

The present study investigated how Instagram filters manipulate low-level visual cues that we rely on to make affective evaluations. Filters are intended to give users an easy way to personalize their images without any prior knowledge of image processing. Social media posts that have been filtered are more likely to be viewed and commented on compared to images that have not been edited. When viewing filtered images, it is apparent that luminance and redness have been manipulated. Luminance and redness influence affective evaluations and are used to make inferences about the external environment. Images with filter on and off were compared to examine how filters modify the luminance and redness in an image. The sample of images were separated into three categories of image: beauty/fashion, travel/lifestyle, and food. All image analyses were carried out in MATLAB which calculated the image statistics to compare the filter on and filter off conditions. Our results indicate that effect of filter was apparent for luminance and redness in all categories of image. There was a main effect of filter where filter on increased the luminance and redness, compared to filter off. These results of this study align with past research on brightness and color, while also providing new insights on the role of these properties on affective evaluations on social media posts. While subject to certain limitations, we found that filters are manipulating the low-level image properties that have an unconscious impact on our emotions and evaluations. The results of this study demonstrate that there are perceptual factors that could lead users to post edited images on social media to increase the likelihood of positive evaluations from others.