

An Overview of Visagism: Designing Smiles to Reflect Inner Personality and Beauty

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ABSTRACT

Visagism extends beyond conventional dentistry and represents a philosophy that brings life and individuality to every smile. By integrating both the physical features and psychological dimensions of a person, dental professionals can achieve results that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also personally meaningful. Through Visagism, smile transformations become a reflection of the individual's true essence, expressing not only external appearance but also inner character, emotions, and temperament. This holistic perspective adds a human touch to dentistry, enabling clinicians to create smiles that deeply connect with patients and positively influence their quality of life. Smile aesthetics share a profound relationship with human psychology, shaping not only dental appearance but also personality, self-image, and social interactions. Recognizing this connection is essential for professionals involved in smile design. It is not limited to correcting visible factors such as tooth shape, size, or color; rather, it requires understanding the emotional needs, aspirations, and personal identity of each patient. By appreciating these unique qualities, clinicians can design smiles that go beyond beauty and become genuine expressions of confidence and individuality. Humanizing the smile design process means acknowledging that every smile tells a unique story, and the role of the professional is to help convey that story authentically. Orofacial aesthetics is far more than surface enhancement, as it can significantly influence behavior, personality, and the way individuals relate to others. In this regard, Visagism serves as an important guiding principle, ensuring that aesthetic treatments harmonize not only with the patient's facial characteristics but also with their personality and self-perception. By embracing this concept, dental professionals recognize the close relationship between outward appearance and inner identity, allowing treatment outcomes to truly represent each individual. Ultimately, Visagism empowers patients not only to look their best but also to express themselves with authenticity, fostering confidence and strengthening social relationships.

Keywords: Visagism; Smile; Temperament; Personality; Discrimination

INTRODUCTION

The importance of a smile extends far beyond simple aesthetics. It functions as a universal form of communication, expressing emotions and fostering connections among individuals. As noted in a 2018 *National Geographic* publication, the frequency and easy recognition of smiles

emphasize their central role in everyday human interaction. To better appreciate the depth of this influence, the concept of Visigothism becomes highly relevant. Rooted in the combination of Hippocrates' Theory of Temperament and an individual's physical appearance, Visagism seeks to harmonize personality with facial expression and smile design.¹

Visagism considers not only the physiological aspects of the smile but also its psychological and social significance. It acknowledges that patients often seek aesthetic treatment not solely for cosmetic improvement, but to bring their external appearance into alignment with their inner identity. When incorporated into orthodontic and smile design procedures, Visagism enables clinicians to address both the functional and emotional needs of patients. In doing so, it contributes to stronger interpersonal relationships, greater self-confidence, and improved overall well-being, reinforcing the smile's profound role in human communication.^{2,5}

The way people perceive themselves, as well as the image they present to others, plays a crucial role in how successfully they interact with their surroundings. Self-perception can promote positive social integration or, conversely, lead to experiences of discrimination, as discussed in various psychological and social studies. Because of this, aesthetics cannot be confined to rigid or universal standards. It remains inherently subjective, allowing us to differentiate between what is simply attractive and what is truly expressive or artistic. Aesthetic features have the ability to inspire pleasure, distinction, and social meaning.³

For this reason, dentists may be viewed as both healthcare professionals and artists. They must evaluate each case from multiple perspectives: their own professional judgment, the patient's desires and expectations, and the broader social environment in which the patient lives. Human behaviour is often influenced by

how individuals believe they are perceived by society, which can motivate them to conform to external ideals.⁴

Although dental aesthetics may sometimes be dismissed as superficial, they encompass a much deeper dimension. Aesthetic dental treatments can significantly improve not only physical appearance but also self-esteem, confidence, emotions, social behaviour, and interpersonal relationships.^{5,6} Therefore, oral healthcare professionals should adopt a holistic approach that recognizes the close connection between physical appearance and mental well-being.

Visagism promotes this broader understanding of the individual by emphasizing the intimate relationship between facial image and psychology. It highlights how this connection can profoundly affect a person's life, identity, and relationships. Despite its significance, the link between aesthetics and the psyche is often underestimated in clinical practice. This underscores the need for greater scientific attention to Visagism within dental treatment planning. By bridging the gap between aesthetics and psychology, Visagism provides a comprehensive approach that goes beyond cosmetic enhancement and ultimately enriches the lives and well-being of patients.⁷

Relationship of Visagism with Dentistry

The smile acts as a powerful medium through which individuals communicate their self-image and personality, making it a fundamental element of esthetic dental rehabilitation. Despite its importance, the

deeper psychological dimensions associated with the smile are frequently overlooked during clinical treatment planning. This neglect can create difficulties in delivering personalized care that truly reflects the individuality of the patient, often resulting in unfulfilled expectations and treatment goals.⁸

An understanding of Visagism provides dental professionals with valuable insight to ensure that a patient's smile not only improves facial aesthetics but also genuinely represents their self-esteem, temperament, aspirations, and behavioural characteristics. By applying the principles of Visagism, clinicians can design smiles that inspire confidence and positively influence the patient's self-image, social relationships, and even interactions in professional settings.⁹

Successful outcomes begin with a detailed anamnesis, which includes the initial consultation and patient interview. During this important stage, the dentist explores the patient's reasons for seeking esthetic treatment, their personal expectations, and their understanding of the treatment options available. This is followed by comprehensive intraoral and extraoral clinical examinations, which form the basis for accurate diagnosis and individualized treatment planning.

Through such a holistic and patient-centered approach, Visagism enables dental professionals to create smiles that resonate deeply with each individual. It promotes not only aesthetic improvement but also

emotional well-being, enhanced self-confidence, and greater social comfort.^{10,11}

The Fifth Dimension of the Smile

For many years, dentistry evaluated the smile through four principal dimensions: biology, function, structure, and esthetics. However, modern concepts of smile design recognize that successful treatment extends beyond these factors to include a fifth dimension—the expression of the patient's personality and identity through the smile. A smile should not only restore health and beauty but also harmonize with the individual's character.^{11,12} For example, a person with a gentle and reserved personality may feel less comfortable with large, bold incisors and canines, whereas someone with a confident and dominant temperament may find such features more suitable.

By acknowledging this fifth dimension, prosthodontic procedures and smile design treatments move beyond simple cosmetic enhancement and become meaningful tools of personal expression. Patients do not merely receive an improved smile; they often experience greater confidence, emotional satisfaction, and enhanced self-esteem. This individualized approach significantly contributes to the overall quality of life and demonstrates the value of dental care that respects each patient's uniqueness.¹³

The Universal Language

Lines and geometric forms represent the basic components of a universal visual

language that transcends differences in culture, language, and education. This shared perception is linked to the optic thalamus, a part of the autonomic nervous system believed to recognize archetypal forms and trigger emotional responses.¹⁴

Different lines are associated with different emotional impressions. Horizontal lines suggest stability, calmness, and comfort. Vertical lines symbolize strength, authority, and masculinity. Inclined lines communicate movement, energy, and joy, while curved lines are linked with delicacy, femininity, gentleness, and sensuality. The predominance and interaction of these lines create distinct geometric forms with symbolic meaning. Rectangles, dominated by vertical lines, reflect strength; triangles convey dynamism; squares represent balance and stability; and ovals express softness, grace, and femininity.

The combination of these visual elements creates a wide range of expressions, each carrying its own emotional significance. This concept not only deepens our understanding of art and design but also influences how people perceive faces, smiles, and the personalities of others in everyday life.¹⁵

Types of Temperaments and Their Relation to the Maxillofacial Complex

According to the ancient theory of Hippocrates, the human body is influenced by the balance or imbalance of four bodily humors: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. This equilibrium was believed to determine both health and temperament.

Building on this classical concept, Paolucci proposed that these temperaments are reflected in facial appearance and dental morphology. Each temperament is associated with characteristic facial forms and tooth shapes.^{5,13}

Choleric (Strong): Individuals with a choleric temperament are often described as natural leaders who are decisive, energetic, and passionate. Their facial form is typically rectangular, with prominent angles that reflect strength and assertiveness. Similarly, their teeth are often rectangular in shape, complementing their bold personality.

Sanguine (Dynamic): Sanguine individuals are typically recognized for their excellent communication skills, extroverted nature, and enthusiastic attitude. They often present with angular facial features, prominent noses, and broad smiles. Triangular-shaped teeth, in which the incisal edge is wider mesiodistally than the cervical third, are considered harmonious with their energetic and lively personality.

Melancholic (Sensitive): Melancholic individuals are generally empathetic, organized, and thoughtful, yet may also appear shy or reserved. Their facial form is commonly oval, with closely positioned teeth and eyes, reflecting an introspective personality and a tendency toward perfectionism.

Phlegmatic (Pacifist): Phlegmatic individuals are known for their calm, diplomatic, and composed nature. They often display discretion, patience, and spirituality. Their faces are usually round or

square, often accompanied by heavy eyelids and fuller lips, which reinforce their peaceful and gentle demeanor. Square-shaped teeth are believed to complement these facial characteristics.

Recognizing these associations enables dental professionals to personalize treatment planning so that smile design not only improves esthetics but also aligns with the patient’s natural temperament and personality. Such an individualized approach can enhance self-expression, confidence, and overall patient satisfaction

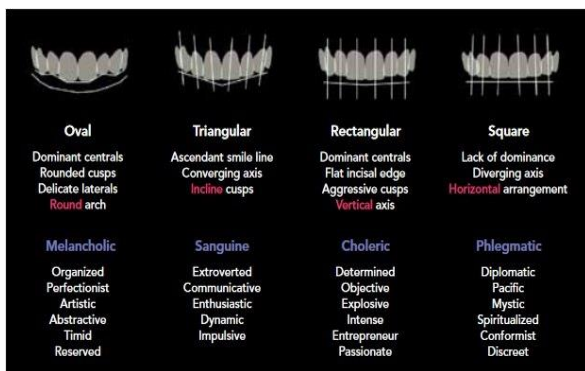


Figure 1: Relationship of smile characteristics and temperaments by Hippocrates

Visual Identity of Smile (VIS) / Individual Visual Smile Identity (IVS)

In the concept of Visagism, the smile is regarded as far more than a cosmetic enhancement. It is considered a unique expression of individuality, carefully designed to harmonize with the colour, shape, and size of the teeth, as well as their functional relationship within the stomatognathic system. This comprehensive perspective gives rise to the concept of **Visual Identity of Smile (VIS)** or

Individual Visual Smile Identity (IVS), in which specific smile designs are selected to reflect both the clinician’s professional assessment and the patient’s personal expectations. These designs are tailored to correspond with the patient’s facial features and personality, creating a smile that appears natural and personally meaningful.^{3,16}

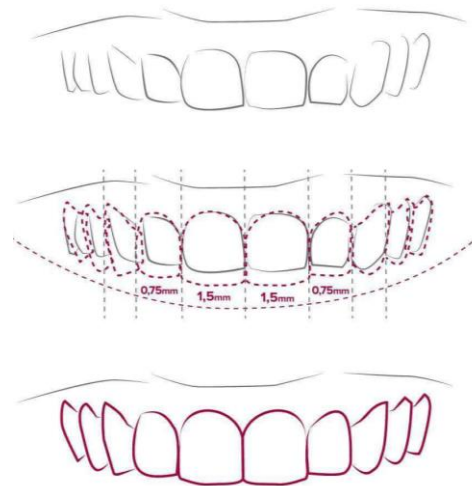


Figure 2: Visual identity of Smile

When patients attend consultations with photographs or references of their desired smile, clinicians need to explore the reasons behind these preferences. In many cases, such choices are influenced not only by aesthetic appeal but also by the emotions, confidence, or personality traits that the smile seems to represent. Therefore, understanding the psychological motivation behind these requests is essential in treatment planning.^{7,13}

However, reproducing or closely approximating a requested smile may present challenges. Factors such as facial proportions, existing dental conditions, anatomical limitations, and possible

contraindications can restrict the ability to achieve identical results. In some situations, fulfilling the patient's expectations completely may be difficult or unrealistic.

By acknowledging these complexities, dental professionals can approach smile design with empathy, clinical expertise, and clear communication. This patient-centered approach allows practitioners to create smiles that go beyond superficial beauty and genuinely reflect the identity of the individual. Ultimately, it enhances patient satisfaction, strengthens the emotional connection between the person and their smile, and contributes positively to overall well-being.¹⁹

Psychosocial Impact of Aesthetics and Dental Health

Beauty is inherently subjective and is influenced by multiple factors such as age, social background, culture, and media exposure. Within this broad context, dental aesthetics play an important role in an individual's life, significantly affecting self-perception and social interactions. The appearance of the teeth and smile can influence how a person feels about themselves and how they are perceived by others, thereby contributing positively or negatively to the overall quality of life.¹⁸

Personal experiences and prevailing social standards strongly shape self-image, which can create challenges during dental treatment planning aimed at improving smile aesthetics. Patients often arrive with strong expectations regarding the desired outcome, and these expectations may sometimes

outweigh professional recommendations.² Cultural ideals and media portrayals of beauty further influence these perceptions, with many patients presenting photographs of celebrities or media personalities as references for their preferred smile.

Discrimination based on physical appearance, including dental aesthetics, can occur in various social settings and may have lasting psychological consequences from an early age. Research suggests that dissatisfaction with smile appearance can contribute to social exclusion or negative experiences, even within healthcare environments. Such issues are often intensified by unrealistic beauty standards and judgments from others. However, an individual's self-confidence and emotional resilience also play an important role in determining how they perceive and respond to such experiences.^{1,9}

It is essential to recognize that discrimination in any form is unacceptable and represents a violation of human dignity and human rights. Therefore, society and healthcare professionals must promote inclusive, respectful environments in which individuals feel valued and accepted regardless of physical appearance.

Aesthetic Parameters of the Smile

Although beauty is subjective, certain objective factors contribute to the attractiveness of a smile. Important dental elements include the colour, surface texture, shape, proportion, and alignment of the teeth. In addition, the gingival tissues and

overall facial features significantly influence smile harmony and aesthetics.¹⁷

Among all teeth, the maxillary central incisors are particularly important because they attract the greatest visual attention during smiling. Their position, symmetry, alignment, incisal edge form, and relationship with adjacent teeth are major considerations in smile evaluation. The presence or absence of interdental spaces and embrasures also affects overall appearance.

Smile height, which refers to the amount of gingival display during smiling, is another key determinant of attractiveness. A medium smile line, showing approximately 0–2 mm of gingiva in the maxillary region, is generally considered most esthetic. Excessive gingival display (high smile line) or minimal tooth and gingival display (low smile line) may be perceived as less attractive depending on the individual case.



Figure 3: Aesthetic parameters of smile

By understanding these objective parameters, dental professionals can accurately assess smile esthetics and plan treatments accordingly. Considering not only the teeth but also the surrounding

gingiva and facial proportions enables clinicians to create balanced, harmonious smiles that improve both appearance and patient confidence.

Discussion

The studies of Paolucci, Rodrigues de Holanda, and López-Rodríguez collectively highlight the significant influence of smile aesthetics on an individual’s life. Their findings consistently indicate that the characteristics of a smile can reflect a person’s emotions, personality, and sense of self-identity. Alvarez-Ramirez further describes aesthetics as elements capable of evoking feelings and impressions in observers, emphasizing the role of nonverbal communication in expressing temperament and personality through the smile.^{5,6} Similarly, research from Bangor University demonstrated that humans possess a natural ability to distinguish genuine smiles from forced expressions, reinforcing the importance and authenticity of facial communication.

Although the role of physical attractiveness in social relationships remains a debated subject, Carbajal and Klages reported that perceived beauty has a direct association with quality of life, self-esteem, and social success. This perspective also reflects the existence of societal preferences toward attractive appearances, while Morales-Domínguez emphasized that standards of beauty are strongly influenced by cultural, educational, and socioeconomic factors.^{6,18}

Within the framework of Visagism in dentistry, lines and archetypal geometric

forms are considered a universal visual language capable of conveying emotions and personality traits. Paolucci and Gürel explained that disharmony between an individual's facial features and smile may lead to dissatisfaction or discomfort, highlighting the need for aesthetic treatments that achieve harmony between appearance and identity.^{14,16}

The ancient temperament theory of Hippocrates provides an additional basis for relating physical characteristics to behavioural and personality traits, thereby guiding smile design concepts. Rambabu expanded this idea through the concept of the Visual Identity of Smile, which is founded on principles of universal visual communication.

To achieve ideal and comprehensive outcomes in smile aesthetics, a multidisciplinary approach is essential. Psychology plays an important role in understanding the patient's temperament, personality, expectations, and the psychosocial impact of appearance on daily life. As emphasized by Paolucci, Klages, and Arenas-Sánchez, collaboration between dentistry and psychology helps ensure that treatment outcomes improve not only physical appearance but also emotional well-being and self-confidence.^{4,18}

Conclusion

Visagism offers a holistic and patient-centered approach to aesthetic dental treatment by harmonizing smile design with the patient's facial characteristics, personality, and identity. By adopting this

philosophy, dental professionals can work within a multidisciplinary framework to achieve more individualized and meaningful treatment outcomes.

The distinctive traits associated with each temperament, as originally described by Hippocrates, may be reflected in the form of the smile arc, dental morphology, and surrounding soft tissues. Understanding these relationships enables clinicians to better anticipate patient expectations and design smiles that align with their individuality.

Orofacial aesthetics significantly influence self-esteem, confidence, and interpersonal relationships, and may contribute either to social inclusion or discrimination. By recognizing the psychological dimensions of smile design, professionals can create results that authentically represent the patient's personality, emotions, and temperament.

Although discrimination and stereotyping remain broader social concerns, the effects of physical appearance on psychological health and social interactions cannot be ignored. Therefore, multidisciplinary treatment planning that includes psychological support and evaluative tools such as the PIDAQ questionnaire can be valuable in addressing patient concerns regarding appearance and in managing communication or social difficulties.

Ultimately, Visagism encourages dental professionals to consider the complete well-being of their patients. It promotes the creation of authentic, harmonious smiles that enhance not only physical attractiveness but

also emotional security, social confidence, and overall quality of life.

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