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Context Effects on the Detection of Manipulated Images in Social Media

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Abstract

The widespread use of image manipulation in social media raises concerns about how individuals perceive and evaluate beauty-related visual information. This study examines how image manipulation and presentation context influence perceptual processing and accuracy judgments. Participants viewed authentic and beauty-enhanced images of male and female targets presented within an Instagram-like interface or a photo gallery context, and judged whether images had been manipulated. Repeated-measures ANOVAs and post hoc analysis revealed that reaction times were faster for authentic than for manipulated images ($t(2,62)=18.12$, $p=0.001$). Accuracy results showed a significant interaction between manipulation type and presentation context: authentic images were detected more accurately in the gallery context ($t(2,62)=-2.902$, $p=0.026$), whereas manipulated images were detected more accurately when presented as Instagram posts ($t(2,62)=-3.740$, $p=0.002$). Confidence judgments revealed a main effect ($F(1,62)=12.35$, $p=0.001$, $n^2_p=0.018$) revealing higher confidence for manipulated than authentic images. Together, these findings suggest that media context modulates perceptual and evaluative processes.