

## Are Social Media Filters Distorting Our Perception Of Reality?

Selfie mania, influencer trends, the rise of VSCO girls and the public decoration of one's life; have introduced a host of GenZ problems to nearly everyone.

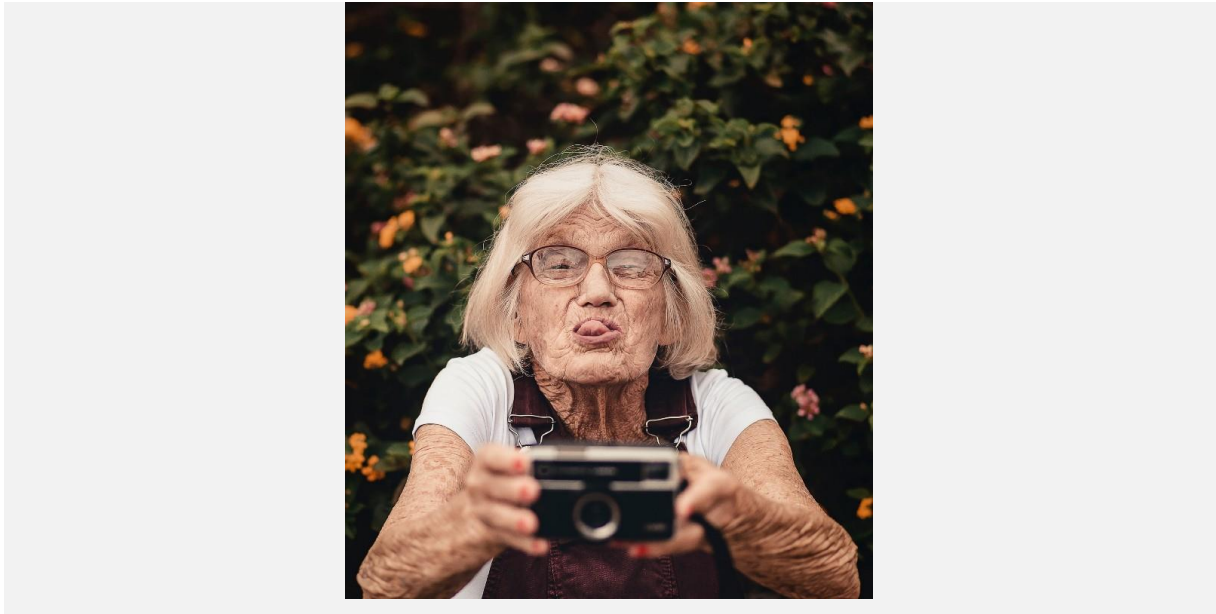


*Snapchat dysmorphia, blurred lines between reality and fiction, the widening of socioeconomic gaps are just a few of them. In this article, we will address how social media filters are making it hard to place your finger on what's real and what's not!*

### The Rise Of Selfie Culture

What's the first thing that pops to mind when you go out on a fancy restaurant date? Or when you visit an incredibly beautiful place whose natural aesthetics just blow your mind away during vacation? Or when you purchase a stunning outfit which does your curves wonders? Or when you finally realize those gains for which you trained your socks off at the gym? Or when you meet up with your favourite people in the world? Or when you happen to have an unpredictable encounter with your celebrity crush?

Taking A Selfie! A photograph! Documenting and sharing memories that encompass a variety of life experiences on social media has become the absolute norm these days.



Once upon a time, people went to restaurants to impress only their date with fancy food and to probably just have a good time and get to know each other. Today those very experiences are now being broadcasted to the entire base of a person's acquaintances. A date these days without being documented on Instagram or Snapchat is absolutely rare. Following just one outing, it is customary to see pictures of the restaurant, the entire five (or more) course meal and the companion of course. Let's not forget the flushed faces before and after the date.

Not only has selfie culture become an acceptable societal norm, but the funnier side in all this is the rise of people who make a living from doing precisely that aka "influencers". Can you imagine we live in a world where people get paid to go to fancy restaurants to sample their food for free and receive royalties and freebies for doing that?!

This would never have been possible without the existence of social media.

Puppies, Hearts, Flowers And All Things Social Media Aegyo!

You can't be on social media without being aware of their greatest USP (unique selling point) aka the phenomenon of filters.

Where once people used to hire skilled professionals adept in complex software such as Photoshop to edit pictures of them to look more aesthetically pleasing on their passports, today such technology is reduced to simple and mere swipes on smartphones. Filters and effects can be easily added to any given image by literally anyone who knows their way around a smartphone.

There are literally thousands of filters in the realm of social media. But they can be broadly categorized under two:

1. **Visual filters:** These are enhancements made on stationary pictures. They could range from something as simple as the removal of a facial blemish to something as creatively fancy as editing a flower crown on one's head.
2. **Audiovisual filters:** These include the addition of not only visual edits but also auditory effects at the same time. Some of the popular filters include - The Cat Whiskers, The Honey-Crazed Bee, The Butterfly Princess, The Creepy Face Swap, The Camera-Roll Face Swap, The Perky-Eared Dog, The Rosy-Cheeked Beauty, The Sweet Deer, Flower Power Crown, The Frowny Face, etc.

So in case, you're in the mood to visit the fictional grounds of Hogwarts, simply go to Instagram or Snapchat and see yourself wearing a Hufflepuff scarf and robes with a wand in one hand.

#### A Deep Dive Into The Need For Filters

It would be an understatement to say social media filters are fast becoming a "need" when they once were originally intended to be a luxury or a want. Filters first probably came into play because a rich guy found his nose too large for a photo and decided that his face couldn't be seen plastered on advertisements. Thus, he decided to make sure that there was a way to correct it. Or probably he didn't want his ex making appearances in their picture frames and decided to blur the face. To sum this up, picture after-effects were mainly a luxury in the past to eradicate superficial flaws.

But in today's world, anyone who owns a smartphone has access to a host of camera filters. Whether the underlying logic for their usage is due to the fact that everyone is doing it or general insecurity for one's appearance; the fact remains that filters are widely used by people from diverse demographics.

And in a world where selfie culture is predominant, it only makes sense that a person sees their face at least a dozen times per day on average. This obviously will lead to people taking notice of the minutest flaws and obsessing over them.

#### Have Filters Adjusted The Lenses By Which We View Reality?



Coming to the real question here, I believe they most definitely have influenced the way we perceive reality in one way or another.

**A.** Not everyone shares the 100% story. If life were a movie, then social media filters most definitely are responsible for making sure that only the highlight reels are broadcasted. Behind the scene shots rarely ever make it to the camera lens let alone social media.

**B.** This divide between peoples' social media and real lives could be psychologically detrimental. Having filters paint a smile on an otherwise depressing face could lead to people being unaware of the real and deeper underlying issues. This makes it such that people go on assuming everything is fine with a certain individual. Life has been made into this cute spectacle where everything is all rainbows and sunshine on Snapchat and Instagram. In other words, it wouldn't be completely unfair to say that social media filters in all their glory are literally making a mockery of all things real.

**C.** Since everything looks all dandy and picture-perfect with the onset of social media, the need for things to be perfect has been automatically translated into the very real lives of people. This pursuit of physical perfection has led to an incredibly serious phenomenon called "Snapchat dysmorphia". This is a growingly worrying disorder is where people are so influenced by the flawless culture they witness online such that they begin noticing the slightest of flaws in their appearance. Reports of people undergoing several dermatological treatments and plastic surgeries just so they get that perfect jawline are on the rise. More and more people have begun wanting a nose so airbrushed that it could be mistaken for a celebrity.

*Overall, social media apps, such as Snapchat and Facetune, are providing a new reality of beauty for today's society. These apps allow one to alter his or her appearance in an instant and conform to an unrealistic and often unattainable standard of beauty. (JAMA Facial Plastic Surgery)*

One of the most famous examples of body dysmorphia is Justin Jedlica otherwise known as the Human Ken Doll who has reportedly undergone over 70 procedures in a bid to resemble Mattel's Ken doll. In 2017 alone, 55% of plastic surgeons across the United States mentioned that there was a rise in people wanting to undergo procedures so their selfies would come across as more aesthetically pleasing. (The American Academy of Facial Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery)

In Conclusion,

All said and done, social media filters aren't that villainous as they're made out to be. They most definitely are a welcome break from the bleak monotony of life to many. But the level of obsession stemming from the pursuit of Instagram ready pictures is as always ever in the hands of the user.

*As Ginger Spice famously said, "Be yourself, take control of your life."*