

EXPLORING CONSUMERS' RESPONSES TO ADVERTISING THAT CHALLENGES BEAUTY IDEALS THROUGH BRAND AMBASSADOR: ANALYSIS OF AUDIENCE RECEPTION TOWARD PANTENE INDONESIA'S BYE#RAMBUTCAPEK, HELLO #RAMBUTKERECHARGED YOUTUBE AD WITH CELEBRITY ENDORSER KEANU ANGELO

Antonia Rachel Sekar Dewi Pramana, Nurist Surraya Ulfa, Muhammad Bayu Widagdo

rachelsekardewi@gmail.com

**Program Studi S1 Ilmu Komunikasi
Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Diponegoro
Jl. Prof. Soedarto, SH, Tembalang, Semarang Kotak Pos 1269 Telepon (024) 746407
Faksimile (024) 746504 Laman: <https://fisip.undip.ac.id> / Email: fisip@undip.ac.id**

ABSTRACT

This research explores how Pantene Indonesia challenges the perception that beauty products are exclusively for women through its advertising campaigns, particularly by featuring male influencers like Keanu Angelo in its promotions for the Pantene Miracle Hair Supplement. As Indonesia's beauty industry, especially hair care, continues to grow, Pantene has sought to redefine its brand image in response to competitive pressures and traditional beauty standards. Utilizing Stuart Hall's Reception Theory, qualitative interviews with five informants reveal diverse audience responses shaped by their social backgrounds and personal experiences. Findings indicate a spectrum of interpretations, including dominant, negotiated, and oppositional positions, with some informants exhibiting a dual negotiated-oppositional stance that acknowledges the ad's inclusive message while critiquing conflicting elements. These insights highlight the complexity of audience engagement with media messages and suggest that while Pantene's strategy has the potential to shift perceptions and challenge stereotypes, it must also incorporate broader representations and community outreach efforts to resonate authentically with evolving societal beauty standards.

Keywords: Challenging Beauty Ideals Advertising, Reception Analysis, Pantene Ad, Consumer Responses

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana Pantene Indonesia menantang mitos bahwa produk kecantikan hanya diasosiasikan dengan perempuan melalui kampanye iklannya, terutama dengan menampilkan influencer pria, Keanu Angelo, dalam iklan Pantene Miracle Hair Supplement. Dengan menggunakan Teori Penerimaan Stuart Hall, penelitian kualitatif ini melibatkan wawancara mendalam dengan lima informan yang mengikuti perkembangan industri kecantikan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan adanya variasi dalam respons audiens yang dipengaruhi oleh latar belakang sosial dan pengalaman pribadi, dengan beberapa informan menunjukkan posisi dominan, negosiasi, dan oposisi terhadap pesan iklan. Temuan ini menyoroti kompleksitas keterlibatan audiens dengan pesan media dan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun iklan berupaya menciptakan inklusivitas, beberapa pemirsa tetap terikat pada standar kecantikan yang ada. Untuk meningkatkan kredibilitas dan mencapai representasi yang lebih autentik, Pantene disarankan untuk memperluas representasi dalam iklan dan melakukan kolaborasi dengan berbagai influencer, sehingga dapat mendefinisikan ulang norma kecantikan dan memberdayakan individu tanpa memandang gender.

Kata kunci: Iklan yang menantang Ideal Kecantikan, Analisis Resepsi, Iklan Pantene, Respon Konsumen

BACKGROUND

Nowadays, women are very particular about how they appear on special occasions such as Valentine's Day, birthdays, gatherings, weddings, anniversaries, etc. Haircare products have grown from a desire to a necessity for women who want to look attractive. Most women can only function by using haircare that makes their hair look how they (Saputri et al., 2020). One of the industries in Indonesia that is expanding most rapidly is the haircare sector, which has been rising steadily over the past several years and is anticipated to keep rising (Cekindo.com,2023).

The hair care industry is grappling with market saturation, characterized by a constantly proliferating array of product options Achim Berg et al. (2023). The market in Indonesia is highly competitive, with local and international brands vying for market share. It pushes brands to differentiate themselves through unique product offerings, effective marketing strategies, and a deep understanding of consumer preferences (Roggeveen et al., 2021).As is the case globally, more and more Indonesian consumers are learning how to take care of their hair with online tutorials and the help of influencers, as shown by the noted surge in Google searches for beauty activities throughout 2022 (Annur, 2019). This has undeniably empowered consumers, transforming them from passive recipients of marketing messages into discerning and

critical decision-makers (Acar & Puntoni,2016)

In the highly interconnected digital era, there is no doubt that brands have leveraged the power of social media as an effective advertising platform (Wei et al., 2023). Innovation, creativity, and adaptability are essential for brands to survive in this environment, and effective advertising plays a vital role in achieving those qualities. In today's marketing landscape, celebrity endorsement has become a widely adopted strategy to maximize advertising effectiveness (Patricia&Rodhiah,2021).

A celebrity endorser is a well-known public figure who leverages their positive reputation to promote a consumer product through advertising appearances (McCracken, 1986). Advertisers featuring celebrities as endorsers are more effective than those using non-celebrity endorsers (Paul & Bhakar, 2017). Celebrity endorsers significantly impact a brand due to their role in television, film, sport, music, and social media, influencing society and popular culture Schimmelpfennig & Hunt (2019) .

Choosing the wrong celebrity can be detrimental, potentially damaging brand reputation and leading to distrust and a lack of credibility (Mallett, 2020). Furthermore, commercial advertising often reinforces gender stereotypes, particularly when it comes to products associated with beauty, masculinity, and femininity (Grau & Zotos, 2016). Men and women are frequently

portrayed engaging in distinct activities within advertisements, with women often occupying the central role within the ad narrative (Gaol, 2016). In some cases, these advertisements can even promote unhealthy or unfair gender stereotypes, potentially conveying inappropriate or discriminatory messages that alienate specific audience segments (Meyer et al., 2022). Additionally, studies explored several factors related to the impact of using celebrities as product endorsers, such as the gender of the celebrity and the gender of the target audience member, which might affect consumer response towards the ad (Klaus & Bailey, 2008).

Beauty or personal care product advertisements are frequently displayed on television and other media, potentially influencing viewers to conform and establish beauty standards (Nagara & Nurhajati, 2022). These advertisements often portray women with specific attributes associated with ideal beauty, with 90% of ads using women as models (Ibrahim & Suranto, 1998). This raises concerns about how the representation of women in beauty advertisements can impact their self-image and society's expectations of them (Listari, 2020).

Heteronormativity assumes that heterosexuality is the only normal and common sexuality and that biological sex, sexuality, gender identity, and gender roles are aligned (Messerschmidt, 2012). This

implies that masculinity is associated with men, and femininity is associated with women. As the demand for diversity and inclusion in advertising grows, it is crucial to consider the intersection of beauty standards with gender and sexuality. Representations of beauty should not reinforce rigid gender stereotypes but rather embrace the diversity of gender expressions and identities. However, there is a growing movement towards more inclusive and diverse representations of beauty in advertising. This will contribute to a more comprehensive and equitable society where individuals are valued for their unique qualities and experiences rather than being judged against a narrow and unattainable standard of beauty.

Pantene Indonesia is a flagship hair care brand under PT. Procter & Gamble (P&G) has established itself as a household name and market leader by addressing the hair concerns of Indonesian consumers through its proven and effective products (Endrika, 2022). This hair care brand has long been associated with women, as Pantene has consistently featured female celebrities as brand ambassadors and advertisement stars. By portraying women as feminine, gentle, elegant, classy, and edgy and showcasing their long, well-maintained hair, Pantene has further solidified its brand identity, exemplified by celebrities like Anggun C.Sasmi, Raline Shah, and Maudy Ayunda (Xaviera, 2022). This has led to the widespread perception among Indonesians

that Pantene products are exclusively for women.

In early January 2022, Pantene Indonesia released a one-minute advertisement titled "*Bye#RambutCapek, Hello#RambutKeRecharged*" on YouTube to introduce its new and first hair supplement product for Indonesia. The product comes in two variants: Miracles Biotin Strength & Collagen Repair Daily Supplement Conditioner, which hydrates and repairs hair, and the Weekly Supplement Hair Mask, which can transform dried and damaged hair into healthy, strong, and lustrous locks (The Jakarta Post, 2022). The advertisement features their first and new male brand ambassador, Keanu Angelo. He is an internet personality with a significant following of 5 million on his personal Instagram account (Kusala, 2022). He is known for his 'Short-Fused' temperament and unruly hair, giving Pantene a fresh point of view and marking a significant departure from their previous marketing strategies to demonstrate how the product works using a personality no other beauty brand ever thinks of that might suit their targeted consumers, Gen Z and Millennials (Dentsu Indonesia, 2022).

This innovative campaign, lauded for its willingness to challenge traditional norms, highlights Pantene's keen understanding of evolving consumer preferences. By embracing inclusivity and dismantling gender stereotypes in its marketing strategy, Pantene establishes itself as a progressive

brand that resonates with the values of younger generations. Their commitment to these values is evident in their storytelling. It celebrates transformation, challenges societal barriers, and promotes an inclusive vision of beauty that encompasses a holistic definition of well-being (pantene.ca, 2024). The campaign's positive reception and its measurable impact on Pantene's sales serve as a testament to its effectiveness and suggest that it could serve as a valuable benchmark for future advertising endeavours, encouraging brands to embrace fresh and innovative approaches to capture the attention of a wider audience (Habibah & Sari, 2022).

Based on the research context above, the researcher is motivated to seek and uncover the issues related to how the audience reception analysis of Pantene Indonesia's YouTube ad starring the new Brand Ambassador, Keanu Angelo. Previous research that examines consumers' responses to an advertisement that challenges beauty ideals through brand ambassador change has never been studied before in national or international research, so this is new research.

Research Framework

Research Paradigm

This research is grounded in the constructivist paradigm, which emphasizes the reconstructed understanding of the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The constructivist paradigm is based on the belief that individuals construct reality from their interactions and beliefs (Neuman, 2014). The

constructivist paradigm emphasizes the importance of seeing the world from the participant's point of view. The audience's perspective will be seen as something that has been constructed and full of meaning. The meanings formed and view of the informer who responds to Pantene Indonesia's rebranding strategy will be seen as value-free, under the principles of the constructivist paradigm, with no right or wrong value as everything depends on the understanding of reality (Belic et al., 2022).

State of The Art

This study incorporates findings from previous studies and prior investigations conducted locally and globally in Indonesia. An example of the study is by Kartika and Wirawanda (2019). The findings on soft masculinity indicate that the informants were in a negotiating position. They acknowledged that men possess a tough or macho side of masculinity. However, they also negotiated soft masculinity as an alternative definition of masculinity. The study's contributions lie in exploring female perspectives on soft masculinity that are presented in variety shows.

Brand Ambassadors in Representing Ideal Images

In a fiercely competitive beauty industry, brands wield the power of attraction, employing brand ambassadors who embody idealized beauty standards (Adhimurti et al. et al., 2023). The onus lies on beauty brands to move beyond a singular focus on

attractiveness and embrace inclusivity in their marketing strategies. Promoting a more comprehensive range of beauty ideals and celebrating diversity can minimize the negative social impact on consumers and foster a more positive relationship with their audience.

Consumer's Reception

The form of advertising can be presented through various kinds of media as a nonpersonal communication paid for by the sponsor using mass media to persuade or introduce the sponsor to its customers. The concept of consumer reception refers to and is an adjustment of the audience encoding-decoding process originated by Stuart Hall (1993). When media is read, seen, or listened to, meaning will emerge during reception. In this case, audiences are not merely consumers of media content but also producers of meaning. Audiences can interpret media based on the background and experiences that audiences experience in their lives, which, in turn, one received media will produce many meanings (polysemy) in the exact media text (Pratiwi et al., 2021).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. As a result, it is employed to comprehend individuals' attitudes, relationships, behaviours, and beliefs. Concentrating on meaning, viewpoints, and motives produces and emphasizes subjective experience rather

than objective measurement (Pathak et al., 2013). This research utilizes a reception analysis approach. This analysis heavily emphasizes the role of the reader in decoding media texts. In general, it has a consciously critical side, in the terms discussed above, which requires the audience to have the power to reject the overthrow of the dominant or hegemonic meanings offered by the mass media.

Research Subject

Young adults (aged 21-25) who spend at least Rp 250,000 per month on body care and beauty products and have watched Pantene Indonesia's *#Pantene Bye #RambutCapek*, *Hello #RambutKeRecharged* on YouTube and other Pantene ads. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on criteria such as age, social media activity, and interest in hair care. The selected participants were knowledgeable and reliable individuals who had watched Pantene ads, including the ad starring Keanu Angelo.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Each informant provided distinct responses to the advertisement, shaped by social, cultural, and situational factors. Lilo recognized Keanu's unique appeal in the ad through his distinctive characteristics but believed that previous advertisements were more iconic and influential. In contrast, Stitch perceived the ad as having a fresh concept, describing the choice of brand ambassador as shocking yet effective, which

he felt made it more innovative and aligned with modern beauty standards that could attract younger demographics. Ariel noted that her initial interest in the ad was sparked by the numerous reposted stories on Instagram; she found Keanu's character engaging and enjoyable due to its interactive elements and humor, although she also identified inconsistencies that diminished the overall impact of the ad's message. Victor suggested that the ad's popularity and virality stemmed mainly from its humor and Pantene's ability to tap into current trends, asserting that the message alone was insufficient to influence his purchasing decision. Lastly, Pooh expressed that previous brand ambassadors were more convincing and effective in persuading audiences to buy the product, while he acknowledged surprising elements in the current ad that captured attention and elicited various reactions.

Audience Reception position

A negotiated reading reflects a partial acceptance of the advertisement's message, often accompanied by personal modifications. For example, viewers may agree with the ad's challenge to traditional beauty standards but choose not to fully engage with the product due to their own beliefs or established habits. In contrast, an oppositional reading entails a complete rejection of the ad's message and a conscious decision to avoid the product altogether. These findings indicate that while the advertisement aimed for a dominant reading, viewers actively negotiated and

resisted the message based on their individual experiences, social contexts, and personal beliefs. Additionally, a negotiated-oppositional position emerged, where individuals might appreciate Pantene's efforts to promote inclusivity yet still harbour doubts or discomfort regarding the new beauty standards presented in the ad. This ambivalence may stem from comparisons to previous campaigns or scepticism about the authenticity of the message. As a result, these individuals may find themselves in a transitional phase, adjusting to evolving concepts of beauty.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussions presented, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Audience reception towards the advertisement was significantly shaped by viewers' active engagement with the beauty industry and their perspectives. The audience exhibited a strong tendency to justify their responses based on differing social values, personal beliefs, and situational factors. Viewers actively avoided or skipped advertisements that featured aggressive marketing tactics or when the portrayal of beauty or the representation of the brand ambassador did not resonate with their ideals. This rejection underscores a critical stance toward the ad, revealing a disconnect between the advertisement's message and the audience's expectations of authenticity and inclusivity in beauty representation.

2. Pantene's "Bye #RambutCapek, Hello #RambutKeCharged" campaign featuring Keanu Angelo challenges the long-standing myth that hair products are solely for women, positioning the brand as an inclusive advocate for diverse representations of beauty. By showcasing a male influencer as the brand ambassador, the ad disrupts traditional gender roles in beauty advertising and invites all individuals to engage with Pantene's products, regardless of gender. Viewers adopting a dominant reading recognised this effort to challenge societal norms surrounding hair care and appreciated how Keanu's representation redefines conventional beauty standards. This campaign underscores the importance of representation in media. It highlights Pantene's commitment to promoting a more inclusive narrative in the beauty industry, encouraging consumers to embrace their individuality and celebrate the beauty of all people.
3. Individuals adopting a negotiated position partially accepted the ad's message. While they found the ad with Keanu Angelo engaging, they disagreed with the choice of brand ambassador, arguing that a female figure would be more suitable for a brand historically associated with women.

4.. Viewers who held an oppositional position completely rejected the ad's message and the choice of Keanu Angelo as a brand ambassador. They argued that the ad did not align with their definition of beauty, contradicted Pantene's previous brand image, and lacked a clear target market.

5. The study revealed a diversity of audience \responses, indicating that viewers did not fit neatly into the traditional categories of dominant, negotiated, and oppositional positions as proposed by Stuart Hall. This finding contributes to the existing body of research on audience reception

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations can be made:

1. Social

The research highlights that a complex interplay of societal norms, personal experiences, and individual beliefs influences audience responses to advertisements challenging beauty ideals. When individuals perceive a discrepancy between the ad's message and their understanding of beauty, they may avoid or reject the ad. Therefore, brands like Pantene should carefully consider how societal beauty standards and individual values shape audience reception when developing inclusive campaigns.

2. Practical

To enhance inclusivity, Pantene Indonesia should feature diverse models, through various backgrounds, ages, skin tones, and gender identities, to create a relatable image. Educational campaigns and initiatives explaining cultural concepts and terms would help the audience foster understanding. Highlighting real user stories showcasing Pantene's benefits for various hair types would resonate with a wider audience. Collaborating with diverse influencers and creating tailored content would reinforce inclusivity. They are engaging in community initiatives promoting self-acceptance. By implementing these strategies, Pantene can strengthen its position as a brand genuinely embracing diversity and representation in the beauty industry while educating the public on important cultural concepts.

3. Academic

This research challenges the notion that audience reception is limited to three distinct positions (dominant, negotiated, and oppositional). It suggests that individuals may hold multiple positions simultaneously when interpreting a message. Future research could explore additional factors influencing audience reception of advertisements that challenge beauty ideals, such as the role of cultural context, personal identity, and the specific characteristics of the brand ambassador.

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