

Messages of Miss Universe Beauty Pageant Winners on a Digital Platform †

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Abstract: Miss Universe is a global beauty platform. The history of this event spans 70 years. The purpose of this study was to see the messages contained in the personal branding displayed by the Miss Universe participants. This type of research is qualitative, using the semiotic theories of Charles Sanders Peirce. The paradigm used is constructivist, with the intention of seeing that reality is the result of a construction or formation by humans themselves. The data source is the Instagram account of the Miss Universe winners from 2017–2021. The objective of this study is to determine the form of personal branding through messages carried out by the Miss Universe contestants as agents of change and inspiration for the youth.

Keywords: Miss Universe; Beautifully Confident; personal branding

1. Introduction

Miss Universe is a global beauty platform. History proves that this beauty contest has given birth to the careers of many beautiful women who are quite influential. Shaping the image of women universally, the contest, which is held every year, has succeeded in uniting the eyes of the world to witness it. Every woman in every country is competing to be a representative of her country [1]. The history of the Miss Universe contest, with the slogan “Beautifully Confident,” began in 1951 when a model named Yolanda Betbeze, wearing a swimsuit product of Pacific Knitting Mills, was crowned Miss America. This story then prompted Pacific Knitting Mills to decide to create their own beauty pageant, namely Miss Universe. This contest then grew and was followed by almost 100 contestants from all over the world, lasting a long time until today [2]. The history of this event lasts 70 years. The last event was held in Eilat, Israel, 12 December 2021 with Miss Universe India, Harnaaz Sandhu, as the winner. At the event, Miss Universe Mexico, Andrea Meza, who was previously crowned as Miss Universe in Florida, United States, on 16 May 2020, crowned Miss Universe India as the 70th Miss Universe.

This beauty contest event, of course, cannot be separated from the social media platform, which is a media that dares to allow users to interact easily with each other without being limited by space and time. Over time, social media has grown both in terms of quantity and quality. Some examples of social media that are well known today are: YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc. Personal branding is a way to influence others to see ourselves, then organize and manage the process strategically and maturely [3]. This is done as a way to help achieve the goals we have, for example, achieving career success. For this reason, understanding the concept of personal branding is important as a way to increase one’s “selling point” [4]. The results of this study are to determine the form of personal branding carried out by the winners of the Miss Universe contestants as agents of change and inspiration for the younger generation. The purpose of this study was to see the messages contained in the personal branding displayed by the Miss Universe participants.



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2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Personal Branding

Personal branding is about controlling the processes that influence the way others see themselves, and managing these processes strategically to help someone achieve their goals [5]. Every individual certainly has a personal brand, but many people are not aware of this. This personal brand affects several things, such as consideration for work and other opportunities, determining how credible one's opinions and ideas are in the eyes of others, and determining how much help others will provide. As a result, currently many public figures are building their own brand or what is called personal branding. The function of personal branding itself is to create an attractive and prominent perception that can distinguish one individual from another [6].

2.2. Definition of New Media

The communication media used today are new media, most of which are digital media, information and communication networks, and computers. One of the tangible forms of the communication revolution that is most widely used today is the internet [7]. The development of communication technology allows people to quickly and easily communicate and seek information through information technology such as smartphones. New media (new media) is a popular term in today's communication technology among modern society.

2.3. Definition of Instagram

Instagram is an application from a smartphone that can display various photos and videos instantly using the internet network that can allow users to view other users' posts, take photos and videos, apply digital filters, and perform other networking activities quickly [8]. The main function of Instagram is to be a place to inspire and share photos and videos with other users, where later the upload will create an interaction between fellow users because of the likes feature, serving as a marker that other users like the photo. In addition, a comment section can allow fellow users to communicate.

3. Methodology

This research is qualitative, using semiotic analysis. The paradigm used is constructivist with the intention of seeing that reality is the result of a construction or formation of humans themselves. The semiotic analysis technique uses the Charles Sanders Peirce approach. The source of the data in this research is the recording of the Miss Universe final night from the Miss Universe YouTube and Instagram channels in the last five years, from 2017–2021. The steps taken to fulfill the research objectives are as follows: observation; determining the final audio-visual recording of Miss Universe and images from Instagram and online media; capturing parts that describe the message or meaning of female beauty in the Miss Universe event; and analyzing videos and images based on object, interpretant, and representamen. Finally, the results of video and image analysis are presented descriptively. The following is a summary of the messages conveyed by the winners of Miss Universe in the last five years.

Table 1 was used to summarize the messages conveyed by the winners of Miss Universe in the last five years. According to Table 1, the messages conveyed by the Miss Universe winners in the last five years include women's empowerment and health, women's rights, eliminating gender-based violence, addressing gender stereotypes and violence, working in the slums, and being grateful (1).

Table 1. Table summary of the messages conveyed by the winners of Miss Universe in the last five years.

Edition	Titleholder	Country	Messages
2021	Harnaaz Sandhu	India	Women’s empowerment and women’s health
2020	Andrea Meza	Mexico	Women’s rights and eliminating gender-based violence
2019	Zozibini Tunzi	South Africa	Gender-based violence and stereotypes (beauty, black is beautiful, the definition of beauty, femicide in South Africa, and stop killing women)
2018	Catriona Gray	Philippines	Work in the slums and be grateful
2017	Demi-Leigh Nel-Peters	South Africa	Gender violence in the world of work.

Tables may; Av; Source: secondary data.

4. Results

This section will explain the results and discussion of this research. The following is a table of the results and explanations in the form of a semiotic description as theorized by Charles Sanders Peirce as it is seen in Figure 1.

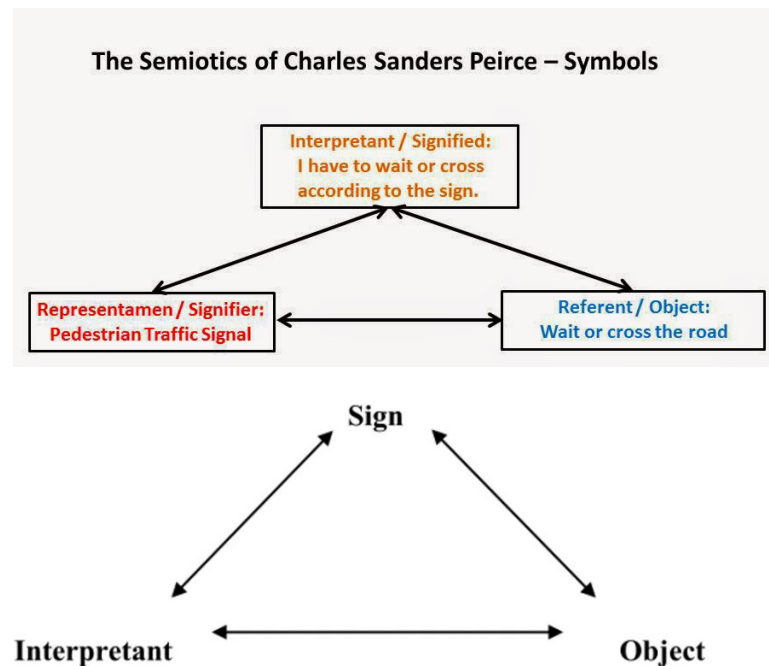


Figure 1. Cont.

PEIRCEAN SEMIOTICS

- Representamen – form which the sign takes (not necessarily material)
- Object – to which the sign refers
- Interpretant – idea, interpretation in mind

Every interpretant is itself a further sign of the signified object. Since interpretants are the interpreting thoughts we have of signifying relations, and these interpreting thoughts are themselves signs, it seems to be a straight-forward consequence that all thoughts are signs, or as Peirce calls them “thought-signs”.

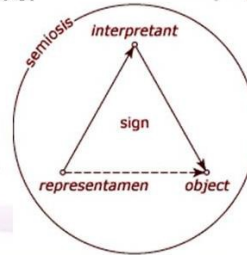



Figure 1. The semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce.

Table 2 provides a semiotic analysis of Harnaaz Sandhu’s participation in an event organized by the Latino Commission on AIDS. The table shows that the sign is a photo with members of @latinocommaids, the object is the event organized by the commission, and the interpretant is that Sandhu attended the event (2).

Table 2. Semiotic analysis of Miss Universe 2021, Harnaaz Sandhu.

Sign	
Object	Photo with members of @latinocommaids
Interpretant	In this picture, Harnaaz Sandhu is seen after attending an event organized by the Latino Commission on AIDS.

Source: secondary data.

According to the message that she had conveyed at the Miss Universe event, her focus was related to women’s empowerment and women’s health. This is not without reason, because it is known that Harnaaz Sandhu’s parents are gynecologists. Therefore, she is very concerned about empowering women, especially in the health sector. Even on her Instagram account @harnaazsandhu_03 with 4.6 million followers, she often shows her active participation in women’s health activities, especially regarding HIV / AIDS [9].

Table 3 shows the semiotic analysis of Andrea Meza’s Instagram story highlight posts, where she made a highlight with the title “love purple” emoticon about how to respect women. The sign is the highlight post, the object is the message about respecting women, and the interpretant is Meza’s advocacy for women’s rights and gender equality (3).

Table 3. Table Semiotic analysis of Miss Universe 2020, Andrea Meza.

Sign	
Object Interpretant	<p style="text-align: center;">Instagram story highlight posts by @andreamezamx In this picture, Andrea Meza made a highlight with the title “love purple” emoticon about how to respect women.</p>

Source: secondary data.

According to the message she conveyed at the Miss Universe pageant, her focus was on women’s rights and eliminating gender-based violence. Even the personal branding that she conveys, through her Instagram account @andreamezamx with 2.2 million followers, often puts a spotlight on how to respect women. Some of the messages she conveyed were, among others, trust women to lead in all sectors, do not cat-call at women, promote gender equality, and upgrade personal skills so that beauty can come not only from physical but beauty can also from skills and learned knowledge [10].

Table 4 presents the semiotic analysis of Zozibini Tunzi’s Instagram video post, where she shared a short video from Netflix about the definition of black being beautiful too. The sign is the video post, the object is the message about black beauty, and the interpretant is Tunzi’s promotion of diversity, inclusion, and representation in beauty standards (4).

Table 4. Table Semiotic analysis of Miss Universe 2019, Zozibini Tunzi.

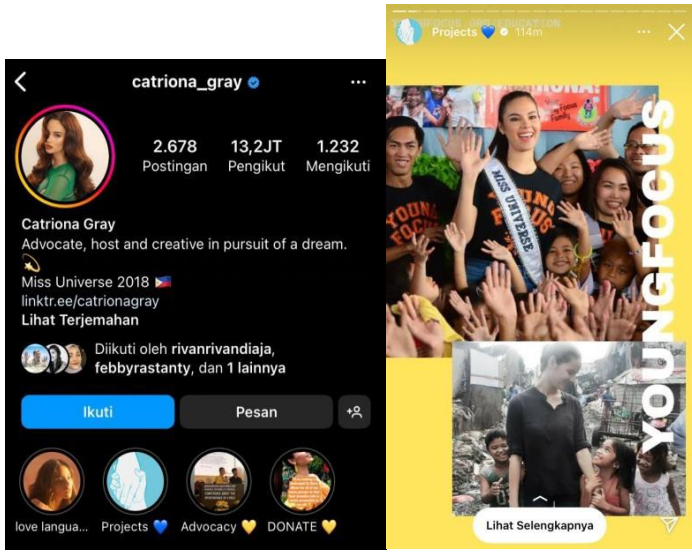
Sign	
Object Interpretant	<p>Instagram video post @zozitunzi In this picture, Zozibini Tunzi posted a short video from Netflix about the definition of black being beautiful too.</p>

Source: secondary data.

In accordance with the message she conveyed at the Miss Universe event, her focus was on gender-based violence and stereotypes (beauty, black is beautiful, the definition of beauty, femicide in South Africa, and stop killing women) [11]. A short video clip from Netflix that she shared on her Instagram account, with a following of 2.7 million people, shows a short interview about her happiness for winning the Miss Universe beauty pageant. Furthermore, in the trailer, she identifies her branding with the declaration that “black is beautiful”.

Table 5 shows the semiotic analysis of Catriona Gray’s Instagram story highlight posts, where she made a highlight with the title “Projects” and the emoticon “love blue” about how to appreciate life by empowering marginalized children in slum areas. The sign is the highlight post, the object is the message about empowering marginalized children, and the interpretant is Gray’s advocacy for social justice and humanitarian causes (5).

Table 5. Semiotic analysis of Miss Universe 2018, Catriona Gray.

<p>Sign</p>	 <p>The image shows two parts of an Instagram profile. On the left is the main profile page for @catriona_gray, featuring her profile picture, 2,678 posts, 13.2 million followers, and 1,232 following. Her bio identifies her as an advocate and Miss Universe 2018. On the right is a story highlight titled 'Projects' with 114 million views, showing a group of people and a vertical text overlay that reads 'YOUNGFOCUS'.</p>
<p>Object</p>	<p>Instagram story highlight posts @catriona_gray</p>
<p>Interpretant</p>	<p>In this picture, Catriona Gray made a highlight with the title "Projects" and the emoticon "love blue" about how to appreciate life by empowering marginalized children in slum areas.</p>

Source: secondary data.

In accordance with the message she once conveyed at the Miss Universe event, her focus includes work in the slums and being grateful. The owner of the Instagram account @catriona_gray with 13.2 million followers often shares posts related to child empowerment among marginalized groups. According to her experience that she had described during the Miss Universe pageant, she often worked in the field in the Manila area. The area is a slum and underdeveloped area, but from this experience Catriona Gray has a deep sense of gratitude for the life she currently has [12].

Table 6 presents the semiotic analysis of Demi-Leigh Nel-Peters' Instagram image post, where she posted an image about how to identify victims of human trafficking. The sign is the image post, the object is the message about identifying human trafficking victims, and the interpretant is Nel-Peters' advocacy for human rights and raising awareness about social issues (6).

Table 6. Semiotic analysis of Miss Universe 2017, Demi-Leigh Nel-Peters.

<p>Sign</p>	
<p>Object Interpretant</p>	<p>Instagram image post by @demitebow In this picture, Demi-Leigh Nel-Peters posted an image about how to identify victims of human trafficking.</p>

Source: secondary data.

According to the message that she conveyed at the Miss Universe pageant, her focus was on gender violence in the workplace. On her Instagram account with 1.6 million followers, she often shares her understanding of gender equality in the workplace. Her posts are also related to how to identify victims of human trafficking, which is also of crime in the area of work. According to her, gender equality in the workplace can not only be observed in the form of tasks performed, but also in the difference in wages earned between women and men. Even at the Miss Universe event she said that, until now, she still often encounters forms of crime in the workplace [13].

5. Conclusions

This study has shown the messages contained in the Miss Universe beauty pageant in the last five years. In addition, the results that have been described show that the core message is related to women’s empowerment. Although the Miss Universe event has the slogan “Beautifully Confident”, the beauty that is considered for each contestant is inner beauty. The concept of beauty that is considered in the Miss Universe pageant is not only physical beauty with straight hair and white skin, but self-radiating beauty in the form of behavior and ways of thinking. In addition, the message that is often conveyed every year is related to gender equality in all aspects.

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