

The Girl's Purity: Visual Analysis of Shinzui TV Commercial with Male Gaze Approach

(Kesucian Gadis: Analisis Visual Iklan TV Shinzui dengan Pendekatan Sudut Pandang Laki-Laki)

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Abstract. Shinzui Body Cleanser is a beauty product containing Herba Matsu Oil which is extracted from the Japanese matsutake plant. The TV commercial of Shinzui shows a girl wearing white clothing bathing in a lake. This female actor is prominently shown in the commercial. The girl was shown with white skin color and proportional bodies to make Shinzui beauty product commercial more attractive to the viewing audience. This study aims to identify the male gaze behind this Shinzui advertisements on female representation using visual analysis and male gaze approach. In dissecting the female representation in Shinzui advertisements, the study was done through Barthes semiotic analysis to find out the meaning behind the gestures, facial expressions, and narratives used. The result shows that Shinzui Body Cleanser advertisements try to enforce the girl's purity as the main value behind the female representation. This concept of girl's purity enforced the value made from the male gaze regarding women's sexuality, where men are more dominant and freer while women are valued by their girl-like purity.

Keywords: Female Representation, Girl's Purity, Shinzui TV Commercial, Male Gaze, Visual Culture.

Abstrak. Shinzui Body Cleanser adalah produk kecantikan yang mengandung Minyak Herba Matsu yang diekstrak dari tanaman matsutake Jepang. Iklan TV Shinzui menampilkan seorang gadis berpakaian putih sedang mandi di danau. Aktris ini ditampilkan secara menonjol dalam iklan tersebut. Gadis itu ditampilkan dengan warna kulit putih dan tubuh proporsional untuk membuat iklan produk kecantikan Shinzui lebih menarik bagi pemirsa. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi pandangan maskulin di balik iklan Shinzui tentang representasi perempuan menggunakan analisis visual dan pendekatan pandangan maskulin. Dalam membedah representasi perempuan dalam iklan Shinzui, studi ini dilakukan melalui analisis semiotik Barthes untuk menemukan makna di balik gerak tubuh, ekspresi wajah, dan narasi yang digunakan. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa iklan Shinzui Body Cleanser mencoba untuk memperkuat kemurnian gadis sebagai nilai utama di balik representasi perempuan. Konsep kemurnian gadis ini memperkuat nilai yang dibuat dari pandangan maskulin mengenai seksualitas perempuan, di mana laki-laki lebih dominan dan lebih bebas sementara perempuan dihargai karena kemurnian mereka yang seperti gadis.

Kata kunci: Representasi Perempuan, Kesucian Gadis, Iklan TV Shinzui, Pandangan Laki-laki, Budaya Visual.

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Introduction

Advertisements on television are part of promotions in selling goods or services and appealing the products to the audience. This is because advertisements on television are able to demonstrate products so that audiences can master the product concept. Belch & Belch (2017) stated that messages created through various signs in advertising can be received by large groups of people at the same time. Darwis & Taufik (2018) stated that television commercial is one of the "above-the-line" advertisements. When making an advertisement, there is definitely competition that requires advertisers to be more creative with interesting ideas. Efforts were made by the advertisers to be more creative in order to attract the attention of the target market by creating unique diction, though sometimes the choice of this diction intentionally contains elements of exploitation (Wicaksono, 2012). Many of the exploitations in advertisement nowadays is related to women. Advertisement makers use women as models because women are often described as gentle and have attractive faces (Tanyildizi & Yolcu, 2020). Thus, many television commercials use female models to strengthen product brands and attract the attention of potential consumers, increasing profits for the producers. One of the television commercials which use female model aired in the Indonesian television is Shinzui Body Cleanser.

Shinzui Body Cleanser is a soap that was advertised with a promise to make the skin bright, naturally clean, and smells of Japanese flowers. It can also whiten the skin if used disciplinedly and was featured containing Herb Matsu Oil, a natural whitening agent extracted from the matsutake plant in Japan. The Shinzui soap advertisement depicts a beautiful woman with views of hills and lakes wrapped in a calm atmosphere. Although many products were advertised with a promise of skin whitening, various types of products for skin whitening do not completely fulfill the hopes of skin whitening, especially for women. According to a study done in Malaysia, around 45% women are not satisfied with their products since the products do not give the expected result and they cause side effect to their skin (Rusmadi, Ismail, & Praveena, 2015). The study can be applied to Indonesian people since the majority of Indonesians shared the same physical appearance with Malaysians, especially in terms of skin colors.

This research is urgently needed due to the disparity in representation between advertising models and the reality of the target audience in Indonesia. Although the majority of Indonesians have tanned or brown skin, advertisements for beauty products

like Shinzui still overwhelmingly use white models with distinctive Japanese facial features. This creates an unrepresentative beauty standard for local consumers. There is a strong tendency for advertisers to use female models to strengthen brand image and attract potential consumers to increase profits. Often, the creativity employed deliberately contains elements of exploitation, both through diction and visuals. Analyzing how women are positioned in television advertisements is crucial to understanding the extent to which women's bodies are commodified.

The heavy use of light skinned woman in beauty product advertisement, especially in Shinzui Body Cleanser marketed towards Indonesians is interesting to be researched. This is because the majority of Indonesian has a tanned brown skin color, which is underrepresented in television commercials, especially in beauty product advertisements. Based on the explanation above, the author is interested in conducting research to find out how the male gaze operates in the Shinzui Body Cleanser television commercial and what kind of representation the advertisement tried to convey. The author uses a semiotic approach proposed by Roland Barthes to look at the signification process contained in the visual advertisement by analyzing the scenes in the Shinzui Body Cleanser television commercials to understand the representation conveyed through the use of male gaze.

Methods

This study was done to analyze a 30 second television commercial for Shinzui Body Cleanser. In analyzing this television commercial, this study used a qualitative method. Researchers study as much data as possible about an individual, an event, a group and the researcher aims to provide a complete and in-depth view of the object to be studied (Mulyana, 2001). This qualitative research was carried out using a visual methodology, treating the visual elements in the television commercial as data to be studied.

The data source was taken from the Shinzui Body Cleanser television commercial for the Skin Lightening edition which was broadcasted on television in 2017. The television commercial was observed and visually dissected by cutting scenes which were then analyzed using a structural semiotic approach proposed by Roland Barthes, specifically the narrative codes, to see the visual meaning contained in this advertisement. Narrative codes are codes that contained stories and sequences which holds the meaning behind the commercial as well as to see the recurring themes commonly displayed within the commercial (Raden, Qeis, & Jahar, 2018).

In dissecting the visual meaning behind the narrative codes, the male gaze theory was used to determine the position of the representation conveyed in this advertisement. Male gaze in advertisement is a field of surveillance where the male value judgments was imposed in the form of sexual innuendo in advertisements (Li & Xie, 2021). Using this theory, the visual data that will be analyzed was taken from the scene depicting a woman from the Shinzui Body Cleanser television commercial.

Result And Discussion

Result

PT Bina Karya Prima is a company that makes beauty products which started its business in 1981, one of which is the Shinzui brand. The brand is very well known in Indonesia, especially among women. The brand consistently enforced a message that their products, which consist of beauty skin care products such as facial wash, body lotion, and soap, contained essential Herba Matsu oils as a natural formulation extracted from matsutake mushrooms. The formulation used in Shinzui products claimed to be very useful for brightening, softening, and whitening the skin.

The television commercial for Shinzui Body Cleanser which was broadcasted in 2017 showed a white woman with the facial feature of a Japanese woman enjoying bathing in a lake using the Shinzui Body Cleanser product. This television commercial has a 30 second duration featuring the many scents and variations of the soap, including myori, kirei, kensho, matsu, sakura, and hana. The actress playing the role of the woman featured in this television commercial is Aya Ueto, a Japanese woman born in Nerima Tokyo, 14 September 1985, who started her career in films and became very popular after entering the 7th All Japan Youth Beauty Contest in 1997 (Poole, 2008).

The focus of this research is to look for visual meaning related to the male gaze theory in the television commercial for Shinzui Body Cleanser. The data to be analyzed was taken from the scenes featuring a woman in the television commercial. This television commercial has five scenes that will be observed and analyzed to identify the representation behind the visual of the women through the use of Barthes' narrative codes and male gaze.



Fig. 1 The first scene featuring a woman standing in front of the lake

Figure 1 shows a scene of a woman wearing a white dress with a long hair and fair skin. She is standing in front of a lake while rubbing her arms in a closed hand position and smiling faintly. In this scene, a narration of "Shinzui" was featured with Japanese music accompaniment and a "Shinzui" text written in Japanese Hiragana. The scene was taken using the Full shot technique to show the whole body of the woman and the environment she's in.

The narrative codes in this scene can be divided into the verbal and visual narratives. The verbal narrative was focused on the narration of "Shinzui". The use of Japanese music accompaniment and Japanese Hiragana in the verbal narrative cemented the codes related to Japan in this product. The visual narrative was focused on the woman wearing white and the serene environment surrounding the woman. The act of rubbing arms in a closed hand position convey the feeling of self-pacifying as written by Edwards in "Body Language Guide (accessed 20 February 2020). The feeling self-pacifying was then supported by the serene environment depicted through the use of full shot technique, creating a sense of pacifism to achieve peace and comfort. The still lake and green forest in the background also supported this sense of peace and comfort.



Fig. 2 The second scene featuring a woman looking at her shoulder

Figure 2 shows a scene of a woman wearing a white camisole dress with loose hair and a smiling face looking at her shoulder. The sleeveless nature of a camisole dress accentuates the shoulder which stands in the center of the frame. This scene was shot using medium shot technique to accentuate the gesture done by the woman. In this scene, a narration of "So soft and bright, because it contains the essence of Herba Matsu Oil" was said accompanied by Japanese music.

The narrative codes in this scene consists of the verbal and visual narratives. The verbal narrative was centered around the quality of the skin which is soft and bright and correlates that quality to the Herba Matsu Oil essence extracted from Japanese matsutake mushroom. Again, the codes related to Japan was made in the verbal codes just like in the first scene. The visual narrative was focused on the gesture of the woman. This scene

depicted a woman posing looking at her shoulder. Parvez (accessed 20 February 2020) argued that the head tilting towards the shoulder was done to portrays innocence and submission. The innocence and submission portrayed by the gesture was further enhanced by the use of white camisole dress. Douglas (2022) argued that camisole dress, also known as slip dress, is a popular casualwear for younger woman. This gives support to a visual narrative of youthful innocence. The flowing dress also accentuates the female body which gives the concept of femininity.



Fig. 3 The third scene featuring a woman taking a bath

Figure 3 shows a scene of a woman washing her body. Her hair was tied in a ponytail and the scene depicted her not wearing clothes. She was depicted rubbing her body while it was covered with foamy soap or lathers. In this scene, a narration of "make your skin so charming" was accompanied by Japanese music. This scene was taken using medium shot technique to accentuate the act of washing the body.

The narrative codes in this scene can be divided into the verbal and visual narratives. The verbal narrative was focused on the concept of charming which the narrative tied to the appearance of the skin. Hence, the charm of a woman was implied to be directly tied to her skin appearance. The visual narrative was focused on the act of washing the body. According to Ashenburg in Verouden & Meijman (2010), the act of washing and bathing the body, aside of the concept of health and cleanliness, also demonstrated good manners and ideas about decency. The lathers covering the skin also create the feel of cleanliness. By covering the body, it also supports the notion of decency.



Fig. 4 The fourth scene featuring a woman floating in water

Figure 4 shows a scene of a woman swimming and floating in water covered in white cloth. She is spreading and swinging her arms while enjoying the water, depicted by her expression of closing her eyes and smiling. This scene is accompanied by Japanese music and taken using the medium shot technique. This shot was used to focus on the expression and gesture of the woman while swimming and floating in water.

Different from the previous scenes, this scene only contained the narrative codes in the form of visual narrative. The visual narrative was focused on the gesture while floating. The opening of the arm shows the openness of the woman. It also shows the act of becoming the center of attention as argued by Edwards in “Body Language Guide” (accessed 20 February 2020). Floating in water give a sense of lightness and calm. These narratives combined create a narrative code of being calm and open, embracing the notion of becoming the center of attention.



Fig. 5 The fifth scene featuring a woman looking over the shoulder

Figure 5 shows a scene of a woman smiling while looking over her shoulder, making eye contact with the viewer while touching the skin of her shoulder. In this scene, a narration of "As white as a Japanese woman, because white is Shinzui" with Japanese music accompaniment. This scene was taken using the medium shot technique to accentuate the gesture and expression, focusing on the smile and pose of looking over the shoulder.

The narrative codes in this scene can be divided into the verbal and visual narratives. The verbal narrative was focused on the concept of tying the concept of white into the concept of Japan. The visual narrative was focused on the act of looking over the shoulder. According to Edwards in "10 Shoulder Body Language" (accessed 21 February 2020), looking over the shoulder is an attractive and very innocent gesture. Accompanied with eye contact and smile, the act of looking over the shoulder give a confidence and flirtatious nature. This flirtatious nature also supported by the use of white camisole dress which, historically, was used as an undergarment.

Based on visual analysis of the Shinzui Body Cleanser Skin Lightening edition ad scene, the narrative codes are focused on several elements that are very dominant. These elements are shown in the form of verbal narrative, namely the constant referencing to Japan, and in the form of visual narrative, namely the constant referencing to the gesture of the body.

In Shinzui Body Cleanser television commercial, the male gaze on women is very dominant. This is because the visual narrative constantly refers to women's body. Meutia & Dwiningtyas (2016) argued that the body is endowed with certain meanings that are related solely to sexuality. Hence, the male gaze on the woman body in Shinzui Body Cleanser television commercial is focused on the sexuality aspect of a woman. White skin also referenced many times in this television commercial. Saraswati (2014) argued in her book *Seeing Beauty* that people prefer pure white skin color and seen as a quality of beauty. This calls back to white skin as a form to enforce sexuality through male gaze.

The sexuality aspect represented in this television commercial are inferred through the narrative codes described above. Most gesture of the body featured a reoccurring theme of youthful innocence. The verbal narrative tying the charming quality of a woman to the skin, the skin to white, and white to Japan indicates the importance of the concept of "like Japanese woman" as a charm preferred by the male gaze. According to Ronzi (2014), the concept of Japanese woman was brought to life with the term "Yamato Nadeshiko" which refers to the epitome of purity and beauty. This term refers to a youthful girl who is submissive, pure, and innocent. Hence, the visual narrative and the verbal narrative combined into a narrative code with the recurring theme of a girl's purity.

Discussion

An analysis of the Shinzui Body Cleanser television advertisement reveals how visual and verbal elements work together to construct the image of "girl's purity" as the primary beauty standard. This discussion will examine how this representation is

produced through narrative codes and the male gaze. The advertisement consistently uses Japanese cultural attributes—such as music, Hiragana script, and the actress Aya Ueto—to reinforce the product's identity. The use of these elements is not simply a marketing strategy, but rather an attempt to bring to life the concept of the Yamato Nadeshiko, which represents the ideal woman who is submissive, pure, and innocent. Through a verbal narrative that connects white skin with Japan (“as white as a Japanese woman”), the advertisement establishes a specific beauty standard and positions purity as the highest value for women.

Research findings indicate that the body positions and facial expressions of models in Shinzui advertisements are heavily influenced by the male gaze. This gaze positions women as objects of observation who must meet male standards of visual satisfaction. Gestures such as tilting the head toward the shoulder and glancing over the shoulder are interpreted as signs of submission and innocence. Although the advertisements are themed around hygiene and bathing, the use of white camisoles or slip dresses—historically used as undergarments—conveys a subtle sense of seduction. The visual focus on the shoulders and smooth skin narratively links women's allure directly to their physical appearance. This suggests that the media plays a role in constructing images of women, particularly in beauty product advertisements (Solikah, 2021).

There is a significant gap between representation in advertising and the profile of the target audience in Indonesia. Shinzui advertisements extensively promote pure white skin as a symbol of beauty and sexuality through the male gaze. The majority of Indonesians have brown or tan skin, yet this representation is minimal in beauty advertisements like Shinzui. This demonstrates an imbalance in the concept of beauty, which is no longer seen as authentic (De Regt et al., 2020). Through the image of a woman with white skin, the advertisement attempts to convey the idea that beauty can be transformed by white skin. This shift positions indigenous people as inferior and perpetuates notions of female beauty standards based on the physical appearance of outsiders (Satria & Junaedi, 2022).

Overall, the Shinzui Body Cleanser advertisement perpetuates gender stereotypes that place women in a passive position. Through the narrative code of purity, women are encouraged to become "charming" and "clean" objects in accordance with the desires of male dominance. White skin is no longer seen simply as a health or hygiene issue but has become a sexual commodity wrapped in a narrative of girlish innocence (Blay, 2011).

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Conclusion

From the study of Shinzui Body Cleanser Skin Lightening edition television commercial, the presence of male gaze is significantly present. All dominant narrative points out to sexualization of the body that are used as trendsetter for women through the application of beauty product. Women are placed as an attraction to garner attention while maintaining the quality desired and expected from the woman.

Based on the analysis presented in the results and discussions, the study concludes that the Shinzui Body Cleanser Skin Lightening television commercial preserved the gender stereotype, especially related to the Japanese women, as a desirable concept of beauty. The male gaze enforced the concept of Yamato Nadeshiko on women to entice women to become more subservient and exudes youthful innocence. The girl's purity became the main value behind the female representation. This concept of girl's purity enforced the value made from the male gaze regarding women's sexuality, where men are dominant and free while women are valued by their subservience and girl-like purity.

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