



## Beauty Mapping on Social Media: A Mihaela Noroc's Perspective on Beauty Around the World

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**Abstract-** The Instagram @the.atlas.of.beauty features the beauty of female from different countries. This account clearly wants to show that female beauty is a prerogative of women to show it. Beauty is who she is, and her pride in all the experiences she has been through. This research aims to find out the meaning of beauty from different cultures in the world displayed through Mihaela Noroc's point of view in Instagram account @the.atlas.of.beauty. This research seeks to uncover the meaning of beauty in different hemispheres. To help reveal the meaning of this beauty, the Roland Barthes's semiotic method was utilised. Meaning is explained through signs of denotation, connotations, and myths. Based on the results of the research conducted, there are various forms of female beauty. Interestingly, some of the major findings that were revealed are, women is beautiful because of her work and women are beautiful for upholding their culture. The conclusion of this study is the beauty presents or exists because women understand who she is and dare to show it.

**Keywords:** the meaning of beauty, Instagram, The Atlas of Beauty, semiotic, women

### I. INTRODUCTION

Diversity is the greatest treasure on earth. Diversity is a form of beauty. Beauty is Diversity. In every part of the world, beauty has different criteria. The terminology of beauty is not only seen from one side. Moreover, according to individual eyes. Women must have self-confidence. Feelings of not being beautiful will affect a woman's personality.

Women have the right to show their beauty wherever they are. No one can judge a woman's beauty. The uniqueness of every beauty is a gift. No matter what form a woman looks like, other people have no right to criticize. Women must present themselves as themselves. The female body belongs to the woman. Beautiful women are not based on the men judging beautiful women. Beauty is a condition that makes a woman's body an independent from herself, without coercion. Beauty does not have to be measured by the criteria of having white skin, slim body, and perfectly straight hair. Everything that has become the choice of women is nothing wrong. Moreover, different racial and geographical conditions determine a person's physical form. Beauty knows no age, shape, and skin color. Beauty is about being yourself, natural and authentic.

In this study, one of the communication media used to convey messages about a woman's beauty is a photo. Visual messages through photos are proven to attract audiences' attention. Photos are honest, as is when they were made. Photos do not reduce and add to events that have already occurred. A photo can tell a story without having to have a long explanation [1]. Photographers have the advantage of being detailed, straightforward, and not requiring the brainstorming process of a news text. Events recorded by photographs are often considered valid. Photos become evidence of special moments. Because of their uniqueness until recently photos were useful publicity materials.

There are several types of photos, one of which is portrait photography. Portrait photography which emphasizes beauty shots conveys a message about beauty, where usually the photos look more beautiful and attractive. As the world of modeling has evolved, beauty shots have created inevitably a flow that develops as fast as the world of beauty itself. Beauty shot photos are not just photos with beautiful essence but have evolved into a form of high taste results [1]. Beauty photographer is a photographer focusing on taking photos of a model who displays beauty and brings out her own aura. The main task of a

beauty photographer is to understand and study the character and facial anatomy of the model to be photographed. Not all photographers possess this strength.

Mihaela Noroc is a photographer who strives to showcase a variety of women's beauty in various parts of the world. Through her lenses, beauty is part of a woman who is unique. The photo is accompanied by a caption that tells the model's background and struggles. Her photo models are the average person she met while traveling. They are not professional models. Mihaela Noroc on her Instagram account @the.atlas.of.beauty wants to show that beauty is not based on race or created myths. Beauty in the definition of Mihaela Noroc has to do with the culture and identity of women themselves, and the courage to be oneself.

Based on the background of the problem above, the researchers see the importance of explaining the meaning of beauty with the title Meaning of Beauty in Mihaela Noroc's Photo Work in the Photography Instagram Account of "The Atlas of Beauty". This study uses a semiotic analysis by Roland Barthes which defines beauty through Portrait Photograph, emphasizing the Beauty Shot. Researchers hope that semiotics can reveal the meanings of the beauty myth contained in the @the.atlas.of.beauty Instagram account.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Visual communication is the communication process of delivering messages using media that can only be seen from sensing. Photos, pictures, paintings and signs are part of Visual Communication. Mark Knapp (1978) as cited by [2] states that the use of nonverbal codes in communication has a function to show feelings and emotions that cannot be expressed in words. It can be concluded that visual communication usually uses photos, pictures, symbols, etc. in their delivery. According to [3], nonverbal communication is the transfer of messages without using words directly and is considered the most convincing way to convey messages to others. In this study, nonverbal communication is the main study and presented in the form of visual communication, especially photographs.

### A. *Photography*

Photography is the art or technique of painting, more precisely the art of painting through light. In the world of photography, there are various types of photography techniques, such as journalistic photography, commercial photography and fine art photography or fine art. Aditiawan (2010) as cited by [1] said that the principle of photography is to focus light with the help of refraction so that it can burn the light capturing medium. A medium that has been burned with the correct luminosity size will produce a shadow identical to the light entering the refracting medium. In this principle, the function of the camera is to paint through light with the help of a medium of refraction or what is commonly called a lens. Light will enter through the refracting medium (lens) and then burn the light capturing medium (film) and produce an identical image.

In the world of photography, the photographer must know the lighting triangle, which is commonly called the exposure triangle, including ISO, shutter speed, and aperture. In addition to mastering basic techniques, the photographer must know this aspect of lighting because to produce quality photos, a photographer must adjust the three elements correctly. ISO is an international standard for expressing the sensitivity of an image sensor or film to light, which is expressed in a number [4]. The diaphragm is an arrangement of blades that form a hole in the lens, which functions as an aperture that can be adjusted to the diameter of the opening. [4] state that each lens has a number of diaphragm blades that vary, for example 5 blades, 7 blades and so on. The more blades, the more round the holes are made by this arrangement of blades. Shutter Speed is the duration of the camera opening the sensor to absorb light.

### B. *The Concept of Beauty*

The discourse on women's beauty and femininity cannot be separated from the construction of a patriarchal culture which gives power to men to acknowledge women's femininity on the one hand, and women to always seeking recognition of her femininity on the part of men [5]. Many feminist critics argue that the idea of beauty is a form of male domination. It is men who want the criteria for beauty and make it a guide for women. The stereotype that says that Eastern people are weak, inferior, pay more attention to spiritual issues and superstitions is a negative effect caused by colonialism [6]. We know that since the colonial era, the natives have always been oppressors. Moreover, women who have been colonized for centuries, lose the concept of self-confidence. But behind it all, women have the strength to survive.

Bush found similarities in 37 cultures which have beauty criteria that made men attracted to women, namely full lips, white, clean and smooth skin, clear eyes, shiny hair, and tight skin as cite by Prabasmoro [6]. These criteria are universally sought after to describe beauty. This criterion also shows that men value physical rather than personal qualities. As a result, there are still many people who think that beautiful women are women with the criteria of having bright skin, beautiful body shape, straight and shiny hair, and clear eyes. Female beauty cannot be judged by physical form, but beautiful women are women who have personality, are independent and proud of themselves.

### *C. Semiotics of Signs and Meanings*

Messages that have a sign must be meaningful because signs are very important in communication. The main function of signs is to evoke meaning. To understand verbal and nonverbal language, Communication Science is needed which studies the meaning of signs, pictures and artifacts. Message in human relations can be expressed by means of semiotics sign in various material formats [7]. The importance of communication semiotics can define the message exchange process, where messages consist of three structured elements, namely signs and symbols, language and discourse [8]. In the communication process, there will be symbols that need to be interpreted in order to become effective communication.

Barthes, as cited by [9] stated that semiology studies how humanity interprets things. To signify in this case cannot be confused with communicating. Interpreting means that objects not only carry information, but also constitute a structured system of signs. Barthes considers social life as an understanding. In other words, social life has its own sign system. Barthes presents the concept of connotation and denotation as the key to his analysis. Barthes uses a much simpler version when discussing the gloss sematic sign model [10]. Denotation is the first level meaning system, and connotation is the second level meaning system. Barthes' viewed that connotations are identical to ideological operations which he calls myths and serve to reveal and provide justification for the dominant values that prevail in a certain period [8]. In myth, there are markers, signs, and signs as a second level system of meaning.

Myth in Barthes's view is language, so myth is a communication system and myth is a message. In his explanation, Barthes argues that myth in a special sense is the development of connotations. The connotations that have been formed are mythical. In addition, myth is a semiology system, namely a system of signs that are interpreted by humans [8]. Barthes's myth is different from myths which have concepts such as imaginary and absurd, but according to Barthes, myth is a person's language style. In Barthes' concept, the connotative sign does not only have an additional meaning but also contains two parts of the denotative sign which underlies its existence. In fact, this is Barthes's very meaningful contribution to the perfection of Saussure's semiology, which stops at marking at the denotative level [9].

Furthermore [9] cited the Barthes works of level of meaning. First Level Meaning System (denotative): Denotation is usually understood as a literal meaning, the real meaning, sometimes even confused with references or references. Denotation is the first level of significance and its meaning is closed. Denotation produces definite meanings that refer to reality. Second Level Significance System (connotative): The connotative sign is a sign whose sign has openness of meaning or is indirect and uncertain [8]. The connotation is the second level of significance, the connotation is a subjective and varied meaning. Barthes asserts that at least in the photo, the difference between connotation and denotation becomes clear. Denotation is what is photographed, while connotation is how to be photographed [1]. Denotative and connotative messages in an image serve as the delivery of messages that are very influential for society. According to Van Zoest as cite by [11] myth is how culture explains or understands several aspects of reality or natural phenomena. Myths will remain if they are maintained, if they are not immediately forgotten, it will change the mindset of every human being [4]. [9] cited a Barthes argumentation of myth as language, so myth is a communication system and myth is a message.


### III. DISCUSSION

Research is essentially an attempt to find the truth or to further justify the truth of the facts. In this study, researchers used a constructivist paradigm, where constructivists think that the world is constructed and not accepted. The world is defined broadly, including relationships, communication, perceptions, and feelings. The constructivist paradigm has different criteria for other paradigms, namely ontology, epistemology, and methodology. The constructivist paradigm at the ontology level sees reality as something that exists but reality is plural. In epistemology, researchers use a subjective approach, to describe meanings by individuals. In methodology, this paradigm uses various types of construction and

combines them. This process involves a hermeneutic aspect. Hermeneutics is an activity in studying text, writing, or images in relation to contextuality and content that builds images. Thus, the researchers build meaning knowledge. The researchers selected the most popular pictures. The researchers also consider the most interesting caption and comment. The context is about raise women awareness about equality around the world. We understand photos, pictures, and symbols are a visual communication tool to convey messages. There are five interesting pictures to study in discussing the meaning of beauty from Mikaela Noroc's work, along with the pictures:

TABLE I. PICTURES FROM @THE.ATLAS.OF.BEAUTY

No.	Pictures		
	Figures from IG	Story	Den. Meaning
1.		The picture has 73,455 likes. After her consent to post it in IG, this picture gives viewer inspirations to keep fighting and chin up to face the truth of life. Today Marzieh is trying to raise awareness about terrible attach had happened to her 6 years ago and advocated the ban of acid sales. For Noroc, this is the purest form of beauty.	As a modern woman in Iran, Marzieh wears modern outfit. She did not wear veil to cover her face. The picture taken in public shows how she already stands out for her life. The hair and the slight make up show us how simple and open mind she is as a victim of acid attack. This picture becomes powerful because of her braveness.
2.		Courtney is a tough woman. Since the age of 17 she has been living on her own. Life takes her from one job to another and it's always an outdoor job. So masculine she is, she's doing the welder's job recently. This photo got 16,599 likes.	This masculine photo is set in a welding workshop. Courtney carries a welding pipe that emits fire. The face mask is on her head. Dashing protective suits and shoes show masculine traits in this image. This picture shows how women can tear down all stereotypes about work
3.		This picture has 12,516 likes. This is Angsana, the Muay Thai or Thai boxing warrior from Thailand. For 15 years she learned herself to become a world champion. She never neglected school as she obtained the degree with English Major.	We can see a sharp eye highlight. Hands ready to fend off attacks. A red color that shows courage combined with a black background as well as sports equipment. The aesthetic way of taking has a masculine effect in this photo. Her hair was tied up and the sheer makeup worn showed a feminine and simple side. This picture become powerful because of her highlight.
4.		This picture has 12,309 likes. This is the story about Ratna, a village girl trying to find a better life in Dakka. As a police officer in Bangladesh. Ratna faces various difficulties in daily tasks. Bangladesh is the most populous city in the world. And Ratna devoted herself to her homeland.	Women in Bangladesh always become second sex. There are many cases on human trafficking, sexual abuse, early-aged marriage. Ratna will face many cases in her daily life as a policewoman in Bangladesh. Her appearance is very simple and like other woman in Bangladesh she keeps her hair grow long. Her uniform seems clean and protect her dignity as policewoman.

No.	Pictures		
	Figures from IG	Story	Den. Meaning
5.		This photo was taken in Omo Valley, Ethiopia, in 2016. In this remote place, you can see communities living as they did thousands of years ago. Her tribe is called Daasanach and has lived in isolation for generations. With the high temperatures here, nudity is not unusual. This picture has 14,344 likes.	Nudity is cultures across Africa. Most native African tribes still show an open chest and close the waist down. The Daasanach people still live in traditional task-sharing conditions, men herd livestock and women look after families. The same garments, beads on the neck and head and fabric for the waist covering, barefoot.

Recently, the commodification of beauty in advertisements has led to the phenomenon of the narrow concept of female beauty [5]. Advertisements construct that beautiful women are synonymous with slim bodies and white skin. Advertising is a representation of colonialization and imperialism, placing white people as a perfect, superior, cultured and civilized human representation [6]. Signs of beauty such as white skin, straight hair, tall and slim body are very westernized. The world today seems to mirror this concept. In addition, physical attractiveness is found to be a major factor in female evolutionary success [13]. For this reason, the myth of beauty never changes, the main concept is always in the idea that white is better [7]. In reality, beautiful women are not only seen from the outside, behind it all women have the privilege of being beautiful. Beauty is not judged only from the physical side, but the culture and personality of women themselves also give meaning to a woman's beauty.

The courage of women in acting shows her beauty. From the observation of the photos displayed by the @the.atlas.of.beauty account, it can be seen that the beauty criteria that have been commodified by advertising and a colonial perspective are unable to penetrate the true beauty of women. A beautiful woman in the view of Noroc is an independent woman, has a strong personal view, is tough, remains cultured, and has strength thanks to the forging of life. All these characteristics do not refer to physical characteristics. The quality that Noroc portrayed is the quality of personal beauty and in all civilizations and societies one can find it. Noroc managed to map universal beauty. The old view of beauty shifted with Noroc's efforts. Beauty to be the perfect person, for example: have a tall body, slim, white skin, and blond hair. Their facial skin should not have the slightest flaw and they should be as small waist size. This colonial beauty myth attached to women in colony territory until today. In fact, this nature of beauty is highly subjective. Each culture has its own construction of what is called a beautiful woman (Wulan 2017: 33).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Related to the purpose of this research, we conclude that:

- a. Beauty is different in different cultures. Every culture has their own respect of beauty. Beauty does not have universal standards in physical form, but in terms of quality, the criteria for beauty have many things in common. Such as respect for the culture of origin, respect for development ideas, knowledgeable, independent, and resilient.
- b. The beauty myth that was built by Mihaela Noroc shows that culture has a stronger influence in building the quality of women's beauty. If the culture is patriarchal, women's beauty is judged by its visible and physical quality. So this is what women always strive for in the struggle for equal rights.

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