

ROLAND BARTHES' SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS: REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY IN EXO'S SCARLETT WHITENING AD (GLOW VERSION)

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Received : 21 May 2025	Published : 13 July 2025
Revised : 29 May 2025	DOI : https://doi.org/10.54443/morfai.v5i6.3412
Accepted : 17 June 2025	Link Publish : https://radjapublika.com/index.php/MORFAI/article/view/3412

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the representation of masculinity and brand image building in the Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" advertisement featuring the famous Korean boy band EXO as brand ambassadors. In the analysis, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is divided into three levels of sign meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach through semiotic analysis. Data sources were obtained from visual and verbal signs in the advertisement scenes, which were then analyzed to uncover the hidden meanings behind the visual or verbal representations. The research findings reveal that the Scarlett Whitening advertisement presents the concept of masculinity as "soft masculinity," depicted as flexible masculinity, associating values of gentleness and aesthetic appeal in a man. Through pastel colors, bright hues, soft expressions, stylish and neat clothing, and an ideal physique, the advertisement challenges traditional masculinity stereotypes and creates an image that body care products are relevant and important for men. Scarlett does not merely sell physical products but also promotes a new lifestyle associated with the product, blurring the boundaries between feminine and masculine in self-care.

Keywords: *Exo, Advertisement, Soft Masculinity, Scarlett Whitening*

INTRODUCTION

The role played by men and women in Indonesian society is often debated related to gender issues. According to P. Nugraha dan Haryani Susilastuti (2022), Gender is a socio-cultural construct that divides human attitudes and actions into masculine and feminine categories. Apart from being a biological construct, masculinity is also a product of socialized experience (Putri, 2022). According to John dkk. (2017), "Gender socialization" is "an individual process related to increasing understanding of gender, as well as learning to 'apply' gender by internalizing the gender norms and roles they learn about through interactions with important socialization agents, such as families, social networks, and other social institutions." Nonetheless, peer groups, education systems, families, and social media all have a significant impact on the micro-level gender socialization process (Haryani Susilastuti & P. Nugraha, 2022). Since men who dress up or wear makeup are considered feminine, men were previously associated with masculinity and rarely wore grooming gear. However, in the era of globalization and contemporary cultural adaptation, the definition of masculinity has changed in the sense that it has permeated the feminine realm (Jannah & Kusumawati, in the Pratami & Hasiholan, 2020). In this day and age, the idea of masculinity has changed a bit. This is shown by the fact that many men try to change their appearance to look more trendy and macho at the same time. The term "masculinity" is a cultural construct that shows characteristics that are specific to men (Yulianti et al., 2017). In the study of signs, especially signs used in advertising, the idea of representation becomes very important. Learning from representations allows us to understand what the media presents, which in this case can be considered advertising. This is related to the philosophy and meaning conveyed by advertising (Faadihilah et al, 2021). One of the media that plays a role in the portrayal of masculinity is the mass media (Pratama, 2023). One of the characteristics that is said to exist in men is masculinity. The media often constructs masculinity through a man wearing a set of attributes as well as normative rules that are opposite to other types of masculinity (Yulianti et al, 2017). But in the 1980s, the image of masculinity was represented by a hardworking man, especially in physical form. Furthermore, as time goes by, the depiction of a masculine man develops into a man who has begun to care about appearance, to diligently take care of himself, or commonly called metrosexual (Hayati et al, 2023). The media

has an important role in constructing the word "masculinity" into a concept. An example of media portrayal that is often displayed through advertising is the concept of masculinity representation. Beauty care products are often associated with women. This then has an impact on the phenomenon of marketing communication, both in the mass media and social media. One example of this activity is advertising, which is a form of marketing communication that appears most often on social media and television. In the advertisement, actresses, actors or celebrities who are considered suitable to star in advertisements that are considered suitable for the product being marketed. During its development in the last decade, there has been a shift in the phenomenon of more and more men using beauty products (Cristina & Tunggal, 2023). In Indonesia itself, the above phenomenon is a new thing that appears in the media, especially on social media. Previously the marketing communication of cosmetic products was dominated by women, but now it is starting to attract more and more male celebrities involved. Now the position of cosmetic products itself is on two different sides by redefining attractive and masculine men at the same time (Kumparan.com, 2019) and (Cristina & Tunggal, 2023)

One of the ads that depicts masculinity can be seen in the "Glow Ambassador" version of Scarlett Whitening ads in 2023 with the new BA, Exo. In the 30-second ad, there are signs and symbols that feature Exo as a Glow Ambassador in representing contemporary masculinity and building the brand image of the skincare product in the form of this visual campaign was made to attract the attention of consumers, especially K-Pop fans, informing about the new packaging of body products. Its practical lotion can expand the international market in skin care products. This advertisement can be seen depicting the eight members of Exo in various advertising scenes which are depicted by combining masculine styles and related to the element of tenderness, can create a modern man who cares about his own care in today's era. The general overview in the Scarlett ad, starting from the visuals and colors, the background of the advertisement is dominated by pastel colors, namely purple, pink and light blue which can create a feminine impression and remain luxurious according to the theme of beauty and skin care from the Scarlett brand itself. Then in terms of appearance, the Exo members themselves of the eight members wear pastel colored clothes according to the background and also the Scarlett brand itself, holding Scarlett's body lotion product which at the beginning of the old bottle packaging in the next scene displays new packaging in the form of tube body lotion. For example, D.O. holds a new packaging of a fresh variant tube body lotion, while Suho holds a charming variant of tube body lotion.

In the commercial, which features interaction and expression, there are several scenes of the eight members of Exo with laughing expressions and interacting with each other, creating a warm and fun atmosphere. With their natural expressions and gentle gestures, they emphasize the image of a man who cares about his appearance without having to lose his masculine side. Then the description of Scarlett's body lotion products in the form of new packaging in the form of tube body lotion with various aroma variants, namely, Jolly, Happy, Romance, Charming, Freshy, and Fantasia. The new packaging in the form of a tube is designed to be easy to carry on the go and can be used anytime and anywhere. This advertisement carries the theme "Glow Ambassador" which means shining beauty and highlights the skin's natural glow visually. The message conveyed is that skin care does not only apply to women but is also important for modern men. In understanding the phenomenon of representation of masculinity in advertising has been the object of research in several previous studies. The first research is titled Representation of Masculinity in K-pop Advertising with a Bright and Energetic Face. This study discusses the representation of masculinity that undergoes changes in social norms related to male identity, where self-care is now considered important and positive (Handayani et al., 2025). The second study is entitled Shifts in Masculinity Representation in Men's Skincare Product Advertising. This study discusses the shift in advertising representation from 2008 which emphasized the physical to in 2023 the representation is more diverse, including metrosexual and socially minded (Putri & Kusuma, 2023).

Then the third research entitled Representation of Masculinity in Television Advertising (Semiotic Analysis of Nivea Men Advertisement 'Changed Extra Bright' Version of Duke Dolken. This study discusses the representation of masculinity in the Nivea Men television commercial 'Changing Extra Bright' by Duke Dolken from Gatsby Styling Pomade, aiming to reveal the meaning of masculinity behind the message (Siswoyo & Asrita, 2021). From the various studies that have been conducted previously from the first, second and third studies, we would like to make it clear that the focus of this research is in line with the themes that are already in the studies. However, this research has differences and uniqueness, because the focus of the Glow version of Scarlett Whitening With Exo is that it features K-pop Boy Idol icons and combines elements of masculinity as well as the image of softness related to the context of advertising tube body lotion beauty products that can be used by both women and men. The study also highlights how visual strategies in advertising build brand image, something that has never been specifically discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Semiotics Roland Barthes

Semiology is a science that helps us understand messages or signs in the process of communication. When talking about symbols, it is important to start with an understanding of the concept of signs (Vera, 2014, pp. 1–2). Semiotics, or semiology according to Barthes, focuses on how humans give meaning to various things (Sobur, 2013: 15) (Prasetya, 2019, pp. 6–7). Barthes states that language is a system of signs that reflects the assumptions of a particular society at a given time. Sobur (2003: 63) Like Saussure, Barthes believed that the relationship between markers and signs was not natural, but arbitrary. Although Saussure placed more emphasis on denotation in marking, Barthes expanded Saussure's concept of semiology by adding a connotative level to the marking system. Barthes also identified another element in the marking, namely the "Myth", which indicates the characteristics of a Society (Vera, 2014, pp. 26–27). In this study, we used the semiotic theory of Roland Barthes to analyze how the various elements in the Scarlett Whitening advertisement with the theme "Glow Ambassador" (for example, from the facial expressions and gestures, colors, appearance/clothing of the Exo members, their interaction with the product and also some of the verbal elements that indicate masculinity can serve as a sign.

Representation of Masculinity

Representation is the process by which we use language to give meaning to various ideas in our minds. It refers to the relationship between ideas and language that allows us to make references to the "real" world of objects, people, or events as well as the made-up world of objects, people, and events. Lawono, et.al (2021) quote Hall (1997). In the study of signs, particularly the examination of signs seen in advertisements, the idea of representation is crucial. It deals with the philosophy and meaning conveyed by the advertisement, through the examination of the advertisement depiction. One way to think about representation is as a symbolic act that reflects an independent world of things. Menurut Saarni, Campos, et.al (1983), Representation is the process of giving abstract ideological concepts in concrete forms (i.e., various markers). For example, we can see representations of women, workers, Wales, or of families, love of war, individualism, industry, class, and so on in the (Faadihilah et al, 2021). A growing common belief is that men are naturally masculine. Men rarely use care products because of this stigma (Hikmah & Utari, 2024). Advertising, which is often used to communicate information to build an understanding of a topic or to encourage people to buy goods through advertising, is one of the ways the media is often used to spread stereotypical ideas about masculinity. For example, in terms of masculinity and male depictions in advertising, advertising serves as a medium for the construction of meaning and communication (Putri, 2022). According to Connell (2005), The idea of masculinity hegemony or conventional masculinity in advertising refers to the forms of masculinity that are accepted by the prevailing culture and gender ideology in that society, or that continue to keep up with the times. As South Korean artists are increasingly used as models for beauty products for both men and women, masculinity has changed over the past ten years, especially in light of the issue of sexism and the impact of globalization (Utari & Hikmah, 2024). Gender and masculinity are closely intertwined. An order that discusses gender will often emerge as a result of the relationship between femininity and masculinity (Lawono et al., 2021).

METHOD

The research method used in this study is qualitative descriptive analysis using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach to be able to analyze the representation of masculinity in the Glow Version of Scarlett Whitening advertisement. The qualitative descriptive method is used to explore or clarify a symptom, phenomenon or social reality that exists (Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023). Qualitative descriptive analysis was chosen by the researcher because the goal is to be able to describe and interpret data narratively and in-depth, without making statistical generalizations. Through this approach with the semiotics theory of Roland Barthes, it can allow researchers to unravel the meaning behind the signs and symbols in the advertisement. The Semiotics approach of Roland Barthes provides an opportunity for researchers to examine the deeper meaning of the various signs and symbols in the Glow Version of Scarlett advertisement, starting from the first level of meaning of denotation, which is the literal meaning or visible to the senses. Furthermore, at the level of meaning, the second connotation, namely cultural or emotional meaning. And the level of meaning of the third myth, namely the ideology or cultural value that has been constructed. Semiotics itself or semiology according to Barthes, focuses on how humans give meaning to various things. (Sobur,

2013: 15) (Prasetya, 2019, pp. 6–7). And the object of this study is the Scarlett Whitening With Exo advertisement in 2023 version of *Glow Ambassador* which displays various visual elements, such as facial expressions, colors, clothing, their interaction with the product and the visual narrative constructed. The data in this study was obtained through documentation in the form of screenshots of certain scenes in the advertisement that were considered relevant for analysis. In addition, the research also utilizes previous literature studies that include various sources of theoretical literature such as books, scientific journals, and relevant articles. Observation techniques are carried out related to advertising both visually and narratively to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the message and representation conveyed. Thus, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth overview of how the Scarlett Whitening advertisement does not only represent masculinity, but combines elements of masculinity as well as the image of softness related to the context of advertising tube body lotion beauty products that can be used by both women and men.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher describes the results of the analysis in *the 2023 Scarlett Whitening ad with the "Glow" version of Exo* which lasts 30 seconds using the semiotic theory approach of Roland Barthes. The following are the results of the analysis through three stages, namely denotation (literal meaning or can be seen by the senses), then connotation (cultural or emotional meaning) and the last stage of myth (ideology or cultural value that has been constructed).

In the sense of denotation: this ad shows two Exo members, Sehun and Chen, behind the scenes doing fun activities with a big smile on their faces, they both wear a set of modern formal suits with soft pastel colors (purple and blue), bright lighting and a clean background that can give a professional and warm impression, and the display of the Exo x *Scarlett* logo at the top.



Figure 1. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)

Meaning Connotation: the expressions and *gestures* shown in the image above are expressions of happiness or happiness caused by the presence of some pleasure that comes to them (Prasetya, 2019, pp. 60), in the picture above shows a sincere smile and also a casual interaction of the two which shows the side of gentle, gentle and empathetic masculinity is far from the stereotype of a hard or dominant man. Expressions and *gestures* show that the representation of "*soft masculinity*" masculinity is more fluid and inclusive. While the pastel colors (purple and blue) combined with the suits worn by the two show an elegant, soft and modern impression. These colors culturally loosen gender boundaries, rejecting gender stereotypes. Casual formal clothes without ties and neat hairstyles but not showing stiffness imply a representation of successful men remains relaxed and open. Although the intro at the beginning of the ad does not show the interaction between the products related to the body lotion advertised, this product is usually associated with women. This may indicate a shift in the image that self-care is part of modern men's lives.

Myth: the new masculinity of a combination of gentle and well-groomed, this shows in this advertisement that the **myth of the ideal man in this day and age is the one who takes care of himself**, is aware of his appearance, but is still socially masculine. This *K-Pop idol* makes a perfect representation of the combination. It is also mythical that **grooming does not only belong to women but can also be done by men**, this also applies to *the Scarlett Whitening* product which was previously associated with women, now over time it has also been used by men can strengthen the narrative that body care is *universal* and can be used by all genders without restrictions. In the current era, *K-Pop Idols* have become the standard of global masculinity, in this advertisement Exo as its global symbol which is used

to convey that men who have followed modern, popular, and of course well-groomed styles are *legitimate role modes* and also worthy of admiration by many people.



Figure 2. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 3. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 4. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)

Meaning of Denotation: the sign that appears in pictures 2, 3 and 4 of the advertisement shows *BTS* from the photo taken by the Exo members holding *Scarlett products*, namely *Body lotion* and *body serum* with old pastel packaging that symbolizes the characteristics of *Scarlett products*. The members wore formal suits with pastel shades (pink, light blue, purple). Their expressions showed a light smile, seemed soft, and natural. Meanwhile, *the* gestures of the members show how they interact with the product, namely sticking to the cheek or holding it close to their face.

Furthermore, the *Scarlett* x Exo logo is also clearly displayed, indicating that it is part of the collaboration between the brand and the idol group. In the fourth image of the advertisement, the word "*Glow Ambassador*" is displayed.

Meaning of Connotation: the appearance of *BTS* scene clips can be annotated as the process of showing behind the scenes in making advertisements transparently and authenticity in building trust, both products and brands, behind the advertisement can be seen the *professionalism* in it. Meanwhile, facial expressions and *gestures* show that they are gentle, sweet and not aggressive. This can show a more subtle version of Korean masculinity or *soft masculinity* (handsome and attractive which is constructed as a man with a slim body shape, stylish hair, bright white skin, muscular in the abdomen, and a face that tends to be 'beautiful' (Daully, 2019, hlm. 56). In contrast to masculinity from the west, which is usually dominant and rude.

Meanwhile, the colors of pastel clothes (pink, light blue, purple) are associated with softness, beauty and cleanliness which are often considered feminine, but are used by male members of Exo in the form of giving a new meaning related to the way a person expresses their gender more fluidly. That men can appear to take care of themselves to be clean, and *glowing* without having to lose their masculinity side. As for product interactions in the form of physical touch such as sticking to the cheek or hugging a bottle, it means that men can also have an emotional connection with self-care. The verbal word "*Glow*" is associated as beauty, brightness, and skin health which hints that *glowing* is not only for women but also for men.

Myth: there is a shift in masculinity if in the past masculinity was depicted as a strong, mighty, brave and other figures, but in this advertisement it has become a new masculinity that forms the narrative **of men who take care of their skin without losing their masculine side**. This shows the trend of a shift in which *self-care* is part of modern masculinity that cares about her appearance, health and also her self-image. Meanwhile, Exo as a *K-Pop Idol group* that is a symbol of new masculinity in Asia in the form of neat, clean, *fashionable*, and emotional is very different from the stereotype of traditional men who are hard, lacking expression and also rigid. Mythologizing "**beauty as power**" refers to the word "*Glow*" which is not just beautiful but reflects in terms of social status, success and influence. *Scarlett* through Exo wants to show *glowing* men the same as successful men who care about their appearance and have access to quality products.



Figure 5. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)

Denotation Meaning: the sign in the image above shows the four Exo members, namely Xiumin, Baekhyun, Kai and D.O wearing formal suits without a tie, pastel in color (pink, light blue, light purple) each of them holding *Scarlett body lotion* products and *old packaging body serum*. The ad's background features a light blue color. And there is a verbal text in the form of "*Glow Ambassador*". The four of them stood upright, staring at the camera and smiling lightly.

Meaning Connotation: pastel colors (pink, light blue, light purple) are associated in giving a soft, clean and elegant impression to build this feminine atmosphere as opposed to traditional masculinity stereotypes. In terms of calm, non-aggressive facial expressions, this can create an image of masculinity that is portrayed as calm and emotionally safe (*soft masculinity*). While the *gesture* of holding the product is carried casually but still confident in giving meaning, it turns out that taking care of yourself is not something strange or taboo for a man. Then the selection of pastel-colored suit clothes displays a balanced combination of formal and soft styles that can break the association of men in suits only for those who seem rigid, and also assertive.

Myth: the emergence of a new masculinity narrative related to modern masculinity, namely men who are open about self-care, *fashionable* and emotional. This advertisement reveals that *body lotion* or other beauty treatments are

women's affairs. With the ad, the ad presents the icon of the male *K-Pop Idol group* in the context of a feminine aesthetic. Furthermore, *Scarlett* tries to build the **myth that the man "Glow" is masculine**. Generation Z or PunK-Pop generation idol.



Figure 6. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)

Meaning of Denotation: the sign in the image above is the same as shown in picture 5, in picture 6 it shows a row of four other Exo members, namely Sehun, Chen, Suho and Chanyeol who are wearing formal suits without ties in pastel colors (dark blue, light purple, light pink, pastel gray) each of them holding Scarlett body lotion products and old packaging body serum in a position facing the camera. Meanwhile, their background is also the same as in figure 5 and shows the same text as before, namely "*Glow Ambassador*".

Meaning Connotation: the color of the clothes shown in this image is more varied, bright as in the 5th image and dark which gives a combination of elegant and assertive nuances, which of course remains in the context of pastel colors. Furthermore, the facial expressions show their strong gaze but not to intimidate, but to show the side of *charm* and *gentle power*. The balanced placement of their calm poses shows a strong sense of self-control without having to show a dominating side. Furthermore, their product interaction is to place them as users who believe in product quality, not just passive models.

Myth: from The image of this ad features a concept that wants to convey the message that **real men in today's era need not be ashamed to show gentleness and take care of themselves**. This advertisement also wants to raise that the word "*glow*" is interpreted as shining or beautiful" is something that is not only attached to women but also men can without having to lose their identity as masculine. Masculinity is not always displayed with muscle shape and aggressiveness, but can also be displayed in confidence, aesthetics and *self-care*.



Figure 7. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 8. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 9. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)

Meaning of Denotation: the marker displayed by the advertisement in pictures 7, 8, 9, and actually there is still a further image of the advertisement, because the image cannot be captured, if the image is captured then the result will be blurred, then the author explains it verbally. So, the image above shows an advertisement that introduces new *body lotion packaging* in the form of *tube body lotion* with 4 variants, namely in figure 7 Jolly (pink-peach), figure 8 *Happy* (pastel pink), figure 9 Romance (light pink) and *Freshy* (yellow). And displayed the words "New! *Body Lotion Tube*", in figure 7 shows the text "UV protection" and a pastel colored background that matches the product.

Meaning Connotation: of the four golden colors displayed in the advertisement associating certain emotions, in the image 7 variants Jolly gives the meaning of peach pink, feminine modern, sweet but elegant, elegant, mature. In picture 8 of the *Happy variant* with a bright pastel pink color, it is interpreted as playful, positive, cheerful, this is perfect for a friendly and energetic personality. In the Romance variant with light pink color is interpreted as soft, romantic, describing love and affection. While *Freshy* with yellow color is interpreted as happy, fresh, active and associated with bright mornings and sunlight. Verbal sentence "New! *Body Lotion Tube*" depicts exclusivity, innovation in packaging from bottle to tube as well as curiosity. While the verbal "UV protection" is interpreted as care, safety on the body and its relevant plus values in accordance with the tropical lifestyle. The adnya is a pastel gradation neon accent between the product with the background which means targeting Generation Z and millennial consumers which gives a contemporary, instagrammable and aesthetic impression.

Myth: beauty can be obtained through skin care, in this *Scarlett* ad it reinforces the myth that **bright and well-groomed skin is the standard of beauty in the modern era in this era**. Meanwhile, the color variants displayed in this advertisement reflect the personality of each individual who can express himself through scents and *body lotion* displayed through the four variants, namely *Charming*, Romance, *Happy* and *Freshy*. The depiction of this practical tube is interpreted as mobility and modernity, building the myth that **modern humans in the current era or anyone who wears it, both women and men** (still have to be active, practical in self-care and also remain shalalish. And in this ad it is also associated that body care products that were once associated with women are now presented through the masculine male icon from Exo. This builds a new myth related to masculinity not only about physical strength, but also about caring about appearance and *self-care*.



Figure 10. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 11. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 12. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 13. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 14. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 15. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 16. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 17. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 18. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 19. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)



Figure 20. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)

Meaning Denotation: the overall marker in the image above shows the visual of these eight Exo members wearing clean and neat pastel clothes, holding a new *packaging Scarlett tube body lotion* product with several variants that have been shown in the ad. In terms of verbal advertising, the advertisement displays a conversation that aims to convey messages from Exo members regarding the advantages of this *tube body lotion* product using Korean and

there is also a written verbal text to translate their conversation, such as, easy to take anywhere, can travel, to the office, to campus, to the practicality of this product, smoothing the skin, fragrance and the tagline of the advertisement "*Scarlett smells good! Everywhere*". For their gentle hand gestures in holding the product confidently and enthusiastically, seen at the *opening*, *their gestures* with shocked faces full of enthusiasm, as well as friendly and confident facial expressions.

Meaning Connotation: the use of Korean when discussing product excellence has an implicit meaning, which emphasizes authenticity, credibility, and also strengthens the global image and premium image of the product. In terms of expressions and faces, displaying warm smiles from the members and the gentle movements they make, reflecting *soft masculinity* is masculinity that is sensitive, aesthetic and caring. As for pastel colors and neat clothes that show a more modern, clean, and fashionable impression, this shows that self-care is part of the lifestyle of men in today's modern era.

Myth: this advertisement gives birth to modern masculinity by forming a myth **of men who take care of themselves with skincare or body care is a natural and also desirable thing**, this shifts the view related to masculinity that was previously traditional to more modern *masculinity (soft masculinity)*. With the appearance of this Exo member, it reinforces the myth in the current era that Korean beauty standards are exemplary ideals, including men. Meanwhile, using the Korean language and also Exo's own image can build a myth **that following the K-Pop trend and also Korean culture is part of the lifestyle in today's modern era and of course global**.



Figure 21. Advertisement Scarlett Whitening x Exo "Glow" Version (Youtube.com, 2023)

Meaning Denotation: the marker in the image above shows the eight Exo members standing in line while holding the new packaging of *Scarlett's tube body lotion product* with various variants. It can also be seen that the background of the photo poster is set against a background of pink and blue with the addition of glitter, with the verbal sentence "*Ready To Glow With Glow Ambassador*". Exo members wear formal clothes with pastel colors (light blue, pink, purple). Their facial expressions are smiling, friendly, gentle and their body gestures are relaxed but still show the product facing the camera. It was found with the alfamart logo and product availability information.

Meaning Connotations: pastel colors on clothes and also backgrounds are interpreted as non-aggressive, soft, fashionable, this gives the impression that masculinity can appear soft and sweet, this directly confirms the stereotype of traditional masculinity that is hard, rigid and aggressive. Facial expressions and poses are not rigid showing that masculinity is more expressive, open related to aesthetics and self-care. The verbal phrase "*Ready Glow*" and the term "*Glow Ambassador*" indicate that men can and do glow, hinting that the freedom to take care of oneself will not eliminate the masculine side of men. The direct interaction carried out by members with *tube body lotion products*, strengthens the impression that *body lotion* is not just a product used by women but modern men can also be.

Myth: this ad indirectly shows the mythical *soft masculinity* **if men who care about appearance, aesthetics and softness do not make it something that is contrary to masculinity**. Using the boy *group* Exo who are already globally famous for their *staylish image* and a style of dress that ignores gender stereotypes, it reinforces the cultural

narrative that modern Asian men are characterized by beauty, glamorous lifestyles and attention to skincare. These ads spread the modern myth that beauty is *universal* and can be owned by all genders.

Based on the results of a semiotic analysis research from Roland Barthes regarding the concept of representation of masculinity in the 2023 *Scarlett Whitening* x Exo commercial, the "Glow" version found that the concept of masculinity will never be absolute and will always change over time. The concept of representation of masculinity will always change can be influenced by cultural values in a region that shape a man's gender identity (Talita Leilani Putri, 2023). The researcher found in the advertisement a depiction of masculinity forms that are no longer oriented to traditional masculine stereotypes in men who display their masculinity by having traits such as, dominant, courageous, mature, a leader, strong, rational, burly, mighty, and others (Dauly, 2019, hlm. 55). But not in this advertisement is described related to softness, self-care, elegance, elegant (*soft masculinity*) this is clearly seen from the depiction of visual elements, namely from soft facial expressions, gestures are not aggressive, bright lighting, using soft, bright pastel colors, and using translated Korean narratives, Indonesian written narratives in the context of beauty care promotion in the form of *tube body lotion*.

There are several forms of masculinity. One of them is Soft Masculinity, which is socially constructed masculinity that displays the soft side of men. K-Pop groups use their symbols and behaviors to show the soft side of men. Some women find it attractive because of its soft aspect (Dauly, 2019, hlm. 55). Penampilan feminin sering dikaitkan dengan soft masculinity. According to Dauly (2019, hlm. 56), men are considered handsome and attractive if they have a strong stomach, a slim body, fashionable hair, shiny white skin, and a generally "beautiful" face. According to Rokhmansyah (2016), Femininity is defined as a term used to describe a person who exhibits typical female traits and behaves in a manner similar to that of a woman. The hegemony of macho masculinity, which controls the evolution of masculinity around the world, differs significantly from the way K-Pop boy groups are portrayed in the construction of soft masculinity (Dauly, 2019, hlm. 62).

These findings show how *the Scarlett* x Exo ad constructs a new myth related to masculinity in the modern era: men who take care of themselves and care about their appearance do not mean their weaknesses, but make modern identities socially acceptable. By collaborating with *K-pop group* Exo, *Scarlett* is not only physically marketing, but also rebuilding the image of "*glowing*" men as a new ideal in an era where various kinds of Korean cultural influences are rampant in Indonesia. as well as selling a new lifestyle associated with products that disguise the boundaries between feminine and masculine in terms of self-care. Therefore, it becomes relevant because advertising focuses on products that can be used by women as well as men.

Research by Wahyu Srisadono et al. earlier in 2022 supported this conclusion, which revealed that The Saem Urban Eco Harakeke Cream ad featuring K-pop boy group Idol Seventeen depicts the change in Indonesian culture from traditional masculinity to soft masculinity. The images show a group of men dressed neatly but engaging in outdoor activities, while promoting SAEM Harakeke Cream products held by its members. Skincare products are now an essential thing for both men and women, giving new meaning to how masculinity is portrayed in the modern world. In measurement systems that track the evolution of contemporary preferences, these conditions may arise as a result of changing meanings of masculinity or myths surrounding men's physical posture (Srisadono dkk., 2022). In contrast to the results of the research conducted by Rizka Junita Sari dkk (2025), This study found that there are four characteristics of Chafetz's masculinity reflected in Enhypen's music videos, namely physical, emotional, interpersonal, and personal appearance. This research found that the masculinity contained in Enhypen's music video is soft masculinity, men are good at controlling emotions, building a free life as a picture of masculinity in the 1990s, and there are also ambitious and adventurous personal characters (Sari & Wirawanda, 2025).

In contrast to the previous research, namely *the Brand Ambassador* of South Korean actors, Song Joong Ki, is a very good sales strategy where the influence of Korean culture in Indonesia is very strong, this research was conducted by Meltha Cristina dkk (2023) This study found that the representation of beauty ads can not only be done by women but over time changes to male models. Finding from his background in the use of male models in beauty products, due to the use of cosmetics that are not only used by women but also men in the new era (metrosexual), a beauty product is considered to be able to increase sales (Cristina & Tunggal, 2023).

Thus, in previous research it depicts the change in the image of traditional men to modern men towards more soft masculinity, in the advertisement also shows how advertising plays an ideological tool in building new gender norms as the development of the era will be different. From the results of our research, the representation of modern masculinity which includes soft masculinity, depicts the ideal body depicted with a neat, clean, soft, elegant appearance, combined with pastel colors (*soft* and *bright*), elegance, a slender body, fair skin, *non-aggressive gestures, a face that tends to be beautiful but still manly, and a bright lighting background*. Still giving a masculine impression in the modern era today with the ideal body of a *global K-Pop Idol*, namely Exo who is used as a *brand*

ambassador in the *Scarlett Whitening* advertisement version of "*Glow Ambassador*" is a famous K-Pop Idol boy group both in Korea and internationally who is known for the image of masculinity and has an ideal body. By combining elements of masculinity as well as the image of tenderness related to the context of advertising beauty products *tube body lotion* that can be used by women and men, this is done to loosen gender boundaries in self-care.

CONCLUSION

The "*glow*" version of *Scarlett Whitening x Exo* ads not only sell products physically, but also play a role in building and producing new values related to male identity in today's society which can change over time. And selling a new lifestyle associated with products disguises the boundaries between feminine and masculine in terms of self-care that combines elements of masculinity, the image of softness, in the context of *tube body lotion advertising* that can be worn by women and men. mBased on the results of research and discussion, it was found that in advertisements that represent masculinity towards softness, displaying facial *expressions, gestures, appearance, combining matching colors, and also interactions between body lotion products, both old and new packaging, and also Exo*. The concept of masculinity displayed in advertisements is not dominated by the traditional masculinity that is strong, mighty and assertive. But it depicts the image of *soft masculinity* which contains the image of soft, clean, smooth, white skin, *glowing*, sesame body and others that have been associated with many feminine figures. In terms of the meaning of the denotation in the advertisement, you can see the scene of promotional activities for *tube body lotion products* coupled with interesting visuals. Getting into the connotation in the advertisement conveys that men can use body care products without reducing the elements of their masculine identity as a man. Meanwhile, the myth in it that the image of modern men in the current era cannot be determined in terms of physical strength, but also pays attention to appearance, softness, aesthetic self-image. This can indicate a paradigm shift related to gender representation in the media, especially in the context of beauty product advertising.

This research is still limited because the author feels that there are some scenes that are not shown, because the results will be shadowy when captured so that the author has difficulty conveying the picture of the message shown and there is still limited data related to masculinity advertising related to *soft masculinity*. The researcher recommends that the next researcher to research more advertising related to the representation of masculinity *soft masculinity* is a common strategy in advertising today, especially beauty products.

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