Masculinity Symbols on Skincare Everwhite Advertisement

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Abstract

The South Korean entertainment industry’s popularity and global reach have prompted private companies to place advertise their products to international viewers. South Korean celebrities have also been found to form positively perceived beauty standards, consequently serving as an antecedent of beauty product awareness and perceived beauty product quality among international audiences. This article aims to unveil how male identities are constructed in masculinity symbols displayed in skincare product ads. This research examines Everwhite skincare ads as Indonesian products with South Korean actors as brand ambassadors. Findings reveal that these ads still rely on stereotypical constructs and traditional discourses of what it takes to be a man. Implications for advertising attitudes towards masculinity were found to be beauty standards. For example, men are invited to consume grooming products but are reminded to do it the men’s way. Men are also reminded of their sexual power to seduce and attract women with the aid of the product.

Keywords: Advertisement, Masculinity, Beauty, Skincare, Communication
1. Introduction
Masculinity refers to the set of characteristics and traits traditionally associated with men and male identity (Mshweshwe, 2020). These can include qualities such as strength, assertiveness, and independence. It can also encompass societal expectations and roles that are often placed on men, such as being the primary breadwinner or protector in a family (Khmil & Popovych, 2019). The idea of masculinity in society can vary depending on cultural, historical context and individual perspectives. For example, the pressure to conform to masculinity can contribute to men's reluctance to seek help for mental health problems or to express vulnerability.

According to Berdahl et al., (2018) study, describe masculinity idea is reflection of society cultures this can vary across cultures and possibility change over time. In line with it, recent years, there has been a growing movement to challenge and redefine notions of masculinity in many countries. This includes promoting a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of masculinity that allows for a wider range of expressions and behaviors, rather than confining men to narrow and rigid stereotypes. For instance, South Korea as nation since 2008 shifting masculinity idea that does not limit men on they appear manly and macho, but on men are free to express themselves (Suh, 2017). This can be seen numbers of men become wear flashy clothes and accessories on their bodies. In additional, South Korean men in gradually realize important of skincare treatment as lifestyle which is in some country is unusual for a man (Kim & Lee, 2017).

1.1 Media as distribute popular culture
The spread of popular culture is straightforward happens in this era of globalization. South Korea has soft power in international politics. Some power, indeed possessed by the countries in power, such as the United States and Western countries in Europe, as well as Japan in Asia, because of their military strength. Meanwhile, soft power rests on three sources: cultural appeal in the country; political values when the country implements domestic and foreign policies; and fair foreign policy and having moral authority (Nye & Kim, 2019). In international politics, the country that produces soft power primarily arises from the values the organization—or state expresses in its culture. South Korea has soft power because it channels the organization's or country's values in its artworks. Korean television dramas and K-Pop music have promoted urban and rural places in South Korea. Artworks in the form of films and songs produced by South Korea also introduce the values of the South Korean state in it (Oh, 2018).

Young people are also targeted by the soft power owned by South Korea (Nye & Kim, 2019). Studies conducted by Syam (2015), Simbar, (2016), and Valenciana & Pudjibudojo, (2022) show that mass media plays a significant role in spreading South Korean values among young people. It is reciprocal with the behavior of young people who imitate fashion and consume Korean specialties, and it is difficult to stop following entertainment shows from South Korea. The symbols and ideologies of South Korean culture were successfully absorbed and became the lifestyle of most teenagers in Indonesia because the media has the power to produce popular culture. A global media network generates, distributes, and promotes popular culture (Cindrakasih, 2021).

Mass media can influence the lives of individuals, including young people, to leave the old culture and carry out other cultures. Masculinity is also a product of the culture that has been understood for a long time by people in Indonesia. The ideal masculine figure understood by young people in Indonesia is related to responsibility, reliability, patience, and being a protector. Young people also associate a caring, protective, polite, muscular figure with a light skin color as the ideal norm of masculinity. It is based on Javanese aristocrats depicted in the figure of wayang (Budiastuti & Wulan, 2014).

Based on the description above, South Korea is one of the countries with strength in the form of cultural attraction data in that country. It is the soft power owned by the country, and then the soft power is further strengthened by the presence of the media. The ideology of masculinity from South Korea is one of the cultures published by the media and known by young people globally. Therefore, the ideology of masculinity known by young people in Indonesia may change. Previously, Indonesian people had an understanding of the masculinity of wayang figures. After getting to know South Korean culture through the entertainment route,
young people in Indonesia can understand the ins and outs of masculinity in South Korea.

1.2 Brand ambassador for skincare advertisement

Currently, in South Korea men idols or actors have become a brand-ambassadors for cosmetic or beauty products. This circumstance beginning from early 2000s in parallel development of entertainment industry (e.g drama, music, fashion) for promote South Korea popular culture to global (Halim & Kiatkawsin, 2021). In line as images reiterated in advertising bit by bit traditional idea of masculinity (e.g., strength, wealth and athleticism) have been change to be free express concept. In sum, men were increasingly offered visions of masculinity in the marketplace not only for consumption but also choose to embody new idea of masculinity (Ely & Kimmel, 2018).

Masculinity, as discussed earlier, has a physical symbol (e.g., muscular and light skin color) and an ideal personality symbol of a man (e.g. responsibility, reliability, patience, and being a protector) that the Indonesian people have known. Again, the media is the primary tool to convey the ideology of masculinity in Indonesia. One is media in the form of advertisements aired on television and Youtube platforms. The results of the studies of Lawono et al., (2021) and Pratami & Hasiholan (2020) show that skincare advertisements for men have appeared on Indonesian television and depict the figure of masculinity in it. The masculine traits depicted in the ad are that men wash their faces quickly. After washing their face, men will become more and more masculine. It has become a point of view in society regarding masculinity and skincare for men.

The research of Lawono et al. (2021) and Pratami & Hasiholan (2020) is a study on Indonesian skincare advertisements that uses brand ambassadors from Indonesia. With the development of Korean soft power in the field of culture and art worldwide, including in Indonesia, Indonesian skincare products also collaborated with South Korean actors to star in skincare products from Indonesia. One of the South Korean actors, Song Joong Ki, is the brand ambassador of Scarlett Whitening. The results of Jonathan & Huwae’s research, (2022) show the influence of brand ambassador Song Joong Ki’s attractiveness on Scarlett Whitening’s brand image. Meanwhile, the results of research by Probosini et-

-al., (2021) show that brand ambassadors, brand images, and promotions simultaneously positively and significantly influence consumers’ decisions to buy these products. The studies above show that brand ambassadors strongly influence buying decisions, so skincare products in Indonesia began to cooperate with South Korean actors.

This research will analyze the symbols of masculinity in Indonesian skincare advertisements that collaborate with South Korean actors as their brand ambassadors. Globalization can make Indonesians understand the symbols of masculinity following the culture in South Korea. Previously, the symbols of masculinity understood by Indonesian people came from the aristocratic character of Javanese wayang. This research will explore the symbols of masculinity displayed by Kim Seon Ho, brand ambassador of Everwhite. One of the media in Indonesia wrote that Everwhite is the first local skincare brand in Indonesia to collaborate with South Korean actors as brand ambassadors (Putri, 2021). Therefore, this study will analyze the symbols of masculinity displayed in the Everwhite skincare advertisement starring Kim Seon Ho.

2. Study Case Scope

Men as gender and masculinity as behaviors inherent in men have been studied since 1895, Smith (2015) discusses in his book that in the war years, the appearance of men who resembled women and vice versa would be considered moral violations. Such a thing only lasts during wartime. When peacetime comes, the regulations that limit duties, appearances, sexuality, and relationships between men and women are no longer as strict as in wartime. Change in duties of men, who were -

Figure 1. Kim Seon Ho as brand ambassador of Everwhite. (Source: Official Everwhite Youtube screenshot taken on January 31, 2023)
-originally laborers and soldiers during the war, began to shift to the realm of industry. Men are required to work, and women are not required to do so. It suggests a reasonably great difference in demands for men and women.

Such differences provoke the growth of masculinity identical to men and femininity identical to females. Masculinity and femininity are about appearance and gender roles that women and men must perform. Based on Lomazzi & Seddig (2020) results, gender roles correlate the national mean levels of attitudes with the cultural values of embeddedness, hierarchy, and egalitarianism. It shows that traditional gender roles are displayed in societies emphasizing hierarchy and embeddedness, while progressive views are more expressed in egalitarian societies. Each country has a different culture, and the gender roles of women and men differ.

The unique thing in this study is the meaning of masculinity that arises from the fusion of popular culture and the influence of globalization. Popular culture can be seen in South Korean actors as brand ambassadors of skincare produced by entrepreneurs in Indonesia. The ad, played by the brand ambassador, is presented to young people in Indonesia and aired on Youtube, which people worldwide can access. This research will analyze the symbols of masculinity displayed in the Everwhite skincare ad.

3. Method

In research using the semiotic analysis method, the researcher can control every research stage. The ability to apply semiotic theory and semiotic methods when analyzing symbols in advertisements must be accompanied by the objectivity of interpretation. This objectification arises from relevant references (Talani et al., 2023). The semiotics used in this study is Roland Barthes’ semiotics. For this reason, this study seeks the meaning of denotation first for the initial stage. The meaning of denotation is interpreted as the first system of significance or a sign with a high level of agreement. The second step is to determine the connotation of the analyzed symbol. Connotation is a sign that meets feelings or emotions from values in a culture that individuals believe (Ariella et al., 2023; Mudijyanto & Nur, 2013).

After describing and finding the denotative and-connotative meanings of the Everwhite video as the object of this research, the final step is to find the myths of the ad. This analysis seeks to link symbols that have been interpreted previously so that a relationship appears between the mass media and the existence of the social structure displayed in the mass media (Wicaksono & Fitriyani, 2021). The analysis results of these symbols will be linked to relevant references from the literature so that the symbols of masculinity in Everwhite ad can be described clearly.

4. Result Analysis

An Everwhite commercial starring Kim Seon Ho was published on Everwhite’s Youtube on November 11, 2022. The 59-second commercial features Kim Seon Ho as the lone actor who tells about the Everwhite serum. The ad shows several scenes in it. The scenes in the commercials are different, but all of these are one unit in the advertising narrative. This advertisement will be analyzed using the two levels of meaning of Roland Barthes. The first step is to analyze the signs of denotation and connotation, while the second is to analyze the signs by analyzing myths (Piliang, 2019). The meaning of the masculinity of the brand ambassador from South Korea in the Indonesian skincare advertisement will be explained at the end, which is a discussion of the results of the result analysis.

The commercial opens with a scene of Kim Seon Ho uttering, “Shall we date?” on camera. The next scene is Kim Seon Ho giving a slice of cake, giving a doll, and asking, “Do you want to listen to music with me?” (Figure 2). The scenes show that Kim Seon Ho seems to be asking the audience who watched the ad as a couple who had a date with him.

The narrative of the advertisement creates a symbolic connection between Kim Seon Ho and the audience who watch it. The image of masculinity is formed through the representation of Kim Seon Ho’s act of treating the audience as a dating couple. These actions include cutting the cake and bribing the cake to the audience, giving the audience a doll, and inviting the audience as a date to listen to music together. The meaning of the connotation is constructed through the markers that appear throughout the narrative of Kim Seon Ho’s monologue inside the commercial. In particular, verbal markers in the form of the words-
“Shall we date?”, “listen music with me...” and visual markers in the form of Kim Seon Ho’s invitation to anyone who watched the ad represent the symbolic relationship between Kim Seon Ho and the audience as his date. Cakes and dolls symbolize Kim Seon Ho’s masculinity in this Everwhite commercial.

The subsequent narrative in this ad is that Kim Seon Ho also invites the audience to use Everwhite serum. In this scene, she shows her Everwhite skincare products. He smiled at the camera, “Do you want to try this serum with me?”. The meaning of the denotation of this scene is that Kim Seon Ho gives the invitation to try his Everwhite serum. The meaning of scene connotation is a symbolic relationship between Kim Seon Ho and the audience as her date. The relationship was interpreted as romantic because Kim Seon Ho invited her date to try skincare and use the serum together. In myth,-

-the actions performed together show Kim Seon Ho shows his romantic side. Kim Seon Ho points out that she is not only a man who gives cakes, dolls, and music to her dates but also shares the skincare she has been using. As a man, Kim Seon Ho not only gives cakes, dolls, and music with a romantic side, but Kim Seon Ho also shares skincare.

The myth of masculinity seen in this scene is that men are dominant figures who invite and give something to their dates. Kim Seon Ho is the male at the party who invites and gives, while the audience is the party that accepts something given by Kim Seon Ho. The audience received cakes and dolls given by Kim Seon Ho. The audience is also the party invited to date and listens to music by Kim Seon Ho. Carter & Duncan’s research (2017) suggests that objects given by men to their dates will show the social display of a man’s success.-
In addition, the objects given will emphasize the differences between two individuals involved in a romantic relationship. In addition, romantic demands between a man and his date will impact the industry that produces objects related to romantic acts, such as dolls, music, flowers, and cakes. It shows that masculinity is characterized by men actively giving, while their dates are passive as the given party.

Another myth shown in the scene is Kim Seon Ho as a man saying “Glowing skin” at the end of the scene. It shows that Kim Seon Ho as a man, also wants fair skin. Fair skin is no longer a thing that girls crave, but also men. Fair skin is also a symbol of masculinity displayed by Kim Seon Ho in the Everwhite commercial.

Other symbols of masculinity shown in this ad are the activities of men who pay attention to their-appearance. The appearance of a man in front of a woman who will be his date is one of the things that Kim Seon Ho pays attention to in this ad. This can be seen in Kim Seon Ho’s activities when choosing clothes in the closet. He said, “Wait for me,” and then chose a gray suit among the other suits in his closet. When Kim Seon Ho was wearing a suit in front of the mirror, he watched his face for quite a while. At that time, he said that his face looked dull. He thought about the next step he would take.

Denotatedly, the words “wait for me” spoken by the male character inside are verbal signs. The sign is Kim Seon Ho’s wish to ask her date to wait for her first. Furthermore, when Kim Seon Ho chooses clothes and looks in the mirror, Kim Seon Ho wants to look good in front of his date. Kim Seon Ho decided to use Everwhite as a skincare to perfect her look. The purpose is to make the dullness on his face disappear. Meanwhile, connotationally, the actions performed by Kim Seon Ho are actions to make him look handsome. He must not look bad in front of his date. The symbols displayed by Kim Seon Ho in this ad show another side of masculinity known by the public. Based on Byrne & Milestone (2023) research, the practice of men using what was traditionally a product almost solely aimed at women poses some interesting questions about changing gendered identities and practices. Men no longer feel that skincare products are taboo, but the skincare has been seen as an improvement over their appearance.

5. Discussion

Semiotics wants to study how humanity interprets things. Meaning means that objects do not only carry information, whereas objects do not only convey information. These objects also constitute the structured system contained in the ad (Sobur, 2009). These objects can be seen in the advertisements analyzed in this study. The object is related to the ideology or myth of masculinity, which is described in the results of this study. Under Roland Barthes’ semiotic analysis framework used in this study, myth, and ideology are two things that cannot be separated. Ideology is understood as a false consciousness that makes people live in an imaginary and ideal world, even though the reality in real life is not like that. Ideology was also formed as long as culture existed (Budiman, 2001; Hoed 2014; Sobur, 2009).
The signs analyzed above indicate that the appearance of masculine men has begun to shift. In previous studies, men described as masculine had sharp noses, proportional height, six-pack bodies, medium-length hairstyles, and black hair. The man also uses a suit that supports his appearance (Hadiani et al., 2020). The man depicted in the Everwhite advertisement is a man who wears a suit, so his masculine attributes are not diminished. Physical appearance was similar. In the Everwhite ad, Kim Seon Ho has black hair, a sharp nose, and a haircut that reflects a typical male look. When viewed from the perspective of fashion and physical appearance, masculinity has not shifted.

The most obvious difference that can be seen from the shift in the meaning of masculinity is the presence of skincare aimed at unisex, no longer skincare that has specifications for women and men. Skincare is generally known for its function to make women more beautiful. When women do not use skincare and makeup, this behavior will be considered uncommon (Jermyn, 2021). Now, men are encouraged to have glowing skin. The goal of women having glowing skin is to fulfill their self-confidence needs. It can be seen in research shows that women pay more attention to their bodies and appearance than men because women more often make comparisons between themselves and others about body and appearance (Hutapea, 2017).

Skincare is here to make women feel perfect with glowing skin. Masculinity is not only talking about appearance but also actions. As Budiastuti & Wulan's state (2014), masculine men known in Indonesia are responsible, reliable, patient, and protective. In the Everwhite advertisement, Kim Seon Ho showed that he behaved romantically with his date. She gives cakes and dolls, invites her dates to listen to music, and uses Everwhite skincare. Kim Seon Ho also ensured he did not look bad when he met his date. He also used the Everwhite serum before meeting his date. Following previous research, men are invited to consume skincare to brighten and care for their skin. It is just that the way to invite him is to use sexual power to attract women with the help of these products (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). Kim Seon Ho displayed these symbols by showing that he was trying to attract women by using Everwhite products.

Kim Seon Ho's efforts to attract women also show that Kim Seon Ho is the one who invites and -gives. It can be seen from the actions of Kim Seon Ho, who said, “Shall we date?” and gave items to women to portray a romantic figure. The activity of giving from men and being given to women shows that women stand in a passive position, while men are in an active position in romantic acts (Sobol-Sarag et al., 2022). Moreover, the female figure is not featured in the Everwhite ad, showing that Kim Seon Ho as a man, dominates the stage in this ad.

The results of the above description show that masculinity in the Everwhite advertisement has several symbols that remain the same. On the other hand, other symbols show changes toward equality. This equality shows an equal position between the sexes of men and women. This equality is shown by skincare users, where skincare is identical for women and men. On the other hand, the way the symbols are displayed in the Everwhite ad shows a robust masculine side. This masculine side is depicted in Kim Seon Ho's appearance in a suit and the way Kim Seon Ho treats his date by giving and inviting him. On the other hand, Kim Seon Ho is also described as the dominant side in the Everwhite advertisement. It shows that men still occupy positions of power in these advertisements.

6. Conclusion

Everwhite serum is a skincare product with a brand ambassador from South Korea, Kim Seon Ho. The symbols of masculinity displayed can be seen in Kim Seon Ho's appearance in the commercial. In addition, Sim Seon Ho's actions toward his partner can also be seen as a symbol of masculinity. These symbols illustrate a shift in masculinity in the ad, where it is not only women who need to pay attention to facial care. Men should do just that, too. Another side of masculinity seen in this ad is that men use skincare to grab the hearts of the opposite sex. Kim Seon Ho still uses the male way, which is to lure the opposite sex, to invite male and female audiences to buy Everwhitening products. The results of this study show that masculinity has indeed changed, but masculinity still shows its dominant side in this skincare advertisement.

Reference


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