



# Deconstruction of The Meaning of Beauty in Advertising Semiotic Analysis of Rexona Motion Activated Advertisement "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop"

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**Abstract.** This study aims to explain the deconstruction of the meaning of beauty depicted in the Rexona Motion Activated "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop" advertisement that aired in 2022 for a duration of 30 seconds. The reason behind this research is the evolution of advertisements shifting towards becoming agents of positive empowerment for women, particularly in representing beauty. The research uses a qualitative research method, and the data collected are analyzed through John Fiske's semiotic approach to television codes, consisting of Reality, Representation, and Ideology, as well as Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory used as a reference in the research. The results of the study show a deconstruction of the meaning of beauty in the ad, moving away from the pseudo-"beautiful" construction by the media and the advertisement's effort to present beauty from within (inner beauty), which has been neglected by the media.

**Keywords:** advertisement, deconstruction, semiotics, women, beauty

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## INTRODUCTION

Advertising, nowadays, has become an inseparable part of daily life in society. Its appearance across various media such as print, electronic, and digital media, contributes to strengthening advertising's position as one of the closest forms of mass communication to everyday life (Nurzanah, 2020; Prihatiningsih & Mudrikah, 2020; Wahyuni & Nugroho, 2021).

In creating an advertisement, every company competes to capture the attention of the audience towards the products or services being offered. Companies, through their advertising creators, play a significant role in packaging a message within the advertisement. These advertising creators often develop ads with themes taken from the realities occurring in society. The realities found in society are then modified and reproduced by combining ideas, creativity, and desired ideological content. The message that is easily understood and seems to depict the realities occurring in society often forms a pseudo-reality, where the reality within an advertisement already contains social constructions that constantly shape the audience's imagination and cognition (Ishanan, 2020; Yusuf, 2018). One of the social constructions formed by advertisements is lifestyle. Advertisements construct society into

various lifestyle groups that organize their way of life based on specific themes, images, and symbolic meanings. Among the lifestyles constructed by advertisements are appearance, masculinity, femininity, and also beauty (Rimbardi et al., 2021).

Speaking of beauty, women are often chosen as models in advertisements. This selection is based on the assumption that women can enhance the sales of a product through their beauty. According to Diarsi (1996), the choice of female models can even determine the success of an advertisement in being purchased or favored by the audience. (Azhar & Pramiyanti, 2018; Cahyani, 2022; Nyoman et al., 2020). However, 'beauty' in this context is a construction that has been built and reiterated by the media, particularly through advertisements displayed to the public. Consequently, the continuous repetition of this construction through advertisements ultimately forms a standard of ideal beauty for women. Common beauty standards portrayed in advertisements include fair or light skin, slim body shape, large eyes, long legs, long hair, large breasts and buttocks, as well as a flat stomach (Pramesti, 2018). This can lead to the perception that beauty is defined by meeting these standards, resulting in the emergence of discrimination and injustice for women who cannot attain them.

However, over time, a term called femvertising has emerged. Femvertising, or female empowerment advertising, can be defined as a form of advertisement that is laden with positive empowerment for women. Women models in advertisements with this theme are depicted as active, confident, independent, and free from the constructions or standardizations formed by the media itself, especially in the context of beauty.

Rexona, a well-known body care brand owned by Unilever, has been selected as the subject of this study due to its unparalleled success as the most popular deodorant brand in Indonesia. The brand offers a diverse range of deodorants and antiperspirants in various formats such as aerosol, roll-on, stick, and lotion. Rexona has been consistently recognized as the top-performing brand in Top Brand Award surveys for four consecutive years from 2019 to 2023, making it the most preferred deodorant brand in Indonesia.

The success of Rexona as the leading deodorant brand in Indonesia is attributed to the company's role in shaping a positive brand image through various aspects. These include introducing innovative and appealing product variations, creating easily memorable product designs, offering high-quality products at affordable prices compared to competitors, and presenting engaging and creative advertisement (Harahap, 2020; Kartini, 2021; Noor, 2018; Rizkiah et al., 2023). Advertising, as one aspect shaping a good brand image, plays a crucial role in facing competition. Rexona consistently incorporates attention-grabbing attributes in its advertisements, particularly in the latest creative ads that promote gender-based empowerment themes (Talia, 2021).

In this study, the researcher chose one of Rexona's recent advertisements, namely the Rexona Motion Activated version "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop" aired in 2022 with a total duration of 30 seconds. The selection was based on its uniqueness compared to other Rexona ads in Indonesia. The "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop" ad courageously features three female figures who deviate from conventional beauty standards in terms of physical appearance. This suggests that the ad is rich in the theme of female empowerment advertising (femvertising). Femvertising portrays women positively, free from stereotypes or media-driven standards, presenting them as independent, strong, and confident individuals (Aini et al., 2023). Currently, women are not only objects in the world of advertising but more and more advertisements position women as subjects (Ramdhan & Yusanto, 2022). Femvertising has recently become a trend for advertisers to market products, create positive brand images, and educate audiences about gender equality (Gracia, 2021).

Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a study involving the semiotic analysis of deconstructed beauty in the Rexona Motion Activated advertisement version "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop." This analysis will utilize qualitative research methods with the semiotic analysis approach of John Fiske's television codes and Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory. In essence, semiotics is the study or process related to signs (Sobur, 2020). On the other hand, deconstruction is an effort to dismantle meanings within language or text to gain a profound understanding of a (Mirasari, 2012).

John Fiske's semiotic analysis approach in this study will be used to analyze signs that may contain interpretations of beauty within the ad through levels of reality, representation, and ideology. Meanwhile, the deconstruction theory will be used as a reference to identify and unravel contradictory and concealed signs of beauty within the advertisement.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative research with a semiotic approach. Qualitative research focuses on text analysis with data collection consisting of words and images from observed objects rather than statistical data (Saputra, 2023). The qualitative approach is chosen to allow the researcher to objectively describe and draw conclusions from the analysis of data containing the deconstructed concept of beauty in the Rexona Motion Activated advertisement version "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop". John Fiske's semiotic approach is used to examine how the concept of beauty is deconstructed in the Rexona Motion Activated advertisement "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop" which is divided into 3 (three) levels, namely at the level of representation, reality, and ideology. Additionally, deconstruction theory will be used as a reference to identify and unravel contradictory and concealed signs of beauty.

The data collected in this research can be divided into 2 (two) types, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data of this research comes from observations and documentation by capturing specific scenes that contain the deconstruction of the concept of beauty in the Rexona Motion Activated advertisement "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop", while secondary data is obtained through literature studies from the internet, online news, and academic references such as books and journals, both national and international journals.

## RESULT

### 1. Analysis of the Contradictions in the Meaning of Beauty

Analyzing contradictions of meaning is a crucial step in deconstructing a certain meaning. The results of the analysis of beauty contradictions in the advertisement can be seen as follows.

#### a. Analysis of The Level of Reality

The level of reality encompasses everything perceptible by the senses and is edited to create a narrative influencing audience perception. This level includes various codes such as appearance, environment, gesture, facial expression, behavior, speaking style, makeup, and sound codes. However, the analysis in this study focuses solely on specific codes: **appearance**, **gesture**, and **facial expression**. The chosen codes aid in analyzing contradictions or discrepancies in the meaning of beauty in the Rexona Motion Activated advertisement version "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop." The presentation of the results is as follows.



Source: ([youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com), 2023)

**Image 1. Scene 1 Second 3**

Through the analysis of **appearance codes**, the advertisement prominently features three female figures actively wearing complete sportswear and exercising in a city park in a region in Indonesia. The noteworthy aspect of this analysis is the selection of these three female characters in the advertisement. When assessed in terms of physical appearance, these figures do not conform to or contradict the beauty standards often constructed by the media, such as slim bodies, fair skin, large breasts and buttocks, and straight black hair.

Furthermore, through the **analysis of gesture codes**, the advertisement explicitly showcases female figures engaging in Zumba, a physical activity performed regularly to enhance physical fitness and activity (Judi & Mahardika, 2021). According to the researcher's analysis, the choice of Zumba in the advertisement is driven by its popularity among women. Zumba emphasizes more complex movements compared to other forms of exercise, and these complex movements effectively burn calories quickly. Additionally, Zumba creates a joyful atmosphere while promoting a healthy and fit body.

In addition to showcasing exercise gestures, the advertisement also features free-spirited poses in scene 5 at the 26th second. The carefree poses performed after exercising can be interpreted as a display of self-confidence through various styles by each figure. Self-confidence is a characteristic of inner beauty. This ad tries to highlight inner beauty through high self-confidence, and loose smiles that show the happiness of women who are outer beauty, they do not have white skin and long black hair (Yusanto & Putri, 2018).

Throughout the ad, the intense **expression code** displayed by each figure is a smiling expression. A smile can be defined as the contraction of cheek muscles moving upward, forming a smile at the corners of the lips (Ramdhan & Yusanto, 2022). This smiling expression can be interpreted as a nonverbal sign that someone is experiencing joy or happiness. Upon further analysis, this smiling expression can be influenced by the Zumba exercise depicted in the advertisement. As reported by the online news channel Kompas.com, physical activity can release endorphins, a chemical compound naturally produced by the body that induces feelings of happiness, comfort, and energy. Endorphins also promote relaxation, reducing stress or depression and enhancing the immune response (Wisnubrata, 2019).

Furthermore, for women, smiling can be interpreted as a form of inner beauty. A smile signifies high self-confidence and exudes a positive aura, benefiting both oneself and those around, regardless of physical appearance.

#### b. Analysis of The Level of Representation

The representation level is a level that encompasses how empirical reality is represented through signs. It involves the process of transforming physical reality into signs or symbols that carry meaning. In short, this level includes technical aspects such as camera techniques, lighting, editing, narration, and music, which are then translated into visual and narrative language, forming a story, conflict, action, dialogue, setting, and casting.

In the analysis of this level, the researcher only utilizes **camera code techniques** and **lighting code techniques** to delve into the contradictions or discrepancies in the meaning of beauty in the selected scenes in more detail. The results are as follows.







Source: ([youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com), 2023)

**Image 2 Several scenes in the advertisement**

The analysis of the representation level in the above image reveals that advertisements commonly employ camera techniques such as full shots to comprehensively showcase subjects, objects, backgrounds, and activities. Medium shots and medium close-ups are also frequently used to clarify expressions of happiness depicted through smiles and the application of Rexona roll-on products. Rarely used camera techniques include extreme long shots, which are briefly utilized to show the overall atmosphere, specifically during bright morning weather. On the other hand, extreme close-ups highlight the advantages of Rexona Motion Activated, symbolized by animated drops of purple liquid and flowers touching the armpits of the figures in the ad. In short, Rexona conveys the message that using their latest product helps women stay odor-free for 72 nonstop hours, equivalent to three consecutive days of strenuous activities like sports.

The dominant use of the straight-on angle serves to proportionally showcase the activities, expressions, and gestures of the figures in the ad. Beauty is conveyed through smiling expressions and free-spirited gestures in scene 5 at the 26th second, representing confidence as a symbol of inner beauty. However, the contradiction of the meaning of beauty at this level is displayed by the presence of these three figures, whose appearance is contrary to the media's stereotypical beauty standards. In terms of lighting codes, it is evident that the advertisement predominantly uses natural lighting throughout scenes 1 and 5, as the ad is set outdoors in a city park in a region of Indonesia. Meanwhile, artificial lighting is used in scene 3, seconds 15 to 18, to provide adequate lighting for indoor scenes.

### **c. Analysis of The Ideology Level**

Through the analysis of the levels of reality and representation regarding the contradictions in the meaning of beauty across various examined scenes, the advertisement for the Rexona Motion Activated version “72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop” contains an ideology rich in feminist values. This determination is based on the relation between signs analyzed at the levels of reality and representation.

The ad aligns with the concept of advertising, overtly challenging stereotypes prevalent in society, particularly in the context of beauty. It focuses more on showcasing inner beauty aspects, such as positive attitudes like being active, spirited, confident, and happy, rather than physical beauty aspects (outer beauty). This contradiction is evident through the physical appearances of the three female figures in the ad that do not conform to common beauty standards in the media.

In summary, the Rexona Motion Activated version “72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop” ad conveys a positive message for women to remain active, spirited, confident, and happy, regardless of their physical appearance. This aligns with feminist values or ideologies, which aim to eliminate stereotypes associated with women.

## **2. Analysis of the Implicit Sign Structure of Beauty Meaning**

Analysis of the implicit sign structure is the next step in deconstructing the meaning of a text or sign. The results of the analysis, particularly in the implicit sign structure concerning beauty in the advertisement, are as follows.

### **a. Analysis of The Level of Reality**



Source: (youtube.com, 2023)

**Image 3 Representation of Indonesian Women**

The relationship between signs, such as the visualization of the text "PANAS INDONESIA BIKIN KERINGETAN" (HOT INDONESIA MAKES YOU SWEAT) in scene 1 at the 3rd second, the lush trees, green field, and buildings shown in scene 1 at the 8th second, and scene 5 at the 26th second in the image above, can be an indicator that the advertisement is set in a city park in a certain region in Indonesia. Besides serving as a sign for the location of the ad, this can be an indicator that the three figures in the ad represent Indonesian women.

Physically, based on skin color, as reported by Fimela.com, Indonesian women have diverse skin tones, including fair, yellowish, tan, brown, and dark brown skin color (Nadya, 2021). In the ad, the three figures, each with different skin tones, can represent Indonesian women. The first figure in the forefront represents Indonesian women with fair or yellowish skin, the second figure on the left represents Indonesian women with brown skin, and the third figure on the right represents Indonesian women with tan skin. In short, the ad aims to showcase various representations of Indonesian women in terms of physical appearance, especially in terms of skin color and other physical features.

As for implicit signs regarding the meaning of beauty, it is reflected through the analysis of the clothing colors worn by the figures in the ad. In addition to wearing complete sports attire, the colors of the clothing have a meaning. Colors can be considered as signs that can represent something else; colors have their meanings behind a sign (Kinasih & Prasetio, 2020). According to the color theory presented by Basuki (2018) colors can be interpreted as symbols of personality or a specific atmosphere.

The combination of sports attire dominated by bright colors such as pink, blue, cyan, light gray, and white carries meanings related to characteristics or personalities such as femininity, cheerfulness, confidence, strength, freedom, and seriousness. These bright colors reflect positive personalities and can be interpreted as a form of inner beauty. In this context, positive values such as cheerfulness, self-strength, and independence are portrayed through the choice of vibrant and energetic sports attire.

#### **b. Analysis of The Level of Representation**





Source: (*youtube.com*, 2023)

**Image 4 Figure 1 as the dominant figure in the advertisement**

Camera techniques such as full shot, medium shot, medium close-up, and the dominant straight-on angle are used in the advertisement. Featuring the first figure with a physically stocky body, fair skin, and straight blond hair tied in a ponytail hairstyle, this figure is consistently positioned at the forefront throughout the ad. Additionally, this first figure in the ad serves as a model demonstrating the proper use of the latest Roll-on type Rexona deodorant in scene 3 at the 15th second. This can be an indication that the Rexona Motion Activated ad version "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop" boldly challenges common beauty standards. In typical ads, the main female model chosen often presents a slim body as the primary focus. The choice of a slim model is based on the assumption that featuring a slim woman will attract more attention to the aired advertisement. Furthermore, the slim body has been a hegemonic representation of beauty perpetuated by the media.

### **c. Analysis of The Ideology Level**

At the ideological level, in the analysis of the implicit meaning structure of beauty through John Fiske's semiotics at the levels of reality and representation, the researcher found another ideology behind the feminism ideology displayed through positive values for women. This ideology is identified as capitalism.

The designation of capitalist ideology is based on the analysis of sign structures in scenes and the commercial purpose of the advertisement, which is created and used to influence potential consumers towards the products or services offered by the company. From a critical perspective, the Rexona Motion Activated "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop" targets the audience, especially women in Indonesia, to make their latest product, Rexona Motion Activated Roll-on, recognized and purchased, particularly by Indonesian women.

## **DISCUSSION**

Advertisements are a form of mass communication aimed at promoting specific products or services. Advertisements play a crucial role in shaping societal constructions with their inseparable presence in daily life. An example of such construction can be observed in the determination of beauty standards, where women are considered 'beautiful' if they meet the beauty standards commonly portrayed by the media. However, contemporary advertisements are transforming into positive promoters, particularly in representing beauty, as seen in the Rexona Motion Activated "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop" ad.

Through the analysis of the contradiction and implicit meaning structures of beauty in the ad, the researcher observed an attempt to deconstruct the traditional understanding of beauty prevalent in the media, especially in the context of physical beauty (outer beauty) for Indonesian women. In the realm of appearance codes, contradictions in meaning, specifically regarding physical beauty, emerge through the explicit portrayal of women challenging the commonly depicted beauty standards in the media. In short, the Rexona Motion Activated "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop" ad strives to deconstruct

the traditional understanding of beauty by introducing a new concept of beauty through diversity, particularly in the context of physical beauty for Indonesian women.

At the representation level, the codes of gestures and expressions in the ad, supported by using medium shots and straight-on angles, depict in detail the gestures displayed by the characters, such as being active, enthusiastic, and confident, as forms of interpreting the new beauty. This new interpretation emphasizes that beauty depends not only on physical appearance but can also be found in positive attitudes, activity, energy, and self-confidence that originate from within (inner beauty).

Through the analysis at the representation level, the selection of the first figure as the primary model in the Rexona Motion Activated ad version "72 Jam Keseagaran Nonstop" carries implicit meanings about beauty. Generally, advertisements often tend to choose women with slim bodies as the main models, influenced by the assumption that a slender body symbolizes health, diligence, and care, contrasting with the symbolism of a plump body associated with being unhealthy, lazy, and undisciplined. Another assumption is that ads using slim models can attract more attention from potential consumers, as seen in examples such as the Avian paint ad featuring a slim model and the Sutra condom ad "Mantap-Mantap Makin Mesra" (Lancia et al., 2021; Madina & Kumala, 2020).

However, as mentioned above, the Rexona Motion Activated ad version "72 Jam Keseagaran Nonstop" has boldly challenged beauty stereotypes by selecting a main model with a plump physique. The portrayal also challenges stereotypes associated with individuals having such a physique, depicting the female figure as actively, disciplined, and energetically engaged in sports activities, contradicting stereotypes about someone with a plump body. In short, the implicit message of beauty at this level asserts that women inherently deserve to be models in media, and they can be considered and labeled as beautiful, besides of their physical appearance.

On the ideological level, feminist and capitalist ideologies seem to shape the values present in the ad. Feminist ideology is evident in the positive portrayal of women, particularly in the context of beauty. From the perspective of capitalist ideology, critically viewed, the positive values of feminism in the ad are commodified to generate higher profits for the company, as the company seeks to persuade an audience rarely represented in ads by its competitors.

The Rexona Motion Activated "72 Jam Keseagaran Nonstop" ad presents a contradictory understanding of beauty compared to the widely accepted and understood meanings by society. Through the portrayal of women who are "liberated" from media-constructed beauty standards, such as having a plump body, brown skin, or curly hair, the ad attempts to convince Indonesian women that beauty can be interpreted as being spirited, active, and confident. Beauty is not solely confined to physical appearance (outer beauty) but can also be radiated through individual attitudes and self-confidence (inner beauty). While not meeting the "ideal" beauty standards hegemonized by the media, the researcher understands that the ad conveys a message about a new interpretation of beauty, where beauty can be defined as positive traits such as enthusiasm, activity, and self-confidence, and is not always tied to physical appearance alone.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussions presented in the previous chapter, this study can be summarized as follows:

Contradictions in the meaning of beauty within the ad can be observed through semiotic analysis at the levels of reality, representation, and ideology. In the reality level, such as appearance codes, gesture codes, and expression codes, the interpretation of beauty in the ad contradicts existing beauty standards. This is evident in the diverse differences in the physical attributes and clothing worn by each character, yet they share the commonality of radiating beauty through positive attitudes such as being active, spirited, confident, and expressing happy smiles. In the representation level, various camera techniques from different perspectives are used to emphasize ongoing scenes, as seen in scene 5, which utilizes the Close-Up technique with a straight-on angle to represent the expressions and enthusiasm of the ad's characters engaging in sports activities. At the ideological level, the ad embraces



feminist ideology through empowerment messages. This ideology focuses on messages designed to empower individuals, especially women, by displaying spirited, active, and confident attitudes, regardless of their physical appearance.

Through the analysis of several scenes, the ad incorporates implicit signs conveying the interpretation of beauty for Indonesian women. The ad encourages interpreting beauty not only through physical appearance but also by emphasizing that true beauty can be expressed from within oneself through positive attitudes such as confidence, activity, enthusiasm, happiness, and other positive behaviors. Through the analysis of implicit signs, the researcher also identifies the presence of capitalist ideology. The ad is used to generate profits for the company by touching on an audience rarely addressed by the media, especially in ads designed to attract attention and build a positive company image in the minds of the audience.

Through the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, 'beauty' in the Rexona Motion Activated "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop" ad can be interpreted as women who are active, spirited, and confident. Beauty is not solely defined by physical attributes but can also be seen as something inherent within oneself. Beauty can be displayed through positive attitudes portrayed in various scenes by the three female characters in the ad.

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