

## A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF MALE BODY TREATMENT PRODUCT ADVERTISEMENTS AS FOUND ON THE INTERNET

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### ABSTRAK

Kajian ini adalah sebuah analisis semiotika iklan produk perawatan tubuh pria yang ditampilkan di internet. Tanda ditransformasikan kepada penentu signifikasi yang dirumuskan oleh Barthes. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan makna denotasi dan konotasi dari tanda lingual dan non-lingual data.

Sumber data adalah 8 iklan yang diambil dari internet berdasarkan tiga kriteria, yaitu memiliki tanda lingual dan non-lingual, merupakan produk perawatan tubuh yang identik dengan wanita, dan beberapa waktu belakangan mulai mengeluarkan variasi produk khusus untuk pria. Kemudian, data dikelompokkan menjadi tanda lingual dan tanda non-lingual. Metode diterapkan dalam pengumpulan data adalah metode observasi yang tidak melibatkan peneliti secara langsung (*non participant observational method*). Selanjutnya, analisis dilakukan dengan menggunakan teori tingkatan penandaan Barthes untuk memunculkan makna konotasi dan denotasinya. Data dianalisis dengan menerapkan metode padan (*referential*) serta hasil analisis disajikan secara informal dan formal.

Dari hasil analisis diketahui bahwa pembuat iklan produk perawatan tubuh berupaya membentuk citra baru mengenai produknya, di mana selama ini produk mereka yang dikenal sebagai produk perawatan tubuh khusus wanita, yang identik dengan kecantikan dan sifat keibuan, kini juga menyediakan variasi produk yang khusus digunakan oleh kaum pria yang sering diasosiasikan dengan kekuatan, keberanian, dan kebapakan. Melalui penggunaan tanda lingual yang didukung oleh tanda non lingual, pembuat iklan membangun citra maskulin terhadap produk perawatan tubuh yang sebenarnya untuk tujuan kecantikan. Kamufase tercipta dengan membentuk opini publik bahwa produk perawatan tubuh juga dibutuhkan oleh kaum pria untuk menunjang penampilan dan aktivitas mereka.

**Kata kunci:** *tanda lingual, tanda non-lingual, tingkatan penandaan, produk perawatan tubuh pria*

### ABSTRACT

This study is a semiotic analysis of male body treatment product advertisements as found on the internet. Sign is transformed into the order signification, as explained by Barthes. The aim of the research is to explain the meaning of denotation and of linguistic and non linguistic signs in the data.

The data sources are 8 advertisements, taken from internet based on three categories; they contain linguistic and non linguistic signs, the brands used to be associated to women, and then they start to produce a specific variant for men recently. These data are classified based on the linguistic and non linguistic signs. The method in collecting the data is *non participant observational method*. After that, the analysis is done by using the order of signification from Barthes in order to find the denotative and connotative meanings. The data are analysed by applying *referential method*, and the result of the analysis is presented by applying formal and informal form.

From the result of the analysis, it is known that the advertisers try to create new image about the products. The products were known as a body treatment product associated with women, beauty and motherhood in the early years. Now, they launched a new variant specific to men, which are always associated with power, bravery, and fatherhood. By using linguistic signs, and supported by non linguistic signs, the advertisers put masculinity values into body treatment products, which are actually aimed to create beauty values. Camouflage occurs by controlling public opinion that body treatment products is needed by men to improve their performance and activities.

**Keywords:** *linguistic sign, non linguistic sign, order of signification, male body treatment product*

## **1. Introduction**

Advertisement is an effective way to persuade readers about certain products or services. By combining interesting visual design and powerful words in advertising, a product can interest prospective consumers more, like in the body treatment advertisements. Some companies of body treatment product try to introduce their product, consisting special variant of body treatment products for men, such as lightening and whitening cream for face and body, cleansing cream, deodorant, shampo, and shower soap. What makes their advertisements interesting to be analyzed is the fact that the producers are the well known producers for body treatment product for women at the beginning, then develop new variants for men. Therefore, to launch the products and to switch the image from women-targetted only brand, the producers have different approaches. However, some messages can be easily recognized while some others need to be interpreted deeply. Therefore, semiotic analysis is applied in analyzing the meaning brought by an advertisement.

## **2. Background of the Research**

### **2.1. Identification of the Problem**

Language is a powerful media to influence the perspective of people, especially in the fields of marketing and advertising. The choice of language to deliver specific messages and to influence people is important. Visualization and design in advertising is the way to make consumers interested, but it is language that helps people to identify a product and remember it. Therefore, in this semiotic study, the writer proposes two basic questions for the research. The first, what are the signs used in some male body treatment product advertisements? And the second, what are the denotative and connotative meanings of the signs of the each advertisement?

### **2.2. Theoretical Framework**

Generally, Semiotics is a study of sign with the purpose to analyze and to find out the meaning behind the sign. By semiotics approach, we can find some meanings in advertisement. The term semiotics comes from Greek word ‘semion’ means sign. Semiotics can analyze everything that can be taken as a sign. It is not only signs in everyday speech such as traffic signs, symbols or pictures but also everything which stands for something else. Buildings, furnitures and products can be the object of semiotic analysis.

Saussure (in Chandler, 2002:18) said that a sign is composed of signifier (the form which the sign takes) and the signified (the concept the sign represents). It is called “two-part model of signs”. The sign is the results from the association of the signifier with signified. The relationship between them is called as “signification”.

Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, is one of the founders of Semiotics. He stated that semiotics is a study about the role of signs as part of social life. Sign is a form which represents combination of concept and sound-image. As the writer stated, sign is the combination of signifier (concept) and signified (sound-image). When someone says “bread”, the concept that occur in hearer’s mind is a kind of food, made from wheat flour, cooked in the oven, have smooth texture, and the color is generally white. While the sound-image is the word “bread” itself.

Barthes, in ‘Elements of Semiology’, expanded the Saussure’s model of sign. Saussure defined a sign as being composed of a signifier and signified and Barthes proposed denotation and connotation as order of signification. Denotation refers to the literal, actual meaning of a sign, and what the product is. For example, “bed” and “pen”. Denotation is the obvious function of an object, how to handle it. For example, “bed” is used for sleeping, and “pen” for writing. Taking the theory from Hjelmslev, Barthes therefore produced his map of sign functioning:

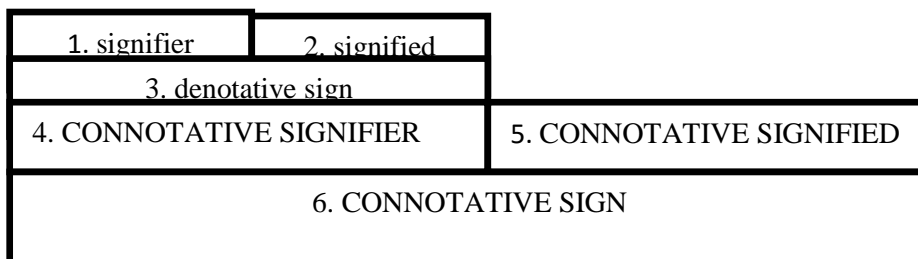


Diagram 1. Sign Functioning

The denotative sign (3) is made from a signifier (1) and signified (2), but the denotative sign (3) is also the connotative signifier in the next stage (4) that must also engenders a connotative signified (5) to produce the next level's connotative sign (6) (Cobley and Jansz ,1999:51). This process may have unlimited process.

### **2.3. Methodology**

The research is qualitative using descriptive method. The general steps follow Sudaryanto's (1993:5); collecting data, analyzing data, and presenting the result of analysis.

In collecting the data, the writer applied purposive sampling. The writer selected some body treatment product advertisements in internet. Then, some represented advertisements were randomly chosen to be analyzed. The writer observed and selected eight different brands. They are Nivea for Men, Vaseline Men, Dove Men Care, Clear Men, Avon for Men, Garnier Men, L'Oreal Paris Men Expert, and Olay Men Solutions.

To analyze the data descriptively, the writer uses referential method, as proposed by Sudaryanto. Here, some elements that out of the language aspect considered are reference, speaker, setting, and background. They give some supporting information that relate the data and the context.

In presenting the results of analysis, the writer uses formal and informal methods. Informal method is used by using the verbal language and formal method by using some technical terms, signs, and symbols.

### **3. Review of Related Literature**

Firstly, a research was held by Ahmad, et al. (2011) about the the logo of Starbucks Coffee. This research focuses on semiotic visual communication, related to the logo of Starbucks Coffee. The samples come from the visitors of the café in Lembah Klang. The keys of the research are visual communication of semiotic, logo, and the imaging of the industry. The research is based on three things; the visual semiotic of Starbucks logo, the relationship between semiotic logo with the assumption of society, and the image of Starbucks in the mindset of people. On the relationship between the logo and the mindset of the consumer about Starbucks, it can be concluded that the selection of elements to construct Starbucks logo is relevant with the idea of Starbucks in the mindset of the consumer. Logo can give good effect to the developments of the industry.

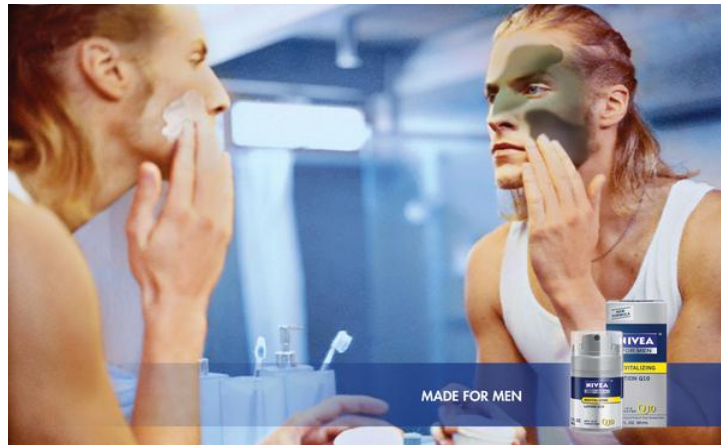
Secondly, a research held by Tsotra (2004) discusses internet advertisements marketing. The data are the Nokia advertisement and Ericsson advertisements. Semiotics is a particularly powerful tool for uncovering hidden meaning of internet marketing. The purpose of this research is to analyze external characteristics and forms of these two advertisements with the aim of constructing meaning. Then the writer focuses on specific elements such as background, color and form. The semiotic study presented uses objects, colors and shapes as elements of advertisement design. He found that Ericsson advertisement also reflects the company's ideology in terms of the ability to use the phone while doing other things and enjoying "colorful, easy-to-use" services while Nokia advertisement suggests that communication is a sacred activity of connecting in a mythical and non earth like environment. As the conclusion, semiotic analysis of the elements and signs of a website internet shows that individuals belonging to different cultural groups create meaning in different ways.

The last is Mulyawan's research (2008) finds out advertisement's meaning and messages by using the analysis of the background of advertisement, meaning in the advertisement's body and meaning in the closing of advertisement. The data were taken on June 2002, from BCA customers in one television station. He tried to find the meaning by elaborating textual and contextual elements of advertisement. The analysis of meanings and messages of advertisement can be separated by its structure; the message of an advertisement is the central meaning of that advertisement and the conclusion of that advertisement can be interpreted by the consumers. Mulyawan concludes that the meaning and message of advertisement show hidden value through various persuasive in order to sell the products. Most of meaning and message of advertisements are delivered by non verbal forms because people are easier to remember such form. The verbal forms have function as the supporting elements to the non verbals.

#### **4. Analysis**

From the analysis, the advertiser of male body treatment products try to convince consumers that the products are no longer associated only to women, with their femininity and beauty, but also appropriate for men, with their masculinity. By using the linguistic signs, which are supported by the non linguistic signs, the advertisers establish manly images for the body treatment products. They try to construct new image of the brands which provide

body treatment products for all gender or unisex, not only women-specific. To see how the construction of image is built ups, here is an example,



(Source: <http://www.behance.net/gallery/Nivea-for-Men-Ad-Campaign/285095>)

This advertisement is from Nivea promoting a lightening cream product. In this advertisement, the product is specific for men. Through this advertisement, the advertiser wants to explain that Nivea, the producer of body treatment products for women, also provides body treatment product for men. The signs in the advertisement are:

1. A linguistic sign “MADE FOR MEN” in capitalized font
2. An image of the product and the name “NIVEA for Men”.
3. an image of a man who is applying the Nivea lightening cream on his face in front of a mirror. The mirror itself reflects different color of the cream on the face associating that the white cream as the thing usually used by soldiers on face during combat.
4. The theme color is blue.

The word “MADE FOR MEN” is the main sign in this advertisement. This sentence can be classified as descriptive sentence. Denotatively, this sentence describes that the product is launched for men. The sign “MEN” refers to the image of the man in the advertisement. Connotatively, this product cannot be used by the opposite gender. This explanation can be described in the following order of signification;

Made for Men	Brief description of the product
Made for men is a brief description of the product	creation for specific gender

Made for Men is meant as creation for specific gender

**Figure 1.a**

Then, the second sign is the image of the product and the name “NIVEA for Men”. The sign “Nivea” refers to the company of the product and the sign “for Men” explains that this product is produced by Nivea, for men in specific. Nivea is largely known as a company that produce cosmetics and body treatments with women consumers. By adding “for Men” next to the “Nivea” sign, the company wants to show that they also produce cosmetics and body treatment for men. Therefore, by combining the sign “Nivea” and the sign “for men”, the advertiser formulates a new value, that a body treatment product is also available now for men, as explained in the next figure;

Nivea for Men	The name of the product	
Nivea for men is the name of the product		Masculinity and specialty
Nivea for men is meant as the sign of masculinity and specialty		

**Figure 1.b**

The third sign is an image of a man who is applying the Nivea lightening cream on his face in front of a mirror. However, the mirror reflects the different color of the cream. The white cream is reflected in the mirror as the colourful oily thing that is usually used by soldiers in war. In war, it is commonly known that the soldiers spread some colouring stuff, such as lubricating oil, to their face in order to hide their appearance. Usually, the colors are associated to the environment such as green like leaves, brown like woods, or black like darkness. This action is shown in many action movies and considered as a symbol of men masculinity, braveness, and heroic. Therefore, the different reflection of the cream color probably means that the model, the man, is probably not a soldier in real life, as seen from his performance which does not like a soldier in total. However, in order to deliver the message,



soldier-related reflection in the mirror is the way how the producer explains that this product can make men look more handsome but do not lose their masculinity. Men with these qualifications are appreciated by society as hero. Nivea adopted this idea, that Nivea for Men reflects a soldier’s look, in this advertisement in order to describe that the lightening cream product can increase men masculinity and braveness, just like soldiers. Here is the analysis;

White cream is reflected as dark colors stuff in the mirror	The image of soldier
White cream is reflected as dark colors stuff in the mirror is the image of soldier	Braveness to fight and protect society
White cream is reflected as soldier coloring stuff in the mirror is meant as the braveness to fight and protect society	

**Figur 1.c**

In addition, the advertisement’s producer also uses blue as the theme color. In the nature, blue is the color associated to sea and sky. Blue is considered as the fresh and calm color. By using blue as the theme, the producer wants to explain that this product is cool and calm, which means a man with this image is adored in society.

**5. Conclusion**

Male body treatment product advertisements are constructed from the linguistic and non linguistic signs. The linguistic signs are identified from the words, phrases, utterances, and texts in the advertisements. On the other hand, the non linguistic signs are identified through the picture of the advertisements. Both signs support each other to deliver the message to the consumers. Linguistics signs explain about the goal of advertisement, which in fact being delivered implicitly. In order to make it clear, the advertiser also puts some non linguistic signs in the form of picture or photo mostly. Through the pictures, the consumers can get the message. Moreover, pictures are used as signs to attract reader’s attention. The appearance of some models with good looking performance will make consumers interested to try the product.



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