

Conference Paper

Women's Resistance towards "Master Narratives" through Female Travelers' Instagram

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Abstract

In Instagram, it is frequently observed that there are various unique female traveler's accounts. Even though in everyday life, female representation in Instagram is influenced by the "master narratives" which overlook the differences between and among women. According to De Lauretis (1987, 1), "master narratives" are influenced by the West patriarchy that focuses on sexual difference between men and women. This sexual difference is not the result of biological understanding. The objective of this research is to figure out the resistance of female travelers to "master narratives" through their Instagram accounts. This research focuses on Claudia Kaunang's account. This research applies a virtual ethnography method. De Lauretis's representation theory, which focuses on "master narratives" and the relations with "Woman" and "women", is used to analyze the data of this research. The research finding confirms that Claudia Kaunang's Instagram account displays resistance to the construction of "master narratives".

Keywords: Instagram, resistance, master narratives, female traveler

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1. Introduction

The word "free" has a double meaning for women because in reality there is no absolute freedom. Nowadays women can do many things and achieve various kinds of achievements that were previously only able to be done by men. But in reality, women's freedom can't be separated from the shadows of male-biased through social construction. The social construction is based on "master narratives" from male thought as the dominant in society. The concept of freedom for women is applied in general without thinking about the needs and desires of women who are different from each other.

Many thing has been done for women's freedom, included by doing traveling. The social constructions positioning women in the domestic sphere, slowly starting to disappear. Nowadays women are not only brave to get out of their domestic sphere, but

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also from the comfort zone by doing traveling activities. We can find a lot of women's traveling activities in print media, electronic media and also on social media.

Instagram's presence as a social media brings fresh air for women. Based on the results of data released by We Are Social and Hootsuite (Indonesia Digital Landscape 2019, accessed 30 September 2019 from <https://www.slideshare.net/DataReportal/digital-2019-indonesia-january-2019-v01>), Instagram users in Indonesia 49% are women and 51% are men. Nowadays, Instagram is one of the social media that is often used by female travelers. Although the freedom that is expected from Instagram is not fully obtained, it does not reduce the enthusiasm of female travelers to make Instagram a space to speak up and show expression. Through posting photos and captions that they upload on their personal Instagram accounts, female travelers often resist "master narratives" that are not only found offline but also online.

One part of "master narratives" that is opposed by travelers is the social outlook that has been holding women back from developing themselves. The pseudo freedom offered and the representation of women that cannot be separated from male-biased always makes women second-class citizens. For example, women are given the freedom to go to school, but it is still constructed that women with high education will find it difficult to get a husband. Women are also given the freedom to get out of their domestic sphere but are always terrorized by security factors and physical conditions that are considered weak.

The female traveler breaks the thought by doing traveling activities that have been considered as the realm of men. This research analyzes the Instagram account of one Indonesian female traveler, Claudia Kaunang who has the account name @claudiakaunang. Through her Instagram account, Claudia shares information about traveling, besides that the caption used often contains messages in the form of enlightenment and invitations for women to have self-awareness and dare to determine their happiness.

Through this article, we will see how the @claudiakaunang account is resisting the "master narratives" by representing the images of women outside of what has been constructed by "master narratives".

This paper uses the theory of representation from Teresa De Lauretis to further analyze Instagram that is used by Indonesian female traveler @claudiakaunang, as a medium to resist "master narratives".

Traveling activities carried out by female travelers are represented in their Instagram accounts according to their self-construction. According to Dobson (2015, 104), self-representation through text on social media can be updated, edited, and rewritten, because the self-represented is intended to be known by many people. Also, the texts

themselves are mortal and fluid and are built to present themselves according to the constructs they want to represent so they can be changed and revised.

The self-representation of female travelers in social media can be revised and changed. This is often directly or indirectly influenced by the "master narratives" in the social life of the community. "Master narratives" which are influenced by men's thoughts produce women's self-construction that cannot be separated from men's influence. The existence of "master narratives" according to Teresa De Lauretis (1987, 1), is influenced by Western patriarchal thinking that emphasizes sexual difference which results not from understanding biology or socialization, but from marking and discursive effects. This causes women to be trapped in the big narratives built by patriarchal culture.

According to De Lauretis (1987, 1-4), the gender that is built, produced, and represented in society can change depending on what perspective they used. In carrying out their role, the "master narratives" negate the differences that exist between women and construct women to be the same as they want. The existence of "master narratives" raises opposition from women who realize that they are different and not similar to each other.

Gender construction and representation are interconnected, as stated by De Lauretis (1987, 9) "The construction of gender is the product and the process of both representation and self-representation". When talking about women as subjects, we cannot only see women as products that are represented. In the process, what is represented becomes input for women to construct themselves and do self-representation.

However, we also have to see that in addition to the women who are represented and become the center in the representation space and are considered ideal (Woman), other women are on the margins and are invisible but they are "real" women. As De Lauretis (1987, 9-10) argues:

"By the phrase 'the subject of feminism' I mean a conception or an understanding of the (female) subject as not only distinct from Woman with the capital letter, the representation of an essence inherent in all women (which has been seen as Nature, Mother, Mystery, Evil Incarnate, Object of [Masculine] Desire and Knowledge, Proper Womanhood, Femininity, et cetera), but also distinct from women, the real, historical beings and social subjects who are defined by the technology of gender and actually engendered in social relations. The subject of feminism I have in mind is one not so defined, one whose definition or conception is in progress, in this and other feminist critical texts; and, to insist on this point one more time, the subject of feminism"

According to De Lauretis (1987: 10), the subject of women must be able to be inside and outside the gender construction of "Woman" built by "master narratives". Women must be able to understand "Woman" (the ideal woman who appears and is in the middle of spaces of representation) and "woman" ("real" woman who are on the edges of the spaces of representation). So women can know what is thought by the "master narratives" and what is desired by women but not revealed.

To understand the existence of "Woman" and "women", De Lauretis (1987: 26) uses film theory which explains that "The space is not visible in the frame but inferable from what the frame makes visible". When we discuss the representation of women, Women with large 'W' become representations that are often interpreted as "real" women. On the other side, there are women with small "w" who do not enter the frame or also called "space-off". "Space-off" can be interpreted as a "real" woman, a female subject who's following what is desired by the woman. Whereas a Woman with a large 'W' is a female construction that is influenced by "the dominant" or "master narratives".

Based on De Lauretis's thought (1987: 26), we can understand that actually women can be separated from the "narrative master". Women as feminist subjects are expected to be able to bring the voices that have existed in the representation space to be heard and seen, especially the voices and the presence of women in "space-off". Therefore women must be able to place themselves inside and outside the frame and voice it in the spaces of representation. The presence of social media allows women to do this, especially Instagram which is used by female travelers.

2. Methodology

This paper will use the ethnographic virtual research method and participatory observation. Virtual ethnographic research emphasizes Multi-Sited Ethnography which separate from the domestic dichotomy and switches from local to global. According to Miller (2000: 5) in virtual ethnography, we are not only dealing with computers and humans, but we are also dealing with social order in society. This was also conveyed by Hine (2000: 65) who said that in virtual ethnographic research, time and physical attachment were not important, even being opposed.

3. Result and Discussions

Claudia is an Indonesian female traveler who has started her career as a travel writer since 2009 and has produced 16 books. Claudia has been traveling since she was a

child and has visited 79 countries. In 2010 Claudia created an open trip program to facilitate people who want to travel around the world, especially Indonesian women. Traveling activities and traveling programs that she made, posted through her personal Instagram account @claudiakaunang. Claudia first used Instagram and posted the first photo on December 6, 2012. Until now, Claudia has posted 1,236 photos and has 44,800 followers. Not only posting on her feed, Claudia is also actively uploading various things on her Insta Story every day.

3.1. Pseudo Happiness

Through her Instagram account Claudia often says that everyone must know themselves and have a meaningful life. As shown in Figure 1, Claudia expresses Happy International Women’s Day and also reminds Indonesian women to develop themselves and especially to know their priorities in life, “value” themselves and dare to be happy.

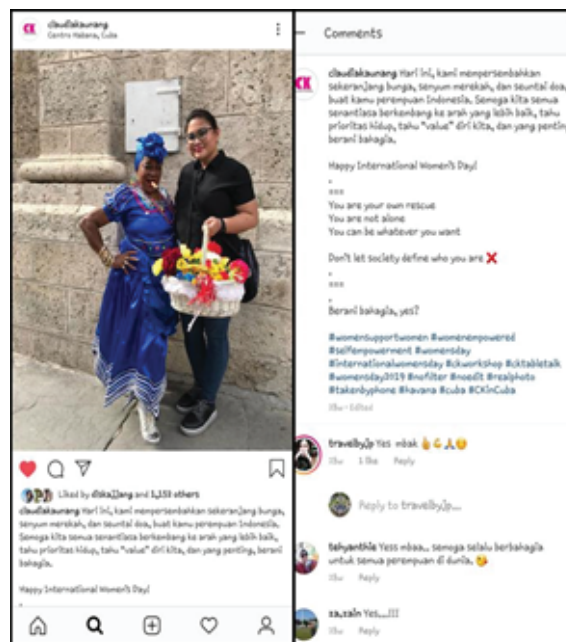


Figure 1: Kaunang in Cuba (Source Instagram account @claudiakaunang)

In Figure 2, Claudia criticizes women who often feel jealous and compare their lives to others who are more successful. Claudia saw that women often wasted time and let go of the happiness she could have achieved. Through her post, Claudia reminded women to take control of their lives. Everyone has their happiness and they must struggle to achieve that happiness. Claudia also encourages women to take control of her life, and every woman should know what she wants and should not trapped in the “master narratives”.

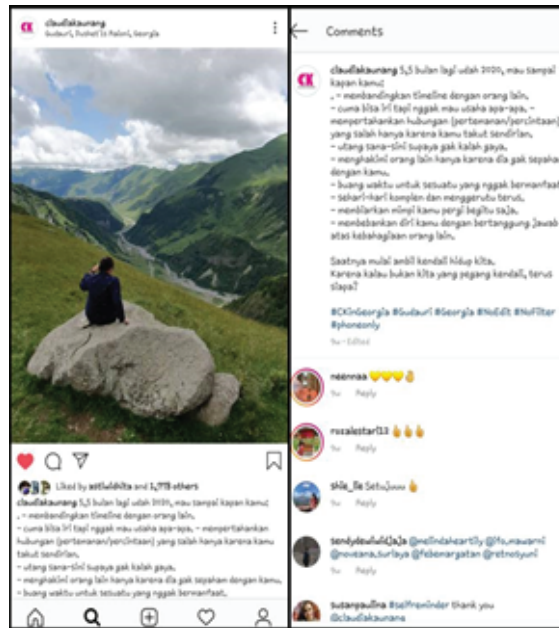


Figure 2: Kaunang in Georgia (Source Instagram account @claudiakaunang)

The two pictures above show how Claudia tried to encourage women to have their self-awareness and find out what would make them happy. During all this time the ideal woman perspective and women’s happiness standards are determined by the construction of “master narratives” which are applied equally to all women. For example, they say that women feel happy when they are married and take good care of their husbands and children. Married and taking care of her husband and children, all in the domestic sphere. So the standard of women’s happiness is still constructed in the domestic sphere. On the other hand, not all women feel marriage and having children are the things that make her happy. The domestic sphere does not always become the source of happiness for women.

Through her Instagram account, Claudia doing resistant to the construction of “master narratives”. Claudia is encouraging women to know themselves and find out what she wants in life and what can make her happy. Claudia represents women’s taught who had been outside the “master narratives” frame. She declares that having a different source of happiness and being a different individual is not wrong.

Claudia’s post is the voice of “space off” or “woman” with a small “w” and later becomes a self-reminder for other women. Claudia was able to represent the voice of women who had not been seen. The response of followers in the form of likes and comments proves that what Claudia doing is representing the voices of other women who have not been heard.

3.2. Women Resistance

The resistance that Claudia made through her Instagram account based on the discussions with some women she met while traveling and also DM (Direct Message) received through Instagram. The topic of discussions is how to get a meaningful and happy life. Through her posts, Claudia always reminds us that everyone has a different standard of happiness and to achieve this we must take control of our lives.

A dynamic life encourages everyone to dare to change and do something in their life. Through her post in Figure 3, Claudia encouraged women not only complain but also dare to do something for their life. When a woman feels unhappy in her life, she must have the courage to fight. In the process of achieving happiness, women must dare to change and be patient through the process. Because in reality women are often trapped and afraid to get out from the comfort zone created by "master narratives".



Figure 3: Kاونang in Myanmar (Source Instagram account @claudiakaunang)

Through her Instagram account, Claudia also resisted the "master narratives" which had been creating fears for women to travel alone. In Figure 4, Claudia encourages women to dare traveling alone as a form of self-respect by providing "me time". Traveling alone is not an important point, but having "me time" is something that is often not realized by women. "Master narratives" which emphasize women's relations with the domestic (family) sphere often cause fear and guilt. Women are often accused of being selfish when traveling alone, this is especially for those who are married.

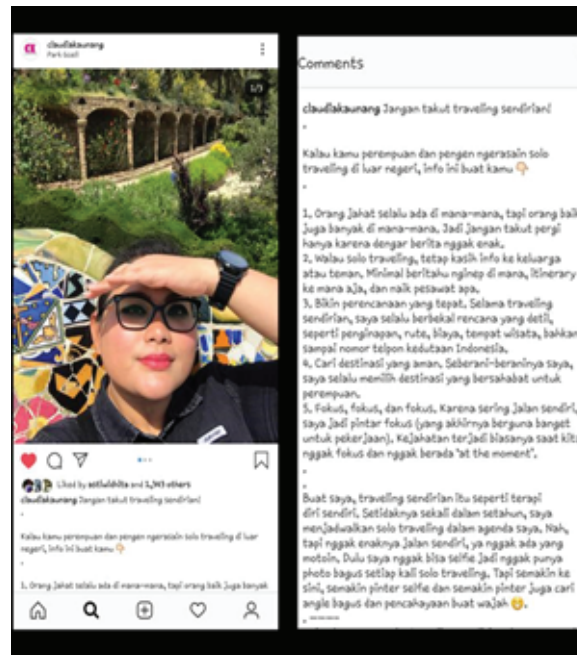


Figure 4: Kaunang in Park Guell, Spanyol (Source Instagram account @claudiakaunang)

Claudia's post mostly shows destinations traveling abroad to encourage Indonesian women to get out of their comfort zones. Claudia has a mission so that many Indonesian women can feel traveling abroad and seeing the world. This is also a resistance to the "master narratives" that haunt women with the thought "What for women traveling, they just spending money. It is better if they spend money for family needs and school for their children". Women are overshadowed by guilt because they are considered selfish by traveling abroad.

In every post, Claudia always gets thousands of likes and comments from her followers. Most of the comments submitted support Claudia's statement and many women feel represented by Claudia's statement. Through her post, Claudia represents the voice of women with a small "w" that has been drowned by the representation of women with a large "W". Marginalized voices now can be represented and taken into account in the lives of Indonesian women.

4. Conclusion

Through Instagram account @claudiakaunang, Claudia resisted the "master narratives" by representing the voice of women with a small "w" that has been burned by the representation of Woman with a large "W". She realize that Every woman has a different purpose in life, happiness standards and abilities. Claudia uses photos and captions to speak up that women can do many things for themselves. Claudia also encourages

women to know their "values", realize what their life goals and be able to take control of their lives. In each post, Claudia reminded the most important thing that women must dare to be happy by determining and pursuing what can make them feel happy.

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