

## Beauty Construction on *Clean&Clear* Foaming Face Wash Video Advertisement: A Semiotic Analysis

<sup>1</sup>Haryati, <sup>2</sup>Deni Apriadi

<sup>1,2</sup> Universitas Pamulang, Indonesia

\* ) Corresponding Author

Email: haryati.safa@gmail.com

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### Abstract

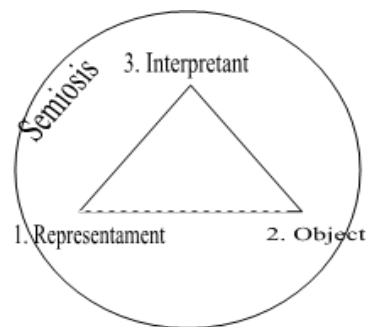
The study attempts to explain and describe the semiotic process and the stereotype about beauty construction in video advertisements. A triadic meaning of semiotics is used to identify and analyze the data, focusing on representamen, object, and interpretant. In addition, this study also uses the theory of beauty stereotypes to identify cultural conflicts in the form of beauty construction in society. The method of this study is descriptive qualitative because the writer collected the data in the form of written words, which produces descriptive information. There are sixteen pictures captured from the "*Gak Perlu Curi-curi Lagi Cek*" – Clean&Clear Foaming Face Wash video advertisement that was analyzed in this study. The research found that the semiotic elements consisting of representamen, objects, and interpretants appeared in the Clean & Clear video ads. The interpretation of signs in this study shows that women are trapped in a dilemmatic beauty construction where physical appearance is an absolute beauty concept for women. Beauty becomes a stereotype because of the construction made by the advertising media that requires women to have perfect physical appearances: smile, confidence, genetically colored skin, clean, without blemishes and acne.

**Keywords:** *Advertisement, Beauty, Semiotics, Triadic meaning*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Language can be defined as a communication system that uses symbols to convey deep meaning (DeMichele, 2017). Symbols can take the form of words, pictures, body language, sounds, and others. Communication is a dynamic process where people intend to share information with others using symbols. In having good communication, people use symbols to represent things, processes or ideas (Garnelo & Shanahan (2019)). Semiotics is one of the scopes of linguistics that studies the signs related to the human means of communication. Semiotics is a study used to zand analyze signs, symbols, texts, or images to convey meanings. Semiotics function to scientifically express all signs in human life, both verbal and nonverbal signs. As practical knowledge, understanding the existence of signs, especially those that appear in advertisements, improves the quality of people's thinking and avoids misunderstandings in interpreting a sign in the advertisement.

Semiotics focuses on patterned communication in all modes, whether in animals or humans, drawing attention to the role of nonverbal communication such as facial expression or gesture, and thus helped to clarify exactly what was involved in the specifically linguistic dimension of communication. The statement explains that semiotics is a field of study that is occupied with zand analyzing verbal and nonverbal patterned communication, including the facial expressions of humans, gestures as well as animal modes of communication to reveal the contexts and meanings as the purpose of communication in the linguistic field. Chandler (2022) defines semiotics as something that is based on logic because logic studies how people reason. While reasoning, according to Peirce, is done through signs. These signs enable us to think, relate to others and give meaning to what the universe presents. Peirce's Semiotic concept is known as the triadic/trichotomy concept, which consists of Representamen, Object and Interpretant.



**Diagram 1: Peirce's Semiotic Triadic (Chandler, 2022)**

A sign/representamen (1) is something that represents something else in some way/capacity/interpretant (3) for someone, and the Interpretant will refer to Object (2). Hence, the sign (Representamen) has a direct triadic relationship with the interpretant and object. This process is called signification, resulting in an infinite relationship between representamen, object and interpretant.

The construction of beauty for women has been around for a long time. This is inseparable from the role of the media as a means of forming values in people's lives, and advertising as an audio-visual medium is one of them. A slim body, white skin and slender height standardly define the construction of beauty. The concept of female beauty related to the ideology of appearance and lifestyle image has been shaped by advertising (Amalia & Zuhri, 2022). In addition to functioning as a means of promotion, advertising also plays a role in spreading and instilling values in people's lives which often results in a failure of cultural understanding and creates cultural conflicts in the form of stereotypes about the construction of beauty for women in society. Similarly, the linguistic and cultural background varieties can be claimed to be regional, creating some distinctive perspectives (Haryati & Prayuna, 2020).

Vidiyawati & Wibowo (2023) delivered the semiotic analysis focusing on the meaning and messages of electronic brands; they believed each advertisement conveys valuable messages regarding the environment. Kralemann & Lattmann (2013) analyzed the meaning of symbols that focus on icons, symbols and indices. Iso, Eriana (2015) focused on investigating the meaning of advertisements and

highlighted the icon, symbol and index with their interpretation. aizan (2019) explored the analysis of semiotics by describing business strategies. He explored the advertising perception and through expressive symbols and signs in advertisements. Moreover, Yohana (2015) examined the relationship between representament, object and interpretant. The triadic analysis is required to create a competitive promotion to the public. Lestari (2016) observed the analysis of icons, symbols, and indexes; she differentiated the textual and visual signs on advertisement posters.

In brief, some previous studies conducted semiotic studies and related them to symbols and signs in products, posters, advertisements of technological products, and more. They analyze icon, symbol, index, denotative and connotative meanings and relate them to myth or culture. Moreover, they focused on visual and textual signs of advertisement meanwhile they did not aim to analyze the people's perspectives on the signs and symbols. Perspective or stereotype analysis is essential to analyze since it could cover the whole people's assumptions or opinions of a sign or symbol. Therefore, signs can be observed no obtain the meanings bandacquire the positive or negative stereotypes of signs on advertisements; those can be associated with specific cultures.

Haryanti & Harwati (2015) found that women's beauty can be seen from some criteria: young, white skin, slim body and unwrinkled skin. Purwandari & Nugroho (2019) claim that Indonesian women judge beauty based on skin color. Sugiharti (2018) assumes that beautiful women prefer having white skin like Korean women; however, the advertisement delivers a distinctive perception. Those previous studies present the study's gap; this study focuses on showing the women's beauty, which are not only slim, white skin and smooth but also has other criteria fitted by the cultural background. Briefly, Indonesians have also stereotypes about women in advertisements who have slim bodies, white skin, long hair, and unwrinkled skin. Hence, the result of the study is expected to provide the identification of representamen, objects and interpretants that appeared in the Clean & Clear Indonesia video advertisement as well as describe a cultural conflict in the

form of stereotype of beauty construction in society. Analyzing the representamen, object and interpretant can be found in semiotic knowledge.

Women are attached to beauty, but beauty itself is relative. The perception of beauty is different. Each individual has their taste to define the limits of beauty based on their standards (Sugiharti, 2018). However, when the media began to represent many forms of beauty through media products, the meaning of beauty changed into what the media showed. The influence of the media on people's mindsets makes the construction of beauty in society become the same.

Wolf (2013) argues that the beauty myth speaks of a quality called "beautiful" that exists objectively and universally. Women have to make it happen and society wants to have women who have it. According to Casad & Timko (2015), gender stereotypes are often displayed in the delivery of an advertisement message to potential customers, such as showing women as housewives while husbands go to work and so on. The construction of women's beauty in advertising is closely related to the beauty industry and its products because the perspective on beauty changes over time. The construction of beauty becomes problematic when used to favor certain groups over others. The signs formed in these stereotypes sometimes create a negative impression on a certain community group (Rahmawati, 2019). The stigma caused by the stereotype impacts a community group so that it has a particular label or designation that is considered harmful. To change the negative stigma caused by these stereotypes, finally, a positive image was formed to change or reverse the negative stereotype labels. This positive image is widely used in advertisements to change people's views about a particular beauty construction that develops in the social environment. From the above explanation, the study attempts to explain and describe the semiotic process and the stereotype about beauty construction in video advertisements.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study applies a qualitative method to examine in-depth problems, such as social phenomena or organizational studies. Creswell and Poth (2016), qualitative research is a

way to explore and recognize the meaning derived from a social or humanitarian problem; it is classified into descriptive methods whose application is to tell, explain, provide analysis, and interpret. Therefore,, qualitative research was applied sin this study ince the results describe the human problems of beauty stereotypes. The objects of this research are screenshots of selected scenes in one video advertisement entitled "*Gak Perlu Curi-curi Lagi Cek – Clean & Clear Foaming Face Wash*" which was downloaded on September 21, 2021, from the Clean & Clear Indonesia YouTube channel, which later becomes the unit of analysis. The sixteen screenshots of the scene used were the scenes that visualize the element of Peirce's semiotic, namely the representamen, object, and interpretant. All three were interconnected in expressing the meaning and message of the advertisement about the beauty construction for women.

The data analysis was carried out by organizing the data collected in the form of screenshots of video advertisements and describing them into units of analysis and analysis using a triadic diagram consisting of representamen, interpretant and object. Then, the writers related the triadic meanings with the women's beauty stereotypes. The writers also explored the cultural conflicts that are featured in Clean & Clear video ads. The writers descriptively interpreted stereotypes in the form of beauty construction in Indonesian women being confused due to video advertisements.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**



Figure 1 (Clean&Clear Indonesia, 2018)

The representation of datum 1 is a qualisign in the form of a smiling face indicating a happy feeling. Then, the object of datum 1 contains the element of icon

in the form of three objects of young women who have white and clean facial skin, and a logo written “Clean&Clear” as the watermark from the brand of the product in the upper right corner of the video’s screen. In addition, the index was shown by the smile of three women as a representation of the feelings of happiness they feel. There is also a symbol in the form of three women who walk together, indicating the three women in the picture are a friend. Finally, the interpretant of Figure 1 was an argument that women tend to be happier and more confident when they feel they have met the beauty standards that apply in their environment so that their environment can accept them.

Figure 1 focuses on an iconic qualisign in the form of three women walking together in a corridor carrying student equipment, indicating that the three women in datum 1 are teenagers. Teenage is a transition to adulthood. This transition sometimes causes errors in the way of thinking, including in the construction of beauty that occurs in the adolescent age environment. The semiosis process that occurs in 1, focusing on women in the middle, is interpreted as an argument that young girls are more comfortable expressing themselves when they have beauty that reaches the standards that apply in their environment (Santi & Wirawanda, 2020). The people of their environment accept her. The woman looks happy, as shown by the smile on her face. In general, a smile is an expression of pleasure. In addition, the smiles of the three women shown indicate that they feel confident when interacting in public. The self-confidence shown by the woman in the middle is obtained because she feels accepted by her environment without any limitations in the form of a beauty gap between the three women. Xu & tan (2020) explain the environment accepts the woman because she is considered to have met the standards of beauty, namely white skin and a radiant face.



Figure 2 (Clean&Clear Indonesia, 2018)

The representation of Figure 2 is a qualisign in the form of a picture of a woman who looks restless as she has a problem with her face skin that makes her uncomfortable. The icon of object datum 1 is a picture of a woman with black-long hair wearing a white t-shirt. Then, the icon creates an index in the form of the action of the woman holding her cheek with her hand while looking around her, indicating her uncomfortable feeling. More, her expression and action symbolize a feeling of restlessness. It focused on the iconic qualisign in which the figure of a girl looks restless with eyes that look sideways looking around and slightly wrinkled eyebrows indicating that the woman is nervous that someone else is watching her. The woman's right hand in the picture also appears to be holding the face indicating that the woman is nervous about something on her face. In the picture, there is a small spot near the woman's nose: acne. In addition, the skin of women also looks dark, so it does not meet beauty standards. The facial expression of women shows a facial expression that represents feelings so it is categorized as a qualisign.

Qualisign is indicated by the absence of action taken by women against the environment or people around them, so it can be said that it is only a concept in the woman's mind. The anxiety experienced by women in datum 3 is not represented in any action, so it is only subjective to them because there is no indication that the people around her noticed the small spots on the woman's face, the interpretant above is rheme. The interpretant can be a new representation so that it is categorized as a rheme that allows multiple interpretations by people who see it. For example, the woman is nervous because of acne, but no one sees it, or someone



sees his face with acne that makes him anxious to look around and hold part of his face with his right hand.



Figure 3 (Clean&Clear Indonesia, 2018)

The representation of Figure 3 is a qualisign in the form of an inferior girl. The girl holding the tumbler in the picture appears to have a different skin color and hair from the two girls nearby, making her feel inferior. The two girls nearby embraced each other while she sat a little further away so no one would notice her face. The icon is a picture of three girls wearing yellow-blue sports shirts and a tumbler. The index is the action performed by the girl holding the tumbler. She seemed to be quietly looking at the other two girls with slightly bent bodies as an index of her feelings of inferiority. Then, the symbol is the difference between the three women's skin colors. The difference in skin color of the three girls in the picture refers to the differences in their races. Black skin is synonymous with people who come from the eastern part of Indonesia. However, the interpretant of Figure 3 was a theme. The woman in the picture looks inferior as shown by her eyes looking at her friends and her hand holding a tumbler.

It focuses on a rhematic iconic qualisign, showing an image of a woman staring at two other women nearby. It can be seen that there is a gap between them which makes the woman feel inferior. From the physical characteristics of the curly hair and black skin, different from the physique of the two women who were nearby, it was certain that the woman was from a different race. The gap between ethnicity and race is a problem that is often encountered in society, both in social and cultural aspects. The physical characteristics of black skin are identified with a dirty nature and do not symbolize the beauty that prevails in society. This often

causes bullying about beauty among women. Women from black races tend to feel inferior when interacting with other people about beauty. Wolf (2013) reveals that women's bodies and faces are instruments to punish fellow women, and they are often used to control and oppose our own will. Today's "beauty" is an economic system in which women find the "value" of their faces and bodies already in other people's space, not themselves but other women (Mukherjee, 2022).



Figure 4 (Clean&Clear Indonesia, 2018)

The representation of figure 4 is a sign form of an insecure girl who looks uncomfortable. The girl in the picture is holding her forehead with two fingers while her other hand is holding a mobile phone that is pointed at her face. Her eyes looked sharply at the screen of the cellphone she was holding with eyebrows that sharpened to the middle, indicating that she felt uncomfortable on the part of her face, especially the forehead where there was a pimple bulge. The icon of the object datum 6 is a picture of a girl wearing a grey jacket and white shirt and a pink cell phone. The index of the object in Figure 4 is the girl's facial expression that appeared because she looked at the part of her face on the cellphone screen that made her uncomfortable. The face with acne spots on the woman's forehead is categorized as a negatively oriented qualisign that makes the girl feel uncomfortable when she sees her face on the cellphone screen she is holding. However, the symbol is her clothes as a student. A white shirt with a logo on the chest pocket is the general uniform of high school students.

Figure 4 contains a rhematic iconic sinsign element in the form of an image of a woman who looks embarrassed. The woman is seen holding her forehead with her right hand to cover her face. Meanwhile, the other hand has the cell phone facing the front. The woman seemed to be squinting her eyes so that she seemed to avoid her gaze on the cell phone she was holding even though she appeared to be looking in the mirror on the cell phone screen.

Wolf (2013) argued that women tend to deal with myths in the construction of beauty to become the perfect woman, namely having a tall, slim, white body and blonde hair. Their facial skin should not have the slightest flaw, and their waist circumference should be as small as possible. Every morning, women wake up feeling uncomfortable about their bodies. The woman also shows her dissatisfaction with her face (Harris. 2020).



Figure 5 (Clean&Clear Indonesia, 2018)

The representation of Figure 5 is a qualisign in the form of a picture of a woman with a smiley face indicating she's happy. The icon of the object datum 14 is a picture of a woman. Then, the index is the action of the woman expressing her feeling with a smile. Furthermore, the symbol of object is a text that reads "MINYAK" represented one of the problems of women's beauty; namely oily skin. It reveals an iconic qualisign in the form of an image of a smiling woman, which is interpreted as feeling happy. In addition, it also has a symbol element in the form of faded text that reads "MINYAK". The text appears to have been formed from the oil on the woman's face in the image before it disappears, giving rise to an element of argument; the woman in the picture looks happy because her face is free from oily skin after using

Clean&Clear products. This means that Clean&Clear products contain ingredients that can remove oil on facial skin after use.

Wolf (2013) considers that the role of the media in the business of the beauty industry (especially cosmetics) is to become the host of the patriarchal system to control women's freedom. Instead of directly oppressing them, the beauty industry's patriarchy attacks women with beauty myths. As shown in figure 5, it is interpreted that a woman who has oily skin means she is not beautiful, while a beautiful woman is a woman whose face is not oily Sakinah & Hanifa (2020). Beauty myths are a means of feminizing women that make them imprisoned in dissatisfaction with their bodies, feeling unable to satisfy their environment, and even hating themselves as shown in figure 5 and other data above.

The signs in the advertisements analysed in this study indicate that the advertisements present a smile of woman can be categorized as the beauty in Indonesia. Wolf (2013) explains a smile symbolizes happiness or a feeling of well-being that other people can know without asking, and it can be well received in her environment or even attract the opposite sex. Mirani, Chandra, & Pratiwi (2021) also add that women should deliver their confidence to fulfill their beauty standardization, and they have distinctive uniqueness as they are extraordinary. The study also found the characterizations of beauty that are not absolute, such as having clean white skin and no dirt or acne without distinguishing the characteristics of the skin types of eastern Indonesian women who tend to be darker than Indonesian women in Indonesia. Similarly, Raharjo, Hidayat, & Jalil (2020) observed that women should apply make-up in order to attract opposite sex; it is crucial to be more confidence and compete with other beautiful women. According to Wolf (2013), as the construction of beauty, idealization is dynamic; it changes with the times and the interests of society. The construction of beauty does not need to be feared as long as women have the knowledge and know themselves. Widyadinda (2016) concludes that self-confidence in one's uniqueness will grow so that women no longer have to worry about the construction of beauty in society.

In addition, the signs that appear in advertisements also show that women tend to close themselves off from others when they feel they do not meet the beauty standards constructed by advertisements so that the concept of beauty that focuses on physical conditions is considered absolute and must exist owned by women. The author hopes that the ad producers are more concerned about the ethnic and racial differences that exist in Indonesia because these differences are diversity that allows women to get to know each other. Knowledge of diversity is expected to give women confidence so that they can love themselves.

Moreover, the findings in this study can provide insight for developing further advertisement impressions for the directors on working another beauty product's video advertisement. The writer hopes that the development of advertising, especially beauty product advertisements in Indonesia, can focus more on how Indonesian women express their inner beauty, not just physical appearance. Emotional intelligence, behavior, manners and "eastern" culture are true beauty that must be shown by Indonesian women in society.

## **CONCLUSION**

In advertising, signs play essential roles to create expressive meaning and successive promotion to viewers. In this digital era, advertisements can be promoted through any kinds of media. It should cover the interactive textual and visual signs like the use of color image, or textual information. However, those signs deliver the misunderstanding of people's perspective. It affects on their linguistic knowledge, environment, experiences, or education. This study focuses on using triadic meaning of Peirce; it covers three main points of sign including representant, interpretant and object. Representant can stand for the object, and object is the description or explanation of a sign. The combination between the representant and object leads to the interpretant. It could be the exploration and people's arguments of a sign. It is believed that one sign will present each category;

those also present the distinctive meaning. Moreover, the writers highlight the people's stereotype of the cosmetic advertisements. Indonesians agree that someone's beauty can be seen from women's appearances. Those appearances are categorized by having white skin, long hair, height, ideal body, clean teeth, pointed nose and other criteria. This study highlights two major points: the analysis of triadic meanings and the beauty construction. Obviously, the advertisements present the elements of representamen, objects and interpretants as the semiotic analysis and cultural conflicts regarding the stereotype of beautiful women in Indonesia. People deliver their distinctive perception of the beauty standardization which people assume that the women beauty can be classified into physical appearances: white skin, tall, slim body, no acne, no wrinkled skin, make-up, and long and blonde hair, and women seem to have a haunting fear when they are not accepted and appreciated by society because they do not meet the beauty standards applied in their environment. However, Indonesian women were born with brown color skin, and this standard cannot be associated with people who have distinctive genetic culture. The advertisements also reveal other beauty constructions: smile, confidence, and genetic skin as Indonesians.

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