

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

The Janus Face of Cosmetic Surgery: The Social Costs of Seeking Beauty By

Prof. Michail Kokkoris
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam



Date : 23 Jan 2026 (Fri)
Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon
Venue : GH120c, PolyU

Abstract

Cosmetic surgery is becoming increasingly popular and is often pursued to improve social impressions. In this research, we argue that it can generate unintended reputational costs. Results of five pre-registered studies with over 4,000 participants demonstrate that cosmetic surgery elevates perceptions of narcissism—a dark personality trait characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance. These inferences arise because cosmetic surgery signals a willingness to incur sacrifices for the sake of beauty, suggesting a strong desire for admiration. Narcissism perceptions weaken when surgery serves restorative or health-related purposes and strengthen when procedures involve greater risks. In turn, anticipation of narcissistic rivalry increases the likelihood of social rejection of those undergoing cosmetic surgery. These findings advance understanding of appearance-enhancing consumer choices by revealing previously unacknowledged social costs of widely used cosmetic procedures.

Prof. Michail Kokkoris is Associate Professor of Marketing at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (Netherlands). He previously held academic appointments at WU Vienna University of Economics and Business (Austria) and University of Cologne (Germany). Prof. Kokkoris conducts behavioral research at the intersection of psychology and marketing, focusing on topics related to identity and decision making, such as self-expression, authenticity, self-control, beliefs, meaning, and well-being. His work has been published in journals such as *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *Harvard Business Review*, and *Journal of Business Research*. His research has attracted substantial third-party funding (e.g., European Commission), has been featured as Editor's Choice in *Science*, and has been extensively covered by international media outlets, such as *Psychology Today* and *Forbes*. He is currently an Editorial Review Board member for the *Journal of Business Research*.

All interested are welcome.



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