.	Helpful information, informative among others.	Drone shots kali sana, excellent videography among others.	Download function

Appendix 2: Survey sample Questions

Afro-Occidental Beauty: A Netnographic Study on the portrayal and perception of Beauty among the youth, a Kenyan case study.

Participant Information & Consent Form (Online Study)

My name is Zipporah Mwangi, I am a doctoral student at Corvinus University of Budapest in the department of Communication and Media studies. I am inviting you to participate in a research study that aims to assess the relationship between the youth & social media influencers, the youths' perception of beauty and the youth's perception of social media influencers as credible sources of information on beauty products, clothing, shoes, handbags and accessories.

Your participation in this study is **voluntary**. You may terminate your participation at any time and decline from answering questions without having to give reasons for this. There is NO monetary compensation for participating in this study.

During the study you will be requested to answer both open ended questions and close ended questions which will last 12 minutes. The results of this study will later be used in publications and will also be presented at scientific conferences. If requested, written or verbal information will be provided on these events.

Data will be collected anonymously during the study and no other personal data will be obtained. All information collected during the research process will be handled confidentially. Data obtained during the research is stored as coded information in a secured computer of the principal investigator. Data from this research will be analyzed statistically during which no personal identification is possible.

By proceeding you agree that data collected on your person - which cannot be identified as those belonging to your person - may be used for research purposes and that these will be accessible to other researchers. I reserve the right to terminate my participation at any time in which case the data belonging to my person should be erased.

I declare that I am **over 18 years of age**. I have received full detailed information concerning the conditions of my participation of the study. I agree with these conditions, and I am willing to participate. ☐ yes ☐ no

Do you follow any beauty| lifestyle social media influencers?

Yes

No

If you do not follow any beauty| Lifestyle social media influencers, please do NOT proceed with the survey.

Who is your favorite beauty or lifestyle social media influencer? (Please indicate their Instagram handle or the name they use on Instagram/Facebook).

Demographic Questions

Gender

Female, Prefer not to say, Other (*Specify*)

How old are you? (Please be specific)

What is your highest level of Education?

Primary school Diploma, High school Diploma, Undergraduate, Postgraduate- Masters Postgraduate-PhD

What is your Marital Status?

Single, Married, Divorced, Separated, Widowed, In a Domestic partnership, Prefer Not to say

What is your Nationality?

Kenyan, Other (*Please specify*)

[The following section evaluates your relationship with your favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below]. Parasocial Interaction refers to an audience's perception on their social relationships with social media influencers based on a one-time interaction and exposure to their content. The Parasocial Interaction scale (Rubin et al., 1985) is a 10-item scale that evaluates the extent of the parasocial relationship with their social media influencers. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below [7-point Likert scale]

- 1) I feel a personal connection to my favorite social media influencer.
- 2) I often think about my favorite social media influencer when I am not watching their YouTube channel.
- 3) I would like to meet my favorite social media influencer in person.
- 4) I feel like I know my favorite social media influencer well.
- 5) When I watch my favorite social media influencer, I feel like they are speaking directly to me.
- 6) I enjoy following my favorite social media influencer on their social media pages.
- 7) I often discuss my favorite social media influencer with my friends & family.

- 8) I feel sad when my favorite social media influencer is ill or away on vacation.
- 9) I have learned things from my favorite social media influencer.
- 10) I find myself mimicking the behaviour of my favorite social media influencer.

Lange, J., & Crusius, J. (2015). Dispositional envy revisited: Unraveling the motivational dynamics of benign and malicious envy. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(2), 284–294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167214564959> [This section evaluates the extent to which you envy your favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer. Please indicate below the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below]. **7-point Likert scale**

1. When I envy my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer, I focus on how I can become equally successful in the future.
2. If I notice that my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer is better than me, I try to improve myself.
3. Envy my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer motivates me to accomplish my goals.
4. I strive to reach my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer's superior achievements.
5. I wish that my favorite beauty/ lifestyle influencer loses her beauty & financial advantage.
6. If my favorite beauty/ lifestyle influencer has something that I want for myself, I wish to take it away from them.
7. I feel ill will toward my favorite beauty/ lifestyle influencer who I envy.
8. Envious feelings cause me to dislike my favorite beauty/ lifestyle influencer.
9. Seeing my favorite beauty/ lifestyle influencer's achievements makes me resent them.

Purchase intention

Spears, N., & Singh, S. N. (2004). Measuring attitude toward the brand and purchase intentions. *Journal of current issues & research in advertising*, 26(2), 53-66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2004.10505164>

[This section evaluates your purchase intention of beauty products, clothes, shoes, handbags and accessories worn/used by your favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer.

Please indicate below the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below].

7-point Likert scale

Beauty Products

I would definitely order the beauty (*skincare, hair care & perfumes*) products that my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer uses.

I definitely intend to buy the beauty (*skincare, hair care & perfumes*) products that my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer uses.

I have a very high purchase interest in the beauty (*skincare, hair care & perfumes*) products that my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer uses.

Clothing, Shoes, Handbags & Accessories

I would definitely order the clothing, shoes, handbags & accessories that my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer wears.

I definitely intend to buy the clothing, shoes, handbags & accessories that my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer wears.

I have a very high purchase interest in the clothing, shoes, handbags & accessories that my favorite beauty/lifestyle influencer wears.

[This section evaluates your sources of beauty information].

Please select your sources of beauty information in the last one month.

Beauty/ lifestyle influencers, Brands, Beauty magazines, Television, Radio, Friends, Family members, Beauty professionals, Others

Please indicate three of your most trusted sources of beauty information.

Beauty/ lifestyle influencers, Brands, Beauty magazines, Television Radio, Friends, Family members, Beauty professionals, Others

The **Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBC; McKinley & Hyde, 1996)** is a 24 -item scale that evaluates how people especially, women look at their bodies especially in relation to societal standards. It includes three subscales:

- **Surveillance Scale-** viewing the body as an outsider.
- **Body shame-** Feeling inadequate when the body doesn't meet societal expectations.
- **Appearance control beliefs-** The belief that one can control one's appearance.

The Objectified Body Scale evaluates how these attitudes affects body image and self - perception. **[The section below evaluates how you view your body.**

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below regarding your body perception]. 7-point Likert scale

Surveillance scale

1. I rarely think about how I look.*
2. I think it is more important that my clothes are comfortable than whether they look good on me.*
3. I think more about how my body feels than how my body looks.*
4. I rarely compare how I look with how other people look.*
5. During the day, I think about how I look many times.
6. I often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good.
7. I rarely worry about how I look to other people.*
8. I am more concerned with what my body can do than how it looks.*

Body shame scale

9. When I can't control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me.
10. I feel ashamed of myself when I haven't made the effort to look my best.
11. I feel like I must be a bad person when I don't look as good as I could.

12. I would be ashamed for people to know what I really weigh.
13. I never worry that something is wrong with me when I am not exercising as much as I should.*
14. When I'm not exercising enough, I question whether I am a good enough person.
15. Even when I can't control my weight, I think I'm an okay person.*
16. When I'm not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed.

Control scale

17. I think a person is pretty much stuck with the looks they are born with.*
18. A large part of being in shape is having that kind of body in the first place.*
19. I think a person can look pretty much how they want to it they are willing to work at it.
20. I really don't think I have much control over how my body looks.*
21. I think a person's weight is mostly determined by the genes they are born with.*
22. It doesn't matter how hard I try to change my weight, it's probably always going to be about the same.*
23. I can weigh what I'm supposed to when I try hard enough.
24. The shape you are in depends mostly on your genes.*

**Items are reverse scored*

Broad Conceptualization of Beauty Scale (BCBS; Tylka & Iannantuono, 2016) [The section below evaluates your opinion of beauty. We are only interested in YOUR beliefs, which may or may not be reflected by others or society.]

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below].

7-point Likert scale

1. Even if a physical feature is not considered attractive by others or by society, I think that it can be beautiful.
2. A woman's confidence level can change my perception of her physical beauty.
3. I think that a wide variety of body shapes are beautiful for women.
4. I think that thin women are more beautiful than women who have other body types*.
5. A woman's soul or inner spirit can change my perception of her physical beauty.
6. I define a woman's beauty differently than how it is portrayed in the media.
7. A woman's acceptance of herself can change my perception of her physical beauty.
8. I appreciate a wide range of different looks as beautiful.

The aim of the survey is to evaluate the relationship between the youth & social media influencers, the youths' perception of beauty, authenticity of social media influencers and purchase intention of beauty products (skincare, haircare, makeup & perfumes), shoes, handbags and accessories. Thank you for participating in the research, your results will go a long way in adding to the body of work on beauty among African women. Have a wonderful day/night ahead.