

Representation of Women's Beauty in Kose Sekkisei White UV Emulsion

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Abstract. The beauty of women has always been a separate conversation in society. Women's beauty is very diverse, but generally beautiful is always synonymous with white skin and this idea is often targeted at audiences in advertising, especially Japan. Advertisements so far have shown beauty through physical appearance that emphasizes certain characteristics of beauty as a female attraction. The beauty shown or used in advertisements is generally based on a background of beauty myths that developed in Japan, one of which is white skin. In the midst of the existence of these advertisements, Kose advertisements then appear to participate in promoting these beauty ideas or myths. This study seeks to determine the representation of female beauty in Kose advertisements by looking at Japanese women's beauty myths. The research method chosen is qualitative. The beauty of Japanese women is an interesting thing to study regarding one's views on women's beauty myths according to society and advertisements. This study uses semiotic theory, representation theory and beauty myths. Through the semiotic method it was found that Kose advertisements represented the white and shining beauty of Japanese women. In conclusion, white skin remains a criterion in Japanese beauty and this indicates that the Kose advertisement is still related to the Japanese beauty myth which states that white skin is beautiful.

Keyword: *Japanese women, beauty myths, advertisements, representation*

1. Introduction

Modern advertising has signs and meanings to promote culture and create a new representation. According to Rahmawati (2013) advertising is defined as having a purpose, namely: 1. Encouraging increased demand 2. Offsetting competitors' advertisements 3. Increasing sales force effectiveness 4. Increasing product use 5. Strengthening product image in consumer memory. In Japan television advertising is a medium that is still commonly used to promote a product. Lots of advertising service providers are flocking to advertise their products to compete with each other. Reporting from the website <https://www.nippon.com/ja/japan-topics/g00937/>, television advertising costs in 2019 entered second place after advertising costs on the internet with a total cost of 18.612 billion yen.

Semiotic figure Roland Barthes uses the term neomania to reduce the impact of advertising messages that appear in every space. Barthes defines neomania as an insatiable appetite for new objects to consume. Today there are many advertisements that present women as advertising objects to attract audiences. Women are placed as strong magnets so that the audience can enjoy the purpose of the message to be conveyed. In Japan, television commercials are dotted with white female models. Of the 2,578 TV commercials, 21.1% used foreign models and more than 70% were white models (Hiyoshi in Torigoe, 2012). In recent years, the demand for whitening products has increased as consumer interest in whitening has increased and the market scale in Japan now exceeds 200 billion yen, accounting for more than one fifth of all skin care products (Tanaka, 2019). The image of a woman's body that is presented contains a meaning that can be interpreted towards the woman shown, starting from the body like the beauty myth behind the advertisement for Kose Sekkisei White UV Emulsion. Research on the

representation of white beauty in advertisement has been researched by Satria and Junaedi in a journal entitled "Representation Of Women's Beauty In Garnier Sakura White And Wardah White Secret

Advertising" (2022). The purpose of this study was to determine the representation of female beauty in Garnier Sakura White and Wardah White Secret advertisements by looking at the beauty standards of Indonesian women who still have a relationship with Japanese beauty because both come from Asia. The chosen research method is Roland Barthes semiotics and uses the theory of representation and the myth of beauty. The two advertisements conclude that postcolonial values where the beauty of the Western world is synonymous with white skin replaces the beauty of the Eastern world, causing a feeling of inferiority if the skin is not white. The second research is based on Mikiko Ashikari entitled "Cultivating Japanese Whiteness" (2005). This study examines the strong preference for fair skin observed among Japanese women using a qualitative method based on data collection. In the study, since the late 1980s, consumption of 'lightening' cosmetics has remained at a consistently high level, and 'white' skin has become considered trendy and desirable in contemporary Japan. Through this connection, white skin becomes a symbolic physical characteristic to identify Japanese people. The research concludes if it argues that the meaning of a symbol is not merely produced or reproduced but is represented and legitimized through body ornaments in public. The third is research conducted by Eric P.H Li, Hyun Jeong Min, Russel W Belk, Junko Kimura and Shalini Bahl with the title "Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Cultures" (2008). This study analyzed print advertisements for skin whitening and lightening products in four Asian societies -- India, Hong Kong, Japan, and Korea. Researchers compared verbal messages and visual images for global brands and local brands and across countries with comparative qualitative methods. In conclusion, it is found that whiteness in this Asian culture is both empowering and debilitating and global and local in nature. From the above studies, as a researcher I am interested in researching KOSÉ SEKKISEI WHITE UV EMULSION advertisements using semiotic methods. Is there a representation of white skin as something that is called beautiful in the advertisement?

1.1 Representation

Each of these social environments requires each social individual to behave and think in a certain way. These behaviors and thoughts are the forerunners of culture (Haryanti et al, 2016). Culture is often described through representation. Therefore representation is related to signs that are understood culturally. Representation is important because there is a process by which meaning is produced between members of a culture. Here advertisements often insert cultural ideas, where these ideas become a constructed representation, just like advertisements on television which are full of visualized ideas. In line with Hall (1997) Ideas are constructed by representation and produced through language where events do not occur through spoken expression, but also visually. Representational systems consist not only of individual concepts, but also of ways of organizing, inserting, and grouping ideas or concepts and various complex relationships.

1.2 Beauty Myths in Advertising

Advertising is a medium for conveying messages to the general public. Women are often used as object models in advertisements because women's appearance is considered to have attractiveness. Apart from society, now the beauty discourse is also born from an advertisement, so that advertisement can produce ideal beauty. Advertisers are constantly trying to offer new concepts (or updated concepts) to society and women, of course, about what is called ideal beauty (Puspa, 2010). The image displayed in the advertisement gives rise to the image of the woman displayed, the image of an ideal woman is displayed with a slim body and white skin. The representation of women in advertisements seems to make white skin part of the symbol of beauty. The initial assessment of economic status is often synonymous with skin color. Brown/black people are considered poor because they work outside while white people are considered rich people who work from within the house. So this is what makes the ideal beauty of being white and brown/black skin marginalized. This is in line with Frith & Gates (2010) who argues that poor people are defined as people who do not have racial characteristics of "white skin, straight hair, wavy

jaws, skull shape and size, well-organized body proportions, and so on. Even the most racially society is currently following the times, in which body skin color is used as a reference mode for cultural trends which are included in terms of fashion, attitude, gait, hairstyle, speech, and their relationships.

1.3 Japanese Beauty Myths in Advertising

Japan has a huge obsession with white skin. History records, in the Nara era the desire to have white skin occurred when women came from the nobility. At that time they often powdered their faces with a powder called oshiroi. This custom continued into the Heian period as a symbol of the beauty of the nobility. This is in line with Cho Kyo (2012), he argues that there is an explanation in the book *The Tale of Genji* and the *Diary of Murasaki Shikibu*, at the beginning of the Heian period there were references to powder which indicated the assumption that white skin was beautiful. But now, in Japan, advertisements on television are filled with white female models. Of the 2,578 TV commercials, 21.1% used foreign models and more than 70% were white models (Hiyoshi in Torigoe, 2012). This indicates that Japanese media has internalized and reproduced American media discourse on race relations, which is characterized as an overrepresentation of whites and an underrepresentation of colored people (Fujimoto in Torigoe, 2012).

2. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative method, because the results of this study are not in the form of numbers or variables, but rather a description of a fact from the findings of the object. This method can make us better understand the problem in a phenomenon. Thus, qualitative research can provide in-depth understanding apart from obtaining descriptive explanations (Sofaer, 1999). In terms of data collection, Gill et. al. (2008) suggests that there are several types of data collection methods in qualitative research, namely observation, visual analysis, literature study, and interviews (individual or group). This research is included in the category of visual analysis because this research seeks to answer the formulation of the problem regarding the representation of female beauty in advertisements. The objects used in this study were analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis which developed the thoughts of Ferdinand De Saussure. The object of research in this research is advertising, Kose Sekkisei White UV Emulsion. According to Littlejohn, (2009: 53), Semiotics aims to find out the meanings contained in a sign or interpret the meaning so that it is known how the communicator constructs the message. In Barthes' semiotics, there are two levels, namely denotation and connotation. Each level has a signifier and signified which are connected to each other. Barthes argues that denotation is the literal meaning of the sign, while connotation is having a subjective or at least intersubjective meaning. Roland Barthes created a systematic model for analyzing the meaning of signs. The focus of Barthes' attention is more on the idea of two-stage signification (two order signification).



Figure 1. Roland Barthes's Theory Model

Barthes created a map of how signs work:

From the Barthes map above it can be seen that the denotative sign (3) consists of a marker (1) and a signified (2). But at the same time, denotative signs are also connotative markers (4). Operationally, in this research, semiotics is applied by studying the signs contained in Kose Sekkisei White UV Emulsion advertisements. The signs contained in the form of images, writing and sound are taken from the shots and scenes in the advertisement. At the stage of the results of this study, the researcher presents denotative and connotative meanings.

3. Results and Discussion

Kose is a classy beauty product in Japan founded by Kōzaburō Kobayashi which has been established since 1946 and until now Kose has issued a variety of cosmetics including facial skin care, hair, make-up and also perfume. Below are scenes in the Kose Sekkisei White UV Emulsion commercial:



Figure 2. Illustration of a woman praying

Denotation Meaning	She is praying so that his skin does not tan because of the sun.
Connotation Meaning	She has a desire that his skin color is not brown.
Myth	White skin is often associated with the meaning of beauty. White skin are synonymous with beauty. Just like Japanese society that glorifies white skin as a standard of beauty.



Figure 3. Illustration of a woman afraid of the sun

Denotation Meaning	Woman afraid of the sun.
Connotation Meaning	She don't want her skin to be exposed to the sun and darken.
Myth	Dark skin is seen as less beautiful than white skin. White skin are synonymous with beauty. Just like Japanese society that glorifies white skin as a standard of beauty.

The media has the power to create beauty myths. Beauty myths in advertising are often narrowly interpreted. This makes it easier for women to feel insecure or not confident (Abdullah et al., 2022). According to Naomi Wolf (2002), beauty is just a myth. Because beauty is not objective and universal. However, so far, the beauty myth that has occurred in Japan has become a myth in society. Japan has a huge obsession with white skin. History records, in the Nara era the desire to have white skin occurred when women came from the nobility. At that time they often powdered their faces with a powder called oshiroi. This custom continued into the Heian period as a symbol of the beauty of the nobility. This is in line with Cho Kyo (2012), he argues that there is an explanation in the book *The Tale of Genji* and the *Diary of Murasaki Shikibu*, at the beginning of the Heian period there were references to powder which indicated the assumption that white skin was beautiful. But now, in Japan, advertisements on television are filled with white skinned models. This indicates that Japanese media has internalized the idea that white skin is beautiful. We can see the obsession with having white skin and the idea that white skin is beautiful in the advertisement scene for Kose Sekkisei White UV Emulsion. In the first scene, a Japanese woman is praying that her skin is not exposed to sunlight so that her skin remains white. Meanwhile, in the second scene, he is seen protecting his face from the sun with his hands. This indicates if he wants to keep his skin white.

4. Conclusion

However, so far, the beauty myth that has occurred in Japan has become a myth in society. Then the results of the study, it can be concluded that in advertisements, the beauty of Japanese women is synonymous with white skin. This shows that the advertisement for Kose Sekkisei White UV Emulsion resonates with Japanese beauty myths.

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