

Semarang College Students' Views on Beauty Standards & Diversity in Indonesian Skincare & Bodycare Advertisements

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Abstract

Beauty standards that spread widely in society make people treat some different from the other. It also influence how people see a person in a formal context, like in recruiting job or school. Unfortunately, this perennial bias also appear in how Indonesian skincare and body care brands make their advertisements. The advertisements usually only show model with particular beauty standards and left diversity behind, forgetting that beauty cannot be defined as simple as that. This research take a depth look about it through the interviews with selected Semarang college students. The research explores about those advertisements and its impact of how people define beauty. Aiming to understand college students' point of view of mentioned issue, this research wants to become a starting step in changing the prevailing beauty standards.

Keywords: *beauty standards; advertisements; skincare; bodycare; diversity*

Abstrak

Standar kecantikan yang tersebar luas di masyarakat membuat orang memperlakukan beberapa orang berbeda dari yang lain. Ini juga memengaruhi bagaimana orang melihat seseorang dalam konteks formal, seperti dalam perekrutan pekerjaan atau sekolah. Sayangnya, bias yang abadi ini juga muncul dalam bagaimana merek perawatan kulit dan tubuh Indonesia membuat iklannya. Iklan biasanya hanya menampilkan model dengan standar kecantikan tertentu dan meninggalkan keragaman di belakang, melupakan bahwa kecantikan tidak dapat didefinisikan semudah itu. Penelitian ini melihat secara mendalam melalui wawancara dengan mahasiswa terpilih di kota Semarang. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi tentang iklan-iklan tersebut dan dampaknya terhadap bagaimana orang mendefinisikan kecantikan. Dengan tujuan memahami pandangan mahasiswa tentang masalah yang disebutkan, penelitian ini ingin menjadi langkah awal dalam mengubah standar kecantikan yang berlaku.

Kata Kunci: *standar kecantikan; iklan; perawatan kulit; perawatan tubuh; keberagaman*

1. Introduction

Semarang, one of a big city in Indonesia that has a vibrant vibe. This city is not only a place but also as a pot of many cultures and opportunities to meet new people, new place, new perspective, and, since it's filled with diversity, it could be a good place to learn new things. Located in the middle of Java Island, Semarang is known for its traditional cultures, history, humble locals, and thriving educational landscape. When someone talks about Semarang, it cannot be separated from its busy and active academic environment. This city is loaded with many campuses, gathering students from other places in Indonesia, or even from other countries to study hard while sharing cultures and interests with others. These campuses makes the city more colors and somehow turns the atmosphere into a more lively city, encouraging sense of science and social curiosity. The writer believes that Semarang

college's student must aware about many issues in this world, including environmental issue, social issue, and also cultural issue. One of the hot social and cultural issue is about beauty standard that spread among the society—especially teenager around their ages.

Chalker (2010) cited by Marta Laham in “How the Beauty Industry Manipulates Consumers Preys on Women Insecurities, and Promotes Unattainable Beauty Standards” Due to the expense of the materials and necessary components to complete the ensemble the look was also a status symbol. The 1950s-60s idolized movie star, Marilyn Monroe is the pinnacle of beauty. Her appearance established the popular blonde bombshell look which consists of voluminous blonde hair, fair skin, blue eyes, fuller lips, and an hourglass figure with larger breasts and buttocks. This shows that the concept of beauty standard is being there since a long time ago. According to Langlouis et al cited by Frederick et al in *Beauty Standards*, beautiful people are treated more favorably in job interviews. Furthermore, teachers also judge attractive children as more likely to be intelligent and treat them more favorably. (Cabot, 1999) These statements are proofs that society tends to make the ‘good looking people’ more special than the others. In other words, they make their standards to treat people by their appearance. This could be called as beauty standard. Most of people see what they only see with their eyes in judging people. That is why someone with fine look can win their attention easier and there is nothing could stop this. It happens naturally because of their sense. Thus, society does not see the concept of beauty standard as something wrong or something that should be fixed or erased. Andrew et al cited by Sari et al in “Beauty of Women from Ideal Appearance and Understanding of Beauty Standards: A Literature Review” says Body image to race from different ethnicities into beauty constructions with different understandings for most people. This has a real impact in identifying women's beauty with certain standards that have been assumed by a number of circles in describing the social construction of women's beauty. (Sari et al., n.d.) Unfortunately, in reality, people with good looking are not that much compared to people with below-standard looking. Specializing the good looking person makes other people feel underestimated. And in the world where technology took control of people's life, the case is even worse. The beauty standards spread more widely through the internet that people consume almost every single day. Over time, the stigma about beauty standards attached in human's mind and in another side, making the below-standard looking people or people who does not fit well with the concept of beauty standards more oppressed. Greenfield in her paper titled “When Beauty is the Beast: The Effects of Beauty Propaganda on Female Consumers” brings Tinggeman and McGill article that talks about similar topic and concluded that advertisements that contains body part in it increased negative mood and body dissatisfaction. (Digitalcommons@uno & Greenfield, 2018)

Parameswara & Cardoza (2015) cited by Martha Laham in her paper says one of the platform that is most likely used to promote beauty standards is advertisement. The commercial boom in beauty products has become part of the consumerism of women's beauty lifestyles, product campaigns and rapid economic growth are one of the factors for the high interest of women in

consuming beauty products. In this context, Indonesian skincare and bodycare advertisements also play big role in shaping the term of beauty standards itself. Following Grower et al cited by Sari et al in her paper says that female social media users have a behavior for feedback in viewing circulating posts that can influence concerns and beliefs regarding ideal appearance.(Sari et al., n.d.) According to the writer's overlook, those advertisements present a limited view of beauty that follows the traditional standard concept yet do not embrace someone's unique qualities of beauty. But as the time goes, people become more aware of how the internet or media builds the opinions, the thoughts, and the perspectives about the definition of beauty. Therefore, the perception about beauty standards concept that has been spreading widely must be changed, especially in the mind of college students who put more attention to that issue as a trend. Considering the circumstances, this study takes a deeper look at Indonesian skincare and bodycare advertisements in presenting beauty standards under the perspective of college students in Semarang. The lack of diversity that is shown in Indonesian skincare and bodycare ads is being the core idea of this research. The writer concern about the negative impact that will people get from the concept of beauty standard.

In the next part of this research, the writer will explore the concept of beauty standard and the contribution of diversity in it with the analysis of interview transcript from Semarang college students that are chosen. Moreover, this research aims to know whether the beauty standards concept that presented in ads with its lack of diversity influence the people who watch them or not. If so, the writer want to know what influence do they get, is it bad or good.

2. Methods

By conducting a qualitative study, the writer contributes in direct interview with the subject who are active students from English Literature Department at Diponegoro University batch 2021 to gain more understanding in their perspective on the beauty standards concept and diversity that are portrayed in Indonesia skincare and bodycare ads. The qualitative approach is used to examine the subjects' thoughts and opinions related to this research topic. Qualitative work draws on cases chosen in an opportunistic or purposive fashion, whereas quantitative work employs systematic (random) sampling. Qualitative work is often focused on particular individuals, events, and contexts, lending itself to an idiographic style of analysis. Quantitative work is more likely to be focused on features that (in the researcher's view) can be generalized across a larger population, lending itself to a nomothetic style of analysis.(Gerring, 2017)

In this developmental framework, initial questions are very open-ended: often the researcher just asks what appear to be relevant individuals to describe, in their own way, their experiences and responses concerning a given situation or issue.(Sofaer, n.d.) To gain the depth understanding about the perspectives of the subjects, this data collection method consists of interview. The writer used a qualitative technique with the help of handphone, especially its voice recorder, during the interview

process. It is to make sure that the writer gathered the accurate information and also as a proof that the writer truly did the research about what Semarang college students' think on beauty standards and diversity in Indonesian skincare and bodycare ads.

Qualitative research also plays an important part in clarifying the values, language, and meanings attributed to people who play different roles in organization and communities. They allow people to speak in their own voice, rather than conforming to categories and terms imposed on them by others. (Sofaer, n.d.) By sinking deeply into Semarang college students' perspective on mentioned topic, this research aims to investigate the influence of beauty standards concept and diversity in Indonesian skincare and bodycare ads on people who watch them.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Participants Characteristics

Participants in this research are active English Literature Department from Diponegoro University batch of 2021. All the participants of this research are women. They are students that active in social media and also using skincare and bodycare in their daily life.

3.2.1. Thematic Analysis

The interview result of participant 1 (Riftiana) shows the biggest thing that attract her to the skincare and bodycare advertisement is the aesthetic branding of the product and also how diverse the shades that the product has since she feels her skintone a bit darker than what make up product shades usually provide. She is agree that skincare and bodycare advertisements show particular beauty standards. She thinks every country has different beauty standards that are shown in the advertisements. She took an example of Korean skincare and bodycare advertisements that are normally show their white skin and everything related to it. In her opinion, the skincare and bodycare advertisements should present beauty as a diversity and can not present in a limited standards or beauty category. Since nowadays people are more aware to that diversity image of beauty, Nana argues that brands with non-diversity branding for their skincare and bodycare product would not survive in market. Nana is satisfied enough with the diversity in Indonesian skincare and bodycare advertisements that she has been seen. Nana thinks the present ads that she saw present more diverse skintype and bodytype than what she had seen before. Nana thinks that more diverse skincare and bodycare advertisements could help the change of society's perspective about beauty itself since the more diverse it is, the more people are encourage to have confidence about their self. Nana's preference in choosing skincare and bodycare often influenced by how diverse the brand portray it. She tends to see detailly what the brands portray in their ads and how much shade and type that the brand own. Nana feels like she is compelled to buy some skincare and bodycare because of the beauty standards that are portray in the brand's ads. Unfortunately, she did not receive the result she wanted. She is still not reach the beauty standard that is portray in the

ads. In her opinion, it is very important to see the diversity in skincare and bodycare's catalog or social media, so there is not particular category of beauty that is served by the ads, but all the uniqueness in every person. According to her, she thinks some brands hold the old concept and perspective of beauty standard, thus they are still hard is hard to show the diversity in their ads.

The interview result of participant 2 (Nazla) shows the biggest thing that attract her to the skincare and bodycare advertisement is the claim that the products say in their ads, also she prefer the product if it has influencer in social media to help the promotion. She is agree that skincare and bodycare advertisements show particular beauty standards, but fortunately it is not as much as before. She thinks present ads are trying to show more diverse beauty category. In her opinion, the skincare and bodycare advertisements should present beauty as a diversity and can not only show particular standards. According to Nazla, it is very important for skincare and bodycare advertisements to present diversity, so there is no one feel left out if she or he has different skin or bodytype with what the ads shows. She thinks currently the skincare or bodycare brands are more aware. It looks from how they start to provide more diverse shades and types of their product. Nazla is satisfied enough with the diversity in Indonesian skincare and bodycare advertisements that she has been seen. Nazla thinks that more diverse skincare and bodycare advertisements could help the change of society's perspective about beauty itself. To her, advertisements play big role in influencing the audience. Therefore, if the ads show more diverse beauty category, the society's perspective about related topic also can be changed. Nazla's preference in choosing skincare and bodycare often influenced by how diverse the brand portray it. She shared her personal experience about a brand that claim it able to make people who use it become more white. She thinks that claim makes people think that darker skin is bad, and the white skin is better. So, she is never and would never use that product. Nazla feels like she is never compelled to buy some skincare and bodycare because of the beauty standards that are portray in the brand's ads. In her opinion, it is very important to see the diversity in skincare and bodycare's catalog or social media. It helps her to choose the most suitable product for her skin if the product show more diversity in their branding. According to her, she thinks the reason why skincare and bodycare brands hard to show the diversity in their ads is because the society itself still believe in particular beauty standards. For example, in Indonesia, people still have a statement that beauty means having a white skin. In this context, the brands just try to follow what the consumers want.

The interview result of participant 3 (Rena) shows the biggest thing that attract her to an the skincare and bodycare advertisements are how useful the product and also the innovation they have. She is agree that skincare and bodycare advertisements show particular beauty standards, but she thinks current advertisements start to change their branding and view about the beauty standards and make it more diverse than before. In her opinion, the skincare and bodycare advertisements should present beauty in more wide category. She thinks it is better to not really depending on particular standards in makin an advertisement since everyone has their own uniqueness. According to Rena, it is very

important for skincare and bodycare advertisements to present diversity. She feels sensitive about what beauty brands show in their ads since she has a bit different skintype than what they portray. Rena is satisfied enough with the diversity in Indonesian skincare and bodycare advertisements that she has been seen. Rena thinks that more diverse skincare and bodycare advertisements could help the change of society's perspective about beauty itself. She thinks, especially in Indonesia, society still hold onto the particular standards that could make someone that has different type of that standards insecure. Rena's preference in choosing skincare and bodycare does not influenced by how diverse the brand portray it. Rena does not feel like she is compelled to buy some skincare and bodycare because of the beauty standards that are portray in the brand's ads. In her opinion, it is very important to see the diversity in skincare and bodycare's catalog or social media. It makes people easier to choose what is fit the most. According to her, she thinks the reason why skincare and bodycare brands hard to show the diversity in their ads is because the society itself that still believe in particular beauty standards and do not want to open their mind about the other standards. She mentioned Indonesian people are still not aware enough about how important it is to support diversity in term of beauty.

The interview result of participant 4 (Shalsabila) shows the biggest thing that attract her to the skincare and bodycare advertisement are the model who is being the brand ambassador and how the product is presented. She does not agree that skincare and bodycare advertisements show particular beauty standards. Shalsabila said that usually a brand hire a model because the model's popularity and is it not because the model has particular beauty standards. In her opinion, the skincare and bodycare advertisements should present beauty more diverse. She thinks it is better if advertisements show models from different background and race with their own uniqueness of beauty to show that 'beauty' can not be defined in one standard only. According to Shalsabila, it is very important for skincare and bodycare advertisements to present diversity. Especially in Indonesia since the country has many different cultures and the people has their own category in skin and body types. Shalsa does not satisfied enough with the diversity in Indonesian skincare and bodycare advertisements that she has been seen. In her opinion, there are more brands that use model with fair skin than the other type of skin. In the end, it creates a standard that fair skin is better than the other. Shalsabila thinks that more diverse skincare and bodycare advertisements could help the change of society's perspective about beauty itself. Shalsabila's preference in choosing skincare and bodycare does not influenced by how diverse the brand portray it. She put her attention more in the ingredients of the product than what the ads show about the beauty standards. Shalsabila does not feel like she is compelled to buy some skincare and bodycare because of the beauty standards that are portray in the brand's ads. In her opinion, it is important to see the diversity in skincare and bodycare's catalog or social media. It can attract more people to use the product if the product has more diverse shades or types. According to her, the reason why skincare and bodycare brands hard to show the diversity in their ads is because they tend to use a model with

particular standard. For example, they prefer the fair skin model. She thinks it is better to show more diverse model too in supporting the diversity of beauty.

The interview result of participant 5 (Risa) shows the biggest thing that attract her to the skincare and bodycare advertisement is the storytelling. She tends to put more attention on how the ads show their background and what they want to get from the products. She is agree that skincare and bodycare advertisements show particular beauty standards. In her opinion, the skincare and bodycare advertisements should present beauty as something that is not supposed to be reached. Risa said it is bad if some products make people think they must be like that—like what their ads or branding show. Beauty can be represented as how someone take care of their skin and body to make it looks healthy. According to Risa, it is important for skincare and bodycare advertisements to present diversity if the brand want to reach wider target market. Risa does not satisfied enough with the diversity in Indonesian skincare and bodycare advertisements that she has been seen. She think lately, beauty brands tends to follow the beauty standard of East Asian, like Japan or China. It is of course does not portray the beauty of Indonesia itself. Risa thinks that more diverse skincare and bodycare advertisements could help the change of society's perspective about beauty itself. There are many of teenager that are still portray beauty in particular standards and it prevents the uniqueness of the other type of beauty to appear. Risa's preference in choosing skincare and bodycare does not influenced by how diverse the brand portray it. Risa never feels like she is compelled to buy some skincare and bodycare because of the beauty standards that are portray in the brand's ads. She tends to choose the product that contains many benefit for her skin rather than put attention into what they show in their advertisement. In her opinion, it is important to see the diversity in skincare and bodycare's catalog or social media. According to her, she thinks the reason why skincare and bodycare brands hard to show the diversity in their ads is because the brand does not put enough attention to the minority and they tend to make what is trend than what is truly needed by the people.

3.2. Discussion

The information are gathered from different Semarang college students about beauty standards and diversity in Indonesian skincare and bodycare advertisements. It gives the writer a better understanding about how college students see an advertisement and the social cultural issue, especially related to beauty standards and the lack of diversity of beauty that is shown in the media. Riftiana, Nazla, Rena, Shalsabila, and Risa have their own thoughts about what makes a skincare or bodycare ads look attractive and how a particular standards are shown that makes people influenced in seeing the beauty itself.

The main themes of questions is about how skincare and bodycare advertisement are related to the concept of beauty standards. Riftiana says it is important for skincare and bodycare brands to be more diverse in making ads also in making products. She is one of the people who experience a bit struggle in choosing shades and skincare products that suit her skin since she has a darker skintone,

meanwhile Indonesian skincare and bodycare products are dominated with product for more white skin. She argues that skincare and bodycare brand must be more diverse to make the consumers easier to choose their products.

Nazla, on the other hand, expressed great interest in the claims made by the product and the involvement of influencers in the promotional process. She acknowledged the positive shift towards more diverse beauty types in today's advertising, but highlighted the continued influence of society's beauty standards, especially in Indonesia, where fair skin is more idolized. Even though she is never compelled to buy skincare or bodycare because of its branding with particular standards, she said it would be better if the brand make it more diverse.

For Rena, product utility and innovation are at the forefront of its appeal in skin and body care advertisements. While she agrees that the industry has historically adhered to certain beauty standards, Rena notes positive changes in the industry's approach to beauty standards. Nonetheless, she emphasized the need for advertising to embrace a broader definition of beauty, accommodating each individual's uniqueness. She is one of a person that has a slightly different skintype with what the ads usually present and she feels sensitive about it. She feels like the society only see beauty if people have particular criterias that is shaped by the media.

Shalsabila's attention was drawn to brand ambassadors and product presentation, insisting that models were chosen based on their popularity rather than adherence to certain beauty standards. However, she can not lie that she is still not satisfied with what the skincare and bodycare brands present in their advertisements. Shalsabila highlighting how the brand prefer white-skin models than the others and it accidently contribute in shaping how beauty is defined.

Meanwhile Risa, sees storytelling of the product as the main attraction. In her opinion, she feels like skincare and bodycare brands tend to only follow the trend rather than providing what people really need. She wants the skincare and bodycare brands stop making people think that they should be the same as what they present in the ads, but she want people to realize that beauty is about how someone taking care of she or his body and skin. She mentions that from her personal observation, skincare and bodycare products and ads nowadays portray the particular beauty standards form East Asian that is not suitable with Indonesian people.

Even though the participants have their own opinions that are different from one another, there is a red thread between their answers. Some of them are satisfied enough with what Indonesian skincare and bodycare advertisements show, but all of them are agree that the concept of diversity must be increased. Therefore, there is no one left behind when talking about beauty. They are agree that how skincare and bodycare advertisements presents beauty can change society perspective about it. So, the beauty brands holds important role in shaping how people define beauty.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, participants collectively pushed for skin and body care advertising to go beyond narrow beauty standards, emphasizing the importance of diversity in representation. Brands that successfully navigate these changes, recognizing and celebrating diverse beauty expressions, will likely have deeper resonance with an audience increasingly aware of the need for inclusivity in the beauty industry. However, advertisements alone cannot have detrimental consequences unless women engage in comparisons of themselves with the unrealistic ideals portrayed in the advertisements. (Digitalcommons@uno & Greenfield, 2018). So, society role is more important because it is the need of society itself.

To wrap it all up, participants agree that Indonesian skincare and bodycare brands should increasing the diversity in their advertising and content, like catalog, etc. It is also important to provide diverse shades and colors of products, also diverse type of skincare and bodycare to serve the needs of people that has different skin and bodytype too. Individual uniqueness must be celebrated.

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