



Section 3. Psychology

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PSYCHOLOGY OF IMAGE PERCEPTION AND THE ROLE OF HAIRSTYLE IN SELF-EXPRESSION

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the psychology of human image perception and the importance of hairstyles as an important tool of self-expression. The mechanisms of visual impression formation, the influence of hairstyles on the perception of personality by others and on the self-esteem of an individual are considered. The article analyzes the role of hairstyles as a means of communication reflecting internal characteristics, emotional state and social identity. Special attention is paid to cultural and social aspects that emphasize the diversity of hairstyle functions in the process of self-identification and interaction with the outside world.

Keywords: *psychology of perception, human image, hairstyle, self-expression, visual perception, self-identification, social identity, appearance, communication*

The psychology of human image perception plays a significant role in understanding how we interpret and perceive external signs of personality. Images are formed by not only facial features and clothing, but also by elements such as hairstyles, which are a powerful tool for self-expression. Hairstyles reflect not only aesthetic preferences but also internal states, social positions, cultural values, and individual characteristics.

In today's society, where visual communication is increasingly important, the significance of hairstyles in shaping and maintaining an image has become especially relevant.

Hairstyles help not only emphasize individuality but also establish connections with others and elicit specific emotional and social responses. By studying the psychology of image perception and considering the importance of hairstyles, we can better understand the complex mechanisms of human interaction with the world and ourselves.

The relevance of studying the topic of hairstyles and their significance in modern society is because visual perception plays a crucial role in interpersonal communication and professional activity. Hairstyles are a noticeable and easily changeable aspect of

a person's appearance, and they can be used as an important tool for self-expression and creating a first impression.

The study of psychology of image perception, with an emphasis on hairstyles, helps to understand how appearance affects personality perception, emotional state, and social behavior. Additionally, in the age of mass visual media and social networks, where images often become the primary mode of communication, it is crucial to understand the mechanisms by which hairstyles reflect personality, mood, and social attitudes.

Regarding the perception of hairstyles and their influence on social interaction, the concept of "hair bias" or "hairstyle bias" should be considered. This concept was defined in a study conducted by the Perception Institute (Perception Institute. 2013).

According to this study, hairstyles that deviate from the dominant standard of beauty are often perceived as less attractive or less professional. This can affect an individual's self-perception of their attractiveness, their position in the social hierarchy, and their professional opportunities and social relationships. Confirmation of this phenomenon has also been found in a study conducted by P. Belmi and Professor M. Neal from Stanford Business School (MacBride E., 2014).

Thus, the study of this topic contributes to the development of effective self-presentation strategies and improvement of interpersonal communication in various spheres of life. It should be noted that the perception of a person's image and the role of hairstyles in shaping social impressions are studied at the intersection of several disciplines, including psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and aesthetics.

Figure 1.



Psychology has developed theories on the perception of appearance, which recognize hairstyles as an important aspect of nonverbal communication and self-expression. However, compared to other aspects of appearance such as clothing or facial expressions, the role of hairstyles has been less extensively studied and requires further research.

Modern research often focuses on the impact of hairstyles on perceptions of attractiveness, trustworthiness, and professionalism. However, there is currently no comprehensive theory that takes into account cultural, gender, and social aspects of hairstyles in various contexts. Additionally, there is a limited amount of empirical research, especially in terms of cross-cultural comparisons and digital communication.

Although basic principles and individual aspects of the role of hairstyles in image perception have been well studied, the topic requires a more thorough and interdisciplinary approach to fully comprehend its significance in contemporary society (see table).

Table 1. Hairstyle classification table

The division of hairstyles	
By style	classic historical elegant sporty extravagant avant-garde stylization eclecticism
By type	anterior (frontal) reverse concentrated (concentric) acentric (acentric)
By appointment	everyday household dressy spectacular
Regarding	women's men's children's youth onesex (no gender) unisex (universal)

The division of hairstyles	
gender and age	cold hot air combined with permanent with haircut
(by gender and age)	from short hair (up to 10 cm) from medium hair (up to 25 cm) from long hair (25 cm and above)

The study of the psychology of image perception started in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the development of Gestalt psychology. This approach emphasized the importance of seeing objects and people as a whole, rather than just individual parts. Psychologists started to investigate how different aspects of appearance influence the way we form impressions. In the 1920s and 1930s, social psychology emerged as a field, focusing on how people are evaluated based on their appearance, such as their face, clothing, and hairstyle, as elements of non-verbal communication.

The role of hairstyles in self-expression and perception has been studied more systematically since the 1960s and 70s. Scientists drew attention to the relationship between appearance and identity, leading to a shift in the way hairstyles are perceived. Hairstyle has become more than just a fashion statement; it is now seen as a means of social communication, a way to show belonging to certain groups and expressing one's identity within culture and subcultures. In psychology, hairstyles are considered one of the most significant non-verbal cues that influence the first impression, attractiveness, and even the perception of character.

In recent decades, interdisciplinary research has been conducted, including in fields such as sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. This has led to a deeper understanding of cultural differences and the psychological mechanisms behind hairstyle perception. New methods, such as experimental research, neuropsychology, and digital image analysis,

have expanded our understanding of the role of hairstyles in self-expression and social interaction. The history of studying hairstyles has evolved from general ideas about image perception to a more in-depth analysis of hairstyles as a significant and multi-faceted tool for self-presentation and communication.

Modern research shows that a person's hairstyle significantly affects their perception in the first few seconds of meeting them. Blonde hair is often associated with friendliness, while more structured and neat hairstyles are linked to professionalism and reliability. Unusual hairstyles, on the other hand, create the impression of individuality and creativity but can also reduce the perception of seriousness and conformity in a business setting.

The color of hair is also linked to a woman's personality and behavior. Through the centuries, certain stereotypes have formed: redheads are seen as selfish and vindictive, blondes as fairytale-like, soft and defenseless, embodying kindness, and brunettes as emotional, sensual and even dangerous.

Psychologists note that changing hair color can indicate a desire to leave behind the baggage of past years and start anew. With the change in appearance, behavior, personality, style, and lifestyle may also change, either immediately or gradually. When a woman frequently changes her hair color, it may indicate that she is struggling with her identity and trying to find herself through experimentation.

Small changes to your hairstyle can help you achieve your goals. Your mind will adjust to the new look, requiring you to adopt new behaviors and actions. In today's digital age, hair has become a powerful tool for self-expression. Young people often use bright colors, asymmetrical styles, or unconventional hairstyles to showcase their individuality and affiliation with cultural or subcultural movements like punk or hipster culture. Psychologically, these choices can boost self-esteem and affirm membership in a group.

Modern research emphasizes the role of hairstyles in reinforcing and challenging gender stereotypes. Men and women select hairstyles that either support or intentionally defy traditional expectations. For instance, short hairstyles for women can represent independence and modernity, whereas for

men, they can symbolize style and tidiness. Hairstyles carry special symbolic meanings across different cultures, affecting how people perceive a person's status and role.

Changing a hairstyle is often seen as a way to make a psychological transformation and refresh one's image. Psychologists have noted that a drastic change in style can help reduce stress levels, improve mood, and spark personal change, which is especially important during times of life transition.

Studies have shown that hairstyle can affect perceptions of competence and leadership. In a professional setting, conservative and well-groomed hairstyles are often preferred, as they promote trust and respect. However, in creative fields, more unconventional and unique looks are often welcomed as a sign of creativity.

Therefore, modern psychology supports the idea that hair is a powerful visual cue that plays a significant role in shaping one's social image and self-expression.

I would like to emphasize that modern image perception technologies, such as computer vision and artificial intelligence, analyze a person's visual characteristics, including their face shape and hairstyle. This information can be used to draw conclusions about a person's age, mood, and even their character traits.

Virtual and augmented reality technologies are widely used to allow people to model and try different hairstyles without physically altering their appearance. This makes it easier to choose and express oneself through an image, facilitating the process.

Neuroscience research has shown that various visual stimuli, such as hairstyles, affect perception and create first impressions of a person. Hairstyles play a significant role in self-expression and serve as a way to indicate identity, belonging to social or cultural groups, reflect internal changes, and emotional state. They influence the perception of others and shape ideas about status, reliability, or creativity. Hairstyles also offer opportunities to follow fashion trends and highlight individuality through color and style, while image perception technologies help us understand the importance of these aspects in visual communication and self-expression in modern society.

Note that there are several key issues in the psychology of image perception. First,

the subjectivity of perception – different people may interpret the same visual image differently depending on personal experience, cultural context, and emotional state. Second, cognitive distortions can affect the assessment of appearance, such as stereotypes, biases, and the influence of first impressions, which can distort perception and complicate the objective understanding of a person's personality through an external image. Finally, the difficulty in integrating verbal and non-verbal information can lead to errors in interpretation, especially when the appearance contradicts behavior or statements.

The role of hairstyles in self-expression is significant, as they serve as a non-verbal signal that reflects a person's personality, mood, social affiliation, and creativity. Hairstyles can be used to challenge social norms or emphasize individuality. However, they are also subject to stereotypes in the perception of others, with specific styles being associated with certain personality traits or social status, leading to biased assessments.

Psychological issues related to image perception include subjectivity, cognitive biases, and the influence of stereotypes. Hairstyles, as an important aspect of visual self-expression, can enhance individuality but also lead to biased judgments about a person's character.

In our opinion, the key to solving the problems of image perception and the role of hairstyles in self-expression lies in increasing awareness and developing critical thinking. This will help people recognize their own stereotypes and avoid making excessive generalizations when evaluating appearance.

It is important to adopt an intercultural and contextual approach, considering social and cultural factors, in order to prevent misinterpretations of hairstyles' meanings. By doing so, we can create a more inclusive and respectful environment where everyone can express themselves freely and without fear of judgment.

The development of communication skills and creating conditions for feedback contribute to a more accurate understanding and reduction of misunderstandings related to non-verbal signals. Supporting individual self-expression through adopting a variety of external styles and hairstyles, helps reduce social pressure and stereotypes.

Furthermore, professional training for specialists such as psychologists and HR managers should include training in analyzing personality without solely relying on external signs, which leads to a more objective and fair assessment of an individual. This holistic approach minimizes perceptual distortions and enhances understanding of hairstyles as a form of self-expression.

Having studied the main aspects of the psychology of image perception, we note that hairstyle is an important visual element that significantly affects how others perceive a person. Hairstyle not only has an aesthetic function, but it also serves as a means of communication, reflecting style, mood, social status, and personality.

The perception of a hairstyle is subjective and shaped by cultural, social, and personal context. This can lead to stereotypes and bi-

ased judgments, but at the same time, it plays a key role in self-expression. A hairstyle allows a person to demonstrate their uniqueness, belonging to a particular group or subculture, and their emotional state.

Understanding the psychology of perception emphasizes the importance of a conscious attitude towards appearance, as the first impressions play a significant role in shaping interpersonal interactions. To achieve a more objective perception of one's image, it is essential to develop critical thinking and take into account the context. Avoiding superficial assessments based solely on external signs such as hairstyle is crucial. Hairstyle, therefore, serves not only as a stylistic element but also as a powerful means of self-expression and communication in today's society.

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