

WHEN ACTORS TAKE OVER THE PRODUCTS: SHOWCASING HALLYU-INFLUENCED INDONESIAN BEAUTY PRODUCT ADVERTISING THROUGH MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

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WHEN ACTORS TAKE OVER THE PRODUCTS: SHOWCASING HALLYU-INFLUENCED INDONESIAN BEAUTY PRODUCT ADVERTISING THROUGH MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract – *Capitalizing on the Hallyu wave, an Indonesian cosmetics company known as Scarlett Whitening changed their Instagram marketing strategy to focus on their South Korean brand ambassador, Song Joong Ki. This study is an attempt to address the research gaps on the semiotics of Korean-related media, considering that there are only a few studies on advertisements that have been influenced by the Korean craze. The data of this study are two Instagram advertisements of Scarlett Whitening that represented their change of strategy on September 2021. The data are analyzed using multimodal analysis to find out the three metafunctions of the advertisements, referring to Kress and Leeuwen's social semiotics theory. Results showed that the representational meaning of both advertisements contained a strong narrative to invite readers to buy the product so that they can be closer to the South Korean actor, the interpersonal metafunction influenced consumers to believe that the human model is very familiar with the product, and the compositional metafunction highlighted the association between Song Joong Ki's white skin, white clothes, white product with the brand's name. However, the analysis also indicated an extreme spotlight on the South Korean actor and a stark neglect of the product in across the linguistic, visual and spatial semiotic systems. This study is significant in revealing a potentially concerning upcoming business marketing strategy that capitalizes on the popularity of Korean culture at the cost of*

neglecting the authenticity of their own products

Keywords: *Multimodality, Representational Metafunction, Interpersonal Metafunction, and Compositional Metafunction*

INTRODUCTION

The life of effective marketers is by advertising their products. Advertisement is successful when it can convince people to respond as suggested by the advertisement (Shariq, 2020). To make their advertisements stand out, creators of advertisements deliberately design their text, images, and other semiotic elements such as audio or video to stand out and attract customers (Singh et al., 2021). However, the notion of "standing out" and "attractive" are highly subjective because individuals have different preferences and online flow experiences, but all marketers need to design their advertisements in a way that will somehow stand out and attract massive amounts of people. This is where world trends have a role.

The academic world, particularly East Asia, has been fascinated in studying the effects of the overwhelming popularity growth of South Korean pop culture (Hallyu). Counteracting centuries of western hegemony, Korean dramas grabbed the attention of not only their own citizens but also Japan, China, Middle East and Europe in the 1990s – 2007 (known as the first Hallyu wave), and then

K-pop massively took advantage of the smartphone advancements and spearheaded Korean products in all sorts of industries such as cosmetics and games in the late 2000s (known as the neo-Hallyu wave) (Jin, 2018). All seven corners of the globe have become witnesses of the craze for Korean products as “fans and supranational fandoms actively act as ambassadors and facilitators of Korean culture among their acquaintances,” (Ganghariya & Kanozia, 2020, p. 178). Non-South Korean people around the world voluntarily take up the role of cultural ambassadors and became the catalyst of Korean product marketing strategies worldwide. As the spread of Korean fandom correlates with the number of individuals who are attracted to Korean things, this study has noted that non-South Korean businesses are starting to market their products by specifically using the Korean fan culture cycle in their advertising.

This study is motivated from the results of a preliminary observation of a recently launched marketing strategy of an Indonesian cosmetics company, Scarlett Whitening. This brand of beauty product is founded by an Indonesian actress Felicya Angelista in 2017 and has been focused in selling skincare type of products (Diananto, 2021). One of their social media accounts with the strongest presence is their Instagram page where they would post images of their products paired with both Indonesian and English texts that focused on introducing their products’ benefits and suggestions to order their cosmetics. At seldom times, their Instagram page would publish pictures of unidentified men and women or a famous Indonesian songwriter Agnez Monica, with the texts largely remaining the same. However, on September 2021, this Indonesian beauty product brand’s marketing strategy took a different direction where their advertisements began to strongly emphasize the hallyu culture by introducing Song Joong Ki as their Star Ambassador. Ever since they released their teaser video of the popular South Korean actor, Scarlett Whitening made headlines and their posts onward began to frequently include images of the actor and other South Korean celebrities and their texts shifted to introducing Song Joong Ki rather than their own products (Soehandoko, 2022).

This contradiction of marketing tactic sparked the interest of this study to understand how they tailor their advertisements with the Hallyu wave phenomenon, as the results of this study can be useful for business stakeholders who are also researching into how they can replicate Scarlett

Whitening’s successful advertising tactic. Scientific investigation of advertisements remain an important task for researchers due to the rapid expansion of online environment generating the demand for online markets to establish brands (Ngongo et al., 2018; Herman et al., 2022), and this social media page is a suitably perfect example that shows how the Hallyu Wave affected the way producers promote their products to attract potential consumers.

Despite the popularity of academic studies related to the Hallyu wave, there are surprisingly very few studies (on English language databases) that analyze Korean product advertisements’ semiotic elements. Kristiva & Suprajitno (2020) analyzed the subtle marketing strategy of product placement in which products were included in the narratives of a top K-drama, and Alhadi et al. (2022) examined the representational meanings behind male-targeted Korean skincare advertisements. There are also two other studies that covered the context of both Korea and Indonesia marketing, although they focused on an Indonesian video advertisement that verbally mentioned K-drama in the script (Rahmawati & Sinar, 2021) and the other one compared the two country’s video advertisements of tourism, not products (Andriani & Hamzah, 2021). Clearly, there is still more room for focused investigations on advertisements that have been affected by the Hallyu wave.

Moreover, Ganghariya & Kanozia (2020) published the only systematic literature review paper on the phenomenon of Hallyu wave that has been published—to the knowledge of the researchers—screened 100 relevant papers out of 5,030 Google Scholar search results and noted that majority of existing research has mostly focused on discussing Hallyu wave as part of the globalization discourse, but rarely carried out conceptual studies that would add to the conceptual understanding of theories in relation to the Hallyu wave. Ganghariya & Kanozia (2020) also identified that Korean-related media is the least explored dimension of Hallyu as majority of researchers concentrated on the Hallyu wave itself or K-dramas only in particular. To address these research gaps, this study carried out multimodal analysis on Scarlett Whitening’s advertisements that featured their star brand ambassador Sung Joong Ki. This study offers a new take on the study of Hallyu-influenced-advertising since the object of the study are not directly Korean

products or from Korean companies, but an Indonesian beauty company that capitalized on Korea's global popularity in this era.

METHODS

This study is qualitative descriptive in design as it utilized systemic functional linguistics (Chefor, 2019) to understand the pictorial and written forms of data of the online advertisement. The data consisted of two of the first Song Joong Ki posts that Scarlett Whitening's Instagram page, which were published on September 3rd and 16th 2021 respectively. These posts are selected because they are the most representative of the Indonesian cosmetics business' attempt to shift their advertising images and texts from emphasizing their products to

shining the light on their South Korean brand ambassador instead.

Because these advertisements use two or more semiotic tools or 'modes' of communication (e.g., image and text), this study used multimodal analysis to understand the online advertisements (Ledin & Machin, 2020; Xiaochen & Yang, 2021). Of the five multimodal semiotic systems (e.g., linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial), this study only focused on the linguistic, visual and spatial systems because the research objects are only pictures and texts (Yanti, 2021). The theoretical basis of the data analysis technique refers to Kress and Leeuwen's (2020) three meta-semiotic steps to understand multimodal data.

Table 1. Social Semiotic Aspects of Multimodal Analysis

Social Semiotic Aspects	Descriptions
Representational Metafunction	The relationship of objects and aspects of the world outside the representational system. This metafunction emphasizes the position, color, size, and arrangement that are actually present in the image. The researcher's task is to show a narrative that is dominantly legible in the text, both in the form of images and writing.
Interpersonal Metafunction	The visual demands that have two functions, namely to create visuals of the advertised product and invite readers to feel what is conveyed by the human image object. Interpersonal metafunction emphasizes on analyzing the relationship between each object in the image text, such as body gestures and the impression that you want to show to the reader.
Compositional Metafunction	The relationship between the two previous metafunctions, namely representational and interpersonal to find out the message the producer wants to convey. It analyzes the value of information that applies to the choice of semiotic signs chosen by producers, the size of the advertising image, the colors used in the advertising image, and the modalities of this advertising image in the text.

By referring to Kress and Leeuwen (2020), the two Scarlett Whitening advertisement featuring Song Joong Ki will be analyzed with the following steps:

1. The first step is to analyze the representational metafunction by paying

attention to the human and non-human objects (represented participants).

2. The second step is to analyze the interpersonal metafunction by paying attention to the type of image, the action shown in the image, the visual proximity of the image to the reader, the perspective highlighted by the producer of the

- advertisement image, and the background of the producer choosing Song Joong Ki as the main focus in the advertisement image.
3. The third step is to analyze the compositional metafunction by paying attention to the effect of choosing represented participants in the images, the relationship between one represented participant and another represented participant in this ad image, the effect of using color and how these images appear to the reader.
 4. The fourth step is to conclude the meaning of the discourse conveyed through Scarlett

Whitening's advertisements.

Hallyu-influenced

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study focused its multimodal analysis on two of the first Song Joong Ki posts that Scarlett Whitening's Instagram page.



Figure 1. Scarlett Whitening's first post featuring Song Joong Ki

In Song Joong Ki's rendition of the Scarlett Whitening publicizing banner that is available in this picture, the authentic meta-work comprises of articles, to be specific a white glass with the item logo as a non-human item, Song Joong Ki as human items, and pack Scarlett Whitening items as non-human articles arranged from left to right. Of the three items, non-human articles are more prevailing in light of the fact that they are situated around Song Joong Ki as the human article in the center. The activity shown by Song Joong Ki as the article is grinning at the peruser by holding the Scarlett Whitening item. This image shows an account and a classificatory idea that proposes a connection between the items present. There are two vectors that show up in this promotion. The cycle that happens in this notice is classificatory on the grounds that it highlights Song Joong Ki as a component of the

Luwak White Koffie espresso epicurean gathering. The justification behind picking the pictures showed on the Instagram page during 2021 is to show that Scarlett Whitening items are delighted in by Indonesians, but at the same time are sought after by shoppers from abroad with the presence of Song Joong Ki who represents unfamiliar nationals. From this it very well may be seen that Song Joong Ki is a specialist to underline the talk, specifically that this Scarlett Whitening item is a worldwide standard item. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that this Scarlett Whitening product is targeting Song Joong Ki fans as the main target market. If this advertising model is replaced with another model, for example, Indonesian actors or artists will produce different effects because the target market is also different. Of course, the selection of Song Joong Ki as an advertising model is the impact of the growing interest of the

Indonesian people in 2021, especially teenagers in South Korean culture.



Figure 2. Scarlett Whitening's second post featuring Song Joong Ki

At this stage of the compositional metafunction, the researcher relates the relationship between the two previous metafunctions, namely representational and interpersonal to find out the message the producer wants to convey. The placement of images in this advertisement has an important meaning because the producers are trying to attract the attention of readers by placing an image of a human model who acts as the center of the advertisement by displaying the image that radiates from the object. This implies that the human image represented by Song Joong Ki is the center for conveying the message to the reader. The composition of the image elements on this Instagram page represents the purpose of the producer. At the representational metafunction stage, it is read that the image has a strong narrative to invite readers to buy and consume the product. The Interpersonal Metafunction in the Figure shows that the producer intends to make the advertising model as part of the reader so that it gives the impression of being familiar with the gestures and actions he performs. In this compositional metafunction, it analyzes the value of information that applies to the choice of semiotic signs chosen by producers, the size of the ad image, the colors used in the ad image, and the modality of this ad image. with Scarlett Whitening products. Song Joong Ki as a model is a meaningful choice because it contains the intention of producers who are emphasizing white or white as the core of

the advertisement. The first reason, Song Joong Ki in this picture has white skin which shows the similarity with the product name that contains the word white. This shows that if the model is replaced with a black model, the meaning of this ad image also changes. Second, the glass that the model is holding also has a white color which implies that this product is white. Third, the clothes used by the model Song Joong Ki are also white, which further emphasizes that this product has a white color. From these reasons, it can be seen that the white color representation in this ad image is dominant. The meaning of the white color indicates the modality of the advertising image. Modality is a semiotic social concept that questions the meaning of the representation used by looking at the interactions of each element of the image present. The representation of the dominant white color in each image element in the figure indicates that the producer is trying to emphasize to the reader, that this is a new product that is light and fun. The black and white gradation in the picture shows the impression of being more than real.

From the analysis of the three social semiotic aspects, namely representational, interpersonal, and compositional metafunctions, it can be stated that the Scarlett Whitening's advertisement after September 2021 has drastically switched its focus from its own product to the point that it seems to promote the actor instead. This is a strategy to attract the interest of

potential consumers, especially fans of the actor and the general public. The selection of Song Joong Ki as the brand ambassador of Scarlett Whitening is one result of the growing popularity of the Hallyu Wave in the global world. The Hallyu wave means that there is a significant public interest in the popularity of culture and entertainment originating from South Korea since the 1990s in various parts of Asia which is influenced by the development of social media (Ganghariya & Kanozia, 2020). This clearly affects the way producers promote their products in order to attract potential consumers who now spend more time on various social media. The selection of Song Joong Ki as the main image on the official Scarlett Whitening Instagram page throughout 2021 is the impact of the rapidly changing fan culture cycle. Jin once argued that social media, such as Instagram has become a catalyst for the development of social media so that young prospective consumers can more easily access various product advertisements. This causes consumers to no longer choose products based on the quality of the ingredients, but from the way producers advertise their products. Song Joong Ki's version of Scarlett Whitening is not only seen as a way of advertising ordinary products. From the three metafunctions, it can be seen that the focus of the advertisement is the actor, not the product. The position of the actor in the middle and the product on the side indicate that there is a special discourse to be conveyed. The discourse is about the covert spread of Hallyu Wave culture. This makes it clear that the internet plays an important role for the Hallyu Wave to spread their culture to make them more famous in Asia (Jin, 2018). The selection of advertising stars from South Korea for Indonesian skincare products is the impact of the increasing number of people who are interested in the Hallyu Wave culture. From the analysis of the three metafunctions, it can be stated that the quality of the product is not important when compared to the actors who advertise the product. The results of this study revealed a very unique, potentially concerning, new trend of marketing that non-South Korean business companies might adopt to increase their sales figures.

CONCLUSION

This study is presented a multimodal analysis on the beauty product advertisements

of Scarlett Whitening. The novelty of this study is that the objects of the research are advertisements of an Indonesian skincare products that capitalized on the Hallyu wave for their new marketing strategy. Scarlett Whitening's Instagram posts now puts their emphasis on both their image, text on image and caption texts exclusively about their South Korean brand ambassador, Song Joong Ki, and almost entirely abandoned their previous marketing language style of introducing and educating their audience about the benefits of their skincare products. This study reveals a potentially concerning upcoming business marketing strategy that capitalizes on the popularity of Korean culture at the cost of neglecting the authenticity of their own products. The results of the research are expected to provide benefits to potential product consumers and the general public regarding the hidden intentions in advertisements on social media. This research is also expected to be a reference for other researchers who use social semiotics in analyzing visual images in various print and social media.

This research can still be continued by other researchers, especially regarding other types of products made in Indonesia that also utilize brand ambassadors from South Korea. This is important to research, considering that the Hallyu wave is still a trend in various parts of the world so that it can attract public sympathy for the advertisement. Research on advertising needs to be carried out on other objects, considering that in everyday life, many types of advertisements appear from various media, both print and visual media. Advertising is an inseparable part of people's social life. This social semiotic research aims to be able to provide new insights to the public, especially potential consumers that there is always a hidden meaning behind all advertising images that are displayed or appear in various media. This research can also be a reference for academics who want to discuss the impact of the Hallyu Wave in Indonesia, especially for young people. This is important considering that the development of social media technology is increasingly intensive, making it easier for various groups to access foreign cultural products.

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