

Analysis of Audience Reception to the Concept of Masculinity in the 'Beauty Is Universal' Campaign

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Abstract

Dear Me Beauty, an Indonesian beauty product brand, has become a trending topic of conversation among the public due to the recent of a post. A middle-aged man with Dear Me Beauty's newest product, the Airy Poreless Fluid Foundation. Together with that, Dear Me Beauty has launched a movement entitled 'Beauty Is Universal', an effort to invite the public to appreciate all forms of beauty, including various skin colors and genders, with the aim of breaking stereotypes that beauty products only for women. With the People Power Brand claim, Dear Me Beauty is trying to popularize the concept of genderless makeup, where there is no gender constraint regardless of who and what is used. This research was conducted to analyze how audiences interpret the concept of masculinity in the 'Beauty Is Universal' campaign conducted by Dear Me Beauty on February 1, 2021, on Instagram. This study used a qualitative approach using Stuart Hall's reception analysis method, which categorized the audiences into three positions: Dominant Hegemonic Position, Negotiated Position, and Oppositional Position. Through utilizing in-depth interviews, this study employed a purposive sampling technique to determine which informants fit the research criteria to examine and understand a person's attitudes and views. The results of this study indicate that audiences have the ability to comprehend and interpret media messages into definitions of life choices and self-identity. Instagram, as a medium, provides a representation of the world that is absorbed and internalized by the audience, internalized, then used to determine decisions and attitudes. Audiences are provided the option to choose which media to consume according to preferences. As a single message cannot be interpreted equally by all audiences, their understanding represents their own decoding of the encoding stage performed by the message producer. The study was found that the dominating informants were in a Dominant Hegemonic Position, indicating their agreement with the 'Beauty Is Universal' campaign. These informants believed that Dear Me Beauty successfully conveyed the belief that beauty products were not bound only to a certain gender. The informants' cultural and religious backgrounds influenced their reception of the campaign's content.

Keywords: Masculinity, reception analysis, beauty products

1. Introduction

Social media is a manifestation of technological developments in the information field. It is an internet medium that provides convenience for users to communicate with fellow users and form virtual social relationships (Nasrullah, 2015). One of the most widely used social media platform is Instagram (Semuel & Setiawan, 2018). It is a platform where users can communicate by uploading photos, following, and commenting on other users' account (Hikmareta & Zuliestiana, 2020; Suryawijaya & Rusdi, 2021). In 2021, through the Instagram account of @dearmebeauty, the beauty product brand from Indonesia, namely Dear Me Beauty, popularized the concept of genderless make up, which is a concept where there is no gender attachment regardless of who and what is used by using the men model that they represent in their foundation product release (Ayuningtyas & Satiti, 2020). The post on February 1, 2021, displays the figure of an adult man with brown skin, a mustache, and beard adding to the masculine impression. The choice of this model has become viral among Indonesian people because it is considered unique and out of the box concept besides the reasons for stereotypes about men in the line of beauty which are considered taboo by society (Komarudin, 2021; van Driel & Dumitrica, 2021).

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The man figure in Dear Me Beauty Instagram content as a representation is part of a reality that has changed. Encouraging the stereotype that beauty products only belong to women by presenting concepts beyond the existing beauty standards in society. The gender dichotomy of women and men forms a society divided into only two choices, feminine women and masculine men. Therefore, both women and men are assumed to have a fixed gender identity. Sexual or gender identity emerges through performative acts defined by social discourse (Butler, 1990; Casalo et al., 2020). Continuous action by society has repeatedly drawn attention to gender cultural identity as a marker of female or male identity (Casalo et al., 2020, 2021; Soedarsono et al., 2020). In the phenomenon that occurs in the Dear Me Beauty campaign, people's way of thinking has been shaped by a frame of reference that judges men as inappropriate to take care of themselves and use beauty products. These things will determine how the audience interprets the concept of masculinity in the 'Beauty Is Universal' campaign. Based on this situation, the research entitled "Analysis of Audience Reception to the Concept of Masculinity in the 'Beauty Is Universal' Campaign" used reception analysis to find out how audiences receive messages in the Beauty Is Universal campaign content on Instagram of @dearmebeauty.

Based on the previous background description, the author chose this topic due to the changes and shifts in the concept of masculinity, where now men also take care of themselves represented in beauty product content with man figures circulating on social media. This research explains how the concept of masculinity is interpreted by followers of the @dearmebeauty account. Regarding that situation, the beauty industry is synonymous with women and stereotypes about men using beauty products is something that is still considered taboo.

2. Research Methods and Materials

This research, entitled Analysis of Audience Reception to the Concept of Masculinity on Dear Me Beauty's Instagram, used a qualitative method with a reception analysis approach. Reception analysis is a new perspective on discourse and social aspects of communication theory (Busti, 2019; Sugiyono, 2019). The qualitative method was selected in this study to determine the concept meaning of masculinity to the public. It was used to find and understand perceptions about the concept of masculinity which is represented by men figures on the Dear Me Beauty product Instagram account. The researcher did not conduct a field survey, such as research in common, but the researcher conducted research online through Instagram social media, precisely on the Dear Me Beauty product Instagram account with the username of @dearmebeauty. The research was conducted over a period of three months, from June 2022 to August 2022. This research employed primary data through interviews and secondary data through Instagram social media. The resulting data from the interviews were revealed to be a transcript, then analyzed by considering several things which included the process of decoding the message (Rakhmawati, 2019).

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. General Description of the Research Object

3.1.1. Overview of Beauty Products by Dear Me Beauty

An Indonesian beauty product, namely Dear Me Beauty, is a subsidiary of PT. Garland Cantik Indonesia, a self-care product manufacturing company based located in South Jakarta. As one of the popular names in the domestic beauty industry, Dear Me Beauty has successfully started its career as one of the local pioneers of Lip Cream. Launching its first product in 2016 to this day, Dear Me Beauty consistently presents complete collections both in the realm of cosmetics as well as skin care. Their bestsellers products are *Perfect Lip Series*, *Dear Me Collagen Peptide+*, and also their viral product, *Airy Poreless Fluid Foundation*.

On February 1, 2021, Dear Me Beauty launched their newest product in the midst of a pandemic, namely *Airy Poreless Fluid Foundation*. Foundation which consists of nine color variants that are adjusted to the skin color of the Indonesian people. Besides the reviews regarding qualified product quality, *Airy Poreless Fluid Foundation* also brought a positive movement in its launch, which made Indonesian people fall in love with Dear Me Beauty even more. The hashtag of #BeautyIsUniversal is a movement that has become a hot or trending topic of conversation among the public.

3.2. Beauty Is Universal Campaign

In the program of "Meet the Local Darling", the Beauty Journal and Sociolla platforms with Nikita Wiradiputri explained that Dear Me Beauty initially had a target market between the ages of 16-25. However, along with the

release of the *Airy Poreless Fluid Foundation* product, Dear Me Beauty is doing a rebranding with a simple nude colored packaging that presents an exclusive impression.

3.3. Research Result

The researcher conducted regular interviews with seven informants who volunteered and met the criteria for potential informants. The researcher initially contacted the seven informants via Instagram direct messages for each informant's account to confirm the availability to be involved in the research conducted by the researcher. After confirming the availability of the informants, the researcher made an appointment to have a time to conduct virtual interviews. The researcher considered the domicile distance between the informant and the researcher so that the interview was conducted through the Zoom Meeting application by using the record feature in the application to facilitate researchers in analyzing interview results and perpetuating the process of interview activities. Researchers conducted intensive and in-depth interviews in order to gather as much information as possible from the informants. Then, the data obtained by the researcher were sent as a written record of the interview activities and analyzed qualitatively. Thus, it produced answers, descriptions, and conclusions from the formulation of the problems raised by researchers.

3.3.1. Audience Reception of the Concept of Masculinity in the *Beauty Is Universal Campaign*

a) *Men's Awareness in Self-Care*

The results of the interview with Informant I revealed that both men and women have the same opportunity in terms of self-care. According to his opinion, self-care is a nature for a human being. But regardless of this in the use of make-up, it returns the choice to each individual according to preference. Even though he doesn't use it, but he doesn't mind at all when he meets other people using make-up.

Slightly different from the Informant II opinion who admitted to using some basic products, such as loose powder and lip balm to support his appearance. According to him, all humans are born the same, only the gender is different. All humans have skin to care for and take care of, so it's appropriate to take care of oneself. Then, informant III also argued that men also need to take care of themselves because people around us will see our physique.

It was different from Informant IV who expressed an opinion that was different from the answers of other informants. Adittiya emphasized that he was not a user of any beauty products as he doesn't think he needs it. Meanwhile, informant V said that he is indeed a user of beauty products, such as make up, but only in certain activities, when there are events that require the use of make up or when he is becoming a talent. Because for Niko, it is not a problem to use beauty products, and self-care is a necessity that cannot be limited by one gender.

Meanwhile, Informant VI said that he occasionally uses make-up, but not on a daily basis. Regardless of who and what gender he is of the opinion that taking care of oneself includes maintaining cleanliness, not just mere aesthetics. Bryan (Informant VII) said that he is a user of several beauty products and even make up because it is a form of self-love as well as gratitude to God.

b) *Men and Masculinity*

Informant I argues that masculinity is a concept to be a man where he considers masculinity more to act as a man to protect and respect women. Furthermore, Informant II interpreted the concept of masculinity as masculine. Informant III stated that the concept of masculinity that he knew was only limited to the ideal concept of being a man. Similar to informant III, informant IV lacked further understanding of the concept of masculinity, according to him masculinity is a concept that exists in society regarding what men are like.

Whereas, Informant V argues that the concept of masculinity is not only limited to the stigma that grows in society, for him masculinity is a trait that is not fixed on a gender. According to him, masculinity may exist in both men and women depending on how a person determines their life choices as an individual. Meanwhile, according to informant VI, the concept of masculinity is a popular narrative in which it has become common community agreement that there is a concept of being a man that grows among them. Finally, according to informant VII, as the last informant, he assumed that the concept of masculinity is a kind of social construction that exists in society so that a person can be called a man.

c) *Dear Me Beauty: Beauty Is Universal campaign*

According to Informant I, the action promoted by Dear Me Beauty discusses about their consumers, both women and men, who have the same opportunity to own their products. Informant II revealed that he sees this campaign as more related to self-confidence, because young and old alike are looking for ways to increase self-confidence. According to

Informant III, the Beauty Is Universal campaign is a form of support for men out there to build their self-confidence, who may harbor their curiosity about beauty products, especially make up.

Unlike some of the previous informants, Informant IV has the opinion that men should not dress like women because according to him it was not permissible. According to Informant V, the Beauty Is Universal movement is a brave step. Niko assesses that Dear Me Beauty is currently carrying out a re-branding with a movement that is able to change the stigma that make-up is only for women. Informant VI has quite a different opinion from the other informants. The fact is that the Beauty Is Universal movement is a marketing strategy for Dear Me Beauty. Informant VII revealed that the Beauty Is Universal campaign refers to an innovative marketing communication.

d) Beauty Is Universal in Social Construction

Informant I, who are from Bali, said that men's interest in beauty products is no longer a taboo in their environment. In contrast to Informant II who is domiciled in Banda Aceh, the branding carried out by Dear Me Beauty is not acceptable in his area. Meanwhile, according to Informant III in his area of Cilegon believes that the roles of women and men are fundamentally different. Meanwhile, according to Informant V with a military background in his family, he, as a man, has responsibility for the family's expectations for a son.

Informant V stated that he had indeed grown up in an environment where the things, such as the Beauty Is Universal campaign were taboo. However, his family was not one of those groups that were very opposite this. Considering that, Niko also works in the beauty industry. Moreover, informant VI reveals his position who has been a victim of masculine traits where when a person is judged or does not look manly he will get scorn. Meanwhile, according to Informant VII, with a background in the Batak tribe in his family, there is indeed a gap between women and men.

e) The Concept of Masculinity in the Beauty Is Universal Campaign

Informant I revealed in a post on February 1. 2021, that the Dear Me Beauty Beauty Is Universal campaign was a good idea. He taught that men also have the same opportunity in terms of self-care. However, it is necessary to remember that this depends on the preferences of each individual. The informant believes that Dear Me Beauty has noticed that skin problems do not only occur in women. For Informant II, everyone is born with complete skin along with their problems, and there is not a single claim that the make-up is intended for women but for the face.

Meanwhile, informant III argued that men also need to care about their appearance. Then, the opinion of informant IV regarding the concept of masculinity that exists in the Beauty Is Universal movement, according to him men should not dress like women because according this is indeed not justified even by existing norms. Informant V said that self-care is not limited by gender, and it is a must. Informant VI argued that for him, he didn't care about gender, taking care of himself and appearance was for his own comfort in the end, not for other people or just aesthetics. Then, the last opinion, namely informant VII, is similar to the answer of informant V, believes that regardless of gender, taking care of yourself is a form of gratitude and a form of self-love.

3.4. Analysis and Discussion

The encoding in this study began when the beauty product brand of Dear Me Beauty encountered a common stereotype in society that beauty products were only intended for women as well as beauty only for women. This is considered inappropriate because in fact not a few men use beauty products and are able to look beautiful too. As a People Power Brand, Dear Me Beauty raised this issue in a movement they called Beauty Is Universal, coinciding with the launch of their newest product at the time, namely the Airy Poreless Fluid Foundation.

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Table 1. The Informant of Encoding-Decoding Results

No	Informant Name	Encoding	Decoding
1.	Informant I	The concept of masculinity in the Beauty Is Universal campaign is based	In essence, humans need to take care of themselves, men and women have the same opportunities in this regard, as well as their position as consumers of beauty products. Informant I noticed that Dear Me Beauty was not only women who had problems with

		on the stereotype that exists in society that men don't deserve to use make-up.	skin, many men were insecure about their appearance as well. With the background of Informant I who lives in Bali, he really accepts the concept of masculinity in the Beauty Is Universal campaign. Because the existing concept of masculinity is considered to be no different from the concept of masculinity that grows with it, thus supporting this movement to build an open-minded netizen ecosystem.
2.	Informant II	The concept of masculinity in the Beauty Is Universal campaign is based on the stereotype that exists in society that men don't deserve to wear make-up.	Everyone has skin and its problems, and the face is a point of appearance that will ultimately be related to self-confidence. Not only women are looking for ways to boost their self-confidence, men are too. Because basically what distinguishes humans is only gender, while appearance belongs to all regardless of gender. It is the construction of society that forms something identical to other things, such as make-up which is identical to women. Although informant II taught that the movement from Dear Me Beauty is risky to be echoed in Indonesia, with the majority of people adhering to eastern culture where he lives, namely Banda Aceh.
3.	Informant III	The concept of masculinity in the Beauty Is Universal campaign is based on the stereotype that exists in society that men don't deserve to wear make-up.	Movement for men who dare to express themselves. Build the confidence of men out there. No matter how appearance influences other people's first impression of someone, men must also concern with that. According to informant III, masculinity cannot be measured through the self-care they do. Even if a man wants to look beautiful, that is the individual's preference. With a note that informant III accepts this idealism but with a background in his environment that believes the roles of women and men are different because in Cilegon, where Informant III lives, men get used to doing rough work, so the concept of masculinity promoted by Dear Me Beauty to support men using make-up are not in line. According to Informant III, it cannot be applied to it with such an environmental background.
4.	Informant IV	The concept of masculinity in the Beauty Is Universal campaign is based on the stereotype exists in society that men don't deserve to wear make-up.	Dear Me Beauty, as a cosmetic brand that is widely known by the public, needs to be careful in issuing campaigns. With 580 thousand followers on Instagram, Dear Me Beauty will very easily lead followers to do what they expect, be your-self, which is good, but identity needs to be reconsidered and remembered. Worried that the followers of the account went too far under the pretext of a message in the Beauty Is Universal campaign that it would end badly. Behaving according to the norm is felt necessary to be done by men. With the background of the informant who grew up in a military family education, men should not dress like women, because that was not permitted. Informant IV also had no interest although he had no problem and appreciated the people involved in the movement. Men who are concerned with facial appearance is an individual preference. Informant IV perceives the Beauty Is Universal campaign as a form of support for needs, not just a desire for one's preferences. With the model of a father, you can see that his visuals have experienced aging, such as wrinkles and dullness, so this campaign is here to fulfill needs, not wants.
5.	Informant V	The concept of masculinity in the Beauty Is Universal campaign is based on the stereotype that exists in society that men don't deserve to wear	Dear Me Beauty's brave move to launch the campaign because as is well known, it is taboo for Indonesia regarding men using make up although make up is not wrong for men. Dear Me Beauty is trying to change the stigma of its followers that make up is only for women. Make-up is genderless. If people really need these products, then go ahead. After all, there is no obligation or prohibition to use make up. Taking care of yourself is not limited by gender. When you love yourself then take care of yourself.

		make-up.	Regardless it is also a form of gratitude to God for giving the opportunity to live. Informant V believes that masculinity does not necessarily belong to men, on the contrary, women also do not rule out being masculine, because masculinity is only limited to the stigma that exists in society. Even though he grew up in an environment that complied with norms, Informant V didn't mind it and continued to convey slowly that it was not wrong for men.
6.	Informant VI	The concept of masculinity in the Beauty Is Universal campaign is based on the stereotype that exists in society that men don't deserve to wear make-up.	It doesn't matter what gender it is, taking care of yourself is a must, not just aesthetics. Because taking care of yourself is a necessity for personal comfort not others. Masculinity is a collective agreement about being a man, a popular narrative to build the image of the perfect man, because basically masculinity exists because of social construction. Thus, there is no need to agree with the popular narrative if it is deemed inappropriate. According to Informant VI, the aim and message of Beauty Is Universal is clear that Dear Me Beauty wants to destroy the stigma in society that only women care about appearance, men too. Despite the fact that this is part of the Dear Me Beauty marketing strategy. With Beauty Is Universal, Dear Me Beauty market is unlimited and becomes wider. Informant VI assessed that Dear Me Beauty doesn't really care who will use their products because their main goal is just to sell products.
7.	Informant VII	The concept of masculinity in the Beauty Is Universal campaign is based on the stereotype that exists in society that men don't deserve to wear make-up.	Taking care of yourself is a form of gratitude and a form of self-love and it doesn't need to look at gender. It is because what distinguishes men and women is only biological. Even though it cannot be denied that men in the beauty industry are marginal people, this does not rule out the possibility that their interest is as great or even greater than women who are representatives of beauty products.

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2022

3.5. Audience Position

Table 2. Audience Position

Position	The Meaning of the Concept of Masculinity in the Beauty Is Universal Campaign
Informant I	Dominant
Informant II	Dominant
Informant III	Negotiated
Informant IV	Oppositional
Informant V	Dominant
Informant VI	Negotiated
Informant VII	Dominant

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2022

In order to strengthen the informants' understanding of the topics discussed in the interviews, the researcher conducted a post-test to classify positional tendencies informants in interpreting the message.

In this study, each informant had a different decoding process for the concept of masculinity in the Dear Me Beauty Instagram post on February 1, 2021, which included the Beauty Is Universal campaign. The decoding process carried out by the informants certainly produces different meanings from one to another since this process is influenced by several factors contained in each informant.

From the discovery of the information provided by the informants, namely informants I, II, V, and VII occupy a dominant position of hegemony, in which the position of this audience fully accepts what the message producers want (Morissan, 2021) , namely posts on February 1, 2021 containing the Beauty Is campaign Universal regarding the concept of masculinity without any rejection by informants. This means that the media conveys a message which the audience then accepts and coincidentally the message is also liked by the audience. This decoding position assumes that the practical purpose of encoding is successfully addressed to the audience (Hall, 2011) .

Table 3. Audience Position of Post-Test Results

	Dominant	Negotiations	Oppositional	
Informant I	█	█		D
Informant II	█	█		D
Informant III	█	█		N
Informant IV		█	█	O
Informant V	█	█		D
Informant VI	█	█		N
Informant VII	█	█		D

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2022

Besides occupying the dominant position of hegemony which was carried out by four informants out of a total of seven informants, negotiating positions were found in informants III and VI, and oppositional positions were found in informant IV. Of course, Ridwan and Iwan's informants have different meanings from informants who are in dominant positions, such as I, II, V, and VII. Different meanings are very likely to occur because the informant has understanding and thoughts that are influenced by himself (Morissan, 2021) . Informants III and VI are in a negotiating position where the audience generally accepts the dominant ideology but they will make some exceptions in its application according to cultural rules to their own thoughts. In contrast to Ridwan and Iwan, the post of the Beauty Is Universal campaign on February 1, 2021 was assessed by informant IV as a rejection of the concept that already existed in society

According to him, acting in accordance with the norms of how men should be is necessary. He stated that he did not fully support the Beauty Is Universal campaign because he taught that men should not dress like women, considering that, this is actually not permitted. His current opinion is inseparable from the influence of her family background which opposes tolerance of such things.

4. Conclusion

Each informant has his own interpretation of the concept of masculinity contained in the *@dearmebeauty* Instagram post on February 1, 2021, in the post containing the Beauty Is Universal campaign. From their description, the informants interpreted that the concept of masculinity as gender performance, namely the inherent characteristics of the men gender and their social roles. However, it is possible for women to have these characteristics in themselves because the characteristics inherent in both male and female gender in the 21st century are more flexible compared to several previous centuries, due to the recognition and struggle for gender equality such what Dear Me Beauty in carrying out the Beauty Is Universal campaign. Gender can be interpreted as a role played by a person based on expectations of the gender of the individual. Gender is complex and difficult to change, but its formation is fluid because it involves socialization and exposure to communication media at random times, and is arbitrary because the values attached to a gender are often in line with the values of society at a certain location and time. This is then referred to as cultural conditioning which then goes into self-concept as a result of the process of human reciprocal interaction in cultural settings. Cultural assumptions that are passed down from generation to generation give rise to stereotypes that make certain gender roles attached to certain genders.

Based on the results of research on the concept meaning of masculinity contained in the *@dearmebeauty* Instagram post on February 1, 2021, the researcher can conclude that the dominant hegemonic position in the meaning of the informant is the dominant hegemonic position. In this position, the audience fully accepts what is expected by the producer of the message, namely the Beauty Is Universal campaign regarding the concept of masculinity without any rejection, where the informants agree on the message that there is no gender attachment regardless of who and what is used. In this study the context refers to the concept of masculinity in the Beauty Is Universal campaign that self-care is not limited by a gender because ideal gender equality is a situation where men and women become the best versions of themselves through mutual agreements without being burdened by accepted gender expectations.

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