

## Expressions of Beauty Identity in Instagram Content of @Cinderella

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**ABSTRACT:** Social media has become a primary space for constructing and expressing identity, including beauty identity. Instagram, as one of the most popular visual platforms in Indonesia, fosters the emergence of various beauty representations influenced by dominant and homogenized aesthetic standards. This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach using qualitative content analysis to examine the representation of beauty identity in the Instagram content of @cinderella. Data were collected through non-participant observation of visual and narrative posts, and then analyzed using thematic coding and hermeneutic interpretation techniques. The hyperpersonal model theory serves as the conceptual framework to understand how identity is strategically constructed in digital spaces. Data validity was reinforced through triangulation and socio-cultural contextualization to obtain a deep and comprehensive understanding. The findings of this study indicate that beauty identity in @cinderella's Instagram content is not a singular and fixed entity, but rather the result of a dynamic representational process in which symbols, visual narratives, and audience interpretations interact with one another. This identity is shaped through the selective use of certain signs that negotiate between market demands, social expectations, and personal desires to appear authentic.

**KEYWORDS:** Beauty, Expression, Instagram content, @Cinderella account

### INTRODUCTION

Social media is a digital platform that enables users to interact, share information, and establish virtual networks through various forms of content such as text, images, audio, and video. In an era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, social media has become an inseparable part of everyday life. Its presence serves not only as a means of communication and entertainment, but also as a strategic tool in education, business, and politics. The ease of access and speed of information dissemination make social media a new public sphere capable of influencing opinions, behaviors, and even the identities of individuals and groups at both local and global scales (Auliya et al., 2023). The digital era, particularly through social media, has emerged as a central medium for shaping, representing, and distributing identity—including beauty identity (Jannah & Swarnawati, 2025). In Indonesia, more than 139 million people actively use social media, with Instagram being one of the most popular platforms, reaching over 89 million users (Yusmawati, 2023). This platform allows individuals, particularly women, to construct self-images that are both personal and public, as well as performative. The representation of beauty identities on social media is heavily influenced by dominant aesthetic standards that are homogeneous in nature, such as fair skin, a slim body, symmetrical facial features, and feminine makeup that emphasizes elegance (Bella et al., 2024). Data indicate that 76% of Indonesian women feel pressure to appear attractive on social media, primarily due to aesthetic expectations within online environments (Basir et al., 2022).

Influencers are individuals with significant influence on social media or other digital platforms due to their large followings and their ability to shape the opinions, lifestyles, and behaviors of audiences (Danendra et al., 2024). Their presence has become a defining phenomenon in digital culture, where they function not only as content creators but also as role models trusted to recommend products, services, or particular ideas. With strong personal branding and emotional closeness to their followers, influencers serve as authentic and persuasive mediators between brands and consumers. Their roles span across fields such as fashion, beauty, culinary arts, education, and social advocacy, positioning them as key actors in the dynamics of today's digital economy and popular culture. The emergence of influencers who adopt non-conventional visual approaches has opened new spaces for more diverse and subversive expressions of beauty identity (Nugraha et al., 2024).

Marcella Febrienne Hadikusumo, widely known as Cinderella, is a beauty influencer who has made a significant contribution to the development of Indonesia's beauty industry through her creative, authentic, and experimental approach. Her career began with a personal need to understand makeup techniques, which later grew into a passion she shared through social media (Lukartono et al., 2020). Through her content, Cinderella presents a dynamic makeup style that reflects her expressive personality. She does not merely follow trends, but actively creates new styles that expand conventional boundaries in beauty aesthetics. Her approach reflects a

paradigm shift in contemporary beauty practices, in which self-expression and personal identity form an integral part of the visual narratives constructed in digital spaces.

The Instagram account @Cinderella contains 2,339 posts, 767,000 followers, and follows 1,915 other accounts. Her profile features a distinctive makeup portrait as a profile picture, and her bio includes the name “maru,” the pronouns “she/her,” and links to a donut shop and business inquiry contacts. Several posts on her profile highlight diverse themes, including crossfit training, food, mental health, and fashion. A visual analysis of selected posts from @Cinderella reveals a variety of multimedia content. These include: (1) self-portraits with curly hair; (2) a fashion photo featuring a red overcoat; (3) a video expressing negative emotions, captioned “tired”; (4) a pet-themed video, captioned “Perfectly Home Keseharian The Adeks!”; and (5) a photo with two other individuals. Overall, the profile blends personal content with elements of lifestyle, emotional expression, and documentation of everyday activities. Some posts appear spontaneous, while others show evidence of more deliberate planning for online publication.

As a public figure, Cinderella uses digital platforms not only to share beauty tutorials but also as a medium for advocating positive values such as the courage to be oneself, acceptance of differences, and the importance of emotional honesty. This representation highlights her perspective that beauty is not solely about physical appearance but also encompasses character and personality traits (Wandira et al., 2024). Her ability to remain relevant amidst the rapidly shifting beauty industry demonstrates adaptability and resilience. Moreover, her role as an influencer carries social value, as shown in her support of family business initiatives through her digital networks. Cinderella exemplifies how social media can be used to construct professional identities, expand influence, and create both micro- and macro-level positive impact. The makeup she showcases is not intended to conform to conventional beauty standards, but instead serves as a medium for constructing visual narratives that are personal, artistic, and deeply expressive (Fahriza & Rukiyah, 2023).

Cinderella employs social media not only as an artistic space but also as a performative communication tool. She cultivates closeness with her followers through relaxed, humorous, and interactive language, often using Q&A formats and storytelling that blur the lines between personal and public life (Vildira & Dewi, 2024). This practice aligns with the concept of identity as something fluid—constantly constructed, negotiated, and performed in social spaces (Isyiya et al., 2024). In doing so, Cinderella both represents her beauty identity and deconstructs dominant aesthetic norms, showing how women’s identities can be negotiated through digital media.

Beauty representation is a social and cultural construct shaped through interactions among aesthetic values, gender norms, and dominant media practices. In the contemporary context, particularly through digital and social media, beauty is no longer homogeneous or static but dynamic, pluralistic, and subject to renegotiation (Garcia & Winduwati, 2023). Such representations not only reflect visual preferences but also articulate identity, symbolic power, and social positioning within societal structures. Beauty is constructed through visual language, symbols, and narratives conveyed by media actors including celebrities, influencers, and beauty industry institutions—factors that collectively shape collective perceptions of what is considered ideal and socially acceptable (Arwanda et al., 2022). Studying beauty representation requires critical and interdisciplinary approaches to unpack the complex relationships between aesthetics, identity, and power in digital cultural spaces. The representations displayed by Cinderella often occupy ambiguous terrain. Public reception of her makeup style requires further investigation: is she perceived as a valid representation of beauty, or merely as entertainment (Andriani & Islam, 2022) Critical analysis is necessary to determine whether her visual expressions expand the meaning of beauty, or whether they remain constrained by the capitalistic logic of social media industries. Data indicate that 82% of beauty-related content on Instagram still presents faces conforming to conventional beauty standards, highlighting the complexities of beauty identity representation in the digital era (Rachmalia & Saputro, 2025). Further research is necessary to explore this phenomenon critically, particularly within the Indonesian context, given the limited number of academic studies addressing these issues.

Considering the complex dynamics of beauty identity representation in the digital era, this study is relevant for investigating how beauty identities are constructed and expressed through visual content on social media. The focus is on the Instagram account @Cinderella, which embodies non-conventional aesthetic practices through artistic and experimental approaches to makeup. This study contributes not only to the development of literature in media and gender studies but also to a broader understanding of women’s agency in defining and negotiating the meaning of beauty amid global aesthetic dominance and the algorithmic mechanisms of digital platforms. As such, this research seeks to open a more critical discourse on identity, aesthetics, and power within the landscape of contemporary visual culture.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the social phenomenon surrounding the expression of beauty identity in visual content on social media, particularly Instagram. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to capture the meanings, symbols, and personal narratives constructed through visual communication—elements that cannot be adequately explained through quantitative methods (Sulistiyawati, 2023). This approach is also aligned with the research objective, which seeks to explore the interpretive construction of beauty identity within the digital cultural context. The method applied is qualitative content analysis (Sulistiyawati, 2023), aimed at identifying, interpreting, and categorizing symbolic meanings in the visual content and captions uploaded by the Instagram account @Cinderella.

To examine how Cinderella constructs self-image and expresses beauty through social media, this study draws on Walther’s Hyperpersonal Model, which explains that computer-mediated communication (CMC) enables individuals to strategically edit, filter, and curate their identities (Muhammad et al., 2025). This theory is useful for analyzing how visual aesthetics and narratives constructed in Instagram content can generate intense social connections between creators and audiences (Chandra, 2023).

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is a communication theory that examines message exchange processes among individuals or groups through computer-based media such as email, social media, online forums, and instant messaging applications (Krisnawati, 2024). It emerged alongside the development of information and communication technologies that have transformed human interaction from face-to-face exchanges into digitally networked communication. CMC explores not only the technical aspects of information exchange but also the social, psychological, and linguistic dimensions that emerge within digital communication contexts. One of its central concerns is how the absence of nonverbal cues in digital media is compensated for through linguistic adaptations, emoticons, and other expressive forms. CMC also examines how self-identity, interpersonal relationships, and group dynamics are formed and managed in virtual spaces (Permatasari et al., 2024).

In contemporary contexts, CMC is highly relevant for analyzing communication phenomena in social media, online communities, and other digital practices, as it illustrates how technology fundamentally reshapes patterns of human interaction. Four main characteristics distinguish CMC from traditional forms of communication. First, communication does not require physical presence in the same location, allowing interaction to occur across spaces flexibly. Second, communication does not always occur simultaneously or in real-time; messages can be sent and received at different times, such as in emails or social media posts. Third, computers or digital media can substitute for humans in communication roles, either partially or fully, as seen in chatbots or interactive algorithms. Fourth, human mental processes, such as information processing and decision-making during communication, can be replaced by technology-based information processing tools. These four features position CMC as an asynchronous, automated, and decentralized medium of communication, enabling the emergence of new dynamics in digital social interaction (Velayuthan & Hashim, 2022).



Figure 1. Instagram account @Cinderella



The unit of analysis in this study consists of screenshots of visual and narrative posts from the Instagram account @Cinderella that feature experimental makeup styles, representations of visual character, and captions that reinforce identity narratives. Data collection was carried out through non-participant observation of content uploaded within a specific time frame, with attention to visual consistency, aesthetics, and audience engagement (Imanina & Palupi, 2023). The researcher categorized the content based on visual themes and identity expressions represented.

Data processing and analysis employed thematic coding, a process of identifying recurring themes based on patterns, symbols, and visual constructions. Interpretation was conducted hermeneutically, taking into account the social and cultural contexts underlying the construction of beauty narratives (Aprilian, 2020). Data validity was reinforced through source triangulation and references to relevant theories. Through this method, the study seeks to provide a holistic understanding of how beauty identity is represented and negotiated in Instagram content by a beauty vlogger such as Cinderella.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Forms of Beauty Identity Expression Displayed by @Cinderella through Visual Content on Instagram

The forms of beauty identity expression displayed by @Cinderella through visual content on Instagram can be analyzed using the concept of identity representation in social media, where individuals present a self-image that reflects aesthetic values, personality, and the social messages they wish to communicate to their audiences.

#### A. Makeup as a Representation of Creativity and Aesthetic Identity

Cinderella expresses her beauty identity through creative and expressive character makeup. She does not merely employ makeup to conform to conventional beauty standards but uses it as a medium for exploring alternative characters and non-traditional themes such as Halloween, animals, or even grotesque and humorous forms. This demonstrates that her constructed beauty identity is not passive or normative but active and subversive. Makeup becomes a means of self-expression that represents the courage to appear different while establishing a personal and performative aesthetic.

#### B. Makeup as a Representation of Creativity and Aesthetic Identity

Her beauty identity expression is also evident in her unconventional and eccentric photography style. She often poses in humorous ways, exaggerates facial expressions, or showcases fashion choices that deviate from mainstream trends. This suggests her rejection of normative beauty dichotomies that confine femininity to softness, elegance, and grace. Instead, Cinderella promotes an inclusive, playful, and confident beauty identity.

#### C. Self-Image as an Expression of Self-Love and Body Positivity

Through her uploads, Cinderella conveys messages of self-love and body positivity. For example, she confidently displays parts of her body often deemed imperfect, such as stomach folds or large thighs, while expressing pride in them. This act represents resistance to discriminatory and objectifying beauty standards. Thus, her beauty identity expression is not only about visual aesthetics but also communicates self-empowerment and self-acceptance.

#### D. Identity Visualization Strategies and Mystification

Drawing on Erving Goffman's concepts of front stage and back stage, Cinderella's Instagram visuals can be understood as the front stage—the curated self-image she presents to the public: confident, creative, humorous, and bold (Nugroho et al., 2024). At the same time, she acknowledges the difference between her personal reality and her public persona, which she manages selectively. This reflects the mystification of identity in social media: Cinderella presents curated aspects of herself that support an empowering beauty narrative but remain under her control.

#### E. Beauty as a Form of Self-Actualization

Through her visuals, it is evident that Cinderella employs beauty as a medium for self-actualization. She channels psychological potentials such as creativity, humor, and personal values into a unique visual aesthetic. This self-actualizing tendency is part of her journey toward wholeness, manifested through her consistent use of character makeup and authentic visual styles (Sovira & Abidin, 2021).

Overall, Cinderella's beauty identity expression on Instagram reflects the strategic use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) to construct personal narratives that are visual, symbolic, and creative. Makeup functions not only as an enhancer of appearance but



also as a digital cue that signifies subversive and performative aesthetic identities. Social media's visual features support this complex and meaningful self-representation beyond conventional communication boundaries. Cinderella resists dominant beauty narratives by presenting unique photography styles, promoting self-love, and embracing body positivity. Through authentic and expressive content, she resists hegemonic standards while celebrating body diversity and personal values. This strategy represents a form of identity performance consistent with the hyperpersonal communication model, where users exercise greater control over impressions in digital spaces. Her representation of beauty serves as an act of self-actualization in the digital realm, where social media becomes a platform for conveying values, ideologies, and personality.

## Self-Representation Strategies In Constructing Beauty Identity Through Artistic And Experimental Aesthetics On Social Media

The strategies used by @Cinderella to construct beauty identity through artistic and experimental aesthetics on social media can be analyzed using semiotic approaches and Richard Dyer's star theory. Her beauty identity is not a conventional representation of a beauty vlogger but is constructed through artistic, experimental, and performative combinations of visual, verbal, and non-verbal elements.

### A. Visual Representation: Experimental Aesthetics through Character Makeup and Unique Style

Cinderella showcases artistic and experimental beauty through character makeup covering themes such as animals, horror, and fantasy. Makeup functions not only as a beautification tool but also as a medium for identity exploration. Beauty is expressed not normatively but through creative self-styling. Her eccentric, unconventional photography style is a deliberate visual strategy to establish a distinctive brand personality. By presenting humorous, absurd, and playful styles, she embodies the aesthetic of authenticity in digital culture, where uniqueness and honesty are valued in building audience relationships.

### B. Verbal Representation: Humor, Self-Love, and Positivity

Verbally, Cinderella emphasizes self-love and self-acceptance. Her statements in videos and interviews reveal her attempts to confront social pressures regarding body and self-image, while promoting body positivity. She not only presents humor and cheerfulness but also acknowledges sadness and imperfections as integral to her identity. Through personal narratives such as "I am also human" and "I'm not always happy," she builds narrative authenticity, strengthening her relatability as a public figure. This curated self-disclosure enables emotional connection with her audience (Imanina & Palupi, 2023).

### C. Non-Verbal Representation: Gestures, Expressions, and Local Dialects

Non-verbal aspects—including exaggerated facial expressions, playful gestures, and the use of Javanese dialect—reinforce her expressive, humorous, and approachable persona. Incorporating a local dialect highlights cultural identity, enhancing her authenticity and relatability to Indonesian audiences. This aligns with the concept of cultural proximity, whereby stars create familiarity through cultural elements known to their audiences (Selviani et al., 2023).

### D. Star Image: Between Mystification and Self-Actualization

According to Richard Dyer (1979), a star's image is formed through the interplay of texts, publicity, and audience perception. Cinderella presents her front stage image as humorous, creative, and positive, while subtly hinting at a more vulnerable back stage identity of insecurities and fears. This creates mystification: the coexistence of a controlled public persona and a private self. Yet, this mystification functions not as manipulation but as part of her self-actualization process (Aprilian, 2020).

### E. Artistic Aesthetics as a Medium of Identity Representation

Her artistic aesthetic is not merely a style but a deliberate strategy of identity representation. Makeup becomes a canvas for exploring alternative identities and asserting control over body and appearance. This positions her as not just humorous or cheerful, but also strong, creative, and aesthetically independent. Her representation challenges passive, normative beauty standards by asserting agency in constructing her own ideals.

From a CMC perspective, Cinderella's strategies demonstrate how digital identities can be strategically constructed through curated visual, verbal, and non-verbal modalities. Her experimental aesthetics act as a visual encoding strategy that compensates for limited physical cues in digital spaces. Through fantasy-themed makeup and eccentric expressions, she creates hyperpersonal, emotionally resonant communication with her audience (Hasibuan et al., 2023). Verbal elements such as humor, personal narratives, and

affirmations of self-love reflect curated self-disclosure, producing emotional resonance (Ema & Nayiroh, 2024). Meanwhile, cultural dialects strengthen interpersonal digital connection through cultural proximity (Wandira et al., 2024). Her identity management reflects the front stage–back stage duality, enabling an authentic yet controlled persona. Thus, her artistic aesthetic is not merely decorative but an instrument of self-actualization and resistance to dominant beauty norms in digital spaces.

## Self-Representation Strategies In Constructing Beauty Identity Through Artistic And Experimental Aesthetics On Social Media

Audience responses to Cinderella's beauty identity expression can be analyzed across visual, verbal, and non-verbal dimensions, linked to Richard Dyer's theory, concepts of self-esteem, self-actualization, and identity mystification.

### A. Visual: Self-Representation through Physical Appearance and Character Makeup

Cinderella leverages the visual power of eccentric character makeup as an expression of artistic freedom rather than conformity to conventional beauty. Her "weird" yet unique photo styles challenge mainstream norms while affirming self-acceptance. From Dyer's perspective, such visuals are part of star image production through repeated mediated representation (Rachmalia & Saputro, 2025). Audiences interpret her as authentic, bold, and unique. Comments frequently express admiration for her confidence, showing that audiences embrace her authentic self-representation as part of broader self-acceptance and body positivity movements.

### B. Verbal: Narratives of Self-Love and Body Positivity

Her captions, YouTube remarks, and media interviews emphasize self-love, confronting insecurities, and embracing emotional complexity. She presents herself not only as an entertainer but also as reflective and self-aware. Her articulation of vulnerability embodies general self-esteem—acceptance of herself holistically, not merely confidence in skills or talents (Aprilian, 2020). Audience responses are overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing inspiration from her honesty and depth, which fosters emotional closeness.

### C. Non-Verbal: Expressions, Gestures, and Dialects

Her playful gestures, exaggerated facial expressions, and use of Javanese dialect support her image as fun, relatable, and authentic. Dyer's framework suggests a star's image arises not only from formal media texts but also from everyday habits, speech styles, and expressions. Audiences respond with laughter and admiration for her openness, making her relatable.

### D. Mystification of Identity: Front Stage and Back Stage

Cinderella consciously distinguishes between her front stage identity—colorful, cheerful, confident—and her back stage reality of sadness or insecurities. This deliberate curation of identity reflects the dramaturgical mystification process. Importantly, her openness about this duality enhances, rather than undermines, audience trust. Her human vulnerability strengthens emotional bonds.

### E. Conclusion: Audience Perceptions of Cinderella's Beauty Identity

Overall, audience responses to Cinderella's beauty identity expression are positive and supportive. Audiences perceive her as:

- a. Authentic and confident in self-expression.
- b. Representing beauty diversity through creative makeup and cultural expression.
- c. Promoting self-love and body positivity through verbal and visual narratives.
- d. Building honest relationships with her audience by acknowledging personal realities.

From a CMC perspective, these responses reflect the success of multimodal communication strategies in creating emotional closeness in digital spaces. Her eccentric visuals function as digital cue substitutions, compensating for face-to-face limitations with meaningful visual symbols (Silvia et al., 2022). This enables parasocial interactions that reinforce audience connections (Ramadhana & Yusanto, 2020). Her verbal narratives embody strategic self-disclosure, curated yet emotionally resonant, increasing perceived authenticity (High et al., 2023). Non-verbal elements—gestures, expressions, and dialects—operate as performative nonverbal, enhancing her persona's authenticity (Ramadhana & Yusanto, 2020). Through conscious front stage–back stage management, she balances authenticity with control, fostering trust. Thus, social media, as a form of CMC, serves not only as a communication medium but also as a complex arena for identity construction and management aimed at building meaningful social relationships (Velayuthan & Hashim, 2022).

## DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis of @Cinderella's Instagram content indicate that the forms of beauty identity expression she presents tend to be non-conventional, creative, and performative. The beauty identity constructed does not refer to normative standards such as feminine, delicate, and narrowly defined aesthetics, but rather to expressions that combine elements of aesthetics, humor, and popular culture. Through the use of character makeup, eccentric photography styles, and humorous body and facial expressions, Cinderella builds the narrative that beauty is a form of self-actualization rooted in the courage to be different.

The self-image presented in visual content touches not only on aesthetic aspects but also conveys social messages such as self-love, body positivity, and resistance to conventional beauty standards. This demonstrates that beauty in the context of social media is not merely about physical appearance, but also a social construct that can be negotiated by individuals through creativity and control over self-representation.

The visual approach used by Cinderella can be seen as a self-representation strategy that integrates artistic, personal, and social aspects. From the audience's perspective, the responses show an acceptance of the diversity of beauty identities. Audiences not only appreciate the artistic and humorous aspects displayed but also feel an emotional closeness to the narratives she builds. Comments on social media reveal that many of Cinderella's followers feel inspired by her courage to present herself authentically and to openly show imperfections. This suggests that social media has the potential to become an affirmative space for more inclusive and humanistic expressions of identity.

These findings are consistent with several previous studies highlighting identity representation on social media, particularly among beauty influencers. Beauty influencers build digital personas through consistent visual and verbal narratives, creating closeness with audiences through curated authenticity (Fakhira et al., 2022). This finding reinforces the depiction of Cinderella, who consciously shapes her image through artistic makeup content, eccentric photography styles, and repeated narratives of self-love in her posts.

Forms of self-representation on digital platforms are often paradoxical: on one hand emphasizing honesty, while on the other strategically controlled to maintain a public image. This aligns with Cinderella's strategy of identity mystification, which maintains a balance between personal personality (back stage) and public appearance (front stage) (Imanina & Palupi, 2023).

Research on body culture and body positivity on Instagram shows that individuals often use the platform to challenge traditional beauty norms and advocate self-acceptance (Casaló et al., 2020). In this context, Cinderella emerges as a figure who promotes the diversity of beauty identities through the use of local dialects, non-conventional makeup themes, and narratives that reject the objectification of the body. Self-presentation strategies on social media can be understood as a form of emotional labor that enables individuals to articulate their identities in reflective, responsive, and often political ways (Purba et al., 2024).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of visual, verbal, and non-verbal content on the @Cinderella Instagram account, it can be concluded that the expression of beauty identity displayed is artistic, experimental, and meaningful. Cinderella constructs a non-normative beauty image through creative visual strategies, reflective and supportive communication styles, and the use of cultural elements that resonate with audiences.

She represents beauty as a form of self-actualization and empowerment, while simultaneously employing identity mystification strategies to manage the boundary between her public image and personal self. Audience responses to these representations are generally positive, appreciating the authenticity, courage, and spirit of body positivity she promotes. As a result, Cinderella is positioned as an inspirational and relatable figure in the landscape of Indonesian social media.

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