# A Semiotic Analysis of Roland Barthes on MS Glow Beauty Advertisement on YouTube

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**ABSTRACT**

This study is about analyzing semiotic of Roland Barthes on MS Glow Beauty Advertisement on YouTube. The objectives of this study were to find out the denotative and connotative meaning also the myths' representation used by MS Glow throughout the classification of *signifier* and *signified*. The method used in this study was descriptive qualitative method. The data was about 16 screenshots captured consists of visual and verbal signs which taken from the 3 sources data that is contained in MS Glow Beauty advertisement on YouTube. The findings showed a number of visual signs and verbal signs had balanced where visual signs for picture had 14 signs and visual signs for text in picture had 13 signs, while the verbal signs with tag line consists 11 signs and verbal signs with dialogue consists 16 signs. Both of visual signs and verbal signs conveyed denotative meaning that is realized by visual signs as picture or text in picture, verbal signs as tag line or dialogue. Meanwhile, connotative meaning realized as giving meaning for every single sign and the myths' representation for advertisements where belief of beauty was belongings to women who have white skin only, not for dark skin and it was also occurred for men. The implication of this study is to give understanding of semiotic approach focused on advertisement.

## INTRODUCTION

The current phenomenon was still happening among women in particular for having white and glowing skin like Korean women. Women tried to get both white and glowing skin through various ways. Because the myth circulated in Indonesian society believed that beautiful women were those who had white or bright skin. Women seemed

good looking with an attractive physical appearance especially glowing skin took people's attention. It had a matter of great concerned and considered brought its own privilege for people who were belonging to the good looking valued as beauty (Akinro and Memani, 2019). Beauty itself defined as something that couldn't be separated from woman's existence. Every woman attempted to get the highest level of beauty that is considered ideal and requires seen to be lovely even for older woman as well. They thought they also had to looked young and stayed beautiful by taking care of their skin using anti-aging products (Laware and Moutsatsos, 2013).

Skincare treatment helped women got healthy skin, brighten and made skin moisturized for more confident. In addition, skincare was also needed as matters for overcoming various skin problems that occurred starting from acne, black spots, scars, and so on. Thus, many skincare brands companies had already built skincare products purposely to help women solve their problem and should've competed to the other brands. One of skincare product brands that is related to the current phenomenon is MS Glow. MS Glow have created every product of skincare and developed well, so they deserved women's notice. In proving the quality of MS Glow products, they were creating advertisements and posted it on several media platforms, and as a form of marketing strategy. Semiotics was the key to advertisement decoding. Semiotics referred to the study of how sign communicates meanings (Bignell, 1997:30-32, Pujiati, 2015). Barthes developed the signifier (signifier) and the signified (signified), into an expression (E) for a signifier (signifier) and content (C/Content) for a signified (signified).

A thesis written by Nurnanengsi (2016), entitled "*REPRESENTASI KONSEP CANTIK DALAM IKLAN TELEVISI (Analisis Semiotika dalam "Iklan Pelembab Wajah Fair & Lovely Versi Gita Virga")"* used Roland Barthes' semiotic had result that any visual signs of Fair & Lovely advertisement could interpret the linguistic messages. The previous study had mentioned about signifier and signified with as followed by shocked expression to strengthen the meaning had explored. Besides that, semiotics also defined for analyzing an advertisement interpreting the language context.

In "*MS Glow X Keanu – Cakep Itu Nasib, Good Looking Itu Pilihan!*" advertisement, the study found that there are signs as data sample that had been taken. The data could be noticed in this way, below:

**Denotative:**

A man came with messy dress, looking sad

**Connotative:**

Face agne was a sign that cause his sadness

*Figure 1. Preliminary Data*

*Table 1. Preliminary Data*

| Signifier | Signified |
|---|---|
| An ugly man came up with messy dress. | It was sign presented as someone Keanu netizen wanted to complaint something. |

| Visual Signs | Verbal Signs | Denotative | Connotative |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1. dialogue *"kak ken aku diputusin gara- gara aku gak good- looking."* | The picture was about a man came with messy dress and felt sad. | Face acne was indication for ugly man sadness because didn't good looking and caused being broken. |
|  | 2. *"Keanu netizen"* | The man was called Keanu. | It was signed as netizen presented as meaning of someone who had problem. |

This study chose MS Glow Beauty Advertisement on YouTube and then took a man as model of figure representing both men and women with same necessities of being good looking and so it is interesting to be analyzed. MS Glow made a new idea in beauty where MS Glow wanted to change human culture where beauty standard only belonged to women, but now it is also applied to men. This study gladded for Roland Barthes' semiotics theory which talked about the *signifier* contained signs visually and verbal signs such as tag line and dialogue in advertisements and *signified* were about signifier meanings being presented. Therefore, denotation and connotation meanings itself could

be explained one to another and then established the myth used in MS Glow advertisement. (Sen, 2014:57-58).

**Problems of The Study**

1. How is Barthes' semiotics realized in MS Glow Beauty advertisement on YouTube?

2. What is the representation of myths used in MS Glow Beauty advertisement on YouTube?

**Objectives of The Study**

1. To know denotative, connotative realization in MS Glow Beauty advertisement on YouTube.

2. To identify the myths' representation used in MS Glow Beauty advertisement on YouTube.

**Semiotics in Advertisement**

(Al-Momani, Migdadi, and Badarneh, F. 2016), in advertisements, semiotics was commonly used symbolically. In order to understand how these modes represented meaning, one needed to understand how symbolic meaning had been created within the system of representation meaning which already arranged both through encoding (production of text) and decoding (interpretation by receiver).

Thus, according to Sobur (2016), the use of semiotics in advertising was the existence of a sign system in the advertisement. The sign system consists symbols that could be verbal or iconic. Besides that, the object was also one of the sign systems in advertising. The object of the advertisement was the thing that is being advertised, it could be in the form of a product or service. Therefore, this study analyzes semiotics in advertisement with the source of data from "*MS Glow x Keanu – Cakep Itu Nasib, Good Looking Itu Pilihan!*", "*Solusi Kulit Glowing Bercahaya (Anti Kusam!) Dari Kak Ivan Gunawan*", "*Night Skincare Routine Ivan Gunawan x MS Glow*" on YouTube, and then carried how MS Glow could finally present their products to public.

**METHOD**

**Research Design**

In this study design, qualitative method was used, where the study produces descriptive data which was translated into textual form (Wager and Wessels, 2016).

Qualitative descriptive study was a study approach that utilizes qualitative data and has been described descriptively, Flick (2014).

Throughout this approach, the study might be able to observe and analyze all signs visually from video in the form of pictures contained in any existing data about how a beauty advertisement could introduce their products by the concept of signs and how verbal signs includes the tag line or dialogue. In addition, this study also contains several indications of the process of changed visualization of each sign based on the understanding of denotations, connotations by Roland Barthes' semiotic theory.  But, in this study it was leading to *signifier* and *signified* indication.

**Data and Sources of Data**

In this study, the sources of the data were taken from MS Glow Beauty video advertisement on YouTube channel. There were 3 videos as source data that already taken from MS Glow Beauty advertisement. The data of this study is screenshot taken from the advertisement's video which includes visual signs consisted of pictures, backgrounds and colors, also including verbal signs consisted of tag line or dialogues. The first advertisement title was "*MS Glow x Keanu – Cakep Itu Nasib, Good Looking Itu Pilihan!*", second advertisement was entitled "*Solusi Kulit Glowing Bercahaya (Anti Kusam!) Dari Kak Ivan Gunawan*" and the third advertisement was entitled "*Night Skincare Routine Ivan Gunawan x MS Glow.*"

**The Technique of Data Collection**

The source of data was collected from YouTube account of MS Glow Beauty who has 16.000 subscribers. The data was taken by pictures which captured MS Glow's skincare video advertisement that contains signs. Based on the three sources of data above, 16 screenshots have been taken for the data analysis of visual and verbal signs.

**The Technique of Data Analysis**

There were some steps of data analysis being used, as followed:

1.  Identifying: The study identified the screenshot of each scene which contains of signs.
2.  Analyzing: The study analyzes the data based on Barthes' semiotic theory.

3. Selecting: The study selects data that is relevant to the research problem's statements.

4. Concluding: The study drawn conclusion after analyzing the data.

**RESULTS**

Throughout the data analysis based on 3 videos of MS Glow Beauty advertisement on YouTube, the findings of this study can be presented as follows:

*Table 2. Results of Visual Signs and Verbal Signs in The Advertisements*

| Advertisements | Visual Signs | Verbal Signs |
|---|---|---|
| MS Glow x Keanu – Cakep Itu Nasib, Good Looking itu Pilihan | 1) There is picture consisted of text<br>2) There is picture consisted of text<br>3) There is picture of a man was laughing<br>4) There is picture consisted of text<br>5) There is picture among a man and a text<br>6) There is picture consisted of text<br>7) There is picture of a man feeling shocked<br>8) There is picture consisted of text<br>9) There is a picture of a man getting mad<br>10) There is picture of devil figure<br>11) There is picture of angel figure<br>12) There is picture consisted of text<br>13) There is picture of a man getting brighter<br>14) There is picture consisted of text<br>15) There is picture of becoming an artist | 1) Gimana ya supaya banyak endorse?<br>2) Kak Ken, aku diputusin. Sebel!<br>3) HAHAHA<br>4) Keanu partner curhat netizen Indonesia<br>5) Gimana ya supaya muka glowing?<br>6) Bagi tips supaya makin cakep dong!<br>7) Aaa?!<br>8) BOOM!<br>9) Eh denger king cobra itu kan gara-gara lo gak bisa ngejaga penampilan lo makanya lihat tuh muka sama kulit lo standar<br>10) Dasar batu lu ye, ganteng sama cantik emang takdir. Tapi, good looking itu pilihan!<br>11) Kalau mau good looking jangan Cuma mengeluh, nih pake produk MS Glow<br>12) Sesudah glowing<br>13) Kalau dah glowing gini bisa dapat endorse dong<br>14) Netizen yang sudah jadi seleb medsos<br>15) Dan endorse-an aku bener-bener kayak penuh banget di ruangan ini banyak banget |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Solusi Kulit Glowing Bercahaya (Anti Kusam!) Dari Kak Ivan Gunawan | 1) There is picture of a man getting serious<br>2) There is picture of woman getting sad<br>3) There is picture of a man who is excited<br>4) There is picture of Whitening Day Cream<br>5) There is picture that was explaining something<br>There is picture of Red Jelly | 1) Lagi kenapa sih? Tumbenan murung begitu mukanya<br>2) Aku ngerasa muka ku tuh kusam banget, gak kayak kak Igun. Mukanya cerah dan glowing banget lagi<br>3) Jadi akhir-akhir ini kak Igun tuh pake Whitening Day Cream dari MS Glow<br>4) Whitening Day Cream<br>5) Nih ada lagi yang plaing juara, Red Jelly<br>Jadi Red Jelly ini mengandung ekstrak bunga sakura yang sudah terkenal di negeri Jepang. Ini mampu membuat wajah kita lebih cerah mernoa sebagai anti-aging, melembabkan kulit dan juga menguarangi iritasi pada kulit |
| Night Skincare Routine Ivan Gunawan x MS Glow | 1) There is picture of Facial Wash<br>2) There is picture of a man sprayed Glowing Toner<br>3) There is picture of a man applying Whitening Night Cream<br>4) There is picture of a man using Red Jelly<br>5) There is picture of a man and a text<br>There is picture consisted of text | 1) Sebelum tidur, pakai dulu night routine dari MS Glow. Pertama, kita pakai sabun<br>2) Lalu pakai toner<br>3) Dan lanjutkan pakai White Night Cream<br>4) Kemudian lanjut pakai Red Jelly, merata di seluruh wajah<br>5) Besok pagi nya tinggal bilas<br>MS Glow |

From the table above, shown three advertisement's videos has been analyzed. There was visual signs and verbal signs. The visual signs were consisted of pictures, backgrounds, and colors or even text in picture. For the verbal signs, there would be tag line or dialogue. There were an equal number of visual signs and verbal signs in the advertisements, balanced with about 27 total of signs. For the classification itself, "*MS Glow x Keanu – Cakep Itu Nasih, Good Looking Itu Pilihan!*" advertisement had 15 visual signs and 15 verbal signs. "*Solusi Kulit Glowing Bercahaya (Anti Kusam!) Dari Kak Ivan*

*Gunawan*" advertisement had 6 visual signs and 6 verbal signs. "*Night Skincare Routine Ivan Gunawan x MS Glow*" advertisement had 6 visual signs and 6 verbal signs. Among visual signs and verbal signs, both has denotative (giving actual information) and connotative (giving meanings). So, from the visual signs and the verbal signs that has been analyzed, myths' representation focused on talking about beauty is important not only for women but also for men.

In "*MS Glow x Keanu – Cakep Itu Nasib, Good Looking Itu Pilihan!*" advertisement, the myths' representation showed beautiful or handsome was fortune but becoming good looking is a choice. Therefore, the myths are people who is good looking would be valued and gets attention. For "*Solusi Kulit Glowing Bercahaya (Anti Kusam!) Dari Kak Ivan Gunawan*" advertisement, the myths' representation shown woman who is sad because her face was muddy even though she has washed her face with facial wash. But the obvious myths here is that to become bright and glowing, one should use skincare series package. Through the classification, the myths' representation of "*Night Skincare Routine Ivan Gunawan x MS Glow*" advertisement was focusing on whether night skincare routine's treatments would achieve brighter and glowy face.

## DISCUSSION

Using Barthes' semiotics theory, the data were analyzed to find out the realization of denotative and connotative meaning along with myths' representation through visual signs and verbal signs' classification. In essence, semiotics in advertisement defined as the study to identify signs where the sign was something that symbolizes brand's messages to their audiences (Kim, Lloyd, Adebeshin and Kang, 2018). Advertisement consisting semiotics indications made the relationship between *signifier* and *signified*. But advertisements had the nature of pushing and persuading people to choose and gets interested to buy. In another word, advertisements were meant to revolutionize and to evolve for better future (White, 2016).

As for this study, visual signs of picture and verbal signs of tag line or dialogue in MS Glow Beauty advertisement has been analyzed. It has implicit meanings that conveys messages about skincare treatment. Therefore, the visual signs and verbal signs could identify denotative meanings and connotative meanings. Not only that the results could

observe the myths' representation used by MS Glow before creating an advertisement. It could also made structured with new ideas and styles for MS Glow advertisement.

MS Glow used men as their bran ambassador who dressed alike women. They are Keanu and Ivan Gunawan. Keanu known as artist while Ivan Gunawan known as a male designer. They both were represented as men who behave like a woman. So, MS Glow made men who treated their skin using skincare as their brand ambassador.

MS Glow created its advertisement concept by choosing men as figure of model to give new myth understanding that skincare treatment wasn't only for women, but also needed by men. Nowadays, men also wanted to take care of their skin to have good appearance and healthy skin. In myths' representation, usually men are significant to masculinity (men dominates women for being hard worker) but now men also need to do treatment on their skin (Kurniawan and Wahjuwibowo, 2021). So, MS Glow wanted to show that skincare is also important for men.

This study has resulted that shown MS Glow Beauty Advertisement on YouTube is well arranged shown by the indications of used signs. So, every sign that was formed actually implied the hidden meanings. Even one sign had thousands meaning depending on someone's thought. In advertisement, visual signs and verbal signs was found frequently because its form can be understood easily. Visual signs were giving information in a picture, even for expression as the *first order-signification*. Verbal signs were giving information in textual or spoken as the *first order-signification*. Thereupon every sign classified by using denotative meaning and connotative where denotation was comprising reality sign as the *first order-signification* while connotation was meaning involvement as the *second order-signification*. Therefore, myths' representation produced thought or culture as the *second order-signification*. Both of visual and verbal signs in form of text in a picture is also founded in this study and its unique uses in both visual and verbal signs.

Based on the finding analysis, 27 visual signs and 27 verbal signs were found. Visual signs with picture consist 14 signs and visual signs with text in picture consisted 13 signs, while verbal signs with tag line consists 11 signs and verbal signs with dialogue consisted of 16 signs. So, this study also wanted to inform the good quality of MS Glow skincare brand and concluded that MS Glow is worth to buy.

The study by König, Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Haase (2016), titled *"A Semiotic Approach Towards a Brand Myth of Luxury Heritage,"* analyzed data from luxury heritage brands using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The research focused specifically on myth representation and also examined how signs within shop design could contribute to the overall impression of luxury heritage. This study is comparable to Zhang's (2019) work, *"A Semiotic Study on Print Advertisements of Luxury Perfume Brands for Women,"* which found that luxury perfume brands aimed to convey messages associated with an improved and more desirable lifestyle.

Additionally, the current study references Uluğ's (2020) article, *"An Investigation into the Connotations of Iconic Buildings by Using a Semiotic Model of Architecture,"* which also applied Barthes' semiotic approach. Uluğ's study analyzed six iconic buildings and focused on identifying signs through denotation and connotation to understand how architectural design influences meaning. Furthermore, the study draws a comparison with the research conducted by Damayanti, Santika, and Pratiwi (2021), titled *"Semiotic Analysis of Mentos Advertisement,"* which utilized Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. Their research identified myths in the Mentos advertisement by analyzing both verbal and non-verbal signs, concluding that the advertisements revealed the general public's fondness for Mentos.

From the analysis of these various studies, it can be seen that denotative meanings are derived directly from signs, while connotative meanings involve more interpretative and culturally-influenced representations. In the context of myth, it becomes clear that even elements initially perceived as negative can have a positive impact by initiating change or forming new movements. This concept is evident in the case of MS Glow's advertisement strategy. The brand successfully positioned itself as a provider of effective skincare treatments. One particularly unique advertisement titled *"MS Glow x Keanu – Cakep itu Nasib, Good Looking itu Pilihan!"* featured male actor Keanu portraying a character with feminine traits. His performance challenged conventional gender norms and reflected MS Glow's creative approach to advertising, using myth and semiotics to communicate deeper messages about beauty and choice.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis of MS Glow Beauty advertisements on YouTube, several conclusions can be drawn. First, signs can carry multiple meanings depending on factors such as language, culture, and individual perception. This highlights the complexity and interpretative nature of semiotic analysis. Second, the use of signs, codes, and meanings plays a crucial role in the creation of advertisements, as the content must be both informative and persuasive to effectively communicate with the audience. Third, this study specifically examined the visual signs presented in the images captured from the video advertisements, as well as the verbal signs conveyed through taglines and dialogues. These elements work together to construct the overall message and appeal of the advertisements. Lastly, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory allows for the identification of both denotative (literal) and connotative (implied) meanings within these signs. Through this dual-level analysis, the study was able to uncover the representation of myths embedded in the advertisements, offering deeper insights into how meaning is constructed and conveyed.

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