

For thousands of years people have been interested in the way they look. The evidence for this hypothesis provided ancient cultures e.g. Egyptian, Greek, Roman (Bartman, 2001; Hatfield & Rapson, 2010; Lerner, 1932; Lucas, 1930), and, according to some researchers, also Neanderthal culture (Finlayson et al., 2012; Mellars, 2010; Zilhao, 2012). Even nowadays, the theme of beauty rises unrelenting discussions. Searching in Google Scholar phrase “physical attractiveness”, gives over 447 000 scientific publications (as for June, 2019). Nevertheless, despite the large body of research, some of the questions still remain unanswered. Is it culturally universal that women perform more beauty enhancing behaviours than men? Do people perform activities aimed at improving their attractiveness due to cultural or biological reasons? Is it the Western media that is responsible for intensifying such activities, or is it within our human nature? Who attends more beauty enhancing behaviours – representatives of a Western world, cultivating youth and physical attractiveness, with almost unlimited access to cosmetics and beauty parlours, or members of isolated populations, with no access to Western media, unfamiliar of Western canon of beauty (the Cook Islands)?

Some studies (Murnen & Seabrook, 2012) and our own data, collected on almost 200 000 Polish consumers suggest that women do indeed spend more money on enhancing their beauty. Many scientists explain this phenomenon by referring to evolutionary theories (Buss, 2015; Schmitt, 2015). According to them, discrepancies between sexes are due to different adaptive challenges, our ancestors encountered. Men faced the problem of identifying and choosing fertile partner (as choosing infertile one resulted in no descendants) (Lewis et al., 2015). Men who learnt to value the most youth and beauty – characteristics that indicate high fecundity – were more reproductively successful (thus such preference became more spread within the population) (Pawłowski, 2000).

Different approach, based on the negative influence of Western media, underlies that women are pressured into the unhealthy pursuit of a perfect look (Rodgers, et al., 2016). Efforts of marketing industry cause women to constantly improve their appearance, leading to many serious social problems, e.g. women’s body objectification or even body hatred (Frost, 2001), eating disorders, potentially dangerous plastic surgeries (Coleman, 2008). According to this approach, people from cultures with no access to media should perform less beauty enhancing behaviours.

In order to empirically verify both theories, we plan to conduct four studies. **First study** will be an experiment. We will investigate, which sex will perform more beauty enhancing treatments and will longer stare at one’s reflection in the mirror. We will also examine, what effect viewing either photographs of models or neutral nature will have on the frequency of improving one’s appearance.

The next two studies (second and third) will be conducted among four different cultures: well developed and Western country (Poland); well developed country from Middle East, which has a specific culture due to the traditional outfit (Iran); and more isolated populations with no access to Western media (Garhwali tribe from Northern India and people from the Cook Islands). In the **second study** we will establish, what kind of behaviours participants from those four cultures perform in order to become more attractive, and also how often they exhibited such activities in the last week’s period. Subjects will also provide the information about motives for performing such behaviours.

The **third study** will be conducted in the natural environment of four mentioned above cultures. For one week, participants will keep a diary. Each day, they will record the type and the duration of activities aimed at improving their physical attractiveness.

The **fourth study** will include questionnaires, and will be conducted among about forty different countries worldwide. We will investigate cross-cultural differences in taking care of one’s attractiveness and broaden our knowledge on potential psychological and environmental factors mediating those differences.

We hope that our project will provide answers on following questions: are the types of enhancing one’s attractiveness behaviours widespread around the world; is the prevalence of women attending beauty behaviours culturally universal; do women and men in different cultures spend similar amount of time on caring for their look; are there the age differences, i.e. are younger people at their reproductive age more prone to performing such behaviours, or maybe it is the older people who care more about their look, and last, but not least, to what extent those behaviours are due to cultural and environmental reasons, and to what extent they are due to innate adaptive strategies (i.e. sexual selection).