

REPRESENTATION OF MALE BRAND AMBASSADORS IN BEAUTY PRODUCTS: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS STUDY OF MALE BRAND AMBASSADORS IN BEAUTY PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

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The traditional representation of women in beauty products has often focused on their attention-grabbing appearance, while men have typically been associated with a simpler, more masculine look. However, this discourse is evolving as more beauty brands use male brand ambassadors. This shift is due to the growing acceptance of men using beauty products, despite some resistance rooted in societal stereotypes. This study aims to analyze how male brand ambassadors challenge traditional gender norms, particularly regarding masculinity and femininity. Using discourse analysis, the research examines advertisements featuring male brand ambassadors and explores how they simultaneously project both masculinity and femininity. The results show that these advertisements reflect a changing perception of gender roles, where men are portrayed as not only masculine but also in touch with femininity, blurring the boundaries between the two. This research contributes to the understanding of how beauty marketing reflects and influences evolving gender identities and the shifting cultural landscape of beauty standards.

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, the discourse surrounding beauty has evolved rapidly alongside cultural changes and shifting perceptions of gender in society. Traditionally, women have been associated with attention-grabbing physical appearance, while men were often defined by a simpler, more masculine look with less emphasis on self-care. However, with the emergence of social change, the view of beauty care has started to shift. Today, more beauty products are featuring male brand ambassadors, creating a new space in the beauty product marketing industry, which was once dominated by women (Balogun, 2023; Frankel, 2020a; Kara & Özgür, 2023; Zhang, 2023).

This research is conducted to explore the phenomenon of male brand ambassadors in the beauty industry, which has become an important issue in understanding how the concepts of masculinity and femininity are now being presented and understood by society. Although the use of male brand ambassadors has become increasingly popular, this phenomenon is still often viewed as contradictory to traditional norms of masculinity. Therefore, it is essential to

conduct a deeper analysis of the representation of men in beauty products and how this reflects changes in the discourse on gender.

The use of male brand ambassadors, such as Nicholas Saputra (Skintific), Angga Yunanda (Azarine), Cha Eun Woo (MS Glow), and Song Joong Ki (Scarlett), illustrates a significant shift in societal norms surrounding beauty and gender. This development reflects how globalization and technological advancements influence cultural narratives, breaking the conventional boundaries of beauty that were once exclusive to women. Such representations blur the line between masculinity and femininity, as highlighted by Hyde's concept of combining East Asian masculinity with femininity in a single performance (Hariyanto & Kusuma, 2024; Rahma & Setiawan, 2022; Ramadini, 2022; Yu, 2024).



Figure 1: Nicholas Saputra as the Brand Ambassador for Skintific Products.

Previous research supports these observations. Mapped, Sunaniah, and Salwia (2023) analyzed the myth of female beauty in local cosmetic advertisements featuring South Korean idols, revealing the cultural infiltration of global beauty standards. Similarly, Meltha Cristina and Ade Putranto (2023) explored metrosexual male representation in Scarlett Whitening ads starring Song Joong Ki, while Utami and Widiarti focused on semiotics in the same context. Riswari and Widiarto (2022) investigated the intersection of masculinity and beauty standards in MS Glow for Men ads. While these studies provide valuable insights, they primarily center on individual brands or advertisements, leaving a gap in understanding the broader societal and cultural implications of male representation in the beauty industry.

The uniqueness of this research lies in its focus on examining the representation of male brand ambassadors in beauty products, a topic underexplored in communication and marketing studies in Indonesia. It extends beyond the scope of previous studies by connecting these representations to shifting societal constructs of masculinity and femininity. The gap addressed here is the lack of in-depth analysis on how male brand ambassadors influence societal perceptions of beauty, self-care, and gender norms in the Indonesian context.

This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on beauty, gender, and marketing in Indonesia by offering new perspectives on inclusive advertising strategies and the evolving role of men in shaping cultural perceptions of beauty. By employing a discourse analysis approach, this study aims to enrich academic and practical understandings of gender identity and its representation in the media, providing insights into how societal norms are being redefined in the 21st century.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using discourse analysis to examine the representation of male brand ambassadors in beauty product advertisements. Discourse analysis is chosen because it enables an in-depth exploration of how language and visuals are used to construct meaning, focusing on the portrayal of gender identities, particularly masculinity and femininity, in the context of beauty marketing (Adeeb & Vieira, 2024; Alejandro & Zhao, 2024; Hayes, 2023; Oktarin & Hastomo, 2024).

Data Collection

The data for this study consists of beauty product advertisements featuring male brand ambassadors. These advertisements are selected from various platforms, including television commercials, online advertisements, and social media campaigns. The selection process focuses on advertisements that feature male figures as brand ambassadors, ensuring the relevance of the data to the research. Advertisements released within the last five years are chosen to reflect current trends and cultural shifts in beauty marketing (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Bhat, 2020; Candra Susanto et al., 2024; Tshabangu et al., 2022; Yan & Li, 2023).

Data Analysis

The analysis follows a multi-step process. The first step involves textual analysis, which examines the verbal elements of the advertisements, such as slogans, taglines, and dialogues. This step focuses on the language used to describe male brand ambassadors and how their masculinity or femininity is constructed through words. The second step is visual analysis, which examines the visual representation of the male brand ambassadors. This includes analyzing body language, facial expressions, clothing, setting, and other visual cues that contribute to the portrayal of masculinity and femininity. The goal is to uncover how these visuals challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms in beauty marketing (Bass & Semetko, 2021; Gilbert & Kelley, 2024; Kort-Butler, 2016; Lerigo-Sampson, 2022; Miles et al., 2013, p. 12; Wheeler, 1988).

Following this, intertextuality is applied, comparing the selected advertisements with broader cultural discourses surrounding masculinity, femininity, and beauty. This analysis helps identify how these advertisements align with or deviate from traditional gender portrayals in advertising by considering historical and cultural contexts. Lastly, the study applies critical discourse analysis to understand how power relations, social norms, and cultural expectations influence the representation of gender in these advertisements. This step also reflects on the broader societal implications these advertisements have on the public's understanding of gender roles and beauty standards.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, multiple advertisements are analyzed to account for variability in the representation of male brand ambassadors across different beauty brands and product categories. Consistency in the analytical approach is maintained by applying the same criteria for textual and visual analysis to all selected advertisements. The research process is transparent and follows a clear analytical framework to support reliability (Frumkin et al., 2023; Gokmenoglu & Dasci Sonmez, 2024; Nagashima et al., 2024; Ruder et al., 2022; Spence et al., 2023).

Ethical Considerations

This research adheres to ethical guidelines by ensuring that the advertisements selected are publicly available and do not involve personal data or sensitive information. The analysis is conducted with respect for the cultural and social contexts of the advertisements, aiming to avoid harmful stereotypes or biases in interpretation (Mainwaring & Aujla, 2023; McKenna, 2024; Tshabangu et al., 2022).

Through this methodological approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how male brand ambassadors are represented in beauty advertisements and what these representations reveal about the evolving discourses surrounding masculinity, femininity, and beauty in the industry.

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis of male brand ambassadors in beauty product advertisements reveals significant shifts in societal perceptions of masculinity and beauty, marked by a blending of masculine and feminine traits. These findings align with the evolving discourse on gender and beauty in the context of globalization and the influence of modern media. The key results are as follows:

1. Blending of Masculine and Feminine Ideals

The inclusion of male brand ambassadors in beauty advertisements demonstrates a shift in the portrayal of beauty, where masculinity and femininity are no longer seen as mutually exclusive. Traditionally, beauty products have been marketed primarily to women, reinforcing the idea that beauty is a feminine domain (Erikson & Josefsson, 2023; Neka Mbangazi & Lunduku Kasanda, 2024). However, the presence of male brand ambassadors such as Nicholas Saputra for Skintific and Angga Yunanda for Azarine challenges this narrative, suggesting that beauty and self-care are now universal concepts (Nasri, Muliadi, et al., 2024). These advertisements depict men engaging in beauty routines traditionally associated with femininity, such as skincare, while maintaining a masculine image. This blending reflects a modern, fluid understanding of gender, where men can embrace beauty and grooming practices without compromising their masculinity.



Figure 2: Angga Yunanda as the Brand Ambassador for Azarine Products.

2. Shifting Cultural Norms Around Masculinity and Beauty

The advertisements analyzed reflect a significant cultural shift from rigid, traditional notions of masculinity—often associated with "toxic masculinity" or machismo—to a more inclusive view of masculinity. In the past, an ideal male figure was often defined by strength, muscularity, and assertiveness, with a clear distinction between masculinity and femininity (Aldoh et al., 2024; Mehta, 2024; Neka Mbangazi & Lunduku Kasanda, 2024). However, the use of male brand ambassadors in beauty advertisements demonstrates a departure from these stereotypes. For instance, male figures in the advertisements were portrayed as strong and confident, yet also sensitive and caring about their appearance. This juxtaposition creates a more inclusive and fluid representation of masculinity, as seen with figures like Cha Eun Woo for MS Glow and Soong Jong Ki for Scarlett.



Figure 3: Cha Eun Woo as the Brand Ambassador for MS Glow Products.

3. Gender Fluidity in Beauty Advertising

A major shift observed in these advertisements is the depiction of gender fluidity, where masculinity and femininity are presented as complementary rather than opposing. This is evident in the portrayal of male brand ambassadors who express both masculine and feminine qualities. According to Hyde's theory, this combination reflects a distinct blending of Eastern masculinity with femininity, resulting in a performance that is both strong and delicate (Deng, 2024; Wiid et al., 2023). The portrayal of men as both masculine and feminine challenges traditional gender norms, promoting the idea that beauty is not confined to one gender but is a shared experience. The male ambassadors in these campaigns represent a new generation of men who embrace both strength and vulnerability, undermining the traditional dichotomy between the masculine and the feminine.

4. Popularity of Male Brand Ambassadors in Beauty Products

The growing use of male brand ambassadors in beauty product advertisements reflects a larger trend within the beauty industry to appeal to a broader consumer base. Male consumers are no longer excluded from the beauty market, as evidenced by the rising popularity of male influencers and celebrities in these roles. These brand ambassadors, often chosen for their large social media following, contribute significantly to the reach and success of beauty products (Frankel, 2020b; Li, 2020). The influence of these ambassadors, who may come

from various backgrounds such as film, music, and modeling, makes beauty products more relatable to a male audience, thereby expanding the market for beauty and grooming products beyond the traditional female demographic.

5. Changing Consumer Attitudes

The presence of male brand ambassadors in beauty advertisements also reflects changing attitudes toward beauty and self-care in society. As beauty has become increasingly associated with personal empowerment and self-expression, both men and women are encouraged to take pride in their appearance and invest in self-care. The advertisements analyzed suggest that beauty routines, once seen as exclusive to women, are now embraced by men as a symbol of confidence and well-being (Faculty of Management, Sremski Karlovci, Republic of Serbia et al., 2024; Rausser et al., 2023). This shift is reinforced by the fact that beauty and grooming are no longer seen as signs of vanity but as essential components of overall health and vitality.

6. Cultural Impact and Social Implications

The use of male brand ambassadors in beauty product advertisements has broader cultural and social implications. The representation of men in these advertisements signals the deconstruction of traditional gender roles, where beauty is no longer considered solely a feminine pursuit. These advertisements contribute to the ongoing transformation of societal attitudes toward masculinity, encouraging a more inclusive and flexible understanding of gender (Kosmos & Pogačar, 2022, p. 43; Pamungkas & Usman, 2021). The incorporation of both masculine and feminine elements in the portrayal of male beauty ambassadors reflects the growing recognition that beauty is a universal concept, not confined to one gender, and that everyone deserves the opportunity to care for their appearance.

In conclusion, the results of this study show that the representation of male brand ambassadors in beauty advertisements challenges traditional gender norms and presents a more inclusive, fluid vision of beauty. This shift reflects broader cultural and societal changes, where masculinity and femininity are no longer seen as opposites but as complementary aspects of human identity. The use of male influencers and celebrities as beauty product ambassadors marks a significant step in the evolution of beauty advertising, where self-care and grooming are celebrated as universal pursuits.

The findings from this study on the representation of male brand ambassadors in beauty advertisements reveal a substantial transformation in the portrayal of masculinity and beauty, in line with changing cultural norms and evolving gender identities. This shift is reflective of broader societal trends and can be analyzed through several theoretical frameworks, including gender theory, representation theory, and the concept of performativity.

1. Gender Fluidity and Performativity

The portrayal of male brand ambassadors who embody both masculine and feminine qualities directly ties into Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, which suggests that gender is not an inherent trait but is constructed through repeated performances. Butler argues that gender is not a stable identity but rather a fluid construct expressed through actions, language,

and appearance. The male brand ambassadors in beauty advertisements embody this fluidity, showing that masculinity and femininity are not mutually exclusive but are part of a dynamic continuum (Arshad & Siddiqui, 2024; Kyselov & Synhaievskva, 2024). These advertisements, such as those featuring Cha Eun Woo for MS Glow and Soong Jong Ki for Scarlett, challenge traditional gender binaries and present a model of masculinity that can simultaneously embody strength, tenderness, and beauty (Nasri, 2015, p. 123; Nasri, Gufran, et al., 2024, p. 34; Nasri, Wahid, et al., 2024, p. 54). These performances create new norms for male beauty that are not confined to rigid, traditional ideals of masculinity but embrace a more nuanced and inclusive interpretation of what it means to be a man.



Figure 4: Song Joong Ki as the Brand Ambassador for Scarlett Products.

2. Representation Theory

Stuart Hall's theory of representation emphasizes how media constructs and conveys meaning through symbols, signs, and images. According to Hall, representation involves both reflecting reality and shaping the way we understand it. The shift from using female brand ambassadors to incorporating male figures in beauty advertisements represents a significant change in how beauty is socially constructed (Banica, 2022; Kreitz & Weihrauch, 1985). Traditionally, beauty has been portrayed as a feminine trait, associated with women who are expected to maintain certain physical appearances. The increasing use of male brand ambassadors, such as Nicholas Saputra and Angga Yunanda, disrupts this norm and constructs a new reality where beauty and self-care are universal and accessible to both genders. The representations in these advertisements not only reflect the growing acceptance of beauty as gender-neutral but also actively shape consumer perceptions, signaling a change in cultural attitudes toward masculinity and beauty.

3. Social Construction of Masculinity

The results of this study also align with Michael Kimmel's concept of hegemonic masculinity, which refers to the culturally dominant form of masculinity that is often defined by physical strength, dominance, and a rejection of femininity. The traditional image of masculinity, which is associated with toxic masculinity and machismo, is increasingly being challenged in contemporary media. The use of male brand ambassadors in beauty advertisements signals a departure from these

traditional masculine ideals. Instead, it introduces a new model of masculinity that embraces self-care, vulnerability, and attention to personal appearance without compromising strength or assertiveness (Fachrul Nurhadi et al., 2018; Sri Harianti, 2023). This shift reflects the deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity, where men are allowed to express a broader range of emotions and behaviors, including those traditionally deemed feminine (Nasri & Astani, 2024; Rulyandi et al., 2024; Rulyandi & Nasri, 2023). The growing popularity of male brand ambassadors in beauty products reflects this broader social shift, where the notion of what it means to be masculine is no longer narrowly defined by physical traits alone.

4. Globalization and Cultural Exchange

Another relevant theoretical lens is the impact of globalization on cultural norms. As argued by Arjun Appadurai in his theory of global cultural flows, globalization facilitates the movement of cultural products and ideas across borders, which in turn influences local cultures. The increasing use of male brand ambassadors in beauty advertisements is part of this global trend, where Western and Eastern ideals of masculinity and femininity converge (Jian et al., 2024; Zalli, 2024). The advertisements featuring figures like Cha Eun Woo and Soong Jong Ki illustrate how global media and celebrity culture have contributed to the redefinition of beauty standards (Haris & Nasri, 2023; Nasri, 2023, 2024a, 2024b; Nasri & Rahmatullah, 2023). These male figures, while still maintaining a masculine presence, also embrace beauty and grooming rituals traditionally associated with women, indicating a fusion of cultural expectations and the global acceptance of more fluid gender identities (Haramain et al., 2024; Nasirin et al., 2023; Nasri & Indinabila, 2024; Rasyidi & Nasri, 2023). This reflects a global shift towards a more inclusive and diverse understanding of beauty that transcends cultural and gender boundaries.

5. Consumer Identity and Personal Empowerment

The rise of male brand ambassadors in beauty advertisements also speaks to the changing role of consumers in the construction of identity. According to consumer identity theory, consumers use brands and products to express and construct their identities (Apipuddin et al., 2024). The involvement of male influencers and celebrities in beauty advertisements offers male consumers an opportunity to engage with beauty products as a means of self-expression and personal empowerment. As beauty becomes less gender-specific, both men and women can use products to project an image of confidence, self-care, and well-being (Nam, 2021; Nøjgaard et al., 2024). This shift represents a departure from the traditional consumer identities that confined men to specific, gendered roles. Instead, beauty and self-care are being positioned as tools for personal empowerment that are accessible to all consumers, regardless of gender (Dwiastuti et al., 2024; Prakoso & Gaby Swastika, 2024).

6. Cultural Implications and Social Change

The changing portrayal of masculinity in beauty advertising has broader cultural and social implications. By promoting male brand ambassadors for beauty products, these advertisements challenge long-held stereotypes and contribute to the gradual dismantling of traditional gender roles (Dyll & Tomaselli, 2024;

Faculty of Dawah and Communication, Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar. et al., 2022). This shift is part of a larger cultural transformation where gender is increasingly seen as a spectrum, and individuals are free to navigate and express their gender identities without conforming to rigid societal expectations (Alim et al., 2024; Arif Saefudin et al., 2024; Muliadi et al., 2024; Nasihin et al., 2024; Nasri et al., 2023; Nasri & Adiba, 2023). As beauty and grooming become more inclusive, these advertisements serve as a catalyst for social change, encouraging a more fluid and accepting view of masculinity that embraces both strength and vulnerability.

In conclusion, the use of male brand ambassadors in beauty advertisements represents a significant cultural shift, reflecting the fluidity of gender and the deconstruction of traditional masculine norms. By embracing both masculine and feminine qualities, these brand ambassadors challenge the historical association between beauty and femininity and promote a more inclusive understanding of beauty. Through the lens of gender theory, representation theory, and social constructionism, it is clear that the growing presence of male brand ambassadors in beauty products is part of a broader movement toward more inclusive and diverse cultural narratives that embrace fluid gender identities.

Table 1: Aspects of Male Brand Ambassadors in Beauty Products, Research Findings, and Discussion

Aspect	Research Findings	Discussion
Representation of Beauty	The use of male brand ambassadors in beauty products challenges traditional gender norms, where beauty was historically seen as a feminine trait.	The shift in representation reflects a move towards more inclusive beauty standards, where both men and women are portrayed as capable of embracing beauty. This challenges the traditional binary gender norms and aligns with the theory of gender fluidity, as proposed by Judith Butler, where gender expression is fluid and not fixed.
Gender Fluidity in Advertising	Male ambassadors are presented as both masculine and feminine, embodying characteristics of strength and tenderness.	The blending of masculinity and femininity in these advertisements exemplifies gender fluidity. This aligns with Judith Butler's performativity theory, suggesting that gender is not a fixed identity but a construct performed through actions, allowing for a more inclusive and dynamic portrayal of masculinity that includes both traditionally masculine and feminine traits.

Deconstruction of Toxic Masculinity	The appearance of male ambassadors who embrace beauty and self-care counters the stereotypical notion of toxic masculinity, which prioritizes physical strength and dominance.	This shift in advertising is a reaction against traditional toxic masculinity, which confines men to rigid norms. The integration of beauty and grooming into male identities challenges hegemonic masculinity and reflects a broader social change towards a more inclusive and less restrictive concept of masculinity.
Globalization's Influence	The rise of male brand ambassadors for beauty products reflects a global shift towards inclusive beauty standards, blending Eastern and Western ideals of masculinity.	Globalization has played a significant role in shifting cultural norms. The use of male brand ambassadors from diverse backgrounds, such as Cha Eun Woo and Soong Jong Ki, highlights the influence of global media and celebrity culture in reshaping perceptions of masculinity and beauty. This aligns with Arjun Appadurai's theory of global cultural flows, where cultural boundaries are increasingly blurred.
Consumer Identity	Male consumers are now empowered to engage with beauty products, using them as tools for self-expression and personal empowerment.	The role of beauty products in shaping consumer identity has expanded to include men. This marks a departure from traditional gendered consumer roles. By embracing beauty products, men are now using them to express confidence and personal care, thus empowering themselves in ways that were previously reserved for women. This aligns with consumer identity theory, where products help individuals construct their identities.
Cultural Shift and Social Change	The inclusion of male brand ambassadors in beauty advertising challenges long-held gender stereotypes and promotes the idea that beauty	The presence of male brand ambassadors is part of a broader cultural transformation towards more inclusive gender norms. This

is accessible to all genders.	shift encourages a more fluid understanding of masculinity and femininity, helping to dismantle rigid gender roles and promoting a more open, accepting society. These changes reflect the growing importance of fluid gender identities in modern culture.
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Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the research on male brand ambassadors in beauty products, highlighting the key aspects studied, the findings, and their related discussions. The table covers how the representation of beauty has evolved to challenge traditional gender norms, with male ambassadors embodying both masculine and feminine traits. It explores the deconstruction of toxic masculinity, the influence of globalization in shaping inclusive beauty standards, and the empowerment of male consumers who now engage with beauty products as tools for self-expression. Furthermore, the table discusses the broader cultural shift towards more fluid gender identities, with male brand ambassadors reflecting this change and promoting the idea that beauty is accessible to all genders. Each aspect is aligned with relevant theoretical frameworks, such as Judith Butler's performativity theory and Arjun Appadurai's concept of global cultural flows, providing a deeper understanding of the social and cultural implications of this phenomenon.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the representation of male brand ambassadors in beauty products marks a significant shift in societal perceptions of beauty and masculinity. This research highlights how the use of male figures in beauty advertisements challenges traditional gender norms, deconstructs the concept of toxic masculinity, and promotes a more inclusive understanding of beauty. By blending masculine and feminine traits, these ambassadors reflect a growing trend of gender fluidity, empowering both men and women to embrace beauty without the constraints of outdated stereotypes. Globalization plays a key role in this transformation, influencing the blending of Eastern and Western ideals and reshaping beauty standards worldwide. Ultimately, this shift contributes to a cultural change that encourages self-expression and the acceptance of diverse gender identities, making beauty products a tool for empowerment across all genders. The findings underscore the evolving role of advertising in shaping cultural narratives and consumer identities, offering valuable insights for both the beauty industry and broader societal trends.

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