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THE ESSENTIALS OF LOOKS: BEAUTY STANDARD IN LOCAL BRAND SKINCARE ADVERTISEMENT

Kusnul Khotimah¹, Najla Qothrunnada², Siti Fera Nur Lutfiana³, Achmad Nabil
Suryaputra⁴

UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta^{1,2,3,4}

kusnulk573@gmail.com¹, najlaqth73@gmail.com²,
feraferaa3@gmail.com³, achmad.nabil1811@gmail.com⁴

Abstract

This research discusses the beauty standards promoted by local Indonesian skincare brands, such as Wardah, Emina, and Kahf, in their advertisements. Beauty standards are often influenced by culture and media, reflecting social preferences for attributes such as fair skin and a natural look. Through a qualitative approach, this study analyzes the visual and textual elements of advertisements to explore how these brands adapt their marketing strategies to the needs of the domestic market. The results show that local brands not only reflect Indonesian cultural values but also begin to challenge the dominance of Western beauty standards. Their advertisements highlight a natural and healthy look, and offer products that are multifunctional and inclusive of various skin tones. In addition, they promote halal and safe formulations, which are relevant to local consumer preferences. The findings illustrate the important role of local brands in shaping a more inclusive perception of beauty, while strengthening consumer loyalty to domestic products. This study contributes to the literature on beauty, media, and consumer behaviour, with a focus on the Indonesian context.

Keywords: Beauty standards, Local skincare advertisement, Wardah, Emina, Kahf, Marketing strategy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Beauty standards are societal guidelines that define what is considered attractive, and these standards vary widely across different cultures and eras. Influenced by art, media, and fashion, these standards include physical traits like body shape, skin tone, facial features, and hair type. For example, in many Western cultures, a slim figure, clear skin, and symmetrical features are often seen as ideal, while other cultures may value fuller bodies, darker skin, or distinct facial traits. Globalization also shaped the standards and body ideals through the impact of tourism (Frederick et al, 2015). Media often reinforces these ideals, affecting self-esteem and social interactions, demonstrating how beauty is diverse and constantly changing. One of the media that builds the beauty standard is advertisement, especially skincare advertisement.

Skincare, one of things people ought to spend their money on, is arguably taking a good shape in the society, where it is not just about caring for their own skin anymore, but also it becomes a pioneer that sets the standard of how women

should be looked like, how women should be doing with their skins, how their skins should be taken care of, and how people will look at them. Skincare is an equipment they use when going out just to buy something outside. This industry grows rapidly, with various brands and types going head-to-head, toe-to-toe, and creating a rivalry in order to win customer's needs. They unconsciously set a certain standard that sometimes begins in society. Society plays a vital role shaping these kinds of standards, driving away the freedom of women to take care of their skins. It is true that women can just not pay the society attention, but women also live in the society, the one who grabs the standards. Here, we can refer to society in online media, the place where all of this mainly happened. Skincare brands also maximize the utility of social media to promote their "identity" that soon people will take attendance to assess it. However, few societies or individuals happen to believe that their values are binding because they happen to be endorsed within their culture (Donnelly, 2007). How an individual perceives and values

themselves is depending on the culture they believe. In Asian countries (Cardoza, 2009), including Indonesia, skin-whitening products are the highest selling products because of their white-skin pursuit (Saraswati, 2012).

Currently, local skincare products are experiencing an increase in popularity. This is a positive development as it can reduce the use of foreign products. One company that produces local skincare products is PT. Paragon Technology and Innovation (PT. PTI). This local company, operating in the beauty industry, has several brands under its umbrella. These local skincare brands include Wardah, Emina, and Kahf. With different target markets, these brands employ different marketing techniques and brand portrayals. If consumers' expectations for a product are high, this will result in an increase in demand for the product (Yulia et al, 2022). By aligning their beauty standards with the needs and desires of the local market, these brands are able to attract consumer interest and build loyalty towards local products.

The existing literature has examined the influence of media and cultural factors on beauty standards, as well as the impact of globalization on evolving body ideals (Dimitrov & Kroumpouzos, 2023). Studies have also explored the role of advertisements, especially for skincare products, in shaping societal perceptions of beauty (Spyropoulou et al., 2020; De Lenne et al., 2021). While prior research has explored beauty standards and the skincare industry, there is limited understanding of how local skincare brands in Indonesia navigate and potentially challenge these norms through their marketing and brand positioning strategies. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how local Indonesian skincare brands, such as Wardah, Emina, and Kahf, are aligning their beauty standards and brand portrayals with the needs and desires of the local market in order to attract consumer interest and loyalty of domestic products. What beauty standards are applied by local skincare brands Wardah, Emina, and Kahf in their advertisements. How are the beauty standards applied by local skincare brands Wardah, Emina, and Kahf in

their advertisements?

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Beauty standards, which define societal perceptions of physical attractiveness, are heavily influenced by cultural, historical, and media driven factors (Laham, 2020). Across different societies, the ideals of beauty can vary significantly, encompassing attributes like body shape, skin tone, facial features, and hair type. In many Western cultures, for instance, a slender figure, clear complexion, and symmetrical facial features are often lauded as the epitome of beauty. Conversely, other cultural contexts may value fuller figures, darker skin tones, or distinct ethnic characteristics. The rapid pace of globalization has further shaped the evolution of beauty standards, as the exchange of cultural influences through tourism and media has homogenized certain ideals while also introducing new, diverse perspectives (Frederick et al., 2015). One of the primary avenues through which beauty standards are propagated and reinforced is advertising, particularly in the skincare industry.

Skincare products have become an integral part of many individuals' grooming routines, serving not only as

tools for personal care but also as symbols of social status and self-worth (Khan, 2023). Skincare brands, in their pursuit of capturing market share, often employ marketing strategies that align with or even reinforce societal perceptions of beauty. This can result in the perpetuation of narrow beauty standards that can have detrimental impacts on individuals' self-esteem and social interactions. In Asian countries, including Indonesia, the preference for fair, blemish-free skin has been a longstanding cultural phenomenon, driven by historical and socioeconomic factors (Miller, 2023). The skin-whitening product market, which often promises to enhance one's complexion and social desirability, has thrived in these contexts, reflecting the deep-rooted societal obsession with light skin tones.

However, in recent years, a shift has been observed, with the growing popularity of local skincare brands in Indonesia that challenge the dominance of foreign, often Western centric, beauty ideals (Fatmawati & Permatasari, 2022). These domestic brands, such as Wardah, Emina, and Kahf, have sought to align their marketing and brand positioning with the unique needs and preferences of the local market, aiming to build consumer loyalty and reduce the

reliance on imported products. The strategies employed by these local skincare brands in navigating and potentially reshaping beauty standards are of particular interest. In understanding how they portray their products and brand identities; the researcher can gain insights into the evolving landscape of beauty ideals in Indonesia and the role of domestic brands in this process.

Previous studies have explored the impact of advertisements on the perpetuation of beauty standards, highlighting the ways in which media representations can shape societal perceptions and individual self-image (Amalia et al., 2023; Rezai, 2020). However, the existing literature has primarily focused on the influence of global, often Western-dominated, skincare brands, leaving a gap in the understanding of how local brands in Indonesia are addressing and potentially challenging these norms. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the beauty standards and brand portrayals employed by local Indonesian skincare brands, such as Wardah, Emina, and Kahf, in their advertisements. In analyzing the visual and textual elements of these advertisements, the researchers can explore how these brands are aligning their marketing strategies with the

needs and desires of the local market, and the extent to which they are either reinforcing or disrupting prevalent beauty ideals.

Thus, the findings of this study will contribute to the growing body of literature on the intersection of beauty, media, and consumer behaviour, with a particular focus on the Indonesian context. Additionally, the insights gained can inform the marketing and branding strategies of local skincare companies, enabling them to navigate the evolving landscape of beauty standards and build stronger connections with their target consumers. Therefore, the examination of local Indonesian skincare brands' approach to beauty standards and brand positioning offers a valuable opportunity to understand the dynamic interplay between cultural identity, consumer preferences, and the shaping of societal perceptions of physical attractiveness.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to investigate the portrayal of beauty standards in the advertisements of local Indonesian skincare brands. The

primary data for this study will be collected through a documentary technique, which involves the systematic analysis of relevant documents and visual materials (Borish et al., 2023). Specifically, the researchers gather and analyze the advertisements of three prominent local Indonesian skincare brands: Wardah, Emina, and Kahf. The advertisements selected for analysis includes digital media, such as television commercials, social media posts, and online banner ads. The researcher strives to obtain a diverse and representative sample of advertisements from the past three years (2020-2023), to capture the recent trends and evolution of beauty standards in the market.

The data analysis is conducted by using the Spradley model of ethnographic analysis (Spradley in Mahvar et al., 2020). This approach involves a systematic process of domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, and componential analysis to identify and interpret the underlying patterns and meanings within the advertisements. The researchers begin by identifying the domains, or the broad categories, of beauty-related

themes and concepts present in the advertisements, such as physical attributes, grooming practices, and emotional/social associations.

Next, the researchers will create taxonomies to understand the hierarchical relationships and distinctions within each domain, examining how specific elements of beauty are organized and presented in the advertisements. Finally, the researchers will conduct a componential analysis to identify the contrasts and similarities between the various elements of beauty portrayed in the advertisements, as well as the underlying cultural and social meanings they convey.

IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the advertisements from the three local Indonesian skincare brands is used in this study, which are Wardah, Emina, and Kahf, revealed several key findings regarding the portrayal of beauty standards.

1. Beauty standards applied by local skincare brands.

The domain analysis of the

advertisements showed that the local skincare brands tended to emphasize a range of beauty ideals that were grounded in both traditional Indonesian cultural values and contemporary global influences. The advertisements highlighted physical attributes such as fair, glowing skin; defined facial features; and youthful, radiant appearances. These standards aligned with the longstanding cultural preference for lighter skin tones in Indonesia, which is often associated with higher social status and beauty (Saraswati, 2013).



Figure 1. The Wardah Everyday Cheek & Lip Tint Advertisement

Based on the advertisement, Wardah's definition of beauty standards seems to be centered around the concept of a "fresh look" and a natural, healthy-looking appearance. The key points from the advertisement highlight Wardah's focus on effortless, all-day freshness and radiance, even in the midst of a busy lifestyle. The advertisement emphasizes the need

for quick touch-ups to maintain a polished, "on" look throughout the day. The Wardah Everyday Cheek & Lip Tint product is positioned as a multi-functional solution that can provide both lip and cheek color, creating a "healthy" and "flushed" look without the need for frequent touch-ups. Thus, Wardah's definition of beauty standards seems to emphasize a natural, radiant, and effortless look that can be achieved through the use of their multi-functional makeup product. The emphasis is on enhancing one's natural features and creating a healthy, refreshed appearance, rather than transforming the look drastically. The advertisement also offers three different color variants that are suitable for a range of skin tones, indicating an inclusive approach to catering to diverse beauty preferences.

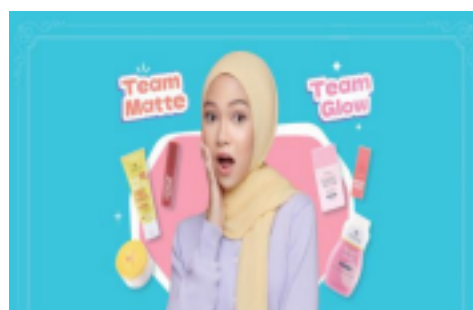


Figure 2. Emina's Team Mate or Team Glowing Advertisement

Based on the Emina

advertisement, the brand's definition of beauty standards seems to revolve around the concept of a fresh, matte, and glowing makeup look. The key points highlighted in the advertisement suggest that Emina's beauty standard emphasizes a "fresh" and "poppin'" appearance, which can be achieved through their Emina Poppin' Matte lip cream. The ad emphasizes the long-lasting, transfer-proof, and mask-proof properties of the product, making it suitable for all-day wear, especially during the Eid al-Fitr celebrations. The focus is on a comfortable, non sticky, and lightweight matte finish that enhances the natural appearance of the lips.

In addition, the advertisement introduces the Emina Cheek Lit Blush, which is positioned as a product that can provide a natural-looking, long-lasting flush of color to the cheeks, helping to achieve a "glowing" and "healthy" complexion. The Emina Daily Matte Series is also highlighted, offering a natural matte finish and coverage to address skin concerns like dark

spots and acne scars, catering to those with normal to oily skin types. The advertisement also suggests that Emina's definition of beauty standards includes a "glowing" look, which can be achieved through the use of their Emina Bare With Me Mineral Foundation, Emina Bright Stuff Loose Powder, Emina Cheek Lit Highlighter, and Emina Glossy Stain. These products are positioned as solutions to create a radiant, luminous, and healthy-looking complexion.



Figure 3. Kahf's #JalanYangKupilih Advertisement

Based on the advertisement, it seems that Kahf's definition of beauty standard or beauty is centered around a few key points. Firstly, Kahf was created to address the specific needs and expectations of men when it comes to skin care products. The advertisement states that the growing demand from men for suitable skin care options that meet their requirements is what prompted the development of this

brand. Secondly, Kahf positions itself as a brand that provides halal, natural, and high-quality products. It is described as a “halal, natural and *tayyib* (pure)” personal care brand for men, with formulations that have undergone clinical testing by dermatologists to ensure safety and efficacy.

Further, Kahf's focus is on maintaining skin health and balance. The key technology used in the products is called “HydroBalance”, which aims to preserve the skin's natural moisture levels. The four product philosophies – Purely Cleanse, Balanced Hydrated, Nourish and Care, and Exquisite Natural Scent – all emphasize providing nourishment and keeping the skin in a healthy, balanced state. Finally, Kahf appears to offer a modern, relevant, and convenient product range for men's grooming needs. It is described as a “breakthrough” brand that is “relevant to current needs” and features a “modern design”. The product portfolio covers categories such as face wash, hair and body wash, perfume, beard care, and deodorant, catering to men's grooming requirements.

2. How beauty standards are applied in skincare brand advertisements.

Based on the analysis of the beauty standards portrayed in the advertisements from the local Indonesian skincare brands Wardah, Emina, and Kahf, several key similarities for beauty in Indonesia can be observed:

- a. Fair, Glowing Skin: Across the brands, there is a consistent emphasis on fair, radiant, and glowing skin tones. This aligns with the longstanding cultural preference for lighter complexions in Indonesia, which are often associated with higher social status and beauty ideals.
- b. Natural, Healthy Appearance: The brands tend to highlight beauty standards that focus on a natural, healthy-looking appearance. The advertisements promote products that enhance natural features and create a fresh, radiant look, rather than heavily transformative makeup.
- c. Youthful Vibrancy: The advertisements showcase models with youthful,

vibrant, and smooth complexions, suggesting that youthfulness is a desirable beauty trait in the Indonesian context.

Meanwhile, there are also demands for standardized beauty standards in Indonesia which are reflected from these findings:

a. Versatile, Multifunctional

Products: There is a demand for beauty products that can serve multiple purposes, such as Wardah's Everyday Cheek & Lip Tint and Emina's Poppin' Matte lip cream that can be used on both lips and cheeks. Consumers seek convenient, all-in-one solutions to maintain their look throughout the day.

b. Inclusive Shade Ranges:

The advertisements indicate a growing demand for beauty products that cater to a diverse range of skin tones, as exemplified by Wardah's offering of multiple color variants.

c. Holistic Grooming Needs:

The Kahf brand's focus on providing a comprehensive

range of personal care products for men, including skin care, hair care, and fragrance, suggests a demand for brands that address the holistic grooming needs of Indonesian consumers.

d. Natural, Halal, and Safe Formulations: Consumers in Indonesia are increasingly seeking beauty and care products that are formulated with natural, halal, and clinically tested ingredients, as evidenced by emphasis on "halal, natural and *tayyib* (pure)" formulations.

The social construction of beauty is a central concept in the sociological understanding of physical attractiveness. It posits that our notions of what is considered "beautiful" are not innate or universal, but rather the product of a complex interplay of cultural, historical, and social factors (Berger & Luckmann, 1966 in Döbler, 2020). This theory challenges the idea of a fixed, objective conception of beauty, and instead highlights how perceptions of attractiveness are shaped by the particular contexts and environments in which individuals and groups are situated.

At the core of the social

construction of beauty is the notion that individuals and groups within a society collectively agree upon and reinforce certain ideals of physical attractiveness. These standards are then perpetuated and internalized through various social institutions, such as media, education, and fashion, which serve as the primary agents of socialization (Foucault in Portschy, 2020). The concept of “embodied capital” is particularly relevant in understanding this process, as it posits that individuals accrue social and cultural capital based on their physical attributes, which are then valued or devalued within a given societal context (Bourdieu in Döbler, 2020). Those who embody the dominant beauty ideals are often afforded higher social status and privileges, while those who deviate from these norms may face marginalization.

One of the key drivers in the social construction of beauty is the role of mass media, particularly advertisements. As Bordo suggests, advertisements wield significant power in constructing and disseminating societal notions of physical attractiveness (in Karmakar, 2020). Through the strategic use of visual and textual elements, ads can promote a narrow range of beauty norms that are then internalized by individuals and

groups. The concept of the "male gaze," as described by Mulvey, further illuminates how these beauty standards are often imbued with gendered power dynamics, where women are portrayed as objects of male desire (in Piechucka, 2020).

The theory of symbolic interactionism, as articulated by Goffman, provides a framework for understanding how the beauty ideals propagated through advertisements can shape individuals' self-perceptions and social interactions (in Husin et al., 2021). According to this perspective, individuals construct their sense of self and identity through their interactions with others and the symbols and meanings they encounter in their social environment. The beauty standards and ideals communicated through advertisements become part of this broader social landscape, influencing how people perceive themselves and navigate their relationships with others.

In this context, the social construction of beauty can significantly impact individuals' self-esteem, body image, and overall well-being. The narrow and often unattainable beauty ideals promoted by media and advertisements can lead to feelings of inadequacy, low self-worth, and mental health issues, such as eating disorders

(Bordo in Karmakar, 2020). In addition, the valorization of certain physical attributes and the marginalization of others contribute to broader patterns of social inequality and discrimination. Individuals from marginalized groups face additional barriers and challenges in accessing social and economic opportunities.

Therefore, it is important to know that addressing these issues requires promoting greater diversity and representation in media, educating about the constructed nature of beauty, and fostering a more inclusive, positive sense of self to mitigate these negative impacts.

To address these issues, it is crucial to challenge and deconstruct the dominant beauty norms and the systems that perpetuate them. This involves promoting greater diversity and representation in media and advertising, as well as educating individuals and communities about the socially constructed nature of beauty (Bordo in Karmakar, 2020). Media and educational campaigns can play a significant role in fostering awareness of diverse beauty standards. In addition, empowering individuals to develop a critical understanding of societal influences on their perceptions of beauty and to cultivate a more

positive and inclusive sense of self is vital. Encouraging self-acceptance and challenging unrealistic beauty ideals can help mitigate the negative impacts on self-esteem and mental health, promoting a healthier, more inclusive society.

V. CONCLUSION

This research study aimed to investigate the beauty standards being promoted by local Indonesian skincare brands, such as Wardah, Emina, and Kahf, through their advertising campaigns, as well as how these beauty ideals are being manifested and applied. The findings from the analysis reveal that these local skincare brands have made concerted efforts to align their depiction of beauty standards with the preferences and needs of the domestic Indonesian market, in contrast to the dominant Western beauty standards that are often showcased by global cosmetic brands.

Notably, the local Indonesian brands tend to feature models with distinct ethnic characteristics common to the Indonesian population, such as darker skin tones, unique facial features, and more natural, less heavily edited appearances. This strategic

approach is employed to cultivate the interest and loyalty of local consumers, while also reducing the reliance on imported beauty products. In doing so, these local brands demonstrate their attempts to challenge and redefine the beauty norms that have long been shaped by Western perspectives and standards of attractiveness.

The implications of these findings suggest a promising shift towards greater appreciation and acceptance of the diversity of beauty standards, as the popularity of homegrown Indonesian skincare brands continues to rise in the domestic market. This development has the potential to drive greater empowerment and self acceptance among Indonesian women, as they are exposed to a more inclusive and representative portrayal of beauty. Future research avenues could explore how Indonesian consumers respond to and make meaning of these local brand imaging strategies, as well as the subsequent impact on their personal identity construction and self-concept.

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