

## **The Myth of Handsome Standard in Men's Biore Advertisement Version "Brightness is Easy" says Dustin Tiffani**

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### ***Abstract***

*Media has an important role in conveying information to audiences related to products by companies, one of which is through advertising. By incorporating a sense of humanity or representing social reality in its packaging, advertisements will become more attractive. The Men's Biore advertisement version "Bright is Easy" by Dustin Tiffani is one that carries social issues. The ad brings the concept of handsome standards to the story's packaging. Handsome standards are a standard concept of good looks given to men by society. The surrounding environment will more easily accept someone who meets the standard of good looks. This research aims to determine whether the advertisement wants to break the concept of handsome standard that exists in society through the selection of actors. The research method used is descriptive qualitative using Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis with three aspects of signification, namely denotative, connotative, and myth, through several selected scenes in the advertisement. The results show that the advertisement still shows the discrimination experienced by someone who does not meet the standard of good looks. Other standards must be met by the main character to be accepted by the surrounding environment. The discrimination shows the social demand to at least be what has been prevailing in society. The ad conveys a message about the self-confidence that everyone should have through the light effect that appears after the main character washes his face using Men's Biore products. This confidence makes the main character more accepted by the surrounding environment. In this case, the advertisement also builds the social construction of beauty or good looks standards among the community as the times evolve.*

**Keywords:** Advertising, Handsome Standard, Masculinity, Roland Barthes, Semiotics.

## INTRODUCTION

The roles of men and women in social and cultural perspectives are still being discussed and debated among the community. In social and cultural perspectives especially in patriarchal culture, men are placed in a dominant position while women are in a marginal position (Kurnia, 2004). Men are synonymous with macho or masculine traits, described as figures with strength, violence, power, ambition, active, and aggressive (Oktaviana & Aprilia, 2019). These values must be applied by men to be recognized by society. Men are always related to physical activities and are characterized by the smell of sweat. Discussing masculinity is inseparable from discussions about gender. Gender and sex are two very different things. Sex is a biological construction carried by each individual from birth. At the same time, gender results from a long process of socio-cultural construction that is dynamic or changeable (Kurnia, 2004). In this case, men are not born with masculinity, but culture shapes the meaning of masculinity itself. The patriarchal culture that is still powerful results in inequality in gender equality in society.

Masculinity is not only the result of social and cultural construction, but the media also contributes to the discussion of masculinity in society. Historically, hegemonic masculinity has been more readily accepted by society. The media constructs the image of a white middle-class male who makes a set of attributes and normative rules contrary to other masculinities (Kurnia, 2004). The change in masculinity from traditional to new masculinity is also the result of media construction. The media's portrayal of masculinity representation influences men to look like what is shown by the media indirectly. The image displayed by the media continuously will become a justification for the audience. The image given by the media to society

regarding the existing values of masculinity makes people want to fulfill what is displayed by the media. In this case, the typical traditional masculinity characteristics of being assertive, demanding, aggressive, and sweaty are slowly being displaced. The journey of history and the development of the media brought changes to the construction of men. The new masculinity or metrosexuality is breaking the traditional masculinity where a man is someone who has a strong character but is soft on the surface. Men today have a high aesthetic sensitivity, such as their physical appearance. The depiction of men's appearance in the media makes men make themselves like what is in the media. This is done so that they become the ideal man in the media (Mustaqimah, 2018).

The shift in the value of masculinity in society coincides with the emergence of advertisements for cosmetic products or special care for men in the media. In this case, men seek to 'beautify' themselves. In today's society, flexible masculinity is more accepted, where men are seen as limited to physical strength and emotional sensitivity and awareness (Rahmasari, 2024). Social perspectives on men and women change occasionally, one of which is about appearance. Nowadays, most men pay special attention to their appearance and use beauty products previously only associated with women. Some even think that a man is not allowed to dress up or pretend because dressing up is a character only owned by a woman. The activities or work that a person does are also based on gender; if someone does activities that are opposite to their gender, they will feel an identity crisis or deviate from what they should (Alifta Kinanti et al., 2021).

Advertising is one of the media used to convey information related to a product to the audience. Advertising is considered a medium that is easily consumed by the public. Advertising is

not only used to inform products but also a medium that offers ideology, lifestyle, and imagery. Meanwhile, advertising is not just a tool to promote a product or brand; advertising represents a lifestyle by embedding the importance of self-image to appear before the public (Diniyah et al., 2023). Advertisements are packaged attractively because, basically, advertisements not only function as a medium to provide information about a product but advertisements are also made to persuade and influence the audience to act and behave like what is in the advertisement. After all, advertising is one of the marketing strategies used to make a profit.

Handsome standards are identical to the beauty of a man's face and body. It is associated with the physical form of a man, such as skin color, body shape, and others. Handsome standards determine whether a man should be considered handsome by society. A beautiful physique is important because good looks can be one of the main factors for getting lucky in everyday life. Therefore, a man who cannot meet the standard is often discriminated against by the surrounding community. In fact, according to Deslandes (2021), the main reason men are scrutinized by society is the handsome standard itself. Men will get a more complicated treatment than how society treats beauty standards on women (Sayekti & Dewi, 2022). Adult men today have demands to look "dandy," which ultimately constructs a man into a metrosexual man who craves to appear confident and perfect (Diniyah et al., 2023). The discrimination that arises in handsome standards is a self-investment because, with good-looking standards, a person can get a better life, such as a comfortable job, an equal partner, and even wealth (Sayekti & Dewi, 2022). Many people consider themselves not good-looking because they have dark skin, curly or frizzy hair, and a full or fat body posture (Hernanda & Utami, 2023). The threat of

discrimination and privilege that exists in society makes men and women constantly change their appearance to meet the standards of beauty that are by those in society. However, society is changing. Since the beauty positivity campaign was launched, everything has changed. The campaign states that you do not have to meet the beauty standards adopted by society to be beautiful or handsome. One of the media is through advertisements, which are starting to penetrate to build public awareness regarding the campaign. Currently, advertisements for cosmetics or special care for men use models that are different from the concept of handsome standards adopted by most people in their advertisements.

One example of an advertisement that attracts attention is the Men's Biore advertisement "Bright is Easy," said Dustin Tiffani, played by one of the humorous male public figures, Dustin Tiffani. This ad has been watched 10 million times on Men's Biore ID's YouTube channel. This ad was also uploaded by the @idmensbiore account on Instagram and received 28.2 million viewers (accessed on March 2025). This ad received a positive response from the social media audience, indicated by the comments launched by netizens on the account. The video ad tells the story of Dustin, who does not get the same attention from his surroundings because of his appearance. However, after using the promoted product, Dustin gets different attention and treatment than before. The uniqueness of the advertisement with the selection of actors who are different from the usual advertising advertisements makes researchers interested in examining the concept of handsome standards built in the Men's Biore "Bright is Easy" advertisement version of Dustin Tiffani. In the ad, Men's Biore makes Dustin Tiffani the first person affected by the concept of handsome standards built in the surrounding environment. Semiotic analysis is a science that studies signs to

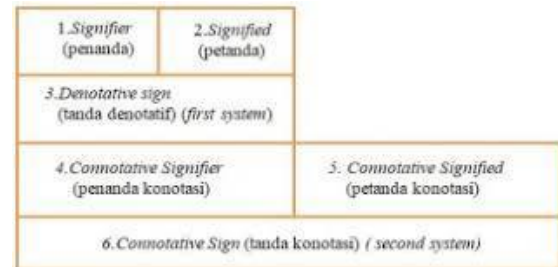
embed the message in the advertisement (Sobur, 2002). The results of research conducted by Eva Ken Sayekti and Putri Aisyiyah (2022) on the concept of male beauty standards with the title Myth of Male Beauty Standard in MS Ads Glow Men Version Babe Cabita and Marshel Widiyanto on Instagram concluded that the advertisement only shifted the meaning of the concept of the handsome standards. That there must be other standards that someone must meet if they cannot meet one standard in the concept. This is because there is still an element of hegemony in the advertisement, namely promoting skincare benefits, one of which is skin whitening. Research on beauty standards has also been researched by Christinawati and Ahmad Junaidi with the title Beauty Standards for Women in Hijab in Television Advertising (Semiotics Analysis of Wardah Ads Version of Feel The Beauty) resulting in that the standard of female beauty is not only from what is seen from the outside but also beauty from within a person. Therefore, many standards of beauty or good looks are built in society, some resulting from the media being shown to the audience. Another research on masculinity written by Rizki Pratami and Togi Prima Hasiholan in 2020, entitled Representation of Male Masculinity in Television Men's Biore Cool Oil Clear Ads concluded that the masculinity message formed in the advertisement is a man who cares about cleanliness and self-appearance which is a new point of view of masculinity in society.

The embedding of handsome standards in the story built in the Men's Biore advertisement version "Bright is Easy," said Dustin Tiffani. A study needs to be conducted to examine the messages conveyed in the advertisement through several selected scenes. This ad uses a main character who contradicts the handsome standard adopted in the previous era. Men are considered to meet the standard with a muscular appearance, intense, challenging, and the like. This

research reads the symbols in the advertisement to be examined using Roland Barthes's semiotics to show that the story shifts the concept of handsome standards. Reading these symbols can show the concept of handsome standards that have been built in social life or add new standards that someone must meet.

## METHODS

The type of research used in this research is descriptive qualitative research with Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method. Descriptive qualitative research explains an object, social setting, and phenomenon that will be explained in narrative writing (Aldrian & Azeharie, 2022). Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis research prioritizes three pillars of thought central to his analysis: denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation is the first level of meaning, and connotation is the second level in the meaning system.



**Figure 1.** Concept Map of Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis.

(Source : Oktaviani, 2019 )

Barthes developed Saussure's advanced theory of signifier and signified with the idea of two stages or two orders of signification. Barthes' two orders of signification consist of the first order of signification, namely denotation, and the second order of signification, namely connotation (Rahmadani, 2024). Denotation is the level of signification that relates between the sign and the reference to reality. According to Barthes, denotation is closed and forms a

clear, definite, and direct meaning. Denotation focuses more on physical vision, what is seen, how it looks, and what it smells like. Denotation is the most common level of signification in society, and its meaning is socially agreed upon. The next level is connotative signification. This order is an advanced form of meaning. The connotative does not look at the physical level alone regarding what is seen. However, it is more directed to the sign's intent or meaning based on the sign maker's role and thoughts. At the connotation level, a sign with a specific intention can be communicated (Akbar, 2022). The meaning referred to in this second level, or connotation relates to various psychological aspects such as beliefs, emotions, and feelings. According to Barthes, connotation has an open nature and has an uncertain, indirect, and subjective meaning, so there is a possibility of causing new assumptions (Rahmadani, 2024). It can be concluded that denotation is a fixed objective and connotation is a subjective and diverse meaning (Oktaviani, 2019).

In addition to denotation and connotation, Barthes also includes the aspect of myth, which is when connotations of an open nature become popular thoughts that grow in society. If that happens, then a myth about the sign is formed. Barthes emphasized that myth is a communication system, a message. Therefore, myth is not an idea, object, or concept. Instead, myth is a way of signification. Anything can become a myth when presented with a discourse (Sobur, 2009). Myth is a marker to interpret specific messages that may produce meanings different from actual ones. Barthes defines myth as a sign that has connotations and develops into denotation; then, the denotation becomes a myth (Rahmadani, 2024). The data collection techniques used in this research are observation, documentation, and literature study. Therefore, the researcher will use several scenes in the Men's Biore advertisement version of

"Bright is Easy" by Dustin Tiffani to examine the handsome standard elements in the advertisement using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis technique. Researchers use triangulation techniques to test the validity of this research by using other sources outside the data to compare the data obtained to get a deeper understanding of the research topic.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Men's Biore is a men's skincare line developed by Kao Corporation, a Japanese company founded in 1887. Kao Corporation has a long history of developing personal and household care products, and Men's Biore is one of their innovations in meeting men's skincare needs (Pratami & Prima Hasiholan, 2020). Men's Biore products address skin concerns, such as excess oil, acne, and dirt from daily activities. Biore Mens is one of the unique grooming products for men in Indonesia, as it symbolizes masculinity in various ways (Hutomo, 2014). Like companies in general, Biore Mens makes advertisements to promote its products to the public. There are many ways to package advertisements to be more attractive so that advertisements can change a person's actions, generate consumer demand, and invite audiences to engage in consumption activities, one of which is through the image built into the story of an advertisement (Putri & Kusuma, 2024). The presence of men's unique care products with various claims is evidence of the displacement of traditional masculinity values into new masculinity among the public. Currently, men are starting to 'beautify' themselves, along with society's concept of handsome standards. The Biore Men's advertisement in the Bright Face Auto Seen episode starring one of the public figures, Dustin Tiffani, is interesting to study. Ads that raise the issue are slowly erasing the concept of handsome standards in society through advertising media. The following are the findings on

the scene chosen by the researcher to be studied.



0:13

**Figure 2. A scene of Dustin eating with his friends** (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MzBbdjVq9Dc&t=2s>)

The denotation in the first picture is that a group of men and women are talking in the background of a restaurant or eating place. However, one man is not treated equally by his friends. The man is Dustin Tiffani. In the advertisement, Dustin is portrayed as an unattractive-looking man with a dull face, who does not have a tall or muscular posture and has a slightly darker skin color than the people around him. The connotation of this scene is that people who have a different appearance from their environment tend to get different treatment from their environment. A less attractive physical appearance means that a person does not get the attention of the people around him and is not as lucky as a man who meets the standard of handsome that most people adhere to. It also indicates that most people judge and treat others based on their physical judgment (Damayanti & Hikmah, 2022). A less attractive physical appearance means a person does not get attention from the people around him and is not as lucky as men who meet the handsome standards most people adopt. The friendship environment is one of the factors for men using cosmetic or skincare products to change their appearance for the better and avoid potential discrimination by those around them. Hsu and Chantha Pratheep stated that an attractive physical appearance is

more desirable than someone who looks less attractive in social life (Diniyah et al., 2023). Therefore, the depiction of Dustin with his friends is a sign that the standard is created from the demands of social relationships, especially friendships. If one does not have thoughts that align with the group, one will be indirectly marginalized.



0:27

**Figure 3. Scene of Dustin being stalked by a guard** (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MzBbdjVq9Dc&t=2s>)

The denotation of the image is where Dustin is in a parking lot with several packages in his hand. However, in the scene, security officers are also stalking Dustin from various directions. The connotation in this scene is that Dustin is considered to have committed a crime because of his unattractive appearance in the eyes of the security guard. Having an appearance that does not meet social standards means having the possibility of getting unfair treatment, such as being considered to have committed a crime even without any evidence or reason. The myth in this scene is that most people assume that attractive people are unlikely to commit crimes, but on the contrary, unattractive people are synonymous with criminals. This scene also illustrates a person's social class; Dustin is considered a lower class because people who are disadvantaged in terms of physical appearance come from the lower class. (Sayekti & Dewi, 2022). The ad builds a story by highlighting the discrimination received by the main character, Dustin Tiffani, to persuade audiences that



Biore's Men's products offer a solution to prevent discrimination. This shows the difference between the purpose of the advertisement and advertisements in the previous era, which used the standard of good looks as an image strategy in front of the audience.



1:07

**Figure 4. Scene of Dustin washing his face with Men's products** (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MzBbdjVq9Dc&t=2s>)

The denotation in the scene is the scene of Dustin washing his face with Men's Biore products. In the scene, Dustin is seen smiling and showing a love sign with his finger, which radiates an aura of happiness in him. This happiness arises because he believes that after washing his face, he will get the attention Dustin did not get. It is much different from before Dustin used the product. The scene where Dustin washes his face is also an illustration of Dustin's ambition to look better so that he can increase his self-confidence. This scene's connotation is that you can boost your confidence by washing your face. This implies that washing your face is a symbol of self-care and an attempt to make yourself better (Sayekti & Dewi, 2022). This is signalled by the sparkling effect on his face, described as the radiance of Dustin's aura as confidence arises within him.. The myth in the scene is that one's good looks appear along with the self-confidence in a person's personality. Facial hygiene is one of the factors in maintaining one's confidence (Sayekti & Dewi, 2022). A journal also said that a man using cosmetic products aims to improve his physical appearance so that

he can appear more confident. In this case, the story from the Men's Biore ad version "Bright is Easy," said Dustin Tiffani, about the standard handsome campaign, indirectly builds a positive image of Men's Biore to the audience who feel the same as Dustin in the ad so that they decide to use men's Biore products (Fantini & Ardianto, 2023). This shows that a well-groomed and physically beautiful appearance is important for a man (Rachmad Rinata et al., 2022). In the concept of new masculinity, men can look more masculine if they pay attention to their appearance.



1:17

**Figure 5. Scene of Dustin playing soccer** (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MzBbdjVq9Dc&t=2s>)

The denotation of the scene is Dustin playing soccer with many fans around him. This scene differs from the previous scenes in which Dustin gets much different attention before washing his face using Men's Biore products. The connotation in the scene is that the bright face he gets after washing his face is a special attraction for the people around him, so all eyes are on Dustin. Because of the changes seen in him, Dustin becomes the center of attention or may even become the object of admiration or curiosity from others. As said before, that bright face is a form of self-confidence that arises after Dustin washes his face with Men's Biore products. The myth in the scene is that men gain more

confidence when doing activities identical to those carried out by men, including playing soccer, riding a motorcycle, and playing music, as in the next scene in the advertisement. These activities are included in traditional masculinity, where men are attached to strength, violence, ambition, active, and aggressive (Oktaviana & Aprilia, 2019). The scene reinforces that men's indicators to be considered attractive are determined by their social environment (Diniyah et al., 2023). The story built in this advertisement proves that individuals are no longer hampered by extreme restrictions in fulfilling life needs, especially to achieve appreciation and acceptance from others (Rachmad Rinata et al., 2022).

Based on the analysis of several scenes in the Men's Biore advertisement version "Bright is Easy" said Dustin Tiffani, the advertisement raises the concept of handsome standard by making Dustin Tiffani the main character where Dustin is someone who experiences the impact of the handsome standard itself in real life. The big influence of the handsome standard is that men try very hard to fulfill it. So many beauty products have sprung up that previously only existed for women, but now there are special beauty products for men with various packaging. According to the researcher, Men's Biore packages the concept of handsome standards in its story by showing the discrimination experienced by someone who does not meet the handsome standards that have developed in most societies. The discomfort caused in the ad resulted in Dustin trying hard to escape the situation. Biore Men's products are here to offer a solution to what Dustin is experiencing, which is likely experienced by their audience as well. In the ad, instead of shifting the concept of male handsome standards that have developed in society by providing a solution, namely, Men's Biore products, the ad proves that if you do not meet the concept of handsome

standards in society, other things must be fulfilled to be accepted in society.

0.44 – 0.48

**Figure 6. Scene of Dustin struggles to become a good looking (Source:**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MzBbdjVq9Dc&t=2s>)

Dustin is depicted as being frustrated with the situation with the script: "If you chase AL's good looks, it's difficult, not difficult, it's impossible. But, if it's his bright face, I can still catch up". The script proves that if you do not have a handsome face, at least have a bright face to be accepted by the surrounding environment. The advertisement shows a person to understand better which part of himself should be more concerned, changed, or beautified from within himself (Sayekti & Dewi, 2022). The good news from the presence of handsome standards in society is that people become more capable of assessing themselves and what they need to improve in terms of physicality to be better, and it becomes a form of appreciation for themselves. This advertisement proves its function as a tool to construct a lifestyle because it is considered effective in influencing a person's view of something (Kartini, 2015). Good looks are important in everyday life because they are considered a supporting factor for a person to get good luck in various aspects of life Deslandes (2021) also thinks that the concept of handsome standards in society is why men are so watched by society, even more than how society imposes beauty standards on women. Masculine and feminism, on the other hand, are products of social construction that are constantly changing with the times. Some



people think that the media has a big part in this, but some people think that these standards are purely the result of human thinking. Men's Biore advertisements not only convey the concept of handsome standards that must be met to get attention and avoid painful discrimination from the surrounding environment but also convey messages about the importance of self-confidence that must be instilled in a person. In the ad, the researcher considers that the interesting point shown by people towards Dustin in the ad is the confidence that arises after Dustin washes his face using Men's Biore products. Standards of male good looks are heavily influenced by patriarchal culture, which defines masculinity based on certain physical and behavioral attributes. Grewal mentions that the pressure to be a real man has created stereotypes for men, such as men not being allowed to behave in certain ways without facing questions about their masculinity (Grewal, 2020). According to Connel and Messerschmidt, the concept of masculinity is not only focused on one thing but varies based on the harmony that exists in society, which then refers to the ideal concept that becomes the standard reference for a man to be considered masculine or otherwise (Putri & Kusuma, 2024). In this context, men are often expected to have a strong and dominant appearance, a muscular body, and high self-confidence. Patriarchal culture associates good looks with power and social status, so men who meet these standards tend to gain more social advantages. The dominant patriarchal system in society makes gender inequality and injustice occur and affects human life in various ways (Sakina & A., 2017). The existence of a patriarchal system makes people impose the value of masculinity on other men. This creates pressure to pursue these ideals, reinforcing patriarchal hierarchy. Social media, a new medium, is used to build self-identity, including gender identity, which is influenced by social construction. So, the emergence of a new masculinity or so-called metrosexual

men who tend to pay more attention to their appearance. This standard is also evidenced by Men's Biore advertisements yearly. In a study on the shifting concept of masculinity in Men's Biore advertisements, it was concluded that the concept of masculinity emphasized by Men's Biore in 2023 is the concept of new masculinity, which describes a male figure who is easy to socialize, dominant towards women and in the surrounding environment, cheerful, ambitious, pay attention to appearance, and likes to take care of himself. This depiction is very different from the depiction of masculinity in the Men's Biore advertisements in 2008 and 2010 as stated in the journal about shifting masculinity in men's biore advertisements in 2008, 2010, and 2023. Men's Biore depicts masculine men as men with burly, strong, and muscular bodies. In addition, in Men's Biore advertisements in 2008 and 2010, men are not allowed to dress up because it is a trait owned by women (Putri & Kusuma, 2024).

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the research results presented from several scenes taken in the Men's Biore advertisement "Bright is Easy," Dustin, the researcher, analyzes the meaning of the message conveyed to the audience from the advertisement. The researcher found that the advertisement did not break the concept of handsome standards that developed in society, even though it raised issues related to the concept of handsome standards by making Dustin Tiffani the main character in the advertisement. This is because there is still a change in skin tone created at the end of the ad. A bright skin color is one of the characteristics of the concept of handsome standard that develops in society. This indicates that if you cannot meet the standards that have grown in society, then you must have other standards to be accepted in the

surrounding environment. Another message conveyed in the ad to the public is about the self-confidence that everyone must have. In the ad, there is also a face-washing scene where Dustin gets different attention from his surroundings after washing his face. In this case, by washing his face, a person can be more confident, and with Dustin's confidence, he gets attention from the people around him. People need to understand that what is shown in advertisements cannot be separated from social reality, which is a product of built social construction. The continued growth of beauty or good-looking standards in society has led to a decrease in one's self-confidence because he considers himself not to meet the existing standards.

Researchers provide suggestions for future research to expand the research sample by analyzing advertisements for men's skincare products with various brands and types of packaging. This will provide a broader picture of handsome standards in Indonesia. In addition, future researchers can analyze the audience's response to advertisements for men's beauty products, such as the Men's Biore version of "Bright is Easy" by Dustin Tiffani. The analysis can identify how people accept the message conveyed in the advertisement. Suppose it gets a positive response from the public. In that case, it can be a reference for other brands to promote their products by embedding social messages regarding the stigma of beauty standards in society.

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