

REPRESENTATION OF THE WHITE BEAUTY STANDARD IN THE CITRA NATURAL WHITE UV ADVERTISING POSTER: A FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Beauty standards in Indonesian society are often associated with fair and bright skin, creating a social perception that lighter skin represents ideal beauty. This phenomenon is closely related to colorism, which privileges lighter skin tones over darker ones. Advertisements play an important role in constructing and reinforcing these beauty standards. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the representation of white beauty standards in the Citra Natural White UV advertisement poster using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory and the concept of colorism. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. The data source was obtained through documentation techniques by analyzing visual and verbal signs contained in the advertisement poster. The analysis focused on identifying signifier and signified and interpreting their meanings through the perspective of colorism. The findings reveal that the advertisement constructs white beauty standard through the representation of bright skin, white color symbolism, natural ingredients, femininity, and self confidence. These representations reinforce the perception that fair and bright skin is an ideal characteristic of female beauty. This study concludes that the Citra Natural White UV advertisement contributes to the construction and reproduction of white beauty standards in society.

Keywords: Semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure, White Beauty Standard, Colorism, Advertisement

ABSTRAK

Standar kecantikan di Indonesia sering kali dikaitkan dengan kulit yang putih, cerah, dan bersih. Kondisi tersebut melahirkan fenomena colorism, yaitu perlakuan atau penilaian yang berbeda berdasarkan tingkat kecerahan warna kulit. Iklan kecantikan merupakan salah satu media yang berperan dalam membentuk dan mereproduksi standar kecantikan tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis representasi white beauty standard dalam poster iklan Citra Natural White UV menggunakan teori semiotika Ferdinand de Saussure dan konsep colorism. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa dokumentasi. Analisis dilakukan dengan mengidentifikasi signifier (penanda) dan signified (petanda) pada unsur visual dan verbal yang terdapat dalam poster. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa poster iklan Citra Natural White UV mengonstruksikan white beauty standard melalui representasi kulit cerah, penggunaan warna putih, slogan produk, bahan-bahan alami, serta citra Perempuan yang feminin dan percaya diri. Representasi tersebut memperkuat persepsi bahwa kulit cerah merupakan salah satu standar kecantikan ideal bagi Perempuan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa iklan Citra Natural White UV tidak hanya mempromosikan produk kecantikan, tetapi juga mereproduksi konstruksi sosial mengenai standar kecantikan berbasis warna kulit.

Kata kunci: Semiotika, Ferdinand de Saussure, White Beauty Standard, Colorism, Iklan.

1. Introduction

Beauty is a concept that continues to evolve and is influenced by various social, cultural, historical, and media related factors (Jablonski, 2020, p .437). In Indonesia, one of the beauty standarts that is still widely embraced by society is the perception that white or fair skin represents an ideal form of beauty (Mufidah et al., 2025, p.90). This perception encourages many women to seek lighter and brighter skin through various skincare and cosmetic products.

According to Isnaeni, as cited in (Ifa, 2025, p. 57), the phenomenon of protizing lighter skin tones over darker skin tones is known as colorism . Colorism is a form of social hierarchy based on skin color, in which individuals with lighter skin tones are often perceived more positively than those with darker skin tones (Ifa, 2025, p. 60). This phenomenon cannot be separated from the influence of colonial history, social construction, and popular culture that has developed within society.

One medium that plays an important role in shaping perceptions of beauty standards is advertising (Dewanti, 2025, p. 41). Advertising functions not only as a medium for promoting products but also as a means of conveying certain values, ideologies, and social constructions. Through various visual and verbal elements, advertisement can shape public perceptions of the ideal image of women, including beauty standards based on skin color.

Citra Natural White UV is one of the skincare products that emphasizes the concept of white and bright skin through various visual and verbal elements in its advertisements. The use of the slogan “*Kulit Putih Bening Alam*” (“Naturally Clear White Skin”), the representation of a female model with fair skin, and the use of certain symbols indicate the construction of meanings related to women’s beauty standards.

Previous studies have tended to employ Roland Barthes’ semiotic approach to analyze the representation of beauty in Citra advertisements. Meanwhile, studies specifically examining the representation of the white beauty standard in Citra Natural White UV advertising posters using Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiotic approach from a colorism perspective remain limited. Therefore, this study is conducted to address this research gap.

This study employs Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiotic theory, which focuses on the relationship between the signifier and the signified. In addition, the concept of colorism is used as a supporting framework to explain how skin color hierarchies influence the construction of beauty standards in society.

Based on the background above, the research questions of this study are as follows:

1. How are the signifier and signified represented in the Citra Natural White UV advertising poster?
2. How is the white beauty standard constructed through the visual and verbal signs in the poster?

The objective of this study is to identify the signifiers and signifieds contained in the Citra Natural White UV advertising poster and to reveal how the white beauty standard is constructed through the various visual and verbal signs used in the advertisement.

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method, with documentation as the data

collection technique. The data are analyzed using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach, supported by the concept of colorism.

2. Results



Figure 1. Citra Natural White UV Advertisement Poster

2.1. Representasi of Natural Beauty

Table 1. Analysis Signifier and Signified of Natural Beauty Elements

No	Visual	Signifier	Signified
1.		The poster background is predominantly luminous green.	Luminous green symbolize naturalness. This color emphasize that the product is made from natural and organic ingredients.
2.		Jicama	Shows one of the natural ingredients contained in the product. It is known for its ability to brighten the skin.
3.		Jasmine flowers	Symbolize femininity, representing beauty, elegance, softness, and naturalness
4.		White liquid	Symbolizes softness and reinforces the representation of white skin beauty standards.

The analysis results show that the Citra Natural White UV advertising poster represents the concept of natural beauty through various visual elements. The green background represents freshness, naturalness, and health. In addition, the presence of jicama and jasmine flowers indicates the use of natural ingredients that can brighten the skin.

The flowing white lotion represents softness, cleanliness, and skincare. Overall, these signs construct the meaning that beauty and bright skin can be achieved through natural and safe skincare, such as Citra Natural White UV body lotion.

2.2. Representation of White Beauty Standards

Table 2. Analysis of Signifier and Signified of White Beauty Standards

No	Visual	Signifier	Signified
1.		The words “Natural White UV”	Indicate the product variant as well as the benefits offered to consumers and reinforce white skin beauty standards.
2.		The model’s bright, smooth, and glowing skin	Represents the ideal beauty standard of bright, smooth, and glowing skin.
3.		Product packaging predominantly white	White symbolizes purity and cleanliness. This reinforces the representation of white skin beauty standards.
4.		The slogan “Kulit Putih Bening Alami Khas Lulur”	Shows the product’s selling value and represents the beauty standard that white skin is beautiful, natural, and ideal.
5.		The “5x Vit C” content claim and gold colored Vitamin C	Indicate the main skin brightening ingredient, emphasize product effectiveness and scientific legitimacy, and reinforce the representation of bright skin beauty standards

The representation of the white beauty standard is the most dominant aspect of this advertising poster. The phrase “Natural White UV” not only indicates the name of the product variant but also represents the beauty goal that consumers are expected to achieve, namely whiter and brighter skin.

Furthermore, the slogan “Kulit Putih Bening Alami Khas Lulur” (“Naturally Clear White Skin with the Essence of Body Scrub”) directly associates white skin with ideal beauty. The use of white on the product packaging also represents purity, cleanliness, and perfection. In addition, the claim “5x Vitamin C” reinforces the construction of the white beauty standard by providing scientific legitimacy for achieving brighter skin as a form of ideal beauty.

The female model in the poster is represented as having bright, smooth, and radiant skin. These findings indicate that the advertisement not only promotes a beauty product but also reproduces a hierarchy of skin colors that positions lighter skin as a symbol of ideal beauty, as explained through the concept of colorism. Thus, this advertising poster constructs lighter skin as one of the beauty standards for women.

2.3 Representation of Ideal Femininity

Table 3. Analysis of Signifier and Signified of Femininity

No	Visual	Signifier	Signified
1.		The model smiles broadly	Shows satisfaction, happiness, and confidence in using the product. The implicit meaning constructed is that women with bright skin will feel more confident.
2.		Long, black, and neat hair.	Indicates female attractiveness, beauty, and health.
3.		White dress	Indicates femininity, symbolizing beauty, elegance, and softness. The white color also supports the white

			beauty narrative constructed by the advertisement.
4.		pose	Display elegance and confidence. Supports the selling value offered.
5.		Italic “Citra” font	Represents softness and elegance.

The advertising poster also represents the image of the ideal woman through various visual elements. The smiling expression displayed by the model conveys happiness, satisfaction, confidence, and attractiveness.

The model's long black hair symbolizes beauty, health, and femininity. The white clothing worn by the model represents softness, purity, and elegance. In addition, the relaxed body posture and exposed shoulders convey an image of an elegant and confident woman. The use of an italicized and curved font in the “Citra” logo can be interpreted as representing softness, femininity, and elegance, which support the construction of the ideal female image in the advertisement.

Through these various signs, the advertisement constructs the representation of an ideal woman as beautiful, feminine, happy, and confident.

3. Conclusion

Based on Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic analysis, this study finds that the Citra Natural White UV advertising poster employs various visual and verbal signs to construct meanings related to beauty, femininity, and skin color. Elements such as the representation of bright skin, the use of the color white, the product slogan, natural ingredients, and the image of a confident woman function as signifiers that generate particular meanings.

This study also demonstrates that the Citra Natural White UV advertising poster constructs the white beauty standard by representing bright skin as one of the characteristics of ideal female beauty. From the perspective of colorism, this representation further reinforces the social perception that prioritizes lighter skin tones

over darker skin tones.

This study is expected to contribute to the fields of semiotics, media, and popular culture studies, as well as to increase public awareness of the construction of skin color based beauty standards that develop in mass media.

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