

## Beauty Mirror: The Depiction of Korean Wave Influence in Indonesian Women's Beauty Standard in Scarlett, Citra, and Wardah Skincare Advertisements (A Semiotics Approach)

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**Abstract:** *Social media, such as advertisements, certainly influenced the spread of the Korean wave to various parts of the world, including Indonesia. It also has begun to affect the perspective, behavior, and lifestyle of Indonesian people, specifically in the way Indonesians view beauty standards. This study investigates the impact of the Korean wave on Indonesian women's beauty standards as reflected in advertisements for Scarlett, Citra, and Wardah skincare products. This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive method, which focuses on the meaning of symbols or representations of Korean wave influence in Indonesian women's beauty standards in skincare product advertisements through certain elements in linguistics. Using a semiotics approach grounded in Roland Barthes' theory, the research analyzes visual and textual signs to uncover denotative and connotative meanings within these ads. The findings reveal distinct beauty standards for each brand, highlighting the interplay between global (Korean) and local (Indonesian) ideals. Scarlett's ads align with the Korean beauty standard of fair skin, Citra emphasizes Indonesia's diverse and natural beauty, and Wardah represents a blend of both cultures, suggesting an acculturation process. The study concludes that while Korean beauty ideals have significantly influenced Indonesian advertisements, local cultural values, and inner beauty remain deeply ingrained in the portrayal of Indonesian women.*

**Keywords:** *Beauty Standard, Korean Wave, Skincare, Advertisement*

**Abstrak:** Media sosial, seperti iklan, tentu saja mempengaruhi penyebaran Korean wave ke berbagai belahan dunia, termasuk Indonesia. Hal ini juga mulai mempengaruhi cara pandang, perilaku, dan gaya hidup masyarakat Indonesia, khususnya dalam cara pandang masyarakat Indonesia terhadap standar kecantikan. Penelitian ini menyelidiki dampak Korean wave terhadap standar kecantikan perempuan Indonesia yang tercermin dalam iklan produk perawatan kulit Scarlett, Citra, dan Wardah. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, yang berfokus pada pemaknaan simbol-simbol atau representasi pengaruh Korean wave terhadap standar kecantikan perempuan Indonesia dalam iklan produk perawatan kulit melalui elemen-elemen tertentu dalam ilmu bahasa. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan semiotika yang didasarkan pada teori Roland Barthes, penelitian ini menganalisis tanda-tanda visual dan tekstual untuk mengungkap makna denotatif dan konotatif dalam iklan-iklan tersebut. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan standar kecantikan yang berbeda untuk setiap merek, menyoroti interaksi antara cita-cita global (Korea) dan lokal (Indonesia). Iklan Scarlett sesuai dengan standar kecantikan Korea yaitu kulit putih, Citra menekankan pada kecantikan Indonesia yang beragam dan alami, dan Wardah merepresentasikan perpaduan dari kedua budaya, yang menunjukkan adanya proses akulturasi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun idealisme kecantikan Korea telah secara signifikan mempengaruhi iklan-iklan di Indonesia, nilai-nilai budaya lokal dan kecantikan dari dalam diri tetap tertanam kuat dalam penggambaran perempuan Indonesia.

**Kata kunci:** *Standar Kecantikan, Gelombang Korea, Perawatan Kulit, Iklan*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Beauty standards are one of the constructions of digital media development in the form of skincare and make-up product advertisements. According to societal perceptions, beauty standards vary based on local regions and cultures. A woman's beauty is not only judged by her face or physical appearance but also by her inner beauty or her character and attitude. The "beautiful is good" bias reflects the idea that people, consciously or unconsciously, perceive a person's attractiveness as reflecting that person's characteristics or personality, resulting in more positive feelings and beliefs about attractive men and women (Dion, Berscheid, and Walster 1972). With the development of beauty products and mass media advertisements, beauty standards in some countries become role models influencing other countries. The models in mass media and advertisements create cultural norms and define standards of beauty in society (Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2009). On the other hand, the massive development of digital media in the contemporary era, such as advertisements in the media, have a great power to construct people's behavior and perspective (Desiyanti & Ling, 2022). The other aspects of the content media advertisements can also create certain perceptions of how ideal beauty or beauty standards are reflected in certain societies.

Beauty standardization has significantly influenced South Korea through the widespread advertisement of skincare products, especially in Indonesia (Mahrunnisa, Susanto, and Susanto 2019). Consequently, the term Korean wave has grown in many countries, establishing South Korea as a center of beauty standards. The Korean wave trend relates to Korean cultural products including movies, music, dance, food, smartphones, beauty products, and fashion which have successfully entered and spread to other countries (B. Kim, 2018). The spread of the Korean wave to various parts of the world, especially in Indonesia, is certainly also influenced by the role of media such as social media and advertisements. This phenomenon certainly impacts the country, namely the mixing of local culture with Korean culture also known as the acculturation process. For example, Korean dramas as the first media that brought the Korean wave to Indonesia, influenced the tastes of its audience ranging from fashion, food, and music, to cosmetics. In addition, the Korean wave has also begun to affect Indonesia's perspective, behavior, and lifestyle. One of them is the way Indonesians view beauty standards.

Beauty standards heavily influenced by skincare product advertising can be observed through every symbol or element in the advertisements. Studies focusing on the meaning of symbols or representations of something through specific elements in linguistics are part of semiotic studies. Chandler (2022) explains that semiotics is the study of 'signs' or symbols, which involves visual signs, words or text, and also body language. A significant theorist in the semiotic approach is Roland Barthes. Barthes' semiotic theory broadly divides the meaning of semiotics into three levels: denotative, connotative, and myth (Octaviani and Maliki, 2019). Denotative meaning refers to the direct meaning reflected by the sign or symbol that can be immediately understood upon seeing it. In contrast, connotative meaning is an indirect meaning that implies deeper interpretations and is open to new interpretations. Unlike denotative and connotative meanings, myths are social and cultural factors that influence the interpretation of a representation. In this context, myths are societal messages, public assumptions, or stereotypes.

The study of beauty standards has become increasingly prominent with the rise of digital media and beauty products. Based on the research entitled "Beauty Standard Construction in Magazine Advertisements" by Desiyanti & Ling (2022) which focuses on depicting two

skincare advertisements from Singapore and Indonesia. The research results reveal a difference in that Singapore advertisements prioritize unrealistic concepts in terms of visual images, attracting viewers to have bright skin, because the women depicted are white, Caucasian female models. Nagara (2022) examines how Generation Z women in Indonesia are influenced by K-Beauty products using the Social Construction of Reality theory. More specifically, through a particular brand studied using semiotic theory, Rezky (2024) and Setyaningsih (2022) investigate beauty standards in Avoskin and Scarlett Whitening advertisements using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The development of beauty product advertisements also presents seemingly unrealistic standards, a problem explored by Habib and Fitriantatsany (2022). Broadly addressing external factors, Goldsteel (2023) highlights the importance of attractiveness in society and beauty advertising strategies that include pseudo-scientific claims and emotional appeals, while also promoting an inclusive industry and positive body image.

The depiction of the Korean Wave trend influence in Indonesian women's beauty standard in three original Indonesian skincare advertisements is a gap left by previous studies discussing beauty standards. This research has the objective to prove Korean wave influence on Indonesian women's standard beauty and identify markers of beauty standards in the advertisements. Therefore, the research questions are: how do the South Korean and Indonesian beauty standards compare and influence each other in the Scarlett, Citra, and Wardah advertisements? And what markers of beauty standards are shown in these three advertisements?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Beauty Standard Concept in Advertisement*

In the era of globalization, mass media such as advertising has become a force that shapes society's norms and perceptions. Kannan and Tyagi (2013) state that advertisements serve as a medium to promote products or services, utilizing language as their primary tool to deliver their language. Advertising itself plays a role that goes beyond promoting products. It also serves as a communication medium to convey social messages, inspire action, and solve various community problems. According to Winarni (2010), advertisements often emphasize aspects such as physical appearance, gender roles, and beauty standards. This practice makes advertisements not only influence purchasing decisions but also contribute to the formation of social norms and self-perceptions.

The concept of beauty standards in the United States, propagated by the media, tends to center on Caucasian features, such as white skin and blue eyes (Islam, 2019). A similar phenomenon also occurs in Indonesia, where physical appearance and ideal beauty are the main benchmarks of beauty, although many argue that beauty is actually subjective (Purba & Tambunan, 2021). Advertising has a significant role in defining and promoting these beauty standards. In the world of advertising, the definition of beauty is often simplified and narrowed. The impact is most felt by women, especially those in the public spotlight such as celebrities. In Indonesia, advertisements generally portray ideal beauty through certain physical attributes, namely, youth, white skin, smooth skin, and slender body (Abdullah et al., 2021). Meanwhile, according to Barber (2011), women's physical appearance is often exploited in television advertisements as an attraction to sell products.

Meanwhile, the concept of beauty standards in Scarlett, Wardah, and Citra product

advertisements adapts the concept of global beauty standards and the local Indonesian context. Robertson (1995) revealed in his theory of "Glocalization" which is a combination of the words "globalization" and "localization". This theory explains how global trends are adapted and reinterpreted in local contexts, resulting in unique cultural hybridization. In the context of beauty standards, this theory helps us understand how global beauty ideals (such as those from Korea or the West) interact with local values and aesthetics. The concept has been applied to various fields, including marketing, cultural studies, and beauty standards.

### ***A Semiotics Theory***

Semiotics is a branch of science that focuses on studying a sign to find out how the sign will have its function and will form a meaning. Semiotic is also defined as a science that studies various social lives, objects, events, and all cultures as signs. Semiotics also studies how humans interpret things. To analyze the advertising media objects Scarlett, Wardah, and Citra used, researchers used Barthes' theory to identify signs or markers that signify idealized beauty standards. Barthes' theory (2009) developed a semiotic concept of signs and symbols in creating meaning in culture, there are three types of concepts, namely denotative, and connotative.

Denotative meaning refers to the literal and universally understood meaning of a word or symbol. It's the clear, dictionary definition. Connotative meaning goes beyond the literal definition. It encompasses the additional layers of meaning associated with a sign, which can be cultural, emotional, or subjective. These connotations can vary depending on the context and individual interpretation.

### ***Scarlett, Wardah, and Citra Skincare Advertisements***

The Scarlett Whitening advertising video aired on Scarlett's official YouTube channel is used as the object in this study. Researchers selected video samples that were watched by more than 14 million viewers with the advertising tagline "Reveal Your Beauty With Twice and Scarlett". The Scarlett product advertisement presents the South Korean girl band Twice as the star ambassador. In the 1-minute ad, the girl band promotes skincare packages such as moisturizer, serum, and toner. This clearly shows that Scarlett's products are influenced by the Hallyu trend or Korean wave. The use of the term "Whitening" in their branded products has reflected the Korean obsession with glowing white skin. In addition, Scarlett's collaboration with Korean celebrities shows a direct adaptation of Korean culture. This practice is following Elfving-Hwang's (2013) statement that beauty is not only about appearance but also about lifestyle and morality.

Citra, as one of the local skincare brands that emphasizes the diversity of skin in Indonesia. Citra has received a lot of attention among Indonesian women with its advertisement uploaded on the YouTube account Cantik Citra in May 2022 with the title "Ragam Cantik Indonesia Citra". Citra products with the advertising tagline "Ragam Cantik Indonesiaku" feature models from various races with various skin colors, hair, and other physical features. The Citra ad reflects the colorful nature and diverse cultures in Indonesia. The product is an interesting example of what we can call an attempt to assert local identity in the Indonesian beauty industry. Amidst the swift flow of global beauty trends, especially the dominating Korean Wave (Hallyu), Citra seeks to emphasize and celebrate diverse local beauty. As stated by Saraswati (2020), colonial legacy and globalization have created a "national wound" in Indonesia, where local beauty is often pushed aside in favor of Western beauty standards. Therefore, Citra only uses traditional Indonesian ingredients,

such as rice extracts in processing its products. However, Citra does not necessarily reject modern skincare concepts or the latest cosmetic technology. Instead, they use traditional Indonesian knowledge in modern formulas to create products that are unique and locally relevant. It is a form of "synthesis" between local heritage and global innovation.

Wardah's "Wardah Travel In Style Goes to Korea With Ayana Jihye Moon" advertisement shows the attractive appearance and positive attitude embodied in women. Not only does it showcase the product, but also the spirit and journey behind it. Wardah is a halal cosmetic brand that continues to innovate and work with global beauty experts to provide high-quality halal products. In this advertisement, Wardah always provides inspiration, and motivation, and inspires Indonesian women to work, achieve, and spread goodness with themselves. Through this campaign, Wardah aims to empower women, foster a sense of pride and achievement, and highlight the brand's role in their journey towards personal and professional success. Additionally, Wardah's commitment to innovation ensures that its products align with global beauty standards, demonstrating its ability to combine traditional values and contemporary beauty needs.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

In this article, the researchers use qualitative research, which is a research procedure that is capable of producing descriptive data in the form of speech, writing and behavior from the people being observed. It had a meaning that the form of qualitative research was descriptive data in written or oral words (Bogdan & Taylor, 1992:21). The main instrument is the researcher itself. This research is important for researcher's ability to understand the phenomenon of women's beauty standards in advertisements. The data of this research contained visual text from the Scarlett, Wardah, and Citra skincare advertisements which includes pictures, models, and colors. The source of data is a sample of three videos from Scarlett, Wardah, and Citra Skincare Advertisements on the Youtube channel. The researcher tried to find the depiction of Indonesian Women's beauty standard in Scarlett, Wardah, and Citra skincare advertisements.

There are two data collection techniques in this research, documentation and literature study. Documentation technique involves collecting data by systematically documenting scenes from advertisements related to beauty standards. Specifically, this involved analyzing and documenting relevant content from three selected advertisements to understand how beauty standards were represented. On the other hand, the literature review involves in-depth review of existing documents. This includes retrieving relevant literature and integrating comprehensive information from a variety of sources to support the research framework. Sources include Roland Barthes's semiotic theory, which provides a theoretical basis for the interpretation of signs and symbols found in advertising. In addition, material related to the skin care brands featured in the advertisement and other related topics were also reviewed.

The data analysis used by researchers is to analyze the signs that have been described according to Roland Barthes' semiotic map, consisting of denotation and connotation. Denotation refers to the literal or most basic meaning of a sign, which is what is directly visible or identifiable. While connotation refers to the additional or deeper cultural meaning, which contains the associations, emotions, and values attached to the sign. By using this semiotic map, researchers can unravel and understand the various layers of meaning contained in the signs in these advertisements, both in terms of visual appearance and the messages conveyed implicitly.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

From the three skincare brand advertisements analyzed, we classified these brands according to different beauty standards as represented in the ads. The Scarlett advertisement titled "Reveal Your Beauty With Twice And Scarlett!" is classified under the 'Korean Wave Beauty Standard' due to its use of the Korean girl group Twice as models. The Citra advertisement titled "Ragam Cantik Indonesia Citra" is classified under the "Indonesian Beauty Standard" as it features various models representing the diversity of Indonesian women. Lastly, the Wardah advertisement titled "Wardah Travel In Style Goes to Korea With Ayana Jihye Moon" is classified under the "Acculturation of Korean Wave and Indonesian Beauty Standard."

##### *Korean Wave Beauty Standard*



*Figure 1: Glow and white skin*

In Figure 1, three members of Twice are shown holding Scarlett products with the tagline "Ready to glow." The denotative meaning derived from Figure 1 can be seen from the characteristics of the models used. The denotative meaning conveys a beauty standard represented by bright white skin and wavy straight hair. This interpretation is further supported by the tagline "Ready to glow," where the keyword 'glow' represents beauty standards. Connotatively, the word 'glow' in the tagline can also mean cheerful and happy, in line with the expressions displayed by the models.

##### *Figure 2: Self-confidence*



In Figure 2, three members of Twice are featured again in an Instagram post holding Scarlett products with the tagline "Make your day Shine, Shine, Shine!". This figure illustrates a

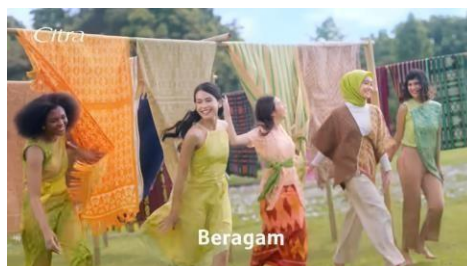
social media post concept that can be connotatively interpreted as confidence. It represents that 'confidence' is a standard of inner beauty, not just external appearance. Additionally, the tagline can be connotatively understood to mean that beauty can provide motivation and enthusiasm in daily life.



*Figure 3: Popular and Acclaimed*

In Figure 3, one member of Twice is shown using Scarlett products in a social media post that has received many 'likes'. Denotatively, this figure demonstrates that beauty standards can be seen through popularity and being liked by many people. This is represented by the post receiving many 'likes', regardless of the popularity of the model and the advertised product. Connotatively, Figure 3 also suggests that beauty standards can be judged based on recognition from others.

### *Indonesian Standard Beauty*



*Figure 4: Confident and Expressive*

In Figure 4, several Indonesian women from various ethnicities and races are shown running happily. Denotatively, this figure illustrates that the Indonesian beauty standard can be seen through the freedom of expression. Connotatively, Figure 4 portrays the Indonesian beauty standard as being characterized by confidence. It highlights that beauty standards are also reflected in the inner beauty of Indonesian women who are confident and free to express themselves.





*Figure 5: Uniqueness and Natural*

In Figure 5, three models from different ethnicities and races are displayed with the tagline “Menghargai Keunikan” (“Appreciating Uniqueness”). This figure demonstrates that the Indonesian beauty standard is not limited to a specific skin color, such as fair skin. Denotatively, Figure 5 clearly shows that the beauty of Indonesian women is reflected in their uniqueness and diversity, such as the variety of skin colors. Skin color, hair type, facial features, and other physical attributes tied to a particular race have their own unique beauty. Connotatively, Figure 5 also features the natural backdrop of Indonesia, which can be interpreted to mean that the Indonesian beauty standard is natural, pure, and authentic.



*Figure 6: Productive and Nurturing Culture*

In Figure 6, a hijab-wearing Muslim model is shown making traditional crafts. Denotatively, Figure 6 indicates that, as a culturally rich country, the Indonesian beauty standard includes the ability to preserve and maintain cultural heritage. Additionally, the Indonesian beauty standard is reflected in women who are productive and capable of creating works of art. Connotatively, the preservation of culture depicted in the figure also signifies that the Indonesian beauty standard values women who are skilled in caring for and maintaining traditions.

#### *Acculturation of Korean Wave and Indonesian Beauty Standard*





*Figure 7: White skin and expressive*

In Figure 7, Ayana Moon is featured as an advertisement model walking through the streets of South Korea. Denotatively, the model in the advertisement showcases beauty standards with bright, fair skin and expressive features throughout the ad. Connotatively, the model also represents Indonesia by incorporating the hijab, reflecting Islam as the most widely practiced religion in the country.



*Figure 8: Confident and Nurturing Culture*

In Figure 8, the advertisement model is shown standing in a culturally significant, crowded place while wearing the traditional Korean dress, Hanbok. Denotatively, Figure 8 highlights cultural elements as a beauty standard, emphasizing the cultural appreciation and blending of Indonesian and South Korean cultures. Connotatively, Figure 8 also represents confidence as a beauty standard, demonstrated by the model's self-assured presence in a busy public space.



*Figure 9: Productive and Shine*

In Figure 9, the advertisement model is shown writing with a natural background. Denotatively, this figure represents the beauty standard of being productive or creating works.

Connotatively, the figure also conveys enthusiasm and motivation in daily life, illustrated by the text or subtitles in the advertisement and the actions of the model.

From the results presented, several beauty standards represented in the three advertisements can be drawn. In the Korean Wave Beauty Standard represented in the Scarlett advertisement "Reveal Your Beauty With Twice And Scarlett!", the beauty standard for South Korean women is obtained as glow and white skin, self-confidence, popularity, and acclaim. From this advertisement, the overall beauty standard of South Korea is portrayed based on outer appearance characterized by fair skin and wavy straight hair like celebrity models. In addition to outer appearance, inner beauty is also considered with self-confidence and motivation in activities. Moreover, there is also an external factor marked by popularity and recognition from others.

On the other hand, in the beauty standard of Indonesian women represented in the Citra advertisement "Ragam Cantik Indonesia Citra", the beauty standard of Indonesian women includes confidence, freedom or boldness in expression, uniqueness, naturalness, good care and maintenance, pride and preservation of culture, and productivity. The representation of Indonesian women's beauty standards tends towards inner beauty, such as confidence, expressiveness, having good care and maintenance attitudes, and being productive. In terms of outer appearance or physical appearance, Indonesian women are depicted with naturalness and the uniqueness of their appearance as it is. Furthermore, external factors influencing beauty standards include pride and concern for culture. These external factors indicate that the beauty standards of Indonesian women are closely associated with pride and the uniqueness of their identity.

As a form of acculturation and the influence of the Korean wave on the beauty standards of Indonesian women, the Wardah advertisement "Wardah Travel In Style Goes to Korea With Ayana Jihye Moon" represents beauty standards with a combination of outer appearance, such as fair white skin, with inner beauty, such as expressiveness, confidence, and productivity. This Wardah advertisement also shows external factors connotatively interpreted as Indonesian beauty standards, such as pride and cultural preservation, combined with South Korean cultural elements such as traditional clothing and places.

Denotatively, the influence of the Korean wave on the beauty standards of Indonesian women is clearly evident through the markers of advertisement models and appearances shown in the advertisements, namely fair skin and wavy straight hair. However, some standards in this influence may not always be applicable to diverse Indonesian women of various ethnicities and races. One example is the beauty standard of 'white' skin, which is then connotatively interpreted as 'bright' skin in the various types and colors of Indonesian women's skin. Meanwhile, the influence on inner beauty is not significant because the values of inner beauty and the strong identity of Indonesian women's beauty become unique values on their own.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The beauty standards of each country undoubtedly differ according to ethnicity, race, and the values of cultural identity in place. However, a beauty standard can also influence and be influenced by other beauty standards, such as the phenomenon of the Korean wave in Indonesia. The spread of the influence of beauty standards is, in part, through the development of digital media and information in the form of advertising. The advertisements referred to here are those related to beauty standards, namely beauty products such as skincare. In this study, three skincare advertisements were the subject of research: Scarlett, Citra, and Wardah. The results of this research show differences in beauty standards between South Korea and Indonesia, which can be observed through physical beauty and inner beauty. The beauty standards of South Korea from this research object indicate an ideal physical form and facial appearance, such as fair skin, wavy straight hair, slim body, and so on. Meanwhile, in the beauty standards of Indonesia represented in this research object, the emphasis is on inner

beauty or attitude and self-worth. The markers in these three advertisements representing beauty standards are more visible in the appearance of the advertisement models and their actions. Additionally, other supporting markers can be seen through taglines or text, audio or narration, as well as the background of the advertisement.

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