

The Portrayal of Feminine Touch in Y.O.U Beauty Indonesia and Philippines Advertisements

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Received: February 28, 2024

Accepted: March 14, 2024

Published: March 30, 2024

Citation: Supriyono, N, M, R, P., Larasati, M, P., & Prasmato, A. (2024). The Portrayal of Feminine Touch in Y.O.U Beauty Indonesia and Philippines Advertisements. *Lingua: Journal of Linguistic and Language*, 2(1), 51-61.
<https://doi.org/10.61978/lingua.v2i1>

ABSTRACT: This research investigates the portrayal of feminine touch in the Y.O.U Beauty skincare advertisement, focusing on a case study in Indonesia and the Philippines through the lens of Erving Goffman's theory of gender in advertising. The analysis is based on four posts from the official Y.O.U Beauty Instagram account. This study utilizes a descriptive qualitative method, employing content analysis to systematically examine the detailed elements of the advertisements. The findings reveal three key aspects—specifically the connection between the model and the product, gesture, and color appearance—that illustrate the feminine touch in the Y.O.U skincare advertisements in Indonesia and the Philippines. Additionally, the advertisements indicate a shift in societal mindsets and culture regarding the use of skincare products in recent years, particularly evident in the selection of brand ambassadors, both men and women.

Keywords: Advertisement, Brand Ambassadors, Feminine Touch, Gender, Skin Care Products.



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INTRODUCTION

The development of public consumption has increased yearly, including the number of service providers or manufacturers, especially skincare products. Producers consist not only of imported

brands but also local brands, which are increasing in number in this industry. Undeniably, the ease of technology has also become one of the factors for market needs, making consumers face many product choices. Instagram is one of the social media that is often used as an intermediary between consumers and producers. The complexity of the products displayed goes hand in hand with the complexity of consumer purchasing decisions, especially female consumers, who are the most skincare product users. Purchasing decisions become a long process carried out by consumers. This is influenced by various advertisements offered in related social media accounts. Generally, consumers will perceive the persuasive message given by the product. In addition to product excellence, brand ambassadors influence brand image and product sales. This is because a brand ambassador acts as press coverage, which has a big role in shaping the image and product proposition from the point of view of the target market to be achieved. The Korean wave phenomenon, also called Hallyu, was booming not long ago. Without realizing it, Korean culture also influences the cosmetic industry, spreading to various countries, including Indonesia. Interestingly, the perception of skincare only used for women has also shifted due to this influence. The reason is that most Korean idol groups always take care of their skin with skincare. Therefore, it is not surprising that male brand ambassadors are now popping up in South Korea and other countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

The phenomenon of marketing skincare products using male brand ambassadors on social media is contrary to the perception of cosmetics that has existed so far in Indonesia. This is the result of a cultural shift that causes a change in people's mindsets. During past decades, cosmetic products have been associated with women, so the use of male brand ambassadors with conflicting concepts will have a different effect on the audience attitudes (Peng, 2020). Thus, this study aims to analyze how feminine touch in skincare advertisements on Y.O.U Beauty's official Instagram can influence people's culture and mindset. This is a local brand that has been around since 2018. Even though it has not been with the Indonesian people for too long, this brand has already shown its existence through various marketing strategies and attractive products. One of them is using Instagram social media for product promotion. Researchers realize there has been a change in the algorithm in 2021, where the ads always use female brand ambassadors. However, various Korean beauty influencers and idols entered the world of skincare in 2022, the advertisements that were shown ended up using Korean male idols for skincare marketing. Researchers are also interested in comparing with different countries, therefore Indonesia and the Philippines were chosen as the benchmark. With the differences in advertisements in other countries accompanied by the same year, the role of

gender displays in these advertisements can be examined.

Sociologist Erving Goffman was the pioneer who explored gender advertisement more. In his book that was published in 1976 entitled "Gender Advertisements", Goffman explains how femininity and masculinity are portrayed in Western media. He discovers dramatic differences between how men and women are portrayed by looking at more than 500 photo advertisements and evaluating the various poses, body placement, clothing, and other factors. Women are frequently represented as being delicate, weak, helpless, dreamy, childlike, and subservient. Goffman primarily focuses on how femininity is constructed in advertising. Still, he also provides insight into how masculinity is portrayed because the two are seen and defined about one another. In addition, Goffman proposed that advertising does, sometimes subtly and other times more overtly, impart cultural notions about each sex.

Five of his categories of gender "behavior displays" are used in the current study: (1) Relative Size: "Relative size, especially height, is one way that social weight—power, authority, rank, and office renovation—is echoed expressively in social situations." (p. 28). (2) The Feminine Touch: "More often than males, women are depicted using their fingers and hands to trace the outline of an object or to cradle or caress its surface. (p.29). (3) Function Ranking: According to Goffman (1979, p. 32), "In our society, when a man and a woman collaborate face-to-face in an undertaking, the man seems to be likely to perform the executive role." (4) The Ritualization of Subordination: "Physically lowering oneself in a manner other than prostration is a traditional prototype of reverence. Holding one's body upright and head high signifies unabashed supremacy, discipline, and superiority." (5) Licensed Withdrawal: "Women more than males seem to be pictured engaged in activities that psychologically isolate them from society as a whole (Goffman, 1979).

The urgency of this study is supported by Bonita's research (2022), which reveals elements in the gender display, one of which is brand ambassadors, which are marketing tools that represent a product (Bonita, 2022). Their ability to use promotional strategies will encourage consumers to buy the products offered. The selection of brand ambassadors brought by celebrities or public figures is believed to significantly impact the company's products. Zuleika, A. D. (2018) states that the company displays the artist through visual merchandising in product sales stores to attract the attention of potential customers (Zuleika, 2018). Artist appearances are available in offline stores and online visual merchandising on a brand's website or social media account. With online visual merchandising, product sales can increase sharply. The arrangement of products on an eye-catching website makes it take longer for consumers to see them. This results in consumers

deciding whether to purchase the product or not. Moreover, this change in gender display is confirmed by Al Ilhami and Hendrastomo's research (2020) which stated that globalization, including the Korean wave, has contributed to improving the skincare and cosmetics industry (Al Ilhami & Hendrastomo, 2020). Thus, it is not surprising that nowadays not only women who care for themselves, but men are also interested in doing the same thing.

Their research results show that men use facial skin care to cover up feelings of insecurity. It can also be because of the influence of advertisements. The meaning of facial skin care for men is considered as a determinant of social class in society and gives rise to a new meaning of masculinity. Accompanied by the results of research by Andriani S. A, Islam M. A (2022), about the use of the feminine concept, which also affects strengthening and recognizing brand identity in the target audience, where the brand wants to be known as a close friend of women (Adriani & Islam, 2022) The feminine concept is also a special attraction for the ideal woman, the target audience for Instagram feed design.

This study differs from previous research by focusing on gender display as a primary lens for analyzing skincare advertising strategies. By examining Y.O.U Beauty's Instagram campaigns, this research aims to explore how shifting representations of gender influence consumer culture and societal mindsets in Indonesia and the Philippines. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of how advertisements function as cultural artifacts that reflect and shape evolving gender norms.

METHODS

Researchers use a descriptive qualitative approach since the data are non-numerical. The data used in this research comes from the official Instagram account of Y.O.U. Beauty Indonesia and Philippines. The samples are four Instagram posts, consisting of two advertisements each from @youbeauty_idn and @youbeauty_ph in 2021 and 2022. Thus, the technique that is used to collect and analyze the data is content analysis. According to Cavanagh (1997), Content analysis is a flexible method for analyzing text data. As a research methodology, content analysis has its roots in the study of mass communications. It applies significance or meaning to information that has been collected and helps to identify patterns in the text. Moreover, content analysis can provide a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of an advertisement. In collecting and analyzing the data, the researchers used these steps: finding a suitable ad from the official

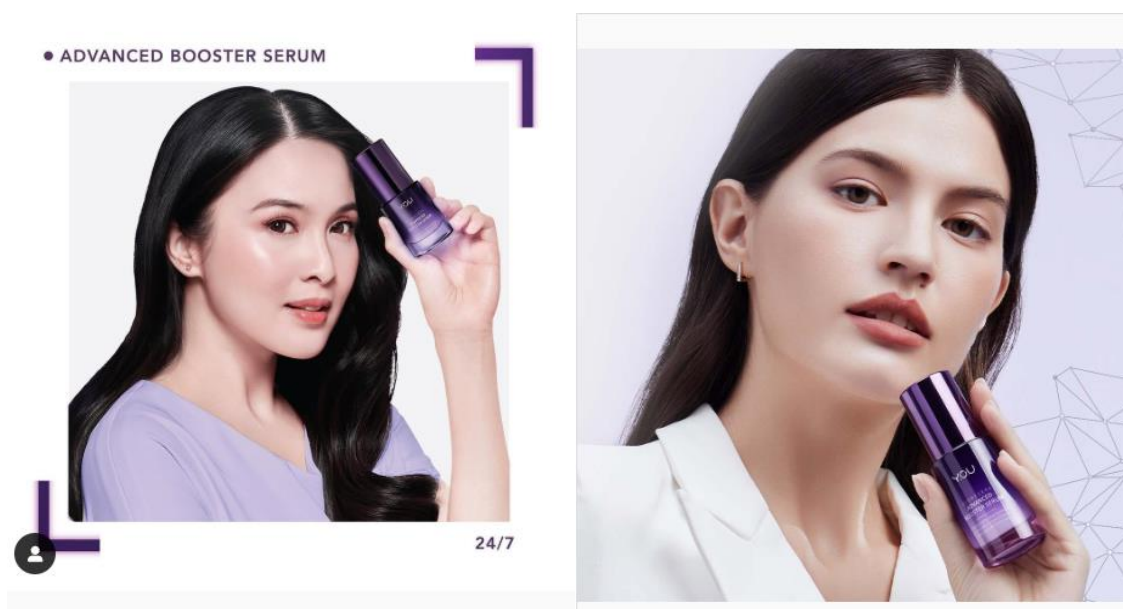
Instagram account of Y.O.U. Beauty Indonesia and Philippines, coding the data into categories (include words, themes, word senses, images, phrases, or whole sentences), interpreting the data, and finding the gender feature on the data collected based on Goffman's theory on gender advertisements.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses how gender displays in skin care advertisements on Y.O.U Beauty's official Instagram can influence people's culture and mindset. One category that stands out is feminine touch where advertisements often use female figures as brand ambassadors. The female figure with a strong connection with skincare is one of the reasons for choosing a brand ambassador.

Advertisement in Indonesia and the Philippines (2021)

Picture 1. Left: YOU Indonesia Ads; Right: YOU Philippines Ads (Source: YOU Instagram Official)



a. Connection between model and product

The connection between models and the advertised product is not merely about visual appeal but serves as a strategic branding effort that aligns with cultural and consumer expectations. In Indonesian and Filipino advertisements (2021), female models—typically actresses or professional models—are chosen for their attractiveness and the brand image they represent. Their association with the product extends beyond personal endorsement; it signals credibility and aspirational beauty ideals. For instance, the Y.O.U Biomecera advanced booster serum

highlights its biomecera technology, emphasizing ingredients such as ceramides, probiotics, and tulsi, which contribute to skin health. The Indonesian model's visibly radiant complexion reinforces these claims, establishing an implicit cause-and-effect relationship between product usage and desired results. Similarly, in the Philippines, advertisements employ the same strategy, leveraging the model's appearance to validate product efficacy. However, the persuasive mechanism differs: while Indonesian advertisements focus on an ethereal, almost unattainable beauty standard, Filipino advertisements lean toward direct testimonials, underscoring a more pragmatic, results-driven approach.

b. Gestures

The portrayal of gestures in advertisements is not incidental but functions as a coded representation of gender norms. In the 2021 advertisements, female models often employ soft, cradling motions when interacting with the product. This aligns with Goffman's "Feminine Touch" framework, where women's interaction with objects is portrayed as delicate, nurturing, and almost reverential. Such a portrayal reinforces conventional femininity, suggesting an emotional and gentle connection with skincare. Conversely, in 2022 advertisements featuring male brand ambassadors, gestures become more assertive and controlled. The grip on the product is firm, with direct positioning near the face, signaling confidence and ownership. This shift challenges traditional gender binaries, presenting skincare as a rational and practical necessity for men rather than a purely aesthetic indulgence. The transformation in gesture use reflects broader societal changes, where self-care is increasingly normalized as a gender-neutral practice rather than an exclusively feminine domain.

c. Appearance and Color

Visual presentation in advertisements extends beyond aesthetics; it constructs meaning and influences consumer perception. A key distinction between Indonesian and Filipino advertisements lies in framing and color coordination. Filipino advertisements favor close-up shots, emphasizing facial features and enhancing relatability. This direct engagement fosters a sense of authenticity and underscores the product's tangible benefits. In contrast, Indonesian advertisements utilize a slightly distanced, side-profile approach, creating a more aspirational and stylized image that suggests exclusivity. Makeup and color choices further reinforce brand positioning. The Indonesian model's attire and makeup often match the product packaging, a deliberate strategy to establish a cohesive visual identity. This uniformity subtly guides

consumer focus, reinforcing product association. Meanwhile, the Filipino model frequently wears white, which aligns with the "clean girl" aesthetic—minimalist, natural, and effortlessly radiant. White clothing enhances the perception of purity and luxury and amplifies the visual impact of luminous skin, aligning seamlessly with the product's claims. The interplay of appearance, framing, and color schemes is not arbitrary; it strategically molds consumer perception and strengthens the persuasive impact of the advertisement.

Advertisement in Indonesia and the Philippines (2022)

Picture 2. Left: YOU Indonesia Ads; Right: YOU Philippines Ads (Source: YOU Instagram Official)



A shift in mindset and culture began to be seen, as men started using skincare. This started with the Korean wave in most countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines. The mindset that used to focus on women's skincare is now a universal assumption, and men also use it.

a. Connection between model and product

In skincare product advertisements, the relationship between the model and the product plays a crucial role in establishing the credibility of the product's claims. The models used in ads in Indonesia and the Philippines represent the promised results—healthy and youthful-looking skin. In this context, the male model in the Indonesian advertisement demonstrates the product's effectiveness by showcasing his wrinkle-free, firm, and blemish-free skin.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, the advertisement features Korean actor Kim Soo-hyun as the brand ambassador. The choice of a Korean actor reflects the influence of the Korean wave (Hallyu) in the beauty industry, where Korean beauty standards have become aspirational for many Asian consumers. As a result, using a Korean model reinforces the product's claims and

aligns with global trends, enhancing the product's appeal in the international market.

b. Gestures

The gestures displayed by the models in the advertisements play a significant role in shaping the product narrative. In Indonesia, the model naturally holds the product close to his face, emphasizing the connection between the product's promised results and his skin condition. This approach creates an authentic impression that the product is genuinely effective in maintaining skin health.

Conversely, in the Philippines, the model's gestures are more deliberate, positioning the product closer to his face with a tighter camera angle. This technique highlights the details of the model's skin, reinforcing the product's claims through clear visual evidence. This contrast demonstrates different strategic approaches in visual communication between the two countries—the Indonesian advertisement adopts a more natural portrayal, while the Philippine advertisement explicitly showcases the product's effects.

c. Appearance and color

Advertisements' visual composition and color choices can also show significant differences. In Indonesia, the composition is balanced, with the model positioned at a moderate distance from the camera, allowing space for other visual elements. The model wears black clothing, symbolizing masculinity and strength.

In the Philippines, the advertisement utilizes a close-up (fill-the-frame) shot to create a more detailed and realistic impression of the model's skin. Additionally, Kim Soo-hyun's clothing is color-coordinated with the product, reinforcing a sense of cohesion between the model and the skincare item. This technique strengthens the message that the product is essential to the model's lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to a general understanding of gender role representation in the advertising world, which influences skincare purchases by female and male consumers. Research also demonstrates a shift in mindset and culture related to the usage of skin care products in society in recent years, viewed from the choice of brand ambassadors who are men and women. This shift

was influenced by globalization, including the Korean wave, which also influenced the beauty world and the mindset of people worldwide, including Indonesia and the Philippines, regarding skincare usage. In this context, it is applied that men also have the right to use skincare to give a positive image in their daily appearance.

Based on the results of the data analysis, the research has identified several factors that depict the feminine touch in Y.O.U Beauty advertisements in Indonesia and the Philippines (2021 and 2022) such as the connection between model and product, gesture, and color appearance. Model and product connections show the correlation between product claims and results in the advertising figures. Then, gesture is a form of non-verbal communication in advertisements shown through body actions to convey certain messages implicitly or explicitly. Meanwhile, the visual representation offered by models and products can be seen directly through appearance and color.

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