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THE USE OF INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT IN CONSTRUCTING THE CONCEPT OF BEAUTY: A CASE ON “UNPAD GEULIS”

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ABSTRACT

New media is an Internet based media using sophisticated computers and mobile phones. One of them is IG or Instagram having more than 800 million users from across the world. In IG there are quite a lot of new phenomena appearing and one of them in Indonesia is an account for beautiful students such as ‘UNPAD GEULIS’ in which such an account has more than 87,000 followers. This research aims to understand how ‘UNPAD GEULIS’ constructs concept of beauty through its Instagram account. The researchers also wanted to find out what kind of beauty standard used for selecting pictures to be uploaded on the account. This is a qualitative research which used a structured interview with the account owner of ‘UNPAD GEULIS’ to get the data needed. The result has shown that ‘UNPAD GEULIS’ indirectly constructs the concept of beauty by uploading pictures through 5 steps such as the recommendation, good Instagram feeds, beauty standard, achievements, and request of permission.

INTRODUCTION

Beauty is something that has consistently been related with women (Spade and Valentine, 2011). Normally, women are additionally portrayed as exceptionally regular, which implies that women are delicate, kind, understanding and consistently focus on their appearance. Hernández-Julian and Peters (2015) affirmed that appearance is viewed as significant for most women. With all facilities at present accessible, women can go through a specific measure of cash so as to look wonderful. Be that as it may, every individual has his/her own excellence standard on how they classify the word beautiful. Franklin Electronics Publishers (2010) defined the word beauty originates from Middle English and it was initially from the old French, which is *beauté*. The word *beauté* implies physical allure, goodness, and graciousness.

Numerous women get roused to change their appearance so as to look excellent subsequent to investigating social media. There is a solid and exact perception to help the thought that presentation of self-observations in conventional media (for example magazines and television) impacts women and lead to a feeling that an ideal body ought to be a thin sort of body (Mills et al., 2017). Sources of motivation for women are mainstream media as well as new media for example social media, blogs, or websites. Social media at that point become an operator in spreading the idea of beauty for women.

Belinska (2018) noticed that there are a few social media that are as yet utilized by many individuals, for example, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and including Instagram (an application for sharing photographs and recordings). DeMers from Forbes.com (2017) clarifies that Instagram has been one of the continually creating social networking sites since the day it came up. Throughout the year 2018, Instagram has got more than 1 billion dynamic users (Statista, 2018). There are numerous new phenomena rising in public, for example, online shops, nourishments, health, spots, and beauty industry which influence the ascending of Instagram celebrities (who are considered as new sort of celebrities) or they are additionally notable as *selebgram* and furthermore also social media influencers.

One of the phenomena is *akun mahasiswa cantik*, which means an account filled with pictures of beautiful students from several universities in Indonesia. The accounts are @ugmcantik (140.8K followers), @unpad.geulis (87K followers), @unj.cantik (19.5K followers), and @mercucantik (5.9K followers). The concept of those accounts is just similar: posting pictures of those individuals who are considered beautiful studying at universities. Thus, the presence of Instagram somehow has made created a beauty-measuring device. In this case, the researcher will discuss the account of *UNPAD GEULIS* in order to find out what kind of beauty standard that is used for selecting the pictures that will be uploaded on the Instagram account of *UNPAD GEULIS*.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Beauty and Media

News sources, for example, papers, magazines, radio, TV, and including online networking, share countless pictures and recordings that contain unreasonable beauty (Lewallen & Behm-Morawitz, 2016). The photographs that exist via social media appeared to act naturally picture and life parameters, including perfect body weight (Samosir, 2015). Payne (2017) emphasizes that the perfect appearance of men and women has been publicized through social media since forever.

The impact given to the audience is a perfect or ideal beauty that says, "slender is excellent", and this makes individuals attempt to assess and change their appearance like what they see on social media (Mills et al., 2017). Further that Mills et al., (2017) found that as a rule, women need their appearance to be in understanding of (1) what others believe is appealing and (2) how normal individual resembles. Besides, Mills et al., (2017) clarified that it happens on account of pictures (which are viewed as beautiful) that are appeared by the media persistently. Therefore, Obiora (2018) states that these pictures truly build a beauty concept in public and offer effects on individuals on how they see themselves. As a result of that, people

have wound up battling over their personality due to the beauty that is exposed by the social media, which maybe have some unrealistic beauty standards.

Beauty Campaign Through Social Media

A research conducted by Dove in 2010 found that only 4% who see themselves as pretty women. From that point forward, Dove continues making beauty campaign so as to support women's confidence (Dove, n.d). In 2004, Dove made a campaign on television by Stephanie Betts entitled "Real Beauty Campaign". The campaign attempted to show women that what they see on the television and Magazines is not a reality (Dove, n.d). Dove's beauty campaign was not just conducted through conventional media, but social media as well by utilizing hashtags, for example, #NoLikesNeeded, #WeAreBeautiful #SpeakBeautiful (Twitter) and #InMyOwnSkin on Instagram (Pugna, 2017). Despite the fact that dove utilizes some social media for their campaign, Scott (2018) describes that Dove settled on a generally excellent choice to pick Instagram for their @InOurOwnSkin (#InMyOwnSkin) campaign. The message of the campaign is to urge individuals to be agreeable and confidence with their skin, which they called as genuine beauty. Pugna (2017) notes that Dove has been successful in utilizing social media in accomplishing their mission.

In Indonesia, Dove additionally made the same campaign to what they did in the U.S.A. in 2005, which is the Real Beauty Campaign (Unilever, 8/17/2018). Concurring with the 73rd Indonesian Independence Day celebration, Dove took an idea from the spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) to deliver the campaign and named it #CantikSatukanKita (Unilever, 8/17/2018). This alludes to the research report entitled Indonesia Research Confidence Report 2017 (Mecadinisa, 2018). Widiyarti (2018) records that Ira Novianti as the Personal Care Director of Unilever Indonesia described that Dove intentionally did the research on the meaning of beauty involving 300 respondents. The result has demonstrated 92% of Indonesian women concur that every woman has her own definition of beauty, and 86% of them likewise concur that women can look pretty at any age (Unilever, 8/17/2018). However, 84% of Indonesian women still do not realize how beautiful they truly are, and 72%

of Indonesian women are convinced that certain beauty standards provide significant influence for their life success.

Ideal Beauty

As noted in Philip Global Beauty Index (2017), there is no common description that can portray the term beauty precisely. Groupworl (2012) states that face is considered as one of the most significant angles while evaluating the beauty of a women. Furthermore, Groupworld adds that over 80% of women said that having an pretty face is significant to make them simpler to find a job and to discover a life partner. In spite of the fact that face is viewed as significant for women, Belinska, (2018) remind that women have been continually trying their best of having that ideal body.

Beauty in Indonesia

Wolf (as cited by Septiyani, 2017) noted that the most significant part of beauty of women is their face and the best excellence is white complexion, symmetrical face, splendid eyes, pointy nose, and straight wonderful hair. Septiyani (2017) characterizes Indonesian beauty such as skin shading (Indonesian white/straight yellow), face shape (oval, balanced, no pimples), eyes (wide eyes/not inclined, splendid), eyebrows (not thick), fingers (small or potentially sharp), streaming hair. Besides beautiful face, things that are remembered for the talk of excellence are the perfect body size, for example, a fit and thin body. Furthermore, Indonesian women who have bright skin are implied as beautiful due to numerous women wishing to have such skin. In view of Vaccaro and Camba-Kelsay (as refered to in Septiyani, 2017) 'white' has become the prevailing outlook that is considered as emblematic of the pinnacle of beauty.

Sociocultural Influence

Sociocultural impact is a theory from psychology that centres around improvement of people in society (Cherry, 2018). What's more, Cherry (2018) contends that sociocultural talks about the linkage of human interaction and the society where they live in. As indicated by Thompson and Heinberg (as referred to in Bertilsson and Gillberg, 2017), the most

remarkable impact causing body disappointment is sociocultural one. Perloff (2014) clarifies that the advancement of self-perception and sporadic dietary patterns are brought about by the sociocultural through social media. Perloff additionally contends that this theory is interconnected with body disappointment by building perfect beauty concept, which is influenced by different social impacts. Dittmar et al. (as referred to in Bertilsson and Gillberg, 2017) describe that sociocultural impact is the root of perfect idea due to its convincing pressure from the general public.

New Media & Characteristics

New media are varied and quite hard to define but still those new media are interesting to talk about. Anything related with Internet such as World Wide Web (WWW), online news, broadcasting, information searches and including social media, are new media and this terminology refers to large-scale changes in media production, media distribution and media use that are technological, textual, conventional and cultural (McQuail, 2010; Turow, 2019).

1. Martin Lister et al (2009: 13-14) states that there are five characteristics: digital, interactive, hypertext, virtual and simulation. **Digital:** the term new media refers to digital media where all data are processed and stored in numeric form and output is stored in the form of digital discs;
2. **Interactive:** this characteristic allows users to interact with each other and allow users to be directly involved in changes in the image or text they access;
3. **Hypertext:** text that is able to connect with other texts outside the existing text;
4. **Virtual:** this characteristic is related to efforts to realize a virtual world created by involvement in an environment built with computer graphics and digital video;
5. **Simulation:** simulation is not much different from virtual. This character is related to the creation of an artificial world made through certain models.

Social Media (Social Networking Sites)

Social media (Social Networking Site or SNS) is a medium for associating with one another online that permits people to cooperate with one another without being constrained by space and time (Turow, p. 178, 2011). Kietzmann et al., (2011) as quoted in Mulyati (2014) elaborates social media is an online media, wherein clients can make an online personality, to build up connections just as to make and to impart substance to a specific topic. These new types of media are changing the manner in which individuals disguise guidelines of excellence and the manners in which they attempt to control others' view of their appearance. As previously mentioned, this study will concentrate more on a platform of social media - Instagram.

Instagram, a mobile application, is a computer-based software made to help individuals who utilize a smart phone to do a specific task (Turow, 2011; 2019). Instagram is an online networking that is now well known worldwide (Moreau, 2018). Moreau then records that this application has 800 million users from over the world. Putranto, (2017) mentions that Instagram originates from two words, Insta and Gram. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explains that social media, based on Web 2.0 technology, makes its users simple to take an interest, make and trade content. NapoleonCat.com, (2018) records that in October 2018 there were more than 60 million users of Instagram in Indonesia, consisting of 49.5% ladies and 50.5% men with 39% of them were at the age of 18-24.

Instagram features

Instagram has experienced a complete transformation from the operating system app and it is still growing with new features (Bellinska, 2018). With the increasing features available on Instagram such as Insta Story, Instagram has, now, more fun. Instagram users can share their stories on Insta Story that can be seen for 24 hours, therefore this can trigger students to open the instagram more often (Zakirah, 2018)

On Instagram, besides uploading photos and videos, users can also edit their photos and videos before uploading them, this is because Instagram has a filter feature that can edit photos or videos by giving certain effects to our choice so that photos that have been posted

will look more beautiful and attractive. Filters in Instagram are one of the important points in building a brand image (Arshad, 2014).

Cultivation Theory

Gerbner (as referred to in Nevzat, 2018) contends that cultivation theory or cultivation analysis is one of the theories discussing the aggregate impact of mass media, which study the connection between mass media exposure, for example, TV, to the convictions and mentalities of audience of this present reality. Despite the fact that Gerbner believes that this theory is best actualized in conventional media for example TV, yet Nevzat (2018) says that it is still relevant to get applied to social media. This is due to a reason that Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Snapchat Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and Youtube are thought to have shaped how individuals see the world as though what they find in the media is true. Therefore, what they have consumed from such media may lead to opinion and perception creation, in return.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher has used qualitative methodology because according to Hashemnezhad (2015) qualitative research is more flexible and allows the study as well as the researcher to be spontaneous and adaptation of interactions between researchers and participants. This flexibility can be seen from the use of open questions that encourage participants to respond freely according to their opinion. The response given by the informant is also not only limited to "yes" or "no" answers. On the other hand, the relationship between researchers and participants is not formal but tends to be relaxed and intimate.

This study uses qualitative methods where the approach used is the phenomenology approach. It seeks to capture various problems that exist in the community and reveals the meaning contained in them

The paradigm for this study applies constructivism paradigm. The researcher tries to understand the behavior of human nature behavior. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018) constructivism paradigm explains that paradigm is a representation of someone's point of view based on a belief to find an answer based on a reality, the nature of researchers with the object of research, and how researchers can find out the reality.

The main object of this research is the Instagram account of *UNPAD GEULIS*. Using the instagram account of *UNPAD GEULIS*, the researcher aims to find out how the account owner of *UNPAD GEULIS* use instagram to construct the meaning of beauty. The data were collected by interviewing the account owner of *UNPAD GEULIS*.

Secondary data are obtained from various literatures, which were news in the mass media including social media, articles or journals and reference books.

Key informant was considered as the source that has capability and authority to give their knowledge as the data for the research. The key informant of this research is the account owner of Instagram account *UNPAD GEULIS*. The key informant will answer the questions given by the researcher in order to answer the research question.

Coding process was used to categorize the interview verbatim into a certain category based on the answer from the informant. The result of the coding process was used in data analysis. For this research, the researcher used *in vivo coding*.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Until now, *UNPAD GEULIS* has uploaded more than 900 photos. Those images have gone through the selection process, which is solely done by the account owner, so the uploading process is not done randomly. There are several criteria that must be fulfilled until the photos can be posted on the Instagram account *UNPAD GEULIS*. The account owner explained that there were several steps before the photo was uploaded, such as:

1) Recommendation

The student whose photo will be uploaded should be the student of Unpad. There should be a recommendation given by, at least, of 5 to 10 people. The recommendation is collected through the direct message on Instagram, mentioned in the comment section and E-mail.

2) Good Instagram Feed

After receiving the recommendation, the account owner will take a look at candidates' profiles. Since he is a photographer, his appraisal will be how good the Instagram feed is. It means the candidates should have an interesting feed, neat, and have high quality pictures. For the account owner, it is important for the candidates to have a very good Instagram feed. Ganta (2019) explains that a good Instagram feed is expected to gain people's attention and a theme will be good for the feed by having the same tone color in order to be the identity for the account owner.

3) The Beauty Standard

After looking at the candidates' feed, the account owner of *UNPAD GEULIS* will rate their physical beauty. He said that an ideal body is one of his appraisals when selecting those candidates. He explained that ideal body is medium size, which means it should be in between. For the face appraisal, he mentioned that the candidates should be pretty. In the sense of beauty means light skin color, clean, straight healthy hair, and hard to get bored to stare at. Of course, not all women in this world have those features. Especially, Indonesian women who were born with different background of ethics, which makes the definition of beauty is different in every place all over Indonesia.

4) Achievements

Besides physical beauty, the candidates are also evaluated based on their academic or social achievements such as *Abang-None*, *Mojang-Jajaka*, *Puteri Indoneisa* etc. Such an achievement will have an added value for the appraisal. As explained by Dove (Dara, 2018), it is important to achieve something in a lifetime, therefore women should have the spirit on

achieving dreams like Kartini. A woman should develop her skills according to what they like to do because that is where the real beauty radiated.

5) **Asking for Permission**

After passing a number of assessments from the account owner of *UNPAD GEULIS*, the candidates will be asked for permission whether the picture can be uploaded to the account or not. *UNPAD GEULIS* will not upload the photo without permission. Even though previously *UNPAD GEULIS* had uploaded without permission, which triggered protests from the people concerned. Since then *UNPAD GEULIS* has never uploaded photos without permission. Considering the law from *Peraturan Menteri (Permen) nomor 20/2016* that says: '*bahwa mengunggah atau mengambil foto atau data orang lain dari perangkat elektronik, harus berdasarkan persetujuan pemiliknya.*' Unfortunately, the regulation is still limited, sanctions that may be given are only administrative to the social media platform, not to the personal account owner. Regrettably, until now there are no regulations that discuss the protection of personal data on social media.

Beauty Standard Constructed by *UNPAD GEULIS*

By looking at the campaign held by Dove a few years ago, the Dove self-esteem campaign found that more than 50% of teenagers had very low self-esteem (Dara, 2018). Silva (2017) said that it causes by social media consumption, which according to cultivation theory, this is possible to happen because the media become one of the strongest tools to cultivate something presented on social media (O'Brien, 2015). Therefore, Dove did a test to teenagers and asked them to draw what ideal girl looked like. According to Dara (2018), The answers given by each group are quite diverse, but all the answers are almost the same. Ideal for them means lean bodies, healthy hair, pretty eyelashes, reddish lips, and smooth skin. It proves that most women always think that there is only one beauty standard; light skin color, lean body, and straight hair. Hence, Dove made a beauty campaign called #CantikSatukanKita to show that there is actually no such thing as "beauty standard" (figure 3.5). According to Dove,

beauty cannot be measured by only one beauty measurement (Dara, 2018). Also considering the beauty of Indonesian women is various.

Figure 3.5 #CantikSatukanKita campaign by Dove



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPfruKKXot8>

In this case, *UNPAD GEULIS* has pictured beautiful women with features of a woman who has light skin, lean body, and straight hair. This can be seen from all the pictures that have been uploaded to *UNPAD GEULIS*. Since the beginning, *UNPAD GEULIS* has never uploaded a picture of women who have curly hair or dark skin tone. The pictures below are the comparison of the beginning (2015) of *UNPAD GEULIS* (figure 3.6) and the current pictures (2019) (figure 3.7)

As seen on the figures, there are no changes at all between the old and the current *UNPAD GEULIS*. The features of the women are still remaining the same because *UNPAD GEULIS* still uses their own beauty standard for all their photos. This means that *UNPAD GEULIS* so far has not **re-constructed** the concept of beauty but more likely to construct a beauty standard against the beauty of Indonesian women. Based on one of Dove beauty campaigns #CantikSatukan kita, they declared: "Selama ini Dove mencari satu wajah yang mewakili kecantikan wanita Indonesia, tapi kami tak temukan satupun, melainkan banyak. Karena dengan keragaman Indonesia, kecantikan tidak bisa diwakili hanya dengan

satu wajah. Beragam kecantikan, satu Indonesia.” it means that there is no specific beauty standard for Indonesian women. The beauty standard is in the diversity itself.

Figure 3.6 UNPAD *GEULIS* old posts



Figure 3.7 UNPAD *GEULIS* recent posts



Since *UNPAD GEULIS* only use one beauty standard, the beauty presented in *UNPAD GEULIS* does not rule out the possibility to decrease the number of its follower's low self-esteem, considering the followers of *UNPAD GEULIS* almost reach 90,000 people who come from different ethnicities. It seems that the word *geulis* (*pretty, Sundanese*) used by the account owner only to represent women having light skin tone, lean type of body and beautiful straight hair. *UNPAD GEULIS* has constructed the beauty standard that likely affects their follower's perception about the concept of beauty. Unfortunately, Bertillson & Gillberg (2017) remind people of such perception, which may lead people to obtain the unattainable beauty which can cause anxiety and body dissatisfaction.

In this research, the researchers have found another finding which actually becomes the (hidden) agenda of this account behind the beautiful faces of those women presented in

UNPAD GEULIS: objectification using photo of female students of Unpad by *UNPAD GEULIS* account owner.

The Objectification of *UNPAD GEULIS*

The female body is often exposed by the media as objects that can be traded, with reciprocity in the form of rating, profit, increase in mass media users and so on (Nayahi, 2015). In Indonesia, it is very common that advertisements only highlight physical beauty of women rather than their intelligence or achievements (Sari, Sudrajat, & Wahyuni, 2016). In this case, *UNPAD GEULIS* uses women as objects indirectly, in the sense that *UNPAD GEULIS* has used photos of female students of this university as a way to earn financial profit. Fardouly, Willburger, & Vartanian (2017) explains that social media platforms like Instagram are associated to greater self-objectification.

UNPAD GEULIS began posting advertisements in 2015. Advertisers promoted their products on *UNPAD GEULIS*' Instagram account because it had more than 87,000 followers (per March 17th, 2019) and the number was still increasing as this research was written. Each ad costs Rp 250.000,- for a single post and the advertisement rate can continue to increase as the number of followers increases in *UNPAD GEULIS*. Advertisers are willing to advertise their products there due to the number of *UNPAD GEULIS* followers. Thus, there will be many people who will see the advertisements. It has been noted that there are 1 up to 3 ads per day in *UNPAD GEULIS*. Here are some examples of ads posted in *UNPAD GEULIS*:

Figure 3.8 Advertisement on *UNPAD GEULIS*



Source: @unpad.geulis

UNPAD GEULIS filters any products or services to be advertised in its account, not all advertisements are accepted. The account will only accept advertisements that do not violate the law. Most of the advertisements promotes food products, cafés, and residency (boarding houses).

With the existence of advertisement in *UNPAD GEULIS*, it has shown that women's beauty and body are objectified in order to gain a big amount of profit because of its content that displays the beauty of Unpad's female students who can attract people, especially men to follow the account. Thus, the number of their followers has grown really fast and it becomes a good chance for advertisers to promote their products.

CONCLUSION

To sums up, *UNPAD GEULIS* as an Instagram account having almost 90,000 followers has constructed the concept of beauty through 5 steps which are *recommendation, good Instagram feed, the beauty standards, the achievements and permission*. *UNPAD GEULIS* has been very consistent on uploading the female students of Unpad with similar features. It has been found out that besides posting Unpad's female students on *UNPAD GEULIS*, there is a hidden agenda that people might not know. Unpad Geulis is a business account under the guises of Unpad students' beautiful faces.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

For future research, the researchers recommend a further investigation on impacts of such an account on product branding or on its audience. This is due to rapid growth of social media platforms use in our society at the moment either in social interaction or in business activities.

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