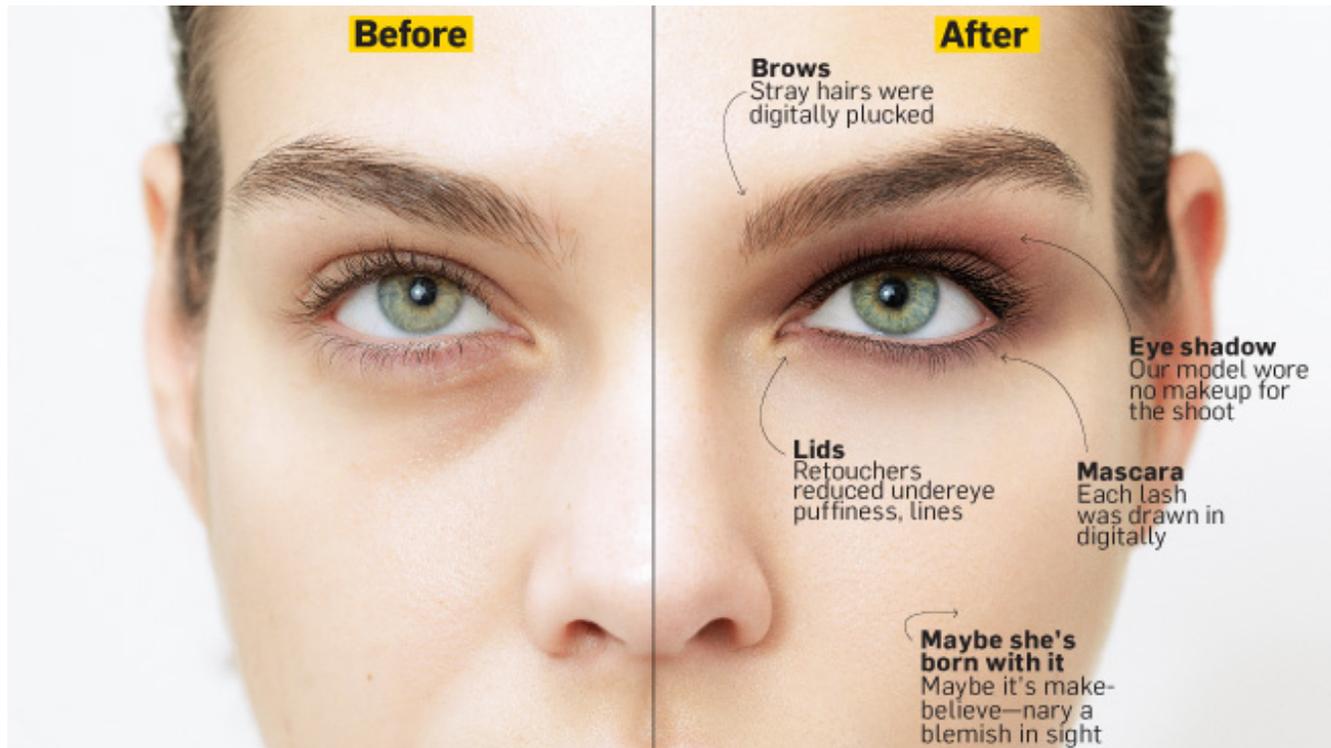


## Photoshop and Consumer Skepticism

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The use of retouched, altered, or “doctored” photos in advertisements has long been an issue in marketing. However, today it seems to be even more pertinent, especially with the advent of high quality, powerful editing programs such as Photoshop. The use of these altered images in advertising has led to an increase in consumer skepticism and in some cases increased governmental regulation. For instance, starting in fall 2017, in France, any commercial image that has been digitally altered to make a model look thinner will have a cigarette-packet style warning on it. The warning will say “photographie retouchée”, which translates to “edited photograph” (Eggert, 2017). Anyone breaking the new rule could be fined 37,500 euros or 30% of the cost of creating the ad. Even the United States had attempts to intervene with the proposed Truth in Advertising Bill in 2016 (Saxena, 2016). In the UK, ever since 2011 ads that were deemed “over-Photoshopped” were banned, including ones with celebrities such as Julia Roberts. Some ad campaigns, such as Dove’s Evolution, even underline natural beauty and the negative use of Photoshop, while others such as Snickers, have taken opportunities to poke fun of the practice.

In this context, aspects such as advertising believability and trust are key issues to attain positive consumer attitudinal and behavioral responses and it’s not surprising that a wide majority of consumers tend to disbelieve advertisements. In acknowledging the importance of avoiding misleading images, some companies use advertising disclaimers to highlight potentially deceptive features of their ads. Some brands recently decided to launch “Photoshop-free campaigns”, which inform consumers that their advertisements do not use digital photo processing software. Research has shown the benefits of retouch-free disclaimers of digital images on attitudinal and purchasing behaviors.

In a research study, we found that ad believability and attitude towards the ad

significantly influence consumers' intentions to purchase the advertised product. Credibility seems to carry a lot of weight in consumers' decisions to try a product, which underlines the importance of an ad's believability and the credibility of its claims in the sales outcome. Therefore, a company can differentiate and affirm its trustworthiness and care for its consumers through its emphasis on truth and transparency in its advertising practices.

**References:**

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