



Jurnal Sastra Indonesia

<https://journal.unnes.ac.id/journals/jsi>



Sexual Objectification of Women in Bath Soap Commercials: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Model Sara Mills

Janchwar Syafutra Zuhudie¹ & Eti Setiawati²

^{1,2}Universitas Brawijaya, Jl. Veteran No. 10-11, Ketawanggede, Kec. Lowokwaru, Kota Malang, Indonesia

Article Info

Article History

Submitted February 1, 2026

Accepted April 19, 2026

Publish April 30, 2026

Keyword

female objectification;
advertisements; soap; critical
discourse analysis; audience

Abstract

Representations of women in commercial media are often trapped in commodification practices that reduce gender identity to mere visual objects. Soap advertisements serve as one of the spaces that consistently exploit the female body to build product appeal through narrow beauty standards. This study aims to examine in depth the practices of sexual objectification of women in soap advertisements through visual and verbal discourse constructions. The research method employed is a descriptive qualitative approach with a Critical Discourse Analysis framework, using Sara Mills' model. The research data sources consist of three video advertisements, namely GIV White Body Wash, LUX Botanicals Body Wash, and Biore Body Foam, selected based on the intensity of visual body representation and their status as contemporary advertisements in the same product category. Data analysis techniques examined subject-object positions and the reader/viewer's position to determine how the text constructs the role of women. The results indicate that sexual objectification functions not only through sensual physical visual displays but also through persuasive language that positions women's skin as the center of commodification within the logic of capitalism. Women are positioned as passive objects whose beauty is validated by an external gaze. At the same time, the self-empowerment narratives presented tend to be pseudo-empowerment as they remain controlled by market interests. This research provides substantial benefits as a theoretical reference in media and gender studies and offers a critical foundation for the development of media literacy in society. Practically, these findings encourage awareness among advertising industry players and consumers to be more critical of ideologies that normalize the objectification of the female body in the public sphere.

*E-mail:

¹syafutra@student.ub.ac.id

²ety64@ub.ac.id

©2026 The Authors. Published by UNNES. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

DOI 10.15294/jsi.v15i1.42799

P ISSN: 2252-6315 E-ISSN: 2685-9599

INTRODUCTION

As the most influential form of mass media, advertising not only serves as a means of product promotion, but also plays a role in shaping people's perceptions of identity, values, and social relations through the symbolic representation it presents (Nismawati et al., 2024). Through visual strategies, narratives, and message repetition, advertising subtly builds perceptions of cultural behavior and identity, including how the body is interpreted and judged in social life. In the context of capitalism, the Body is positioned as a commodity in the capitalist system that is traded not only physically, but also through the symbols, meanings, and desires attached to it (Shalihin & Firdaus, 2019).

In the framework of capitalism that is intertwined with patriarchy, women's bodies are often represented as commodities with high selling value. Quote Hadji et al., (2020), explained that women's body activities are often used in various economic practices based on certain social constructions and ideologies attached to the body. This representational practice then shaped a construction of female beauty that emphasized white, clean, and seamless skin as the ideal standard. As a result, women who do not meet these criteria are often perceived as not ideal and outside the applicable beauty standards (Sunarsih & Kurniawati, 2025). Such representations not only reduce the meaning of beauty to a single form but also place women under social pressure to conform to those standards to gain acceptance and recognition.

Sexual objectification of women refers to treatment that places women solely as visual objects or sexual commodities, thus ignoring their identity, experience, and dignity as human beings. According to Fredrickson (1997), view the female body as a cultural construct shaped through persistent social discourse, rather than a purely biological reality. In other words, women's bodies are in a state that is constantly regulated, supervised, and controlled, from reproductive aspects to clothing choices, as well as how to speak and behave (Swastini et al., 2025). In the context of the media, this objectification is increasingly strengthened because the representation of women's bodies is often displayed to meet aesthetic and commercial needs. This is evident in *advertisements for body wash products, which prominently feature images of women's skin and bodies* as the main promotional strategy. *Body wash* ads generally feature women's bodies, with intense camera angles that highlight skin, curves, and sensual movements, thereby strengthening the association that women's value lies in their physical attractiveness. This characteristic makes *body wash*

advertising one of the most potent spaces for structured and normalized sexual objectification to be socially accepted.

In the context of the media, this objectification is increasingly strengthened because the representation of women's bodies is often displayed to meet aesthetic and commercial needs. This is said to be so because many scenes, from the camera's point of view to the narrative, to their consistency, highlight parts of the body out of context. Like in the GIV *body wash* ad featuring a woman lying on the beach sand with the "bright yes" dialogue. This shows a mismatch or irrationality, considering that beaches are synonymous with hot sunlight and sand attached to the body. In addition, an interesting phenomenon emerged when these ads began to adopt a *self-love* narrative, a trend known as *femvertising*. However, visually, it still perpetuates narrow beauty standards. LUX ads also implemented the concept in response to a negative social media comment. This characteristic makes *body wash* advertising one of the most promising spaces for structured and normalized sexual objectification to be socially acceptable.

Several previous studies have examined the representation of women as visual objects in advertising, though with varying focuses and approaches. Fahmi (2022) highlights the objectification of women, where the use of minimal clothing is considered only as a sexual attraction that is irrelevant to the essence of promotion. This is considered to have a negative influence on the behavior and way of dressing children who watch it on television. In addition, there is research from Anggita (2025) who discovered the practice of objectifying women by reducing their value to mere physical attributes for the sake of patriarchal beauty standards and capitalist interests. This is also reinforced by research by Larasati and Fernando (2023), which concluded that job recruitment ads on Instagram still perpetuate the objectification of women's bodies through discriminatory physical conditions. This practice is not just a biological problem, but a cultural problem that positions women as objects and hinders *women's empowerment efforts* in the economic sector.

Previous research has found that women are often positioned as visual objects in advertising. In contrast, the object of study is still limited to certain products or services, such as *e-commerce*, *body care*, and job recruitment, this study offers a novelty that focuses on examining specifically how women's objectification is constructed in *body wash* advertising, an advertising category that intensely uses the female body as the center of

representation of sensuality, cleanliness, and beauty. In addition, previous research has not used the Sara Mills framework, which is specifically able to dissect the position of objects and the construction of the audience in the visual discourse of advertising. Therefore, this research makes a new contribution by analyzing the form of objectification through Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis, thereby opening up a deeper understanding of how the positions of objects and audiences are constructed in the discourse of advertising body care products.

Analysis of the objectification of women in advertising cannot be done solely through a descriptive approach or content analysis, because these methods tend to stop at surface observations without dismantling the ideology, power relations, and gender biases that underlie the text's construction. An approach is needed that reveals how messages are formed, directed, and naturalized through language and visuals. In this context, Critical Discourse Analysis is a relevant approach because it allows researchers to examine how advertising operates as a power-laden means of meaning production. Quoting Bianchi in (Umarela et al., 2022) Regarding the definition of power in advertising, it concludes that advertisements aired by the media no longer function solely as a means of promoting capitalist products to consumers, but also as a medium for disseminating various ideologies originating in foreign cultures. In this study, Sara Mills' model was chosen because it specifically focuses on the representation of women and how the position of subjects, objects, and viewers is constructed in a text (Mills, 2005). By examining who is given the right to speak, who is spoken of, and how audiences are directed to interpret women's bodies, this model can uncover ideological layers that are not immediately visible. In addition, the Sara Mills model was chosen because it offers specific advantages over other AWK models, such as Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk. If Fairclough focuses more on the structure of social cognition and van Dijk on macro discursive practices, Sara Mills's model focuses on how women's representation is constructed through subject-object positions and, most crucially, audience addresses. In *body wash* advertisements, the position of the audience is often deliberately constructed as a 'voyeur' who is invited to enjoy the intimacy of private space through skin visualization and sensual movements.

The Sara Mills model is also used to examine texts and visuals that direct the audience to interpret the female body as an object of desire. This model reveals the ideological layer that

normalizes objectification as a common form of aesthetic consumption. This is made clear by the opinion Hulst et al., (2025), which emphasizes that, at the textual level, analysis can be carried out by tracing the use of similar words in a source to interpret the message conveyed more deeply. This is what makes Sara Mills' model the most relevant for dissecting the discourse of advertising for body care products that rely heavily on the relationship between body visibility and public perception. Although studies on Sara Mills' AWK have been widely applied to advertisements and other media, studies that specifically examine sexual objectification in *body wash* advertisements are still rare. This condition shows that there is an important research gap to fill, considering that *body wash* advertising is one of the most intense media displaying women's bodies as a promotional center.

Based on this description, this study seeks to examine the representation of women in *body wash advertising* through visual and verbal language, using Sara Mills's Critical Discourse Analysis framework. More specifically, this research is formulated in several research questions, namely: (1) how are women positioned as objects and subjects in the discourse of body wash advertising? (2) How is the position of the audience constructed in directing the perspective of the female body? Moreover, (3) how are the narratives of empowerment and power relations towards women rearticulated in the logic of capitalism?

This article is compiled in several parts. The first part introduces the background and the formulation of the research problem. The second part describes the research method, including the data sources and analysis techniques. The third part presents the results and discussion related to the research findings. The fourth part contains the conclusions and implications of the research.

METHOD

This research uses an interpretive qualitative approach with a critical paradigm. The framework used is the Critical Discourse Analysis (AWK) model of Sara Mills. The selection of this model is based on its theoretical focus, which specifically analyzes the women represented in the text through the positions of the objects and how the reader/viewer position is constructed (Mills, 2005). This approach allows researchers to go beyond textual content analysis by dismantling power relations, patriarchal ideologies, and the commodification of the body hidden in advertising discourse. The main data source for this study consists of three body wash advertisements: GIV White Body Wash, LUX Botanicals Body Wash, and Biore Body Foam, with a uniform advertising duration of 30 seconds. The

three ads were chosen because they prominently featured representations of women's bodies, especially through sensual skin visuals, body shapes, and movements, thus distinguishing them from other advertisements in similar product categories. Data is obtained from each brand's official *YouTube* channel to ensure its authenticity and credibility. The ads analyzed are the latest version available at the time of data collection to represent current representation practices. In addition to the main data, this study also uses supporting data, including scientific articles and relevant literature, to map the social, cultural, and commercial context of beauty and body care discourse in the advertising industry. Data collection is conducted through digital documentation using a *purposive sampling method*. The criteria for selecting ads include: (1) Advertisements for *body wash products* that are actively circulating in Indonesian digital media; (2) Displaying the dominant representation of women's bodies; (3) It has elements of *femvertising* or empowerment narrative but visually highlights sensuality. The method used a series of systematic stages including: (1) Initial observation, by repeatedly watching the three advertisements to capture general impressions and identify patterns of representation that appear; (2) Multimodal transcription by converting audiovisual data into written form, which includes recording verbal dialogue as well as describing visual shot changes in the form of transcription tables; (3) Identify the discourse position based on Sara Mills' framework, by sorting the parts of the advertisement into three main positions, namely the position of the subject as the party who tells the story and defines reality, the position of the object as the party being talked about or shown, which in this context is a woman, and the position of the audience that shows how the camera directs the viewer's point of view, including the possibility of presenting a *voyeuristic* perspective; (4) Data encoding, which is the labeling of each ad fragment based on a certain category, for example, GIV code showing data from GIV *White Body Wash* ads, LUX codes showing data from LUX *Botanicals Body Wash* fish, and BIO codes showing data from Biore *Body Foam* ads. The data analysis in this study was carried out dialectically by bringing together texts and social contexts.

(1) Textual analysis, the researcher examines the choice of diction and the use of metaphors in verbal narratives using Sara Mills' theoretical framework, as well as examining visual aspects through cinematographic techniques, such as the use of extreme close-ups on certain body parts such as skin that have the potential to construct certain meanings; (2) Analysis of power relations is carried

out by linking these textual findings with the perspectives of capitalism and patriarchy, in order to reveal how the practice of sexual objectification is reproduced and normalized in advertisements; (3) Interpretation of meaning, namely drawing conclusions about how the narrative of women's empowerment in body wash advertisements is actually rearticulated into an economic commodity that has a selling value in market logic. To ensure the credibility of the research, a theoretical triangulation technique is used by comparing the results of the Sara Mills model analysis with Nancy Fraser's feminist capitalism perspective, so that the interpretation of sexual objectification is based on complementary theoretical foundations. To maintain dependability, the researcher conducts diligent and repeated observations of GIV, LUX, and Biore advertisements, and documents the data in detail. In addition, peer debriefing is carried out with the supervisor to review the analysis categories, so that the research results remain consistent, systematic, and accountable. The data is presented descriptively and qualitatively, featuring narrative excerpts and screenshots of key scenes in the advertisements. Each image presented is accompanied by an explanation of the subject-object and audience positions, making it easier for readers to understand the researcher's interpretation process.

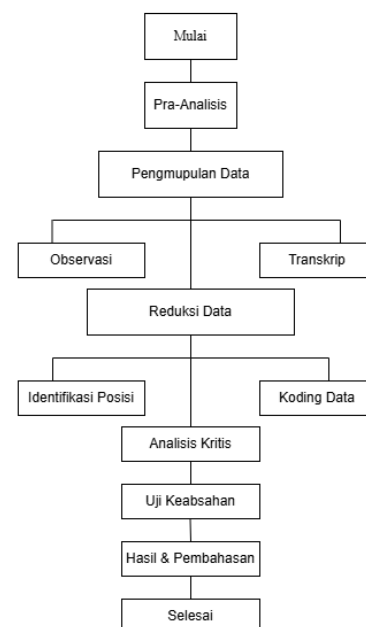


Diagram 1. Research Flow

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To avoid repetitive exposure to data, the analysis results are presented in several discourse clusters that reveal recurring patterns of representation in *body wash advertisements*. Each cluster was analyzed in an integrated manner using

Sara Mills's Critical Discourse Analysis framework, focusing on the positions of subjects, objects, and audiences in shaping the meaning and power relations in the advertising text.

The Position of Women as Objects

In Sara Mills' framework, the object is the party at the center of representation, but it lacks the power to determine its own meaning. The three ads analyzed (GIV, LUX, and Biore) showed a consistent pattern of placing women as visual objects to support the product's commercial message. The following is data on women's position as objects.

Body Objectification and Skin Beauty Standards



Figure 1. (GIV 1)

A high-angle close-up *scene* at the end that shows a woman's body lying on the sand in a thin white dress, which highlights the shoulders, abdomen, and legs through full *body* shots, shows that the female body is placed as the visual center of the *body wash advertisement* (Prastio Ginanjar, 2022). In these scenes, women are not shown as subjects performing actions, but are positioned as visual objects to be stared at and displayed. The emphasis on static body poses and the portrayal of clean, blemish-free skin suggest that the female body serves as a visual element to support the product's representation in advertising. The openness of the body or the representation of nudity in the visual is often perceived as having a negative connotation or is considered incompatible with moral norms in society. In fact, by nature, every human being is born naked. However, as social and cultural developments progress, humans learn to cover their bodies with clothes as part of the values of decency and the construction of norms that prevail in society (Hasan et al., 2025). Indonesian Film Censorship Institute (Wardhana, 2013) also have a harmonious opinion that considers nudity or openness to be a negative and immoral thing.

"Cerah ya? Glowing kan?" (GIV 2)

"Sunny, huh? Glowing, isn't it?" (GIV 2)

Verbal remarks "Sunny, huh? Glowing right?" said by a female character on GIV 1, the question appeared in the form of a rhetorical question directed at women featured in the advertisement. The use of "yes" and "right" as affirmative particles is a persuasive strategy that forces audiences to agree with the value standards offered by ads even before the self-assessment process begins. In addition, the diction of "bright" and "glowing" places skin conditions as the main focus of visual attention. Through these speeches, women are positioned as objects that are judged based on their physical appearance and only serve as visual evidence of the product's effectiveness, by displaying healthy, flawless-looking skin as a representation of the ideal beauty standards expected by consumers (Nurusyifa & Arifbillah, 2024).

"Bagian tubuh paling spesial yang memberi rasa percaya diri" (BIO 2)

"The most special part of the body that gives you confidence" (BIO 2)

BIO 2's verbal speech is a clear form of objectification of women. The narrator delivered the speech in a soft, feminine voice. This certainly creates an irony, as the narrator instead gives space to the objectification of fellow women. The use of the superlative "most special" discursively narrows the source of women's self-esteem to physical attributes alone, rather than their intellectual capacity or experiences. In the framework (Mills, 2005) This creates identity fragmentation, where women's dignity is reduced to just a "body part" that must be cared for to gain emotional validation in the form of self-confidence. This then triggers the internalization of unrealistic beauty standards, encouraging women to meet external expectations to avoid negative judgments and achieve social acceptance (Ramahardhila & Supriyono, 2022). Through its diction, the female body is presented as an object imbued with positive meaning, while other dimensions of women's identity are ignored in the advertising narrative. Thus, this saying shows that the assessment of women is directed only at the body condition displayed.

Normalization of Social Gaze and Assessment of the Female Body

"Lihat nih, cerah glowing" (GIV 6)

"Dilihat dari mana aja. Give white skin care" (GIV 7)

"Look here, bright glowing" (GIV 6)

"From anywhere. Give white skin care" (GIV 7)

In this section, the ad displays the words of the female character, "Look, bright glowing," followed by the statement, "Seen from anywhere. Give white skin care." The series of speeches explicitly directed the audience's attention to the condition of women's skin. The discursive use of the command word "See" deprives the subject of privacy and asserts the position of women as objects of spectacle whose existence depends on the visual recognition of the other party. The statement "seen from anywhere" expands the scope of this objectification beyond a single point of view, creating a panopticon effect in which the body is placed in a state that is constantly observed and judged from all directions (Nur et al., 2024). At the same time, the audience is positioned as the invited party to observe and confirm the quality of the skin displayed, while the product is introduced as part of the advertising narrative.



Figure 2. (LUX 7)

At the end of the LUX ad, a woman with a confident gaze is shown wearing purple clothing that matches the product packaging. The color harmony between fashion and products creates a strong visual connection, so that the female body becomes a visual element that represents the product. The slogan "My Beauty, My Strength" is displayed along with the visual and associates the display of female beauty with the message conveyed by the ad. Through this combination of visuals and text, viewers are directed to observe the results presented within the advertising narrative. This is not something accidental; the narratives formed in LUX 7 not only serve as promotional tools, but also as a structured effort to instill value in consumers (Adiputra, 2025).

Based on the data description, the advertisements for GIV White Body Wash, LUX Botanicals Body Wash, and Biore Body Foam predominantly position women as objects of visual representation, thereby shaping women's self-image and identity in modern society (Hikmatul Hinayah, 2025). The position of women as objects of discourse is evident in the prominence of

women's bodies, especially their skin, as the main focus, both visually and verbally. All three ads consistently feature women through physical attributes such as skin brightness, shine, softness, and fragrance, which serve as the main visual markers in conveying the ad's message. This emphasis on the physical aspect makes the female body the center of meaning that legitimizes the product's effectiveness claims. Quote Fitriana et al. (2021), It is also a similar opinion that women are reduced to their role only as objects and aggravated by the results of objectification becoming a normality. The objectification of the female body in *body wash* advertisements is built through the reduction of the body to certain aesthetic qualities, so that the female body is represented not as a subject with personal experience, but as an object that is judged based on its visual appearance. In Sara Mills' perspective, women are placed as objects to be displayed and judged. At the same time, personal experiences, voices, and experiences do not acquire significant representational space, as reflected in GIV 1, GIV 2, BIO 1, LUX 4, GIV 6, GIV 7, and LUX 7.

Women's Position as Subjects

In Sara Mills' framework, the subject is a position in discourse that has space to speak, direct meaning, or form a perspective in a text (Mills, 2005). In this position, women appear as the party that conveys certain experiences, opinions, or attitudes. The following is data on women as subjects.

"Banyak komen negatif di sosial media, caraku mengatasinya" (LUX 1 & 2)

"A lot of negative comments on social media, how do I deal with it?" (LUX 1 & 2)

At the beginning of the LUX ad, the narrative opens with the words "a lot of negative comments on social media" followed by the statement "how do I deal with it". The series of speeches uses first-person pronouns, showing women as speakers who convey their experiences of social judgment. On the surface, this represents women as active, reflective, and well-positioned subjects in responding to the situations they face. However, from the perspective of Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis, the position of the subject is not only determined by who speaks, but also by who has authority in shaping meaning (Afifah, Putri, Syahda, 2025). In this context, although women use the pronoun "I", the narrative conveyed is actually directed by the construction of advertising scripts that position the product as the primary solution. Thus, the subjectivity displayed is pseudo-sexual, as women

appear to have control over the narrative, but structurally remain within the framework of discourse determined by commercial interests. The confidence and self-expression displayed are reduced as a direct effect of using the product, as affirmed in the slogan "my beauty, my strength" on the LUX 7. Women's subjectivity is thus framed to the extent that it supports the promotional narrative and the commercial importance of advertising. This, of course, is inversely proportional because the body is not just a container for the existence of subjectivity, but is an integral part of subjectivity itself. Consciousness and subjectivity cannot be separated from the body, while the body is never naturally or neutrally present, but is always shaped and constructed through social and cultural contexts (Murwonugroho & Piliang, 2015).

"Memberikanku kepercayaan diri untuk mengekspresikan diriku dan mengabaikan komentar negatif itu". (LUX 4 & 5)

"Gives me the confidence to express myself and ignore those negative comments" (LUX 4 & 5)

The narratives in LUX 4 and 5 present solutions to the problems faced by the female characters in LUX 1 and 2. In this series, verbal speech emphasizes changes in the attitude of female characters after using the product. The phrase "express myself and ignore those negative comments" suggests that women respond positively to situations previously described as problematic. Through these speeches, the audience is positioned as the invited party to observe and imitate the attitude displayed in the advertisement. This indicates a shift in gender representation in advertising media, where women are no longer reduced to mere objects but are subjects who can respond and shape positive narratives (Christanti & Wicandra, 2021).

"Hai kamu saatnya cintai lebih kulitmu" (BIO 1)

"Hey, it is time to love your skin more" (BIO 1)

At the beginning of the Biore commercial, the narrative "Hi, you, it is time to love more of your skin" appears, delivered directly by the narrator in a soft, female voice as an invitation. The speech features women as speakers who greet the audience personally with informal greetings or position women as subjects through the use of affirmative language. This language strategy creates an impression of closeness between the

speaker and the audience and directs attention to the skin's condition as the main focus of the advertising message. Through these speeches, the audience is positioned as the invited party to respond to the invitation conveyed by the speaker. The speech also constructs women as subjects who are invited to love themselves. However, the discourse remains focused on the skin as the main object of representation. As a result, women's subjectivity is limited to their relationship with the physical body, particularly skin, while other dimensions of women's identity do not gain adequate representation.

In the context of commercial media, the subject's position is often limited because it remains within a discourse constructed by advertising interests. As stated (Darmawan Ferry, 2005) Advertising is a sign game that simultaneously associates objects, contexts, and text to support a specific persuasive goal. Therefore, although women are given space to speak, the subjectivity displayed is not entirely autonomous but rather directed toward reinforcing the promotional message. The limitation of subjectivity is evident in BIO 1, where the advertising narrative opens with persuasive remarks that urge the audience to start loving their skin. Women are depicted as subjects who speak and give instructions. However, the message still emphasizes that women's bodies must be cared for in accordance with the beauty standards set by advertisements. Women who are supposed to convey the message in an advertisement are not given meaningful relevance (Rahmah et al., 2025).

Audience Position

In Sara Mills' framework, the position of the audience in the media discourse is a textual construction that directs how the audience understands, assesses, and responds to the representations displayed (Mills, 2005). In body wash advertising discourse, the audience is not positioned as a passive observer but as a subject directed to adopt a certain perspective on the female body. Through instructive language and visual strategies, the ad guides the audience to view the female body as the center of visual attention and a benchmark of beauty worthy of assessment. This position places the audience in a power relationship that supports the normalization of the practice of seeing, assessing, and comparing women's bodies. Advertising not only invites the viewer to observe but also to affirm the beauty claims attached to the product, thereby indirectly involving the viewer in reproducing the aesthetic standards set by the beauty industry. In this position, the audience is not neutral but tends to

position women as the main audience. This is because, in general, women tend to pay more attention to appearance than men do. From an early age, women have been socialized to view body appearance as one of the important factors in building a sense of pride and confidence (Hasrin & Sidik, 2023). Therefore, *the gaze* that is built is more toward the internalized female gaze, which directs women to judge themselves and other women based on the beauty standards displayed. The following is the data on the audience's position.

"Cuma mandi susu pakai ini nih" (GIV 3)
"Just take a milk bath with this" (GIV 3)

In GIV 3, women are shown as speakers who convey product-related claims. However, the speech is limited to an explanation of the product's benefits and results, without a narrative of personal experience. Personal experience refers to narratives that give women full authority to tell their history, feelings, or subjectivity as human beings, rather than merely superficial testimonials about the product's function. Without any space to explain how bathing is related to self-reflection or emotional self-confidence, women are only positioned as a medium for conveying messages or as "funnels" for producers. He has no sovereignty over his own story because his voice has been limited to instructional and functional scenarios. The language used in GIV 3 also emphasizes convenience and practicality, directing the audience's attention to the product as an information center, while women serve as conveyors in the advertising narrative. Thus, women in advertising or media are seen as if they are considered inferior and have no more value (Madina & Kumala, 2020).

"Manjakan kulitmu dengan moisture Biore setiap mandi, and say hello to glowing. Biore love your skin" (BIO 4-6)
"Pamper your skin with Biore moisture every shower, and say hello to glowing. Biore loves your skin" (BIO 4-6)

At the end of the Biore ad, a series of verbal statements appear in the form of "pamper your skin with Biore moisture every bath", "say hello to glowing", and "Biore love your skin". The series of speeches uses second-person pronouns and an invitation form that directly greets the audience. Through this language strategy, the audience is positioned as the party that is invited to interact with the product. These sayings place the skin at the center of the treatment, directing the audience's attention to the product's consumption within the

advertising narrative. The formation of the narrative is intended to influence the attitudes of the audience who pay more attention to their physical appearance (Chairina et al., 2023).

"Dilihat dari mana aja. Give white skin care-Mandi susu di rumah aja" (GIV 7 & 8)

"From anywhere. Give white skin care- Take a milk bath at home" (GIV 7 & 8)

In GIV 7 and 8, the audience is instructed to judge the product together through the sentence "seen from anywhere," which explicitly places the viewer as the subject of the appraiser. The phrase serves not only as a verbal invitation but also as a discourse strategy that frames the female body as a visual object worthy of observation from various perspectives. In this context, the audience is constructed as the authority to judge, while the female body is reduced to a means of proving the product's effectiveness. This practice exposes the politicization of the body and unequal power relations, where women are transformed into subordinated objects in a digital capitalist system dominated by patriarchal norms (Ni Made Putri et al., 2025).

Apart from being a visual assessor, the audience is also directed to understand women's bodies in the framework of consumption as a solution to social pressure. Advertising discourse links confidence, self-expression, and the ability to cope with social judgment with the physical condition of the body generated through the use of products. Audiences are guided to interpret body care as a reasonable, necessary, and even expected practice. At the same time, product consumption is portrayed as the primary path to achieving social acceptance and self-confidence. Through the brand's narrative of self-love, the audience is invited to internalize the idea that caring for the body according to industry standards is a form of self-care. In this context, the representation of the female body is positioned as something that must be constantly maintained and improved, so that the consumption of products becomes a normalized practice in daily life. It is different from the concept of *the male gaze*, which places men as the subject who sees and women as the object of sight (Ilham Mubarak, 2013). *Body wash* ads show a *commercial gaze*. In *commercial gaze*, both male and female audiences are involved in a market mechanism that actively maintains the objectification of the body and the reproduction of beauty standards through consumption practices. Operationally, the involvement can be seen in how the camera highlights certain body parts, for example, through close-ups or slow motion, to attract the audience's

attention, thereby keeping the assessment's focus on the physical aspect. The audience is then encouraged to accept these beauty standards as ideals worthy of achievement. This process continues when the audience associates the standard with the advertised product, so that the practice of consumption becomes a way to approach or realize the body image displayed. Thus, through viewing activities to purchasing decisions, the audience indirectly participates in maintaining the objectification of the body while reproducing beauty standards in market logic. More specifically, the construction of the audience's position can be seen from the use of direct greetings, ownership pronouns, and evaluative statements such as "sunny, huh? glowing, right?", and "seen from anywhere". These phrases lead the audience to adopt the role of visual assessors who affirm the beauty standards displayed while also connecting them to the product's value and effectiveness.

Narrative of Women's Confidence and Empowerment

Body wash ads build a narrative of women's confidence and empowerment through language that emphasizes personal strength, self-expression, and body acceptance. Women are portrayed as confident figures, able to withstand social judgment, and free to express their identity. The following is the data on women's beliefs and empowerment.

"Memberikanku kepercayaan diri untuk mengekspresikan diriku dan mengabaikan komentar negatif itu" (LUX 5)

"Gives me the confidence to express myself and ignore those negative comments" (LUX 5)

In this section, the phrase "gives me the confidence to express myself and ignore those negative comments" explicitly links the product's use to women's ability to deal with social pressures. The use of the ownership pronoun "give me" affirms women's status as subjects who feel the product's direct impact, while also suggesting that self-confidence results from consuming the product. Through this speech, the advertisement directs the audience to interpret the product not only as a body care tool but also as a means of forming mental attitudes and self-expression. This approach shifts from promoting purely functional attributes to fostering identity and self-image, leveraging advertising's capacity as a medium of representation to construct cultural meaning. (Slogan et al., 2023).

"Kekuatan wangi 12 jam kekuatanku" (LUX 6)
 "The fragrance power of 12 hours of my strength" (LUX 6)

In this section, the saying "the strength of fragrance is 12 hours of my strength" appears, linking the product's durability to the concept of strength. The use of the ownership pronoun "my power" invites the audience to associate product characteristics with personal identity. Through these sayings, products are introduced as part of an advertising narrative that highlights strength, while directing the audience's attention to the benefits offered. Through these storytelling techniques, advertising is no longer just a conveyance of information, but an immersive experience, encouraging the audience to actively engage with the narrative and feel an emotional connection with it (Karim & Utari, 2024).

"Bagian tubuh paling spesial yang memberi rasa percaya diri" (BIO 2)

"The most special part of the body that gives you confidence" (BIO 2)

In this passage, the saying "the most special part of the body that gives confidence" places the body, especially the skin, as the main source of women's confidence. The phrase "most special" emphasizes the value of the female body, while the clause "gives confidence" links physical condition to psychological aspects. Through this construction, the audience is directed to understand that women's confidence stems from the condition of the skin they care for, positioning body care as an important prerequisite for the formation of a positive self-identity. This is because in this social life, a person's body, especially a woman's, has an important meaning for that person (Thomas, 2023). So that there are efforts to maintain and represent these forms of beauty in various forms, which then become something to be proud of (Faradila Yufita Septian & Handoyo Pambudi, 2013).

Based on these three data points, it was found that *body wash* ads build a narrative of women's confidence and empowerment through language that emphasizes personal strength, self-expression, and body acceptance. One example can be seen on the LUX 7, where the slogan "My Beauty, My Strength" is displayed alongside a visual of three women walking confidently after using the product. Textually, the slogan associates power with women's self-identity. However, visually, the meaning of "strength" is reduced to an idealized, aesthetic physical condition. This contradiction shows that the empowerment displayed is pseudo. Women are indeed represented as confident and

empowered figures. However, the source of this confidence does not come from social experiences or equal relationships, but from the success of meeting the beauty standards constructed by advertising. This is in accordance with the concept (Fraser, 2013a) About recognition and redistribution: Advertising emphasizes recognition (self-confidence, self-love) but ignores redistribution (structural inequality faced by women). Thus, the empowerment shown is pseudo, as it depends on the body condition that matches the beauty standards built by the advertisement. Women appear to be symbolically empowered, but remain within the confines of meaning determined by commercial interests (Fraser, 2013).

From the perspective of capitalist feminism, the representation reflects how the discourse on women's empowerment is rearticulated in the logic of the market. This emphasizes that *feminist values* such as independence, freedom, and empowerment are often reduced to individualistic slogans that are in line with the interests of capitalism (Fraser, 2013). In the context of *body wash* advertising, women's bodies are not only a visual object, but also commodified as a source of economic value. Beauty, confidence, and personal strength are represented as attainable through the consumption of products, so that women's emancipation is reduced to the ability to buy and use body care products. This practice is in line with the concept of *femvertising*, which is a marketing strategy that utilizes the themes of women's empowerment, self-confidence, and gender equality as commercial attractions (Mita Amelia, 2024).

Furthermore, advertising creates the illusion of freedom and choice for women. Women are portrayed as free to love their bodies, determine their own ways, and express their identity, but the consumer-driven framework of consumption limits this freedom. Quoting Counihan (2018 in (Hasrin & Sidik, 2023), the beauty industry not only offers products to beautify the body, but also constructs women as commodities in which the concept of beauty that is ideological and pseudo-is instilled. In the framework of Nancy Fraser's critique, women's freedom shown in advertisements is not a freedom born of a change in social structure or equal power relations, but a freedom packaged as a consumptive act. Therefore, *body wash* advertisements not only represent women as "free" and "empowered" individuals but also affirm the role of capitalism in shaping the meanings of freedom and empowerment.

Power Relations in the Representation of Women's Bodies

The power relations in *body wash* advertising do not work in a single, or even always, one-way manner, but rather through mechanisms that operate subtly through knowledge, norms, and the ways we interpret the world in this context, through the medium of advertising. The inequality of position between objects, subjects, and spectators in Sara Mills' framework suggests that power works through voluntary discipline. When advertising uses narratives such as "my beauty, my strength", there is a process of rearticulation in which the values of *feminism* are absorbed into the logic of the market. Although it appears to have a voice, the subject's position in commercial media is often limited because it remains in a construction governed by the advertising structure, which is essentially a game of signs through the interconnectedness of objects, contexts, and texts that support each other (Darmawan Ferry, 2005). Here, power does not appear as coercion, but rather as a seductive offer of identity, so that women feel in control even though they are disciplining themselves according to the standards of capitalism (Swastini et al., 2025).

However, it is important to understand that power in this discourse is not absolute; it has gaps. Refers to *the theory of encoding/ decoding* (Stuart Hall, 1980) Viewers don't always occupy the position of receiving messages raw. There is room for oppositional or opposing readings from the audience. For example, the highly sensual use of visuals and body fragmentation in GIV 1 can trigger a critical reaction from viewers who are aware of the issue of objectification. Viewers can reject the narrative of "empowerment" offered and instead see it as commodified sexual exploitation. This opposition arises when the audience realizes a paradox between verbal messages about "confidence" and visual reality that still relies on the male gaze. This pattern shows how power works ideologically by wrapping the interests of capitalism in a positive narrative of beauty, self-confidence, and empowerment, which ultimately places women as subordinate groups in the social system, while potentially hindering the realization of substantive women's empowerment (Larasati & Fernando, 2023).

The culmination of this power relationship lies in the contestation between beauty myths and social reality. Although the ad seeks to naturalize the glowing skin standard through instructive commands such as "look here" in GIV 6, the extent to which this influence succeeds depends on how the viewer negotiates that meaning with their lived experiences. If the audience begins to question why

"power" should always be conditional on "fair skin," then the advertising narrative fails to claim the status of sole truth. Therefore, the power in *body wash* advertising is a battlefield of unclear meaning. On the one hand, it continues to try to wrap the interests of capitalism in the word 'empowerment.' However, it risks rejection from audiences critical of the narrowing of women's identity. This inequality arises when one party places itself in a more dominant position, while the other party is in a weaker and limited position in determining its own meaning (Wibowo & Claretta, 2023).

This complex power relationship concludes that the representation of the female body is not just an aesthetic problem, but a political-economic instrument that seeks to inhibit basic empowerment by diverting it into symbolic-consumptive empowerment. Without critical awareness or restrictions on these patterns of representation, women will continue to be trapped in positions wrapped in illusions of free choice and false confidence.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussions, it can be concluded that the sexual objectification of women in GIV, LUX, and Biore body wash advertisements is constructed through the position of the subjects and the arrangement of the audience's position, which places the female body as the center of commercial meaning. Women are consistently positioned as passive objects of visual representation, with physical attributes such as fair skin and sensual movements prominently featured to support claims of product effectiveness. At the same time, the subjectivity displayed through *self-love* narratives tends to be pseudo because it remains controlled by market interests. The position of the audience is constructed not as a neutral observer but as a visual assessor, invited to adopt a commercial gaze and to normalize narrow beauty standards as a form of self-empowerment. These findings suggest that sexual objectification does not work solely through the visual appearance of the body, but is also constructed through persuasive language that places women's skin at the center of social judgment and commodification in the logic of capitalism.

The importance of critical media literacy is the main suggestion for the public to be more sensitive in dissecting the ideologies and power relations hidden behind gender representation in commercial advertising. The advertising industry is expected to adopt a more authentic narrative of diversity, without reducing women's identities to mere physical attributes for economic interests. In addition, this study can serve as a reference for

future research exploring gender representation across broader digital media to uncover the complexity of body commodification practices.

REFERENSI

- Adiputra, N. A. (2025). Feminisme populer dalam iklan digital: analisis femvertising pada konten Instagram @sascofficial periode 2021-2025. *Besaung: Jurnal Seni Desain Dan Budaya*, 10(3), 835-860.
<https://doi.org/10.36982/jsdb.v10i3.5913>
- Chairina, R. R. L., Afandi, M. F., Alove, D. A., & Sularso, R. A. (2023). Dampak Gender pada Pembelian Produk Perawatan Wajah di Negara Beriklim Tropis. *Jurnal Maxispreneur: Manajemen, Koperasi, Dan Entrepreneurship*, 12(2), 368.
<https://doi.org/10.30588/jmp.v12i2.1274>
- Christanti, C., & Wicandra, O. B. (2021). Kesetaraan Gender dalam Iklan-Iklan Televisi Indonesia. *Nirmana*, 18(2), 66-73.
<https://doi.org/10.9744/nirmana.18.2.66-73>
- Darmawan Ferry. (2005). *Ferry Darmawan. Posmodernisme Kode Visual dalam Iklan Komersial*. (56), 103-114.
- Diaz Nur Afifah, Dita Amalia Putri, Wisista Syahda, H. S. (2025). Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills dalam Novel Padang Ilalang di Belakang Rumah Karya Nh . Dini. *Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Business (RIGGS)*, 4(4), 5626-5633.
- Faradila Yufita Septian & Handoyo Pambudi. (2013). KONSTRUKSI DIRI INSTRUKTUR SENAM WANITA TENTANG TUBUH DALAM INDUSTRI KEBUGARAN DI SANGGAR SENAM "VIVI" Yufita Septian Faradila Pambudi Handoyo. *Paradigma*.
- Fitriana, Soedjono Soeprapto, & Kusriani. (2021). Representasi 'Kekerasan Simbolik' Dalam Foto Iklan Cetak Produk Kecantikan Dalam Majalah Femina Tahun 2000. *Specta*, 5(2), 83-98.
- Fraser, N. (2013a). *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*. Verso Books.
- Fraser, N. (2013b). How feminism became capitalism's handmaiden - and how to reclaim it. *The Guardian*, oct(14), 1-3.
- Fredrickson, B. L. & R. T. (1997). Objectification Theory; Toward Understanding Women's Lived Experiences and Mental Health Risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21, 173-206.
- Hadji, R., Nurdin, N., & Ismail, L. (2020). Persepsi Sosial Terhadap Komodifikasi Tubuh Perempuan (Studi Kasus Sales Promotion Girl Di Mall Ratu Indah Makassar). *Aksiologi: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Ilmu Sosial*, 1(1), 44-55.
<https://doi.org/10.47134/aksiologi.v1i1.17>
- Hasan, Y., Retno Wulan, R., & Nurhayati, I. K. (2025). Dekonstruksi Representasi Perempuan dalam Perspektif Sutradara Film YUNI. *Jurnal Riset Komunikasi*, 8(1), 67-84.
- Hasrin, A., & Sidik, S. (2023). *Tren kecantikan dan identitas sosial*. 12(4), 740-757.
- Hikmatul hinayah, A. (2025). Tubuh Perempuan Sebagai Komoditas: Objektifikasi Dalam Iklan Bodycare Dari Perspektif Feminis (Analisis Wacana Kritis

- Norman Fairclough). *JDARISCOMB: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam*, 5(2), 148–163. <https://doi.org/10.30739/jdariscomb.v5i2.4130>
- Hulst, M. Van, Metze, T., Dewulf, A., Vries, J. De, Van, S., Ostaijen, M. Van, Hulst, M. Van, Metze, T., Dewulf, A., & Vries, J. De. (2025). Discourse , framing and narrative : three ways of doing critical , interpretive policy analysis. *Critical Policy Studies*, 19(1), 74–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2024.2326936>
- Ilham Mubarak. (2013). *MALE GAZE DALAM FILM THE HANDMAIDEN*.
- Karim Iklilul , Utari Prahastiwi, H. S. (2024). REPRESENTATION OF CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN AQUA's ADVERTISEMENT. *ANDHARUPA: Jurnal Desain Komunikasi Visual & Multimedia*, 10(1), 1–18.
- Larasati, Y. G., & Fernando, H. (2023). OBJEKTIFIKASI TUBUH DALAM IKLAN REKRUTMEN KERJA DI INSTAGRAM: QUESTIONING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT. *Masyarakat Madani Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Pengembangan Masyarakat*, 8(2), 85–106.
- Madina, I. H., & Kumala, A. D. (2020). Eksploitasi Sensualitas Tubuh Perempuan dalam Iklan Cat Avian Versi Awas Cat Basah. *Jurnal Audiens*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.18196/ja.12020>
- Mills, S. (2005). *Feminist Stylistics*. Routledge.
- Mita Amelia, P. R. (2024). *PATRIARKI DAN FEMVERTISING: EKSPLOITASI FEMINISME SEBAGAI ALAT KAPITALISME DALAM MEDIA*. 04(02), 1–10.
- Murwonugroho, W., & Pilliang, Y. A. (2015). Subjektivitas Dalam Iklan Ambient Media Miracle Aesthetic Clinic. *Panggung*, 25(2), 164–176. <https://doi.org/10.26742/panggung.v25i2.6>
- Ni Made Putri, L., Erviantono, T., & Noak, P. A. (2025). Praktik Komodifikasi Tubuh Perempuan Sebagai Konten Pemasaran dalam Ruang Media Sosial Tiktok. *Indonesian Journal of Public Administration Review*, 2(4), 10. <https://doi.org/10.47134/par.v2i4.4402>
- Nismawati et al. (2024). Analisis Semiotika Komunikasi Visual Pada Seri Iklan Versi Sambungkan Senyuman Bersama Telkomsel Siaga 2022. *RESPON JURNAL ILMIAH MAHASISWA ILMU KOMUNIKASI*, 5, 35–46.
- Nur Andi Ainun Juniarsi , Gunawan Wahyu , Zakaria Saifullah , Yunita Desi, L. A. C. (2024). *ANALISIS DIFERENSIASIPANOPTICON DAN POST-PANOPTICONPEMIKIRAN MICHEL FOUCAULT-DELEUZE & GUATTARI*. 2(2), 306–312.
- Prastio Ginanjar, F. (2022). Objektifikasi Perempuan Sebagai Elemen Persuasif dalam Iklan : Kritik Terhadap Iklan Shopee 11.11 Big Sale Versi Tukul Arwana. *CITRAWIRA: Journal of Advertising and Visual Communication*, 3(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.33153/citrawira.v3i1.4621>
- Rahmah, R. I., Corliana, T., & Mustika, S. (2025). Representasi Kecantikan Perempuan Dalam Iklan Scarlett Aha Body Serum 2024 (Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes). *Jurnal Basataka (JBT)*, 8(1), 132–142. <https://doi.org/10.36277/basataka.v8i1.626>
- Ramahardhila, D., & Supriyono, S. (2022). Dampak Body Shaming Pada Citra Diri Remaja Akhir Perempuan. *Ideas: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, Dan Budaya*, 8(3), 961. <https://doi.org/10.32884/ideas.v8i3.952>
- Shalihin, N., & Firdaus, F. (2019). Transformasi Gender: Strategi Pembebasan Perempuan dari Jerat Pembangunan dan Kapitalisme. *Sawwa: Jurnal Studi Gender*, 14(1), 109. <https://doi.org/10.21580/sa.v14i1.3366>
- Slogan, B., Sayogie, F., Majid, D. D., Prasetyo, F. I., Nazuli, F. R., Negeri, I., & Hidayatullah, S. (2023). Brand Slogan and Tagline with Masculinity Role in L-Men Platinum Advertisements. *Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie)*, 19(3), 473–479. <https://doi.org/10.13187/me.2023.3.473>
- Stuart Hall. (1980). *Culture, Media, Language* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Sunarsih, S., & Kurniawati, N. (2025). *Critical discourse analysis on the representation of the female detective character in the Borderless Fog film*. 394–410.
- Swastini, N. L. M. E., Erviantono, T., & Noak, P. A. (2025). Politik Tubuh Perempuan Antara Kontrol Sosial dan Resistensi. *Socio-Political Communication and Policy Review*, 2(3), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.61292/shkr.247>
- Thomas, A. N. (2023). Ruang Lingkup Body Shaming Di Media Sosial. *JUSTITIA Jurnal Ilmu Hukum Dan Humaniora*, 6(2), 376. <https://doi.org/10.31604/justitia.v6i2.376-388>
- Umarela, F. H., Dwityas, N. A., & Zahra, D. R. (2022). Representasi ideologi supremasi kulit putih dalam iklan televisi. *Siaran Pers No: 95/SP/HM.01.02/POLHUKAM/7/22*, 4(1), 64–84.
- Utami Aisyah Nurusyifa, Anwar Aulia Arifbillah, D. C. (2024). MULTIMODAL PADA IKLAN PRODUK SKINCARE JEPANG. *Edu Research Indonesian Institute For Corporate Learning And Studies (IICLS)*, 5(1), 70–80.
- Wardhana, V. Sp. (2013). *Budaya Massa, Agama, Wanita* (Christina M. Udiani, Ed.; Cetakan Pe). KPG (Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia).
- Wibowo, P. O., & Claretta, D. (2023). Representasi Relasi Kuasa dalam Kekerasan Seksual pada Film “Penyalin Cahaya.” *Jiip - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 6(10), 7609–7616. <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v6i10.2988>