



The representation of female beauty in the Instagram pageant lovers

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ABSTRACT

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The representation of female beauty in the beauty queen event is only associated with brain, beauty and behavior. Women are not only considered beautiful from the outside, but also need inner beauty through the beauty queen event. Pageant lovers as loyal supporters of the beauty queen event also represent female beauty through Instagram accounts, in addition to raising support and updating information about beauty pageants. This study aims to describe women's beauty represented by Instagram pageant lovers on social media. The research method uses the semiotic approach of Roland Barthes on Instagram accounts of pageant lovers, including @portalpageant.id, @pageantcrownwarriors, and @indopageant. The time span of the analyzed uploads was January to February 2023. The results showed that the representation of female beauty on the accounts of pageant enthusiasts contains a number of issues, namely that the standard of female beauty is relative with the caption Black Beauty. The issue of commercialization of women through the beauty pageant event can be seen from the disappointment of pageant lovers with the transfer of the license of the Puteri Indonesia Foundation (YPI) and the Miss Universe Philippines fundraiser.

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Introduction

The concept of female beauty has changed from time to time. In the past, physical beauty was always in the foreground, where women tried to achieve an ideal body and facial treatments were not cheap. Facial beauty and ideal body shape are a dream for women. Not only to be the center of attention, especially for the opposite sex, but also to get recognition and a sense of satisfaction when praised by others. Not surprisingly, there are some women who feel "insecure" because their bodies are different from society's standards of beauty. In fact, quite a few women are willing to spend money to improve their appearance, including achieving an ideal body.

Instagram is one of the social media with the fourth most popular among people around the world, including Indonesia. Referring to the We Are Social report as of January 2020, it shows as many as 89.15 million users, of which Indonesia is the fourth country with the highest number of Instagram users in the world. Thus, Instagram certainly has a massive impact on its users. Users can share moments in the form of photos and videos, including reels, which are now increasingly preferred. Instagram also determines the beauty standards that exist in society, considering how women are portrayed through social media, namely Instagram.

According to Ayustin (2019), the concept of millennial women's beauty is also not only based on what looks beautiful on the outside, but inner beauty also supports the concept of beautiful millennial women. Therefore, the representation of women through social media has a significant impact on the concept of women's beauty in general. Given the changing standards of beauty, social media has a significant impact on how women are portrayed. Conversely, women can also feel insecure about normative concepts of beauty

and concepts of beauty that are reproduced through social media, including Instagram.

Often, women are always shown with many followers because of their beauty and sexy body shape, regardless of the content uploaded. However, the standard of beauty is seen as a relativity in which the standard of beauty between one woman and another will be different. This is in line with Harper and Choma's (2018) opinion that beauty standards are rooted in cultural norms that have been created by society and media over centuries, where predominantly white women in movies and advertisements lead to Eurocentric notions of beauty that give inferiority to women of color. At the same time, however, Instagram also displays universal standards of beauty, such as slim bodies, long legs, long hair, and clear skin.

The phenomenon of the beauty queen event, which is also displayed on social media, also contributes to the image of female beauty. Beautiful women are displayed with three general criteria such as brain, beauty and behavior. As Kanzulfikar (2019) said that there are new concepts and themes in the 2019 "Miss Universe", carrying the theme of 3B, which means brain, beauty and behavior in the concept of brain, Miss Universe finalists have a different focus, current general knowledge can educate people about customs and culture. Thus, each beauty queen event carries its own vision and mission, ranging from representing the diversity of female beauty from different parts of the world, to bringing peace issues by reducing violence and war, to bringing the issue of world climate change.

Women are not only required to be beautiful, but also required to have adequate knowledge. Contestants are required to have a good attitude, tough and beneficial to the surrounding environment including interest in social, cultural and environmental issues depending on the vision and mission of the beauty queen event to be followed.

Inevitably, the beauty pageant contestants must have the three criteria which are then often referred to as 3B, namely Brain, Beauty and Behavior.

Instagram social media is the easiest promotional media while mobilizing support for Indonesia's representatives in the women's beauty event. Pageant lovers as loyal supporters of the beauty queen event are also keen to seek support while imagining the beauty of Indonesian women. Instagram accounts that actively update information, activities, and participants in beauty queen events, including issues related to beauty pageants, are relatively common. There are a number of Instagram accounts that focus on supporting Indonesian beauty pageants, including @portalpageant.id with approximately 24,000 followers, @pageantcrownwarriors with 118,000 followers, and @indopageant with 208,000 followers.

The age of social media, especially Instagram, has also had an impact on how women are portrayed through beauty pageants. A number of very loyal pageant fans/pageant lovers have helped shape the concept of beauty through social media accounts. The photo of the uploaded female figure is liked not only by men but also by women. As if to reinforce beauty, women do not hesitate to compare themselves with others. In fact, pageant lovers also have the potential to compare beauty queen contestants with other idolized figures on Instagram; not infrequently, fellow pageant lovers also form both positive and negative opinions about idolized figures, in other words, "nyinyir."

With the existence of pageant lovers' social media accounts, how the representation of female beauty displayed by Instagram social media through images and captions changes. If previously the representation of female beauty was only associated with brain, beauty and behavior, then it needs to

be further investigated how then beauty is re-represented by social media Instagram pageant lovers. Therefore, the researchers are interested in describing "the representation of female beauty in Instagram pageant lovers".

Method

This research uses a semiotic approach of Roland Barthes, which analyzes signs and how they work, this thinking is based on Saussure's thinking about signs, which he divides into signifiers and signs, where Barthes' analysis is divided into several stages of analysis, namely denotation, connotation and myth. This hidden meaning is the meaning that, according to Barthes, is an area of ideology or mythology (Sobur, 2009: 69).

Denotation is the level of meaning that explains the relationship between signifier and signified, or between the sign and its reference to reality, which produces an explicit, direct and definite meaning. Meanwhile, connotation is the level of signification that explains the relationship between signifier and signified, in which a meaning operates that is not explicit, indirect, and uncertain (meaning open to all possibilities). Barthes created a map of how signs work (Cobley & Jansz, 1999 in Sobur, 2009: 69). The semiotic method or approach is used to deconstruct the meaning and myth of representation from photos, videos, and text in the form of captions uploaded from Instagram accounts of pageant enthusiasts, including lain@portalpageant.id, @pageantcrownwarriors, and @indopageant. The time span of uploads analyzed is January to February 2023.

In deconstructing myths and representations, signs become an important element to be interpreted, because researchers assume that the signs contained in the photo carry a dominant ideology,

which shows that in photos and other visual objects there are certain interests that try to be communicated to the public.

Results and Discussion

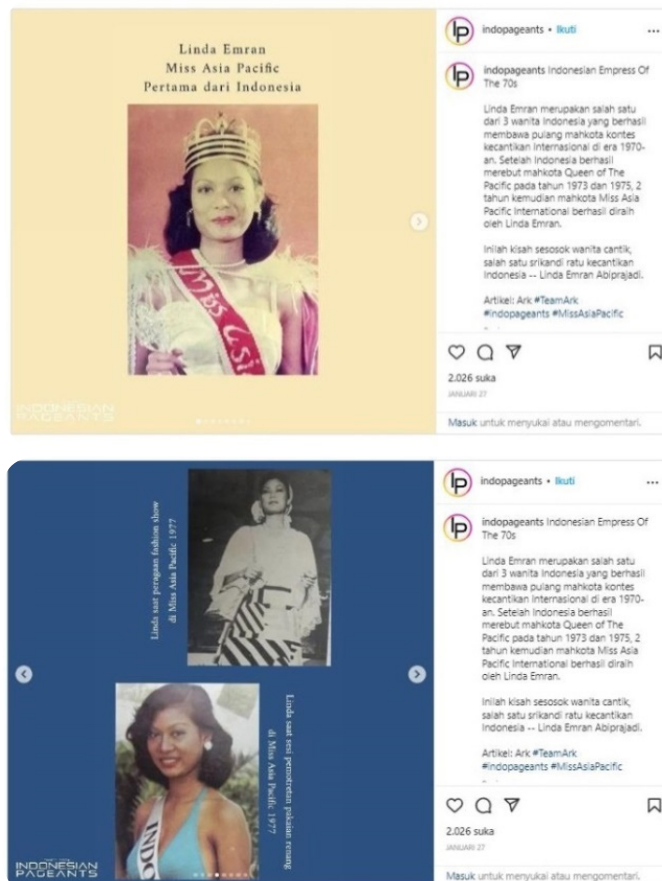
There are several beauty queen events such as Miss Universe, Miss Charm, Puteri Indonesia including the issue of transferring the Miss Universe license from Puteri Indonesia Foundation to JKN Group in a series of events highlighted by several pageant lovers Instagram accounts through a series of uploads, photos, videos and texts. The representation of women in pageant lovers Instagram accounts is not only about beauty queen contestants, but also includes a number of issues related to women. According to Mitchell (1999), through representation, people organize

the world and reality through the act of naming its elements. Signs are organized to form semantic constructions and expressive relationships. Instagram as a reality is able to shape actions and views related to female beauty.

Beauty standard relativism

Beauty pageants also have fanatical fans, especially in the age of social media. The image of beautiful women also needs to be built through the Instagram account of pageant lovers with thousands of followers. Thus, the meaning of beautiful tends to be relative to physical appearance from time to time. The following screenshot, posted on January 23, 2023 regarding Linda Emran is one of 3 Indonesian women who successfully brought home the Queen of the Pacific crown in 1977.

Picture 1.1. In Memoriam Linda Emran

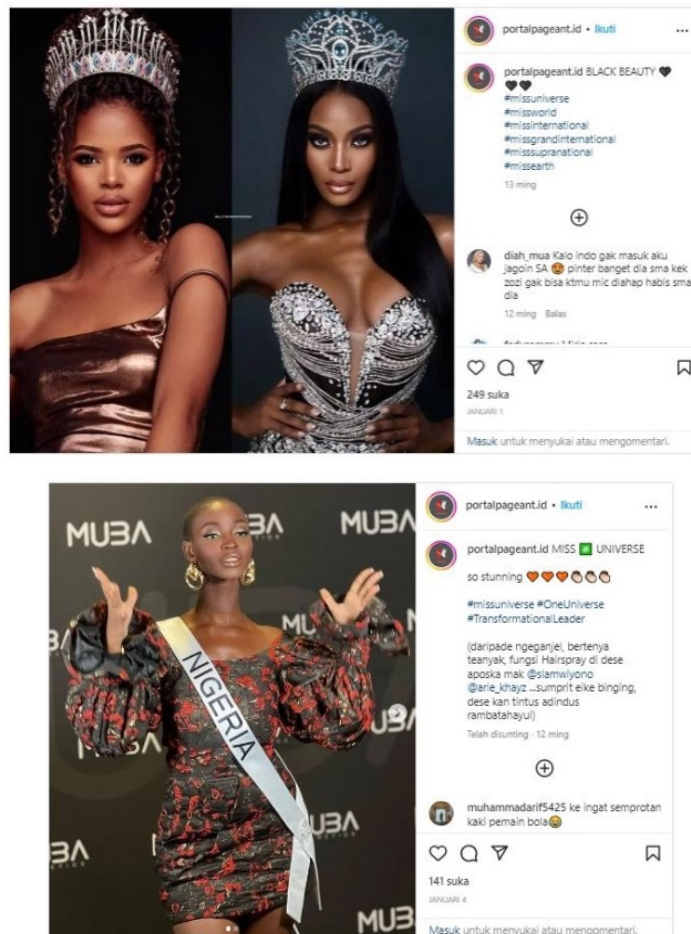


This is the story of a beautiful woman, one of Indonesia's beauty queens. Asian beauty representations at that time tended to be natural. Miss Asia Quest is the first and oldest Miss Asia Pacific International in Asia since 1968. It is based on physical appearance, namely wavy hair and brown skin at the time of the swimsuit photo shoot. The crown received tends to cover part of the skull with minimal decoration on the crown. The signifier that appears in the photo shows that Linda Emran naturally represents Indonesian women with wavy hair, oval face shape and brown skin. Thus, the denotation meaning of the photo is that the representation of Indonesian women in general is still natural, not much familiar with facial treatments as sophisticated as today. The connotation meaning of the photo of Linda Emran wearing the crown

shows that women at that time still seemed to be limited in their space and thoughts in general. When asked, "If you had the chance to be born again, what would you be? Linda Emran's answer was "I would like to be reborn as an angel". This means that by being born as an angel, she can certainly have many advantages in all contexts, both in terms of morality, intelligence and the ability to move as a woman.

The myth that women can only work in the domestic sphere, meek and mild, is still relevant in the modern era. Thus, the limited space for women in the public sphere is still relevant in the beauty queen event of the early 1970s. Linda Emran's figure at that time was able to break the beauty standards dominated by women with white skin and straight hair. Although beauty pageants were not common in 1977, Linda Emran was

Picture 1.2. Black Beauty and Miss Nigeria



able to become an inspiring figure for young women in a public sphere where some women still had limited space.

Beauty relativism can also be seen in the Instagram posts of a participant representing Miss Universe Nigeria on January 4, 2023 and January 1, 2023. The depiction of the beauty of black women with the caption "Black Beauty" is both a sign and a form of support for pageant lovers, not only for the beauty queen finalists from Indonesia.

Furthermore, the marker of this post shows that the representation of beauty according to pageant lovers does not only look at certain races and skin colors. Beauty has a universal meaning that is not based on one standard of beauty. Black women with straight hair, curly hair, and even short hair can have extraordinary beauty.

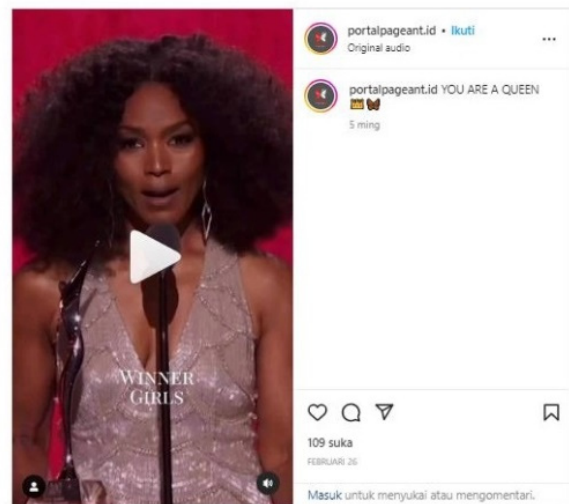
The representation of beauty standards through Instagram media now also seems to be not limited to women's skin color, face shape, and hair type. Beauty pageants also play a role in the campaigning of beauty standards. Women are only represented with the dominance of certain beauty standards in mainstream media such as television, magazines, movies, including advertisements. The caption Black Beauty is both a jargon and a signifier for a form of support for beauty queens from other countries. The signifier tends to mean positively that any woman with high self-confidence and abilities, later referred to as inner beauty, has indeed broken the existing beauty standards. In the realm of myth, the real beauty standards depend on most media industries.

Campaign body positivity

Another form of pageant lovers' support for women is with positive affirmations as an effort to love themselves more. This can be seen in the February 26, 2023 motivational affirmation sentence post by an Angela

Basset, who received the Icon Award at the 2019 Black Girls Rock awards, given to black women for their career achievements.

Picture 1.3. Angela Basset's Speech on Black Girls Rock 2019



The signifier that appears when Basset speaks by displaying a firm gesture, smiling face and confidence. Basset also delivered motivational sentences and gave positive affirmations to women, "...so when you're told you're not good enough, you tell them, not only am I good enough, I am more than enough, and when they say you're not beautiful, you tell them that, you're the descendants of royalty and you're queen..." The audience's amazement and applause greeted Basset's thank you speech to everyone who has supported her throughout her career. On a mythical level, there are still not many women who call for body positivity because women are considered unattractive if they do not meet normative beauty standards that are limited to physical appearance.

Thus, women are born beautiful with all the physical forms they have and need to be supported by behavior and intelligence. Basset's acceptance speech motivates many women to not feel insecure about what they have, one of which is body positivity. Her

role as the Queen Mother in the film Black Panther made Angella Evelyn Bassett famous as a smart and strong African-American woman. Broadly speaking, the connotation meaning contained in the post wants to convey the message of body positivity to be more confident in body shape and size, skin color, gender and physical abilities to all Indonesian women. This is also consistent with the results of Kanzulfikar's (2019) research that the concept of inner beauty represents women not only physically beautiful on the outside, but also beautiful with enthusiasm, active and energetic, and promote "inner beauty". One of the inner beauties is high self-confidence.

Body positivity posts were also seen on the @pagecrownwarriors account on February 10, 2023 Puteri Indonesia East Java 2023, who advanced to the top three. Pictured are Nakhlah (Malang), Yasinta (Sidoarjo) and Renata (Surabaya). Nakhlah Vadaq, a graduate of Malang State University, did not expect to be selected as the second runner-up in the Puteri Indonesia East Java 2023 event. Nakhlah initially admitted that she was insecure and did not have the confidence to make it this far. The eldest of four siblings

arguably recorded a new history because she was the only finalist wearing hijab who could enter the ranks of the top 3 of Putri Indonesia East Java. The marker of the photo contains the real message of the phenomenon of women wearing hijab is still relatively difficult to get into the top three beauty queen events, especially Puteri Indonesia. Hijab-wearing women are still limited in expressing their joy, interests and talents in competitions and beauty contests.

The myth of the dichotomy of the domestic space for women, as well as women wearing hijab being connoted as conservative, not open-minded, still seems to be relevant in domestic beauty queen events, including international standards, often causing pros and cons. Nakhlah is an example of an individual who is able to send a message of body positivity to other women who wear hijab to not feel insecure. Thus, women wearing hijab through beauty contests cannot be separated from efforts to objectify women's bodies. As researched by Rokhmatin and Habsari (2020) that the appearance of women with makeup, thick makeup, high heels, ideal bodies, glamorous dresses and ornate headscarves, although they meet the qualifications to have the quality of Islamic values and other supporting elements to be able to participate in the competition, tend to be ambivalent.

In the midst of the social media era, which displays various standards of beauty, it seems that women are becoming increasingly insecure and attached to normative standards. In other words, the issue of low self-confidence among women still reinforces the opinion that women are creatures who tend to prioritize the emotional side over the rational. The word insecure is most often used by women who feel less confident about their abilities and what they have.

Picture 1.4. Top Three of Puteri Indonesia Jawa Timur 2023



Women's bodies as objects of national costume promotion

The message in the beauty queen event, which is now an important agenda, is to promote the culture of the archipelago in national costumes. The appearance of the national costumes is considered the most awaited and prestigious session for millions of viewers and lovers of the beauty queen event. The positive side of the appearance of the participants in national costumes can

also promote tourism and culture. This is in accordance with the @pageantcrownwarriors account uploaded on January 12, 2023, Laksmi De Neeffe Suardana, appeared in a national costume at the Miss Universe 2022 final performance with the theme of the Pinisi Ship. As stipulated by the Miss Universe pageant, each contestant is required to wear a national costume that reflects her culture. Laksmi's act of bringing the costume not only amazed the Indonesian people, but also netizens until it went viral on social media.

Picture 1.6. Laksmi Wore National Costume



Since December 2017, the pinisi ship has also been recognized by UNESCO as an intangible world cultural heritage. The obvious sign is the desire to be recognized as a finalist from Indonesia with a rich cultural heritage, namely the pinisi ship, through the Miss Universe 2022 beauty pageant. Laksmi not only wore ship accessories, but also carried a kind of spear that made her look like a goddess of the sea. The dress is called "The Glory of Phinisi" and is the work of designer Ikie Morphacio.

Laksmi's feminine beauty as a finalist in the Miss Universe pageant represents universal beauty, as a woman who is not only physically beautiful, modern and elegant, but also knows the origin of the archipelago's

very rich culture. Laksmi is also able to imply that women with their abilities and willingness are also able to become a leader or captain of a ship by sailing in various fields of interest in this modern era.

The element of loving culture can also be seen in the upload of the @pageantcrownwarrior account dated February 14, 2023, which shows the Miss Charm 2023 finalists wearing national costumes that carry Toraja customs and culture. The design of the traditional dress itself comes from the traditional dress of Toraja women, namely Baju Pokko.

The Indonesian national costume highlights the beauty of Toraja and also contains aspects of Toraja culture that

Picture 1.7. Olivia Tan Wore National Costume



can be referred to as signifiers. The upper headdress depicts the horns of an albino buffalo, symbolizing the wealth status of a family. The lower part of the head depicts tongkonan, a traditional ancestral house with boat vessels and a distinctive gabled roof. The traditional costume is usually worn by women in traditional ceremonies for thanksgiving, rice pounding, and welcome ceremonies.

A number of markers on the national costume show that women are highly honored in Torajan tradition with the depiction of family status on the headdress. On the other hand, women also play an important role in a number of traditional Torajan ceremonies. Women who become beauty queen finalists not only represent beauty and intelligence, but also insight and love for the national culture. This is in line with the vision and mission of Miss Charm, which prioritizes the promotion of tourism, education and culture. Inevitably, Olivia Tan was able to become the first runner-up of Miss Charm 2023 in Vietnam. This is a great achievement for Indonesia considering that

Miss Charm was the first beauty pageant that Indonesia participated in.

The two uploads about the beauty queen event with national costumes also reinforce that women are still synonymous with the feminine, graceful or gentle side. The national costumes worn by the contestants are related to the theme, concept and suitability between the vision and mission of each beauty queen event and do not escape the judges' evaluation aspects. The myth of women who are feminine and tend to explore the body is also seen in the national costume performance session. The cultural message that contestants from different countries want to convey is also inescapable from the assumption that beauty queen finalists are like mannequins in a clothing store where they are a medium for promoting national costumes. The theme, the concept and the uniformity of each contestant's walk seem uninteresting compared to the visualization of the costumes worn. This is in line with Wolf's critique of the fashion and beauty industry as exploitative of women, but she adds that the myth of beauty extends to all areas of human functioning.

Commercialization of women through beauty queen events

The commercialization of beauty pageant events has become a controversial issue in every implementation both domestically and internationally, including the Miss Universe event. Yayasan Puteri Indonesia, which has been the initiator of domestic beauty pageant events for decades as well as the licensee of Miss Universe, has always prioritized messages of women empowerment and gender equality since its inception. This can be seen in the upload@indopageants dated February 8, 2023.

Photo session of Puteri Indonesia 2022 graduates, including Adinda Chresheilla (from left) Puteri Indonesia representative from East Java. Laksmi Shari De-nefee Suardana (center) winner of Puteri Indonesia 2022 representing Bali, Cindy May McGuire (right) Puteri Indonesia 2022 representing DKI Jakarta 5. The markers in the photo of the three of them appear beautiful and elegant wearing modern kebaya clothes, the tops of the three are white and red batik subordinates, which are different between the three of them. Adinda wears a dominant red kebaya subordinate, Laksmi

Picture 1.8. Contestants of Puteri Indonesia by Yayasan Puteri Indonesia



wears a red kebaya combined with white as well as Cindy. The makeup tends not to be excessive, with a bun as a characteristic hairstyle when wearing a kebaya. The three models are quite different in presenting Indonesian women Adinda as a beautiful figure with an Indonesian face of Javanese-Manado descent, brown skin color. Laksmi as a beautiful figure representing Balinese women with a mixed Indo-Australian face with brown skin. Cindy May McGuire looks

different with a mixed Indonesian-American face.

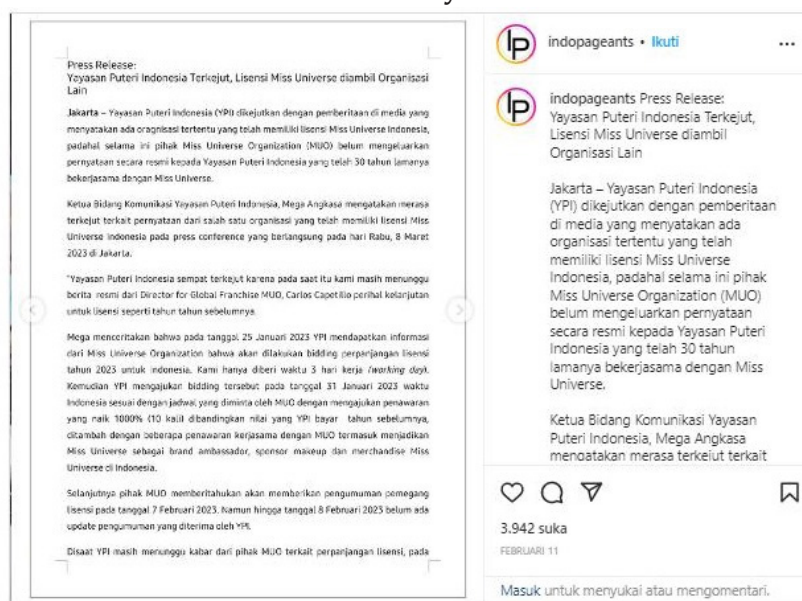
The denotation meaning depicted from the photo is that Puteri Indonesia Foundation (YPI) has been able to represent women's beauty through its finalists in a diverse way from different ethnicities and cultures. The connotation meaning of Indonesian women's beauty not only shows physical beauty, elegance, but also can love and preserve Indonesian culture. Through the caption on

the post, "The blasphemy, diatribes, skewed views of the Indonesian people that we witnessed firsthand during the initial journey became a sign that YPI's journey to organize a beauty pageant to send representatives of international beauty queens was not easy. Here it can be understood that YPI has made a positive impact on women and gender equality, which has always been promoted as the highest achievement for its journey

to organize a beauty pageant. Through the image of the three finalists produced by YPI as the highest achievement before the transfer of the license.

There is disappointment amidst the issue of the transfer of YPI as the licensee of Miss Universe into the hands of JKN Group from the Miss Universe Organization (MUO). This can be seen in the @indopageants upload from February 11, 2023.

Picture 1.9. Press Release Yayasan Puteri Indonesia



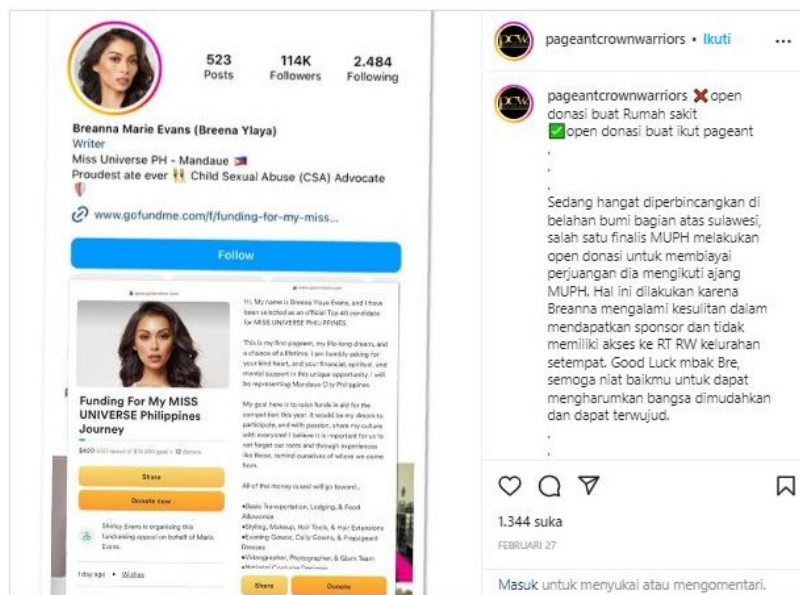
Although pageant lovers and YPI expressed their disappointment in a number of Instagram accounts, YPI has made many achievements in the world beauty pageant. Not to be outdone, as of February 8, PT Capela Swastika Karya (CSK) has the license and right to organize and send the winner to Miss Universe. PT CSK also released a new logo that is identical to the Indonesian culture seen in the upload@portalpageants on February 21, 2023 about the grand launch of Miss Universe Indonesia with a new logo display after being separated from Puteri Indonesia Foundation (YPI). JKN Group Wayang gunung is a shape that encloses a female doll image of the goddess Subadra in the center.

The new Miss Universe logo as a signifier has a number of meanings rooted in the culture of the archipelago, namely puppetry. Miss Universe with this new logo tends to connote the beauty of Indonesian women as a sacred figure and should be glorified. Not only beautiful, elegant, loyal, but also has very high self-confidence to have an influence on the environment. The connotation meaning that the new logo represents is that beautiful women who can represent at the Miss Universe event are not only beautiful but virtuous, have good empathy. under the license of JKN Group, Miss Universe Indonesia finalists are able to be recognized and even win the universal beauty queen event. The use of a new logo

Picture 1.10. New Logo of Miss Universe



Picture 1.11. Funding for My Miss Universe Philippines Journey



by JKN Group actually wants to be a new breakthrough, while not much different from the previous Miss Universe licensee, YPI, which successfully won the attention and hearts of Indonesian pageant lovers. The business nuances cannot be avoided from the issue of transferring the YPI license to JKN Group, which then increased the offer tenfold, and the lack of transparency made YPI's vision and mission no longer in line.

The business relationships that arise increasingly show the commercialization of beauty pageant events. This is further corroborated by the @pageantcrownwarriors upload on February 27, 2023, fundraising for the pageant conducted by Filipina finalist Breanna Marie Evans.

The donation is obviously to support Breanna in the Miss Universe contest. It has been a dream to join her passion and share

her culture. The news post titled Funding for My UNIVERSE Philippines Journey) this fundraising is categorized as a sign that to become a Miss Universe finalist needs moral support and the cost is not cheap. This is also highlighted by Instagram @pagecrownwarriors that Filipina finalist Breeana Marie Evans had difficulty getting sponsors. The text included in the post about donations to join the pageant with a green check mark is a sign that it seems unusual for someone to do this. donation to join the beauty queen event. Despite the controversy, the organization of beauty pageants is able to attract various new business opportunities ranging from brand ambassadors, makeup and merchandise sponsors, including other supporting sponsors.

Behind the post is able to connote that the beauty queen event including Miss Universe is nothing but an effort to exploit and commercialize women with issues that are relevant to the social, economic and cultural conditions of the local community. Although this issue is growing, the fact is that the beauty pageant event is now increasingly existing and popping up and getting a lot of support from the public. To become a beauty queen finalist including Miss Universe requires high fighting power. The fund raising done by the Philippine finalist also seems to justify the commercialization by the new licensee, Jakapong "Anne" Jakrajutatip, CEO of JKN Group. As well as justifying that JKN Group's current mission is not in accordance with YPI and the concept of behavior that is always echoed by the Miss Universe Organization (MOU).

Conclusion

Based on the analysis conducted on the accounts @portalpageant.id, @pageantcrownwarriors, and @indopageant,

there are a number of issues regarding the representation of female beauty. First, the relativism of women's beauty standards is seen as the figure of Linda Emran with the natural physique of Indonesian women can win Miss Asia Quest 1977, and Black Beauty with the support of black women also shows that women's beauty standards are relative. The myth that women are still judged by their physicality is also represented by mainstream media such as television, magazines, movies, including most advertisements. Second, women's beauty is portrayed so that they can better appreciate the advantages and disadvantages of their bodies. The jargon of "inner beauty" began to be campaigned, so that women could not only judge themselves physically beautiful, but have inner beauty reflected in behavior, including high self-confidence. Third, the beauty queen event with national costumes also reinforces that women are still synonymous with femininity, grace, or softness. Women are not like objects of national costume and cultural promotion. Fourth, the commercialization of women through the beauty queen event is inseparable from a number of issues, namely the disappointment of pageant lovers over the change of Miss Universe license because of the lack of transparency from the JKN Group to the Puteri Indonesia Foundation and the news of Breeana's fundraising to join Miss Universe Philippines.

Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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