

## THE REPRESENTATION OF MILLENNIALS AND THE IDEOLOGIES IN *MSGLOW* SKINCARE ADVERTISEMENT

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### Abstract

Representations and ideologies in advertisements build concepts and ideas in a symbolic form that can be interpreted. This study discussed the representation of millennials and ideologies in MSGLOW skincare advertisements. This study aimed to reveal the representation and ideology of MSGLOW's advertisement entitled '*MS Glow x Keanu – Cakep itu Nasib, Good Looking itu Pilihan!*'? The research model used in this research is descriptive qualitative and applied semiotics by examining the elements contained in MSGLOW advertisements. This study applied Roland Barthes's (1972) order of meaning theory, which focuses on the first order of meaning (denotation), the second order of meaning (connotation), and the third order of meaning (myth) on visual elements (models, settings and properties, frames, camera angle, and color saturation). The concept represented in the MSGLOW ad is mainly related to the millennial trend that is glowing and good-looking, as well as becoming famous like a social media celebrity. Then, the ideologies behind the representation are commercialism and popularity. The selection of a model that uses a social media celebrity, namely Keanu, although not from women, can attract millennials with his popularity. Commercialism is reflected in the scenes where the model can overcome facial and body skin problems using MSGLOW skincare products.

**Keywords:** Advertisement; Barthes's semiotic theory; representation

### INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a superior feature for advertising that reaches many groups of people. Apart from being commercial, social media is also used to convey the ideology of the product and the company. According to Correa (2017), advertising can be a vehicle for an ideology that reflects ideas, beliefs, and opinions about society. The representation of ideology can be seen through the elements in advertisements, such as models or artists, colors, gestures, styles, costumes, and music. Representation is how aspects of reality in various mediums are constructed (Chandler, 2002). Then Hall (1997) defines representation as a process by which people in a dispersed culture build and reify meanings, associations, and values. Representation is a concept or process that examines symbols or signs, namely, realizing a concept or idea in a symbolic form that someone can interpret.

The selection of elements in the advertisement is adjusted to the product offered and is believed to contain its intent and purpose from the maker. The advertised product must look attractive so that people who see it feel like owning and buying it. Not infrequently, advertisements are also made more straightforward and realistic so that people can understand and connect more easily by even glancing at the advertisement. The latest trends in society cannot be separated from the advertisements displayed in creative and attractive ways. The advertised products were given brand/name, then created accounts on social media such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and others, then uploaded content in the form of photos, videos, memes, brochures, and promotions related to the products they will trade by utilizing the features in social media.

Most people will imitate what their idols wear or use, so brand/product owners will utilize many models/brand ambassadors, public figures, or famous artists in marketing their products. However, lately, the one going viral is also often used to attract attention. By effectiveness and efficiency of social media to make their products more known, many business actors also take advantage of social media users or more identically called netizens, by establishing communication through the features available in social media such as comment fields, hashtags, reposts, stories, groups, and more. Therefore, their products are more easily recognized, and eventually, their followers promote products through social media features. It can be voluntarily or given a gift from the marketer the term gives away.

In addition to introducing products, advertisements are made to bring up social phenomena or issues that are developing and to create new trends in the community; one of the phenomena is 'good looking' concerning appearance. One's appearance is the most important thing to pay attention to. Consequently, the rise of skincare products is increasingly widespread in the community from local to international brands, from those with low, medium, to high selling prices reaching various groups. Various business strategies for skincare products made their sales soar quickly. One of them is the local skincare product MSGLOW which is very well known and has become very popular among all skincare users. Even though the products are not only for women, MSGLOW is now innovating to make skincare products for men. In any media, MSGLOW advertisements always carry the tagline 'Glowing' because its brand name is MSGLOW.

The concept represented in the MSGLOW ad is mainly related to the current trend of millennials that wants to be popular. One of the newest advertisements on the MS Glow Beauty youtube channel is entitled MS Glow x Keanu – *Cakep itu Nasib, Good Looking itu Pilihan!* It has a unique advertising concept with model/artist Keanu, a well-known Indonesian celeb gram today. Most skincare advertisements show beautiful female models who are white, smooth, bright, and perfectly beautiful. Still, this time MSGLOW shows a different ad video from the usual, where a male model has their own uniqueness in the eyes of millennials; he looks girly, has long hair, and has a slightly not ideal posture. Still, he is very influential and gets a lot of advertising or endorsement offers, so he becomes an idol among millennials. As a result, many young people or millennials want to be famous and become a celebgram (social media celebrities) like him.

The analysis will focus on the sequence of meanings proposed by Barthes (1972) to find the representation and ideology of the MSGLOW advertisement entitled MS Glow x Keanu – *Cakep itu Nasib, Good Looking itu Pilihan!* This study aims to reveal the representation and ideology of MSGLOW's advertisement entitled 'MS Glow x Keanu – *Cakep itu Nasib, Good Looking itu Pilihan!*'? Other researchers have carried out several research related to representation in advertising. Fathoni & Fadillah (2021) discuss the stereotype of women with dark skin as ugliness, represented in Fair & Lovely advertisements where the ideal beauty must be changed into glowing white skin. Then Sari (2020) discussed the appearance of masculine male images represented in activities or actions in the *Garnier Men* advertisement. Another study was conducted by Sari & Ganiem (2021), which discussed the representation of gender equality between the roles of men and women in domestic life contained in the correct husband version of the *ABC* soy sauce advertisement.

Using Barthes's study is appropriate because language is a sign system that reflects the assumptions of a particular society at a specific time. So, this research is in the form of a study that contains the researchers' interpretations of the issues contained in MSGLOW advertisements to reveal the meaning behind the symbols that represent male feminism in this modern era where feminist men are also used as women skincare advertising models. This research is necessary because it theoretically discusses the production of idealistic messages conveyed through advertising discourse, which usually focuses more on delivering product or service quality.

## METHODS

The research model used in this research is descriptive qualitative. Operationally this research uses semiotic methods to analyze the research object. The object of research is the MSGLOW video advertisement entitled 'MS Glow x Keanu – *Cakep itu Nasib, Good Looking itu Pilihan!*' The duration is 1 minute 10 seconds, uploaded by the official MS Glow Beauty YouTube channel on January 28, 2022, and so far, it has been watched by more than 12 thousand viewers and has 158 comments. The object of this research was analyzed using the semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes, which developed the thinking of Ferdinand De Saussure. Semiotics comes from the Greek, 'semieon,' which means sign. Semiotics was introduced by Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913). To understand Saussure's ideas, it is also necessary to understand the signifier and signified, as well as *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* means language is the design and expression of language at the social level. At the same time, *parole*, a concrete form of language, is the expression of language at the individual level. Therefore, *parole* is a form of *langue* related to language.

Barthes explained that the role of media has an essential contribution to the transcription of ideas by developing Saussure's ideas and theories on semiotics, which had entered the world of media and social research in the 1960s. According to Saussure, the importance of the media in broadcasting ideas or worldviews is based on their ability to arrange signs and images in a certain way. In particular, they see that through the process of meaning, the media make specific meanings and perspectives seem natural and sensitive in society (Williams, 2003). The idea of Barthes, which plays a vital role in interpreting signs, is about myth. He continues Saussure's assumptions about the relationship between language and meaning or symbol and character. Semiotics constructed by Saussure tends to show meaning as a sign meaning. Therefore, at the beginning of its emergence, the semiotic tradition tends to refer to a meaning which is also called semiotics. Barthes further explores the idea

of denotative meaning or primary meaning. However, according to Barthes, another meaning plays on a deeper level: the level of connotation or secondary meaning. For Barthes, connotation shows something as a myth, and myth has a purpose for a particular ideology. Thus, Saussure's thought was developed by Barthes by dismantling the practice of signification at the level of sign connotation.

Operationally, this research applies semiotics by examining the elements contained in MSGLOW advertisements. The MSGLOW ad entitled 'MS Glow x Keanu – *Cakep itu Nasib, Good Looking itu Pilihan!*' is placed as text with certain elements and scenes with a specific purpose. In the results stage, the researcher will present the denotative meaning, where the denotative sign is the actual meaning that appears in the advertisement elements. Then the connotative meaning, where this connotative sign is a meaning related to culture or ideology (Barthes, 1988; Kurniawan, 2001 in Alex Sobur: 2013), followed by a discussion in which the intertextuality of the research results was analyzed. According to Roland Barthes' theory, the analysis was carried out by sorting advertisements based on the messages in every scene, quoted by Alex Sobur from Copley and Janz: (1) Linguistic messages: messages in the form of words and sentences in advertisements. Each method of conveying delivers its meaning as the text and tagline in the MSGLOW Ad entitled 'MS Glow x Keanu – *Cakep itu Nasib, Good Looking itu Pilihan!*'; (2) Coded iconic messages: visual meanings that appear creative at the connotative level; and (3) Uncoded iconic messages: the true meaning that can be directly understood from the images and news in the advertisement.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Denotation meaning

The signifier of this advertisement is a man who is a famous Indonesian public figure or celebgram Keanu AGL. He displayed at the beginning reading Indonesian netizens' complaints through social media accounts on several handphones in front of him by responding with laughter, added with a narrative element from netizen comments about appearance problems and facial conditions, including in Figure 1 there is a discourse:

Statements such as "*Gimana ya supaya muka glowing?*", "*Bagi tips supaya makin cakep dong?!*", "*Sedih kulit aku kusam!*" represents that the problems millennials worry about today are their appearance and facial condition; they crave a beautiful impression with glowing facial skin.

**Figure 1**

*Keanu, a social media celebrity/celebgram, becoming a share partner for Indonesian netizens.*



In the next transition in Figure 2, Keanu appears with a different role as a 'netizen' who complains a lot about his appearance as well as his skin problems that are not good looking and it made him break up with his girlfriend, he confides in Keanu 'celebgram' who looks more presentable and glowing.

**Figure 2**

*Keanu in a different role, as a netizen who came to complain to Keanu's celebrity about the problems he was facing*



Then in Figure 3, a verbal discourse from Keanu 'celebgram' appears that 'good looking is not an important obligation, just be a good person first', but Keanu 'netizens' denied that if it was just a theory, the proof is that his loyalty and kindness do not mean anything, he still left by girlfriend. Then Keanu 'celebgram' responded again with his characteristic temper, and verbal discourse emerged that it was his fault that he could not maintain his appearance so that 'his face and skin is standard'.

**Figure 3**

*The face of Keanu 'netizen' has been changed to a motorcycle 'standard' because it is considered a standard face and skin*



**Figure 4**

*Keanu, a new role in a devil costume, scolded Keanu 'netizens' by mentioning the MSGLOW advertising tagline 'Cakep itu Nasib, Good Looking itu Pilihan!'*



**Figure 5**

*Keanu in an angel costume provides a solution to the problems faced by Keanu 'netizen'*



Then in Figure 5 comes Keanu with another different role as an angel who provides solutions to the problems being discussed, and in Figure 6, several series of MSGLOW skin care products appear with the statements 'if you want to look good, do not just complain, use MSGLOW products!'

In picture 7, Keanu 'netizen' applies one of the MSGLOW products on his hand skin, then in picture 8, it immediately turns glowing. Moreover, finally, he became a social media celebrity (celebgram) who got a lot of endorsed items (things or products that must be posted on personal social media accounts by tagging the online shop account that sold those products and got paid for them) in his room.

**Figure 6**

*Displaying the MSGLOW range of skincare products as a solution given by Keanu 'angel'*



**Figure 7**

*The appearance of Keanu 'netizen' before using MSGLOW products*



**Figure 8**

*The appearance of Keanu 'netizen' after using MSGLOW products*



### **Connotation meaning**

In this advertisement, a meaning can be interpreted, namely 'popularity,' the desire of many people today, especially millennials. Through their social media accounts, they post anything according to the image they create. Of course, their appearance and skin facial condition will be their priority as an asset to appear more confident in front of the camera and their social media account posts. The image of Keanu, who is currently a well-known social media celebrity used by advertisers in the commercial video, is one of the attractions and references. His distinctive character made him known and remembered by netizens.

Most skincare advertisements usually use women models who are white, bright, smooth, and ideal, representing beautiful women. Still, this time MSGLOW made a unique and different advertisement from usual using a male social media celebrity to be a model in advertising her skincare products, not even products specifically for men. MSGLOW is trying different things, not just without purpose. This time MSGLOW wants to show the image of millennials who has popularity because of their good-looking and glowing skin. So, he will be more confident to be popular and famous.

## Myth

Being a social media celebrity (celebgram) is often shared by netizens on social media to look so happy. He has many handphones arranged to read various comments, quirky rants, and complaints while laughing, realizing that society's problems are ridiculous and unnecessary. They are so worried about their appearance, especially skin facial conditions that are not ideal such as dullness, acne, blackheads, and dark. That way, they feel they need to be more good-looking, beautiful, and confident. Currently, millennials have a new trend seems like they are competing to become social media celebrities who are sought after by online sellers to endorse (advertising their products through personal social media accounts) like Keanu, a model in the MSGLOW advertisement who has millions of followers and high insight from the audience makes him flooded with high-paying endorsement offers, due to the increasing number of viewers and increased engagement. That way, popularity is obtained, and high income has also been guaranteed.

To be popular, of course, someone needs a good and attractive appearance so that when he is in the public spotlight, he will feel confident. Using the MSGLOW product range, their problems will be resolved, their skin will be bright and glowing, and their appearance will automatically become good looking, like the advertising tagline '*Cakep itu Nasib, Good Looking itu Pilihan!*'. However, having bright and glowing skin is not only by using MSGLOW products, but also many ways to have radiant and glowing skin by using other products besides MSGLOW, which can make the attractive appearance and good looking. In this advertisement, there is an ideology that bright and glowing skin to make good looking appearance can be obtained by using MS GLOW products which is a myth as the ideal person. Therefore, people will be interested in using the product then it contains the ideology of commercialism. Besides that, popularity is something millennials crave, and they have to be good-looking to be popular, as the title of this advertisement, because being a pretty and nice person is not enough. We have to be good-looking so that we will be liked by many people and get much insight from followers on social media accounts.

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