

Panopticon Effect on Skin Color Representation in Scarlett Whitening Advertising

Anggito Priyambodo,¹ Annisa Rahmawati,² Raden Ali Reza G. K.,³ Dini Safitri⁴
Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indoensia^{1,2,3,4}

***Abstract:** The existence of panopticism that occurs in the social structure regarding differences in skin color in advertisements that are broadcast massively through the mass media, especially for beauty products, is the main reason for researchers in conducting research. In addition, this paper aims to identify the truth game that manufacturers do in introducing their products through the representation of skin color. The research method used in this phenomenon is a qualitative method with the semiotic analysis method of Roland Barthes so that the meaning of Denotation, Connotation, and Myth in Scarlett Whitening's product advertisements can be known and is associated with a conceptual framework based on the scientific theory of Michel Foucault's panopticism discipline. Based on the results of a qualitative study, there was no panopticon effect found in beauty product advertisements on the Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube platforms. This is evidenced by endorsers who are not limited to a particular gender or race.*

***Keywords:** Panopticism, Advertisement, Racism.*

Introduction

The development of today's technology is increasingly rapid so that the dissemination of information becomes an easy thing and is supported by various parties that accommodate the media. Advertising is one of the persuasive media to promote a product in the field of services and goods to the wider community massively. Advertising is a persuasive communication medium designed in such a way as to generate a response and help achieve marketing objectives or objectives. Advertising plays a major role in determining trends, trends and fashions, public awareness and the construction of modern thinking (Reyhan et al., 2021, p. 74).

Advertising itself is a medium with social effects that can create images and meanings for certain things that are adjusted based on the understanding of everyone. Its ability to construct image and meaning is the greatest strength of television media. Therefore, advertising can lead the audience to what they want. The strength of the image, the meaning, and the breadth of the accessible area. Advertisements that predominantly contain a product marketing agenda are also designed in the same way (building image and meaning). Advertising often builds an image of itself as something that can eliminate the problems of the audience so clearly and effortlessly. The effects of the existence of advertisements have unwittingly affected various aspects of people's lives (Ishanan, 2020, p. 18).

In television commercials, it is often found that several advertisements are loaded with latent meanings on the side of advertising messages to certain groups or to the ruling or dominant class. The class in question can be related in a political context; state versus civil society, gender aspect; such as siding with male domination over women, race; such as favoring the white race over the black race and so on (Umarela et al., 2020, p. 66).

In this study, the author focuses on the dominant group with white skin color characteristics that outperform other skin colors, especially the "dark" color. The number of beauty products that exist, makes manufacturers compete and think to attract people's interest through ways that they should not. There is an issue of racism against certain skin colors in beauty product advertisements that promote a bright skin color, namely 'White'. With the guarantee that dark skin tones can be changed to bright skin colors within a few days of use. Not only that, the model in advertising is also indicated to have a race with a 'dark' skin color. In this regard, the author finds advertisements for one of the local beauty products that are oriented to Korean beauty standards, namely Scarlett Whitening. This is shown by the collaboration product Scarlett Whitening x Song Joong Ki. Scarlett takes well-known Korean artists as advertising models for their products. Especially now that Scarlett is partnering with the K-POP music group Twice as their brand ambassador. By choosing an artist or model from Korea, the public will think that the ideal skin is like the skin that Korean stars have in the Scarlett advertisement.

Literature Review

The Scarlett x Twice advertisement shows the white-skinned members of the band using Scarlett's products on their skin, as if they have the skin because of the use of Scarlett's products. It gives the mind to consumers that someone who has ideal and good skin is white like Korean stars. Though the condition of the skin color of each person in each country is different. Skin lightening or whitening products in Indonesia do not fully represent the diverse needs of the Indonesian people and consist of various races and ethnicities. Most Indonesian people have tan-skinned physical characteristics that are not represented in various kinds of skin whitening products.

This is related to the previous explanation regarding the advertisement for the beauty product Scarlett Whitening which indirectly indicates the appropriate standardization of skin color based on the social construction of beauty in South Korea which is applied in Indonesia. Researchers found a correlation between the "signs" given implicitly through advertising posters and in the form of audio visuals in every campaign by Scarlett Whitening when introducing their products to a wide audience. That way, Semiotics analysis is used to determine the meaning of Denotation, Connotation, and Myth contained in the Scarlett Whitening beauty product advertisement.

The basic concept that unites this semiotic tradition is "sign" which is defined as a stimulus designating something other than itself (a stimulus that refers to something that is not itself). Messages have a very important position in communication. According to John Powers, messages have three elements, namely 1. Signs and symbols, 2. Language and, 3. Discourse (discourse). According to him, signs are the basis of all communication. The sign points to or refers to something that is not itself, while the meaning is the relationship between the object of the idea and the sign.

These two concepts are integrated in various communication theories, especially communication theory which pays attention to symbols, language, and non-verbal behavior. This group of theories explains how signs are related to meaning and how signs are organized. The study of this sign is called semiotics. Semiotics as a model of social science, understands the world as a system of relationships that have a basic unit with "signs". Therefore, in semiotics, Umberto Eco calls the sign a "lie" and in the sign there is something hidden behind it and is not the sign itself. When understanding media texts, we are often faced with signs like this, which need to be interpreted and studied what is behind the signs. Modern semiotics does have two fathers, namely Charles Sanders Peirce (1857-1914) and Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913). In Saussure's view, the meaning of a sign is strongly influenced by other signs. Semiotics seeks to explore the nature of the sign system that goes beyond the rules of grammar

and syntax and which regulates the meaning of the text which is complex, hidden and dependent on culture. This then raises attention to the connotative meaning and denotative meaning of the connection and impression generated and expressed through the use and combination of signs. The implementation of this is done by acknowledging the existence of existing myths and a collection of valuable ideas that originate from culture and are conveyed through communication (Muzakkir, 2019, p. 36).

Panopticon is a concept that was first put forward by a British philosopher named Jeremy Bentham in 1843. The panopticon uses a simple architectural design that allows one guard to oversee the entire detention room from one point. This allows detainees not to know whether they are being watched or not (Ramadhan, 2017, p. 78). The concept of the panopticon was later redeveloped by a French philosopher named Michel Foucault in 1975 in his book entitled "Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison". Foucault explains that the concept of the panopticon previously proposed by Bentham is an interpretation of the element of power that is applied to the supervisory function. Locked inmates will always feel like they are being watched when they look up at the tower in the middle of the prison complex. In the explanation he explained, Foucault slightly quoted an important point that had been stated by Bentham which said that power must be visible but cannot be proven (unverifiable). The tower here is likened to a symbol of power as an interpretation of "visible", while unverifiable is defined as a condition where prisoners will never know exactly when they are being watched (Foucault, 1975, pp. 36–108).

According to Foucault, power is no longer through physical punishment by touching the body viciously, but power spreads in the form of different interpretations in the "body of society" with "discipline mechanisms" through a network of power. Based on this network, the power of attorney can carry out recording, supervision, monitoring, treatment, discipline, training, and subjugation in a covert and invisible way. (Ilmiah, 2017, p. 9). The phenomenon of standardization of beauty becomes a social issue that often occurs and continues to be embedded in people's lives. Thus, justification presents itself through the subconscious which indicates that white skin is better than other skin colors without realizing it. This happens because the advertising effect is massively broadcast. Based on this phenomenon, it is related to the concept of Michel Foucault's disciplinary theory, namely Panopticism. justification for social structure in people's lives.

In this study using the concept of previous research related to the topic raised by the author. Study (Saputra, 2021, p. 72) discusses the visual power of photography that can create a view of cultural looks and traditions during the covid 19 pandemic, which is unconsciously capable of disciplining a wide audience only from visualization. This relates to the visualization of an advertisement that can provide a panopticon effect on the audience. The research also has a related theory, namely the panopticon theory proposed by Michel Foucault. The panopticon in the study describes the current situation, where there is a COVID-19 pandemic. There is a visible power because of the effect of the visual itself, which affects the audience's consciousness so that they are disciplined with something that the audience believes through a visual that is displayed. Based on this research, the writer was inspired to see how much visual power the Scarlett Whitening ad has with the theory used, namely the panopticon theory from Michel Foucault to see how big the effect is.

Study (Umarela et al., 2020) which discusses the representation of white supremacist ideology in television advertisements by Bukalapak version of Confession: At first it was trial and error, so it was profitable to continue to use the figure of Blackface as a comedy element. The ad begins with the faint voice and silhouette of a man in a dark room like an investigative interview by a television show where the identity of the character is disguised but when the lights are turned on the silhouette is a Blackface figure (wearing an entirely black costume or make-up). In the results of the discussion, it was found that the use of black color is still used

as an ingredient in jokes, thus indicating that the black race is an Inferior race. In the advertisement, the black element implied by using the figure of Blackface is not only a comedy through the concept of makeup but can also be considered as a racist practice that can offend black people. This practice is one proof of the existence of an ideology about white supremacy which assumes that the white race is superior to other races. The equation in this study the author uses a qualitative method with descriptive analysis through Roland Barthes' Semiotics.

Based on the author's explanation regarding matters related to advertising, the author is interested in knowing the panopticism that occurs in the audience towards the representation of skin color in the Scarlett Whitening advertisement and the implied semiotic meaning. The author also has a question in this study, namely how is the effect of the panopticon in the Scarlett Whitening advertisement and its relation to the semiotic elements that are shown to the public on the representation of skin color?

Methodology

The type of research that will be used in this research is descriptive qualitative research. This type of qualitative research was chosen to analyze the effect of panopticons in the representation of skin color in Scarlett Whitening advertisements. According to Kountur (2009, pp. 60-61), Descriptive research is a type of research that provides a clear picture of the object under study without special treatment of the object under study.

The research method that will be used to support this research is the semiotic analysis method of Roland Barthes to find out and compare the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth in the advertisement of the Scarlett Whitening product to the representation of skin color which is reinforced by the concept of panopticism theory according to Michel Foucault. (Anggraini et al., 2018, p. 68).

The data collection method that will be used in this research is by means of a comparative study of various social media platforms that contain Scarlett Whitening advertisements on several endorsement accounts of Scarlett Whitening products. This is intended to prove the hypothesis that the panopticon effect in the Scarlett Whitening advertisement is a myth.

Findings & Discussion

The study was conducted for 2 months using a comparative study of advertisements for Scarlett Whitening beauty products from several social media. Some of the social media platforms studied are Instagram, Youtube, and Tik Tok. The reason for choosing these platforms is because Scarlett Whitening has intensively endorsed on the Tik Tok and Instagram platforms and has collaborated with YouTubers on the Youtube platform. Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis will be carried out on each of the social media platforms studied.

1. The meaning of denotation and connotation in the Scarlett Whitening ad on the Instagram platform

On the Instagram platform, a study was conducted on two accounts that endorsed the Scarlett Whitening product. The accounts that will be studied are @vadyanovelialaa (picture 1, left) and @kekeshabila (picture 1, right). The comparison of the two accounts will be shown in Figure 1.



Source: Instagram @vadyanovelialaaa (left) and @kekeshabila (right)

Figure 1. Comparison of two endorsers from the Instagram platform

**Table 1
 Comparison of Analysis of the Two Endorser Accounts on the Instagram Platform**

Number		@vadyanovelialaaa	@kekeshabila
1	<i>Sign</i>	One Person, Tan Skin	One Person, White Skin
2	<i>Signifier</i>	There is one person with brown skin	There is one person with white skin
3	<i>Signified</i>	There is a woman with tan skin, wearing a green and gray plaid long-sleeved shirt. The woman is promoting beauty products from Scarlett Whitening	There is one woman with white skin wearing a gray hijab. The woman is promoting beauty products from Scarlett Whitening

Data source: researcher documentation

Denotation Meaning

In the picture, it can be explained that there is a woman with brown skin (left) and another woman with white skin (right) who is doing an endorsement of the Scarlett Whitening product using the Instagram platform.

Connotation Meaning

Based on Figure 1 above, the connotation meaning that Scarlett Whitening wants to highlight is that its products are not only intended for white people, but also for people with other skin colors.

2. The meaning of denotation and connotation in the Scarlett Whitening advertisement on the TikTok platform

On the TikTok platform, a study was conducted on two accounts that endorsed the Scarlett Whitening product. The accounts that will be studied are @Scarlett Whitening Official (picture 2, left) who uses Korean artists for their endorsements and @ba contest (picture 2, right). The comparison of the two accounts will be shown in Figure 2.



Source: TikTok @Scarlett Whitening Official (left) and @ba contest (right)

Figure 2. Comparison of two endorsers from the TikTok platform

Table 2
 Comparison of Analysis of Two Endorser Accounts on the TikTok Platform

Number		@Scarlett Whitening Official	@ba lomba
1	<i>Sign</i>	One Person, White Skin	Four People, tan skin
2	<i>Signifier</i>	There is one person with white skin who is Korean	There are four people with brown skin
3	<i>Signified</i>	There is a white man with Korean nationality wearing a white shirt. The man is currently a brand ambassador for beauty products from Scarlett Whitening	There were four brown-skinned men wearing T-shirts of varying colors. The four men are promoting beauty products from

Scarlett Whitening using the competition method (games).

Sumber data: dokumentasi peneliti

Denotation Meaning

In the picture, it can be explained that there is a Korean man with white skin (left) and four men with brown skin (right) who are doing endorsements in different ways for scarlett whitening products using the TikTok platform.

Conotation Meaning

Based on Figure 2 above, the connotation meaning that Scarlett Whitening wants to highlight is that endorsers are used to promote products that are not limited by ethnicity or certain skin color. In addition, there are many ways to promote products, on the @scarlett whitening official account, the promotion method used is to use a combination of memes and Korean artists. Meanwhile, on the @ba race account, the competition promotion method (games) is used so that the promotion is more attractive. This is evidenced by the number of likes on both accounts, the @scarlett whitening official account which uses the artist as its endorser, only gets 262 likes, while the @ba contest account gets more than 124,500 likes.

3. The meaning of denotation and connotation in the Scarlett Whitening advertisement on the YouTube platform

On the YouTube platform, a study was conducted on two accounts that endorsed the Scarlett Whitening product. The accounts that will be studied are Adhe Tora TV (picture 3, left) and Erveva ERV (picture 3, right). The comparison of the two accounts will be shown in Figure 3.



Source: YouTube Adhe Tora TV (left) and Erveva ERV (right)

Figure 3. Comparison of two endorsers from the YouTube platform

Table 3
Comparison of Analysis of the Two Endorser Accounts on the YouTube Platform

Number		Adhe Tora TV	Erreva ERV
1	<i>Sign</i>	One Person, Tanned Skin	One Person, White Skin
2	<i>Signifier</i>	There is one person with brown skin	There is one person with white skin
3	<i>Signified</i>	There is one man who has brown skin color who is doing promotion/education about Scarlett Whitening product on the YouTube platform	There is one woman who has white skin who is doing promotions / educating about Scarlett Whitening products on the Youtube platform

Data source: researcher documentation

Denotation Meaning

In the picture, it can be explained that there is a man with brown skin (left) and a woman with white skin (right) who are doing an endorsement of the Scarlett Whitening product using the YouTube platform.

Conotation Meaning

Based on Figure 3 above, the connotation meaning that Scarlett Whitening wants to highlight is that endorsers are used to promote products that are not limited by gender or certain skin color. The methods used by endorsers on the YouTube platform are also relatively varied, ranging from reviews or education about the Scarlett Whitening products offered.

Judging from the three social media platforms above, it was not found that Scarlett Whitening targets a specific target market in the form of skin color, gender, or ethnicity. Therefore, based on the studies that have been conducted, no panopticon effect was found in the advertisement for the beauty product Scarlett Whitening

Conclusion, this study examines the effect of panopticon in the representation of skin color in advertisements for Scarlett Whitening beauty products. Based on the results of a comparative study, no panopticon effect was found due to Scarlett Whitening. As for some explanations of the meaning of denotation, the meaning of connotation, as well as myths about Scarlett Whitening beauty products are as follows.

The meaning of denotation and connotation in this study is direct which states that the products or types of promotions from Scarlett Whitening are not limited to a gender, race, skin color, promotion method, and promotion platform. This is reinforced from the second study that white Korean endorsers do not get more likes than brown-skinned endorsers. Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that the myth about the effect of panopticon on the representation of skin color in scarlett whitening products is not true. However, it is necessary to do further research or study on the endorsement distribution algorithm carried out by Scarlett Whitening because the researcher found that when inputting "scarlett whitening" on the

Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube platforms, the endorsers that appear to be mostly white are endorsers.

References

- Anggraini, Y., Antoni, C., Prasetyaningsih, S. (2018). Analisis dan Implementasi Motion Grafis Iklan Layanan Masyarakat (ILM) dengan Metode Semiotika Peirce. *Ekspresi & Persepsi Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi UPNVJ*, 1(1), 64–82. ([Journal Article](#))
- Foucault, M. (1975). *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison*. Paris: Gallimard. (**Book**)
- Ilmiah, D. N. (2017). “Panopticon” Di Liponsos Keputih Surabaya (Studi tentang Praktik Dominasi dalam Relasi Kuasa antara Penghuni dengan (Studi tentang Praktik Dominasi dalam Relasi Kuasa antara Penghuni dengan Pihak Liponsos Keputih Surabaya dan Resistensi Penghuni). *Jurnal Sosiologi UNAIR*, 7(2)1–20. ([Journal Article](#))
- Ishanan. (2020). Iklan Kecantikan dan Diskriminasi terhadap Kulit Hitam (Studi Iklan Rexona Women Whitening). *Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam*, 4(1), 17–26. ([Journal Article](#))
- Kountur, R. (2009). Metode Penelitian. Edisi Revisi. Jakarta: Buana Printing. (**Book**)
- Mahsun. (2007). Metode Penelitian Bahasa: Tahapan Strategi, Metode, dan Tekniknya. Edisi Revisi 3. Jakarta: PT Raja Grafindo Persada. (**Book**)
- Muzakkir, F. (2019). *Makna Kecantikan dalam Iklan (Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes Iklan Citra Pearl White UV Hand and Body Lotion)*. Tesis. <http://repositori.usu.ac.id/handle/123456789/33004> ([Online Journal Article](#))
- Ramadhan, M. (2017). Panopticonism dalam Media Massa (Analisis Wacana Berita Kasus Pemerkosaan Yn yang Ditayangkan pada Program AIMAN Kompas TV Mei 2016). *Indonesian Journal of Criminology*, 13(2), 69-93. ([Journal Article](#))
- Reyhan, M. N., Almubasysyir, R., & Febriansyah, M. (2021). Representasi Rasisme Warna Kulit dalam Iklan Lotion Dove. *Jurnal Audiens*, 2(1), 71-79. <https://doi.org/10.18196/jas.v2i1.8830> ([Online Journal Article](#))
- Saputra, S. J. (2021). Kekuatan Visual dalam Mendisiplinkan Khalayak di Masa Pandemi Covid-19. *Jurnal Kajian Jurnalisme*, 4(2), 72-81. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jkj.v4i2.27811> ([Online Journal Article](#))
- Umarela, F. H., Dwityas, N. A., & Zahra, D. R. (2020). Representasi ideologi supremasi kulit putih dalam iklan televisi. *ProTVF*, 4(1), 64-73. <https://doi.org/10.24198/ptvf.v4i1.25172> ([Online Journal Article](#))

About the Author:

Chief Researcher
Anggito Priyambodo <i>Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia</i>
Researcher Member
Annisa Rahmawati <i>Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia</i>
Raden Ali Reza G. K <i>Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia</i>
Dini Safitri <i>Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia</i>