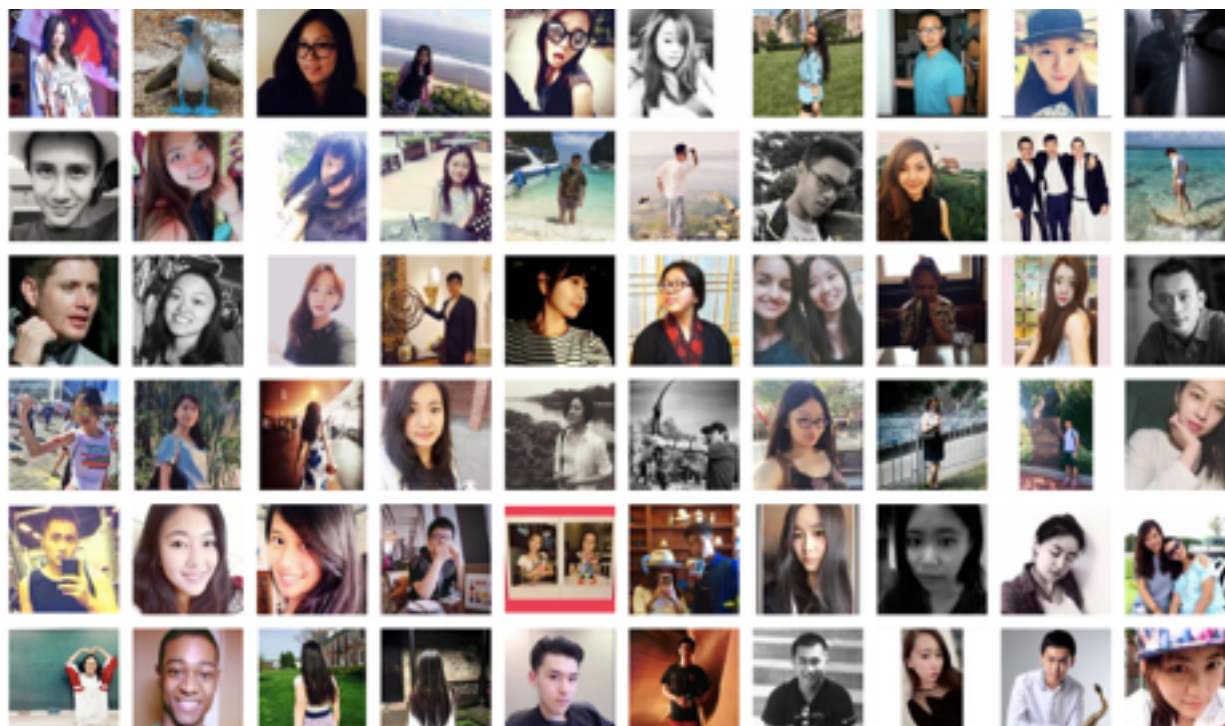Profile photo, the first thing we'll notice when we add someone on social media, is highly important to show what s person wants to tell others about he/herself. Before this project, I thought people normally like to show the positive side of their lives on social media. Thus their profile photos are likely to be smiling and in bright color, maybe use filters to make them look better.
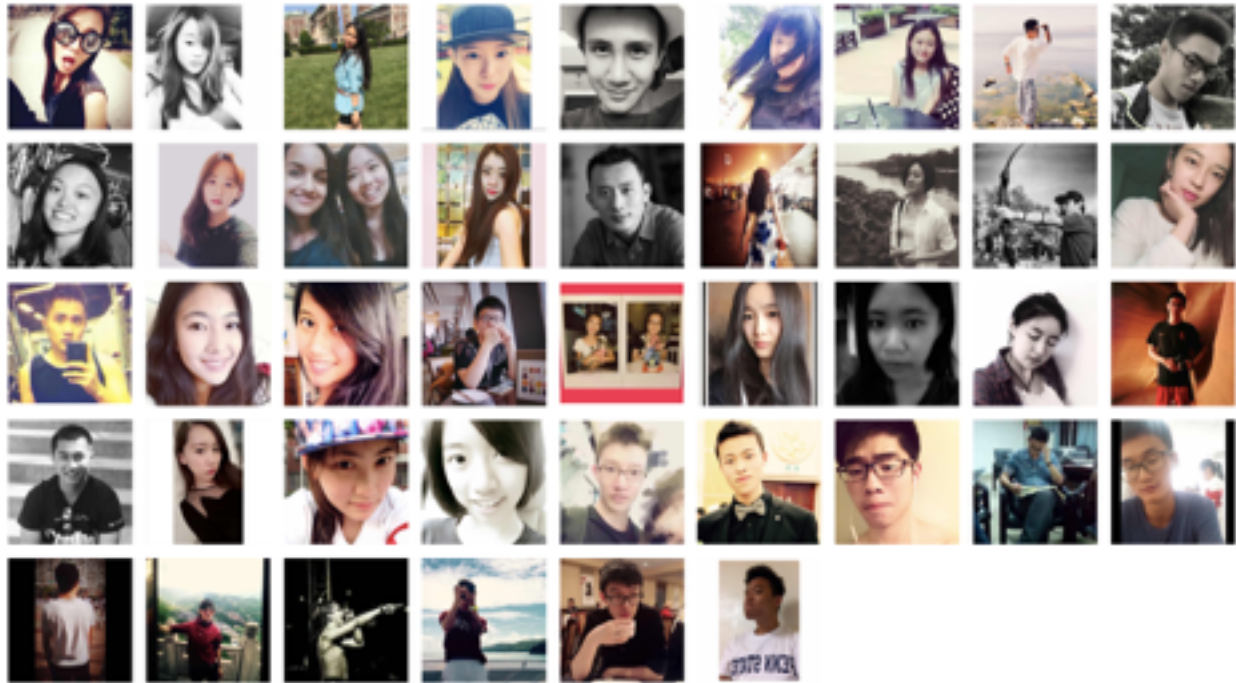
So I randomly chose 75 profile photos of my friends from Wechat.

First I counted how many of these profile pictures include smile. Surprisingly, only 25, which is approximately 32%, of them are smiling. This percentage is far lower than I expected.

Then I counted how many of them used filters, or obviously used photoshop to edit the picture and I counted 42, which is 54.5%, a little bit more than a half.

Instead of picking colorful profile photos or making them brighter, some people choose to make the color duller or even black and white. In fact, 10 of the 42 people's profile photo is in dull color.

These results are quite different from what I expected. Most of the posts I see every day is very passionate and my friends on Wechat all seem so positive. It is true that looking at those 25 smiling avatars makes people feel delighted. My profile photo also shows me smiling so I jumped to the conclusion that happy people use happy profile photos. However, only 32% of the profile photos are "smiling" means people chose their profile photo base on other factors.

I know most of my "subjects" so I can tell that many of their avatars are actually more good-looking that the real persons. Especially those who use filters or photoshopped heavily. This leads me to think that "how do I look on this photo" is the primary question people ask when choosing avatars rather than "what will people think of my character through this photo".

But only a bit more than a half people uses photo-editing techniques(or uses them in an obvious way so that I can tell) is still not enough evidence to draw a conclusion. Maybe people just want to show the downside of themselves in the avatar. Maybe they just feel like choosing one specific photo. More deeper research is needed I can tell How and Why people choose their profile photos.