

# Constructing Masculinity in Men's Skincare Advertising: A Semiotic Study Utilizing Roland Barthes' Theory

Nurul Rahmawati<sup>1\*</sup>, Andang Saehu<sup>2</sup>, Irdan Hildansyah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung; <sup>1</sup>rahmanurul0805@gmail.com; <sup>2</sup>andangsaehu@uinsgd.ac.id; <sup>3</sup>irdan.hildansyah@uinsgd.ac.id

\*Author Correspondence

Submitted: August 1, 2023

Accepted: June 30, 2024

Published: June 30, 2024

**Abstract:** Semiotics is a sign system that reflects various assumptions of a particular society at a certain time. One of the assumptions often heard is the assumption about gender, which can be reflected in media such as advertisements. Thus, this research aims to identify the denotative and connotative signs of linguistic and visual elements in several men's skincare (NM, PM, GM, and VM) advertisements and analyze the myth of masculinity portrayed in these advertisements. The method used to analyze this research is qualitative, which refers to content analysis. The findings reveal several characteristics of masculinity based on the denotative and connotative meanings of the advertisements' narration. Men are portrayed as intellectual, possessing leadership abilities, embracing challenges, and displaying strength and adventure. The myth of masculinity is further represented through visual elements such as actors, settings, properties, and color saturation. Here, the myth of masculinity reflected men's affinity for sports, their leadership qualities, and ambition, emphasizing their strength, muscular bodies, beards, mustaches, and along with the depiction of outdoor activities. Overall, the combination of narration and visual elements effectively reflects the concept of masculinity.

**Keywords:** Masculinity, Men's Skincare Advertisements, Roland Barthes' Semiotics.

## 1. Introduction

Semiotica or "semion" in Greek means sign. In other words, semiotics is a study or analytical method for studying signs. According to Barthes (1915-1980), semiotic or semiology is a sign system that reflects various assumptions of a particular society at a certain time (Fatimah, 2019). One of the assumptions often heard is the assumption about gender, namely femininity and masculinity. Gender is defined as a perception that refers to the roles, behaviors, expressions, and identities of individuals, both male, and female, which are not innate traits from birth and are clarified as female (feminine) or male (masculine) traits, which are the result of general socio-cultural construction (Sasmita, 2017).

Masculinity is a concept that exists because of the social construction of men. It indicates that men are not naturally born with masculine traits because culture shapes masculinity (Demartoto, 2010). Some general unwritten rules state that real men are active, aggressive, logical, ambitious, and strong. They should not cry, look scary, have an athletic body, and be brave (Demartoto, 2010). This assumption about masculinity can be found in various media.

Media is one of the most powerful impacts on viewing women and men as social phenomena. Wood (1994) stated that there are three subjects in how media portrays gender perspective. First, women's female voices are not represented, which indicates that the cultural standard is that men and women are not important. Second, both women and men are portrayed by the stereotype of social view about gender, like women are in the domestic area (home, bedroom). In contrast, men do outdoor activities and relations. Third, normalize violence against women and emphasize traditional roles of the relationship between men and women (Herman, 2021).

One of the media is an advertisement, which is defined as a form of conveying a message or persuasion, where the message conveyed is in the form of information about a product, either in the form of goods or services that will be offered to the public. The representation of masculinity through advertising reflects the ideal view of masculinity that is socially constructed by society from time to time (Pimenta & Natividade, 2013). Kurnia (2004) stated that a representation of masculinity in advertisements today raises a new standard for men as aggressive and sensitive characters. In addition, Kurnia (2004) also stated that the concept of masculinity in society has shifted to feminism. This thing can be found in skincare advertisements aimed at men.

Cosmetics that used to be women are now an item that is no longer taboo for consumption by men. Through media exposure that depicts masculinity, men with well-groomed bodies and faces have influenced people's consumption of skincare products. It seems that men's awareness of their body's appearance is increasing. Now men are starting to feel no shame in caring for their bodies to get the impression. Therefore, the researcher is interested in analyzing verbal (linguistics) and visual signs in men's skincare product advertisements and how men are portrayed. The chosen object is from online advertisement, as the media can easily be found in people's daily activities. However, this study will focus on several men's skincare products, namely NM, PM, GM, and VM advertisements on YouTube. To make it more focused, the researcher limits the period of ads to be analyzed, i.e., from August 2011 until October 2019. This period was chosen because it represents a pivotal era characterized by significant shifts in societal attitudes toward gender roles and male grooming practices.

Therefore, the writer is interested in making these brands the object of this research, considering that these brands come from abroad but have succeeded in targeting the market with specifically male consumers, even though many still consider it taboo to use skincare for men in Indonesia. The advertisements issued by the four of them are also interesting because they represent the male figure with their skincare products. Roland Barthes' semiotics is a theory that fits the research problem raised. In his theory, Barthes uses the development of Saussure's sign theory (signified and signifier) and adds connotation, denotation, and myth to

examine a sign. Denotation usually refers to using language with a meaning that matches what is said. Sobur (2013) stated that denotative meaning is also called cognitive meaning. It is called cognitive meaning because it is related to awareness or knowledge. This is also called propositional meaning because it relates to factual information or questions. However, in Barthes's semiology, denotation is the level of signification that explains the relationship between signifier and signified, or between a sign and its reference to reality, which produces an explicit, direct, and definite meaning.

While connotative is a type of meaning related to feelings and emotions between the stimulus (the message's sender) and the response (the recipient). Barthes states that connotation becomes a system consisting of the signifier, the signified, and the process that unites the former with the latter (signification). This is also an inventory of these three elements that must be done in advance for each system (Barthes, 1986). Feelings, emotions, cultural values, and ideology form connotative meanings. For example, the image of a smiling person's face can be interpreted as friendliness and happiness. Also, vice versa, smiling in the picture can be interpreted as an expression of contempt or mocking someone. The last is myth, or in Greek *mythos* means speech or story. Myth is a communication system because it carries a message. It is not an object, concept, or idea but a way of the signification of a form (Barthes, 1991). Myth is a second-level semiotic system and takes the first-level semiotic system as its basis. In his book *Mythologies* (1991), Barthes stated that in the myth will be found again tri-dimensional pattern as known as; the signifier, the signified, and the sign. To produce a mystical system, the second-level semiotic system takes the first-level sign system as the signifier or form.

From the explanation above, the researcher is interested in identifying what denotative and connotative meanings are found in the linguistics sign in several men's skincare product advertisements (NM, PM, GM, and VM) and analyzing how the visual elements of those advertisements portrayed the myth of masculinity.

## **2. Results**

### **2.1 Denotative and Connotative Meaning of Linguistic Signs in NM, PM, GM, and VM Advertisements**

This section discusses the signifier, signified, and the myth portrayed masculinity that appears on men's skincare products such as NM, PM, GM, and VM advertisements on YouTube. Two analysis presented: the first analyzed the denotative and connotative meaning of linguistic signs (narration), and the second analyzed the myth of masculinity portrayed in the advertisement through its visual signs (the actor, setting, property, and color). The data were analyzed using Roland Barthes' theory of signification, the second-order semiotic system.

This study employs the voice-over or the narration of NM, PM, GM, and VM advertisements on YouTube as the data to be analyzed. Eight (8) advertisements include narration, which will be analyzed through the utterances found. From those advertisements, twenty-seven (27) narrations are found, which will be analyzed further.

### 2.1.1 NM Deep

NM Deep is a series of products for deep and effective skin care. In this advertisement, five (5) narrations identified as follows:

Narration 1: Sometimes you need to dig deep

Narration 2: You need to lead by example

Narration 3: You work together

Narration 4: And overcome any challenge

Narration 5: NIVEA Men Deep. Our performance starts deep

Based on the narrations above, the phrase 'dig deep' in the first narration could have a variety of meanings, depending on the context. The first narration leads to the concept that someone has to be more to understand and find out about something. Thus, the denotative connotation of this narration is a deeper understanding and knowledge are needed to be able to understand what something means or what it means. From this, the connotative sign is that a real man must dig deeper into something. Shows that men are intellectual human beings and ambitious.

In the second narration, there is the phrase 'lead by example', which means to set a good example for others to follow. It means to behave in a way that their leader wants others to behave. When a leader leads the people by example, it shows others what the leader expects of them. From that, the connotative sign in this second narration is to be the best leader it is important to lead by example.

The next is the third narration, as it can be seen that in this narration there is the phrase 'work together'. That phrase means someone is not working alone, one is working with one, two, or more people. By working together, things that previously seemed difficult to do and impossible to achieve become easy and light to do and are also possible to achieve. Working together also can increase productivity, increase ability to solve problems, increase creativity establish a close relationship between fellow team members, and so on. So, the connotative sign that can be seen from this signifier works well together to facilitate and expedite the work to achieve the goal.

In the fourth narration, the signified is the team must believe that they will face every challenge and obstacle that comes their way. From that, the connotative signifier refers to successfully dealing and controlling with new or difficult tasks. In doing everything there will be obstacles that get in the way, therefore overcoming challenges often requires a combination

of determination, problem-solving skills, resilience, and sometimes creativity. Thus, the connotative signified here is that a real man can solve problems well and is serious about achieving his dreams. Challenge is something that is often associated with masculinity, according to Brett (2021), the men who tried to prove themselves, who accepted the challenge, who dared to do great things, and who had the intelligence.

The last narration refers to the products that help men protect their skin deeper to keep their skin looking good. The products are designed to remove the dirt and to prevent acne breakouts. Moreover, from this, the connotative sign is if a man looking for skincare, they can use NM Deep for deeper protection.

### 2.1.2 NM Crème

NM crème is a crème specially formulated for the characteristics of men's skin, this product claims to be able to help solve various skin problems, including dry skin, shaving wounds, and sunburn. In this advertisement, the researcher found six (6) narrations as follows:

- Narration 1: When it comes to what men want. We went back to basics
- Narration 2: Men like convenience. So, we created a tool they can take anywhere
- Narration 3: Men like attention to detail. So, we added a screw top lid and side grips
- Narration 4: Men like masculine colors. So, we made it dark blue and silver
- Narration 5: Men like it fast-absorbing. So, we made it without any grease
- Narration 6: Men, this is your cream. NIVEA Men. It starts with you

As seen in the narrations above, the first narration here included the word 'basic', which means the simplest kind or at the simplest level (Online Oxford Dictionary, n.d) It refers to men loving the simplest level of things. Gomes (2020) stated men are 'simple creatures'. It means men don't like complicated things, as long as it can be made easy, then they will take that path, they don't like to have someone fussing over them all the time, and don't see the need to make a big deal out of anything that should be straightforward and this also applies to skincare. Thus, the products offered are made in such a way and as simple as possible to suit the wishes of men.

There is the word 'convenience' in the second narration. Based on the online Oxford Dictionary, the meaning of 'convenience' is useful and can make things easier, quicker to do, or more comfortable. From this, it can be seen that the literal meaning of this narration is men like something that makes their lives easier and more comfortable. This is related to men liking the simple things, because a simple thing can make their lives easier. Thus, the connotative sign in this narration is men's comfort with easy and efficient things.

In the third narration, the connotative signifier is men's interest in the small features of something. Men like attention to detail because they appreciate it when someone takes what

they want seriously. Relate to the product men often pay close attention to appearance. They may focus on the packaging of the product and re-think the function. The top lid and side grips indicated consideration for security and easy to hold. So that, men will like the product because the product is designed with detail.

In the fourth narration, the idea that men like masculine colors suggests that certain colors are commonly associated with traits and characteristics traditionally attributed to masculinity. The product is made with colors that suit for man that is dark blue and silver. Silver is often associated with modernity and nature. while dark blue is often associated with power, integrity, and wisdom (Cerrato, 2012). Thus, the connotative sign from this narration is dark blue and silver are colors that show masculinity.

The fifth narration refers to the product formulated to be quickly absorbed after application, however, the product also does not leave an itchy sensation due to the presence of oils in the product. From this, it can be known that men typically have lots of activities daily. Thus, the products offered are fast-absorbing and without any grease making men do need to take a lot of time and have a sticky feeling on their skin when using it. So that, the connotative sign in the fifth narration is men love to be quick as simple life.

The last narration refers to the product being designed only for men. Even though there are many other skincare options out there, this product offers things that suit men's wishes. Therefore, the connotative sign in this last narration is a real man who used this product.

### **2.1.3 PM Acne Solution Facial Wash**

PM Acne Solution Facial Wash claims to clear acne and oily skin in three days. In this advertisement, the researcher found there are two (2) narrations, as follows:

Narration 1: Don't let pimples distract you

Narration 2: Use Pond's Men Acne Solution with lock and clear technology. Stay clear in the zone with Pond's Men Acne Solution.

In the first narration, it can be known that the literal meaning or the connotative signifier is pimple or acne could take someone's attention away from what they are trying to do. Therefore, 'Don't let pimples distract you' is a sentence to remind you to always stay focused and confident because acne is a normal thing and there are many ways to deal with it, from skincare to various treatments. From that, the connotative sign of this narration does not let skin problems get in the way of your confidence and focus.

The second narration refers to the product formula that aims to lock in moisture while clearing away dirt and oil from the skin. This technology is designed to help prevent acne breakouts by keeping pores clean and hydrated. From that, it can be known that the connotative signifier in this narration is the formula of the product to help the consumers

(men) to fight acne and blemishes and keep pores clean and hydrated, so that, men will be confident and comfortable with their skin. Overall, this narration encourages men who struggle with acne-prone skin to use the product offered to achieve clearer, healthier-looking skin over time. The clearer and healthier skin can increase self-confidence and courage.

#### **2.1.4 Energy Charge**

This product claims to refresh dull skin and make it look brighter. In this advertisement, the researcher found two (2) narrations, as follows:

Narration 1: Have a coffee break for your face with Pond's Men energy charge

Narration 2: Infused with coffee bean extracts for brighter more energized skin

As can be seen, the first narration refers to the product offered that can charge the energy. The connotative signifier of this narration is a short period of rest for a face when someone stops working and uses the product. By analogy with the idea that coffee breaks can provide energy amid busyness. The same goes for the face, the product claims to help freshen up the skin and give it a boost of freshness. A fresh face can help raise enthusiasm and focus amid busyness.

In the second narration, it can be known that the product contains extracts of coffee beans. This ingredient can help men's skin to a brighter and more radiant complexion. Coffee bean extracts can help reduce discolorations caused by sun exposure, leading to a brighter more energized skin for men. So that, men can work with more enthusiasm and focus because their skin is bright and clean, free from pollution and they don't have to worry about sun exposure or sunrays.

#### **2.1.5 GM AcnoFight Anti-Pimple Face Wash**

This product claims to reduce excess oil on the face, fight acne, and blackheads, and make pores appear small. In this advertisement, the researcher found there are two (2) narrations, as follows:

Narration 1: Running away from pimples is difficult, because germs and oil attack your skin constantly, giving you pimples again and again.

Narration 2: Want to win the pimple fight? So, switch to Garnier Men acne fight face wash with Herba Repair and salicylic actives. It fights up to 99.9% pimple-causing germs and gives you clear skin every day

In the first narration, the signified obtained is germs and oil which can cause pimples to appear on the face. From this, it can be known that the literal meaning of this narration is pimple is something that makes someone shy or lack confidence, but germs and oil attacks make acne difficult to avoid. Therefore, to avoid the appearance of pimples on the skin, it is necessary to do several things, including maintaining cleanliness and trying not to touch the

skin of the face with dirty hands, and so on. So that, the connotative sign in this narration is maintaining cleanliness and excess oil production on the skin must be done to prevent acne.

There is the phrase 'herba repair' in the second narration. It refers to the ingredient of the product, natural herbal extract included in the formula that are known for their soothing properties. Men are usually associated with outdoor activities; this is related to the characteristics of masculinity which are strong and adventurous. This activity makes them sweat easily because they are exposed to the hot sun, dust, and germs can easily land on their skin. This can cause acne. The product offered is a product that is formulated to fight acne, by containing repair herbs and the active ingredient salicylic acid, the product can cleanse the face of dirt that settles on men's skin after they are active outside. So that men can have clean skin even though they have done various outdoor activities.

### 2.1.6 GM Power White Moisturizer

This product claims to be helpful against dull skin, black spots, and the effects of pollution. In this advertisement, the researcher found there are three (3) narrations, as follows:

Narration 1: Our skin faces torture every day

Narration 2: Dullness caused by harsh sunrays and daily pollution attack

Narration 3: When your skin looks dull? New Garnier power white moisturizer its fast-absorbing formula gives your skin 8 hours of protection and makes your skin brighter

There is the word 'torture' in the first narration. Torture as literal meaning causes agony or pain (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). From that, it can be known that people's skin is exposed to various environmental factors and stressors daily, which can cause damage and lead to premature aging. Especially for men, they often do their activities outdoors. Therefore, it can be known that the connotative sign of this narration is to prevent skin damage caused by the environment, men must also take care of their skin.

The second narration refers to Doing outdoor activities can make the skin dull due to constant exposure to harsh sunlight or ultraviolet (UV) and also exposure to pollution. Therefore, the skin needs to be cared for to keep it looking fresh and not dull is found as the connotative sign of this narration.

The last narration of this advertisement shows that outdoor activities make facial skin susceptible to dullness due to exposure to sunlight and pollution. Therefore, the product offers special protection with 8 hours of protection. In addition, the product is also formulated to help brighten the skin and absorb quickly, so it will not interfere with activities due to the sticky or greasy feeling left by the product.



### 2.1.7 VM 2 Step Brighter Skin

VM 2 Steps to Brighter Skin are two skincare products consisting of a face wash and moisturizer. These two products claim to make facial skin brighter. In this advertisement, the researcher found there are four (4) narrations, as follows:

Narration 1: Real bikers protect themselves with leather jackets and boots to prevent skin dullness from direct sunlight

Narration 2: Wash your face and use Vaseline Men moisturizer SPF for optimal protection from the sun and pollution for visibly brighter skin.

Narration 3: Two simple steps for visibly bright skin.

Narration 4: Vaseline Men effectively restores and brightens men's skin.

The signified in the first narration is leather jackets and boots are some things that can protect the skin from direct sunlight. From that, it can be known that the actual bikers wear leather jackets and boots to stop skin dullness from direct sunrays. To protect the skin from sun exposure, motorbike riders can use a helmet and skin care products such as sunscreen. Thus, from the connotative signifier and signified, it is obtained that real bikers prioritize personal safety and still maintain and pay attention to the health of their skin when riding, including by using helmets, leather jackets, and boots.

The connotative signifier of the second narration is that using facial wash and SPF moisturizer can give the best results to protect the skin from sun exposure and pollution. The products also help make facial skin brighter instantly. The sun's UV rays and pollution can damage the skin, causing inflammation and making the skin more prone to breakouts. Washing your face can remove dirt that clogs pores and using a moisturizer that contains SPF can help protect your skin from the sun's UV rays and maintain moisture is found as the connotative sign of the second narration.

While the third narration refers to men-like things that are simple but effective and efficient. Thus, from this narration, the connotative sign is men don't like things that make them complicated, including facial skin care. Two steps for caring for their skin make their lives easier.

The signified of the fourth narration is that the brand's product can restore and brighten men's skin. Thus, the connotative signifier that found is the product can effectively help heal the skin from its problems; pimples, and dullness, and not only that, the product can also make your skin look brighter instantly. With formulations aimed at meeting new men's skincare needs, such as hydration and moisturizer, the products offered have the potential to help men take care of their skin, including skin brightness.

### 2.1.8 VM Range

This product claims to be able to solve skin problems in just two weeks. In this advertisement, the researcher found there are three (3) narrations, as follows:

Narration 1 : Waw you can see my face's spots here.

Narration 2 : With the new Vaseline men's face scrub the excess oil on my face gets removed and in two weeks my face looks brighter with acne blemishes.

Narration 3 : Take the Vaseline men's challenge today.

In the first narration, the signified is other people can see someone's spot. The word 'here' in this narration refers to the camera, so it can be interpreted that other people can see the freckles on the model's face very clearly on the camera. These visible blemishes make the model less confident about her appearance on camera. Therefore, the connotative sign obtained from this signifier is stains or spots on the face or even other facial problems that can make a person lose confidence in their appearance.

The second narration refers to the product made specifically for men with formulations that can help men overcome excessive oil on the face. This product offers two weeks to see the results, besides that, within two weeks, acne scars can fade and facial skin looks brighter.

In the last narration of this advertisement, the signified is men should try this Men's Vaseline challenge. Meanwhile, the connotative signifier is the brand inviting and encouraging men to use their product so they can experience the benefits directly. Men are synonymous with liking challenges. Men who like challenges will be considered more 'manly' in society.

## 2.2 The Portrayal Myth of Masculinity through the Visual Elements in NM, PM, GM, and VM Advertisements

### 2.2.1 NM Deep

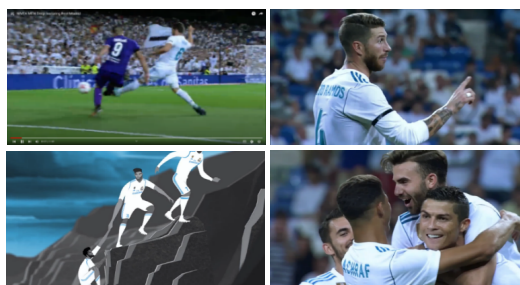


Figure 2.1 Visual Sign Signification of NM Deep

Figure 2.1 shows a football team playing ball on the field. At the beginning of the scene, the Real Madrid team is seen being overwhelmed by the opposing team's attacks. But swiftly, the leader and several other team members looked for a solution, until finally the leader started planning a strategy to fight back, and they won the match.

According to Brake (2011), sport has been a site where masculinity is learned, performed, and reproduced. It refers to a real man is the one who should love sport. Because

for men who lack the ability or interest in sport, they risk developing a more marginalized masculinity (Brake, 2011). Brake (2011) also stated that one of the most masculine sports is football because it draws the largest crowds, receives the largest budgets, has the reputation (if not necessarily the reality) of being profit-makers, requires great physical strength and speed, and have high levels of violence and aggression. In addition, Runkito (2011) argued that victory and defeat in sports matches can represent masculinity. Where the winner is a masculine man and the loser is not. Runkito (2011) also stated that not all men do sports. Because only masculine men dare to take risks to become winners. However, in the early twenty-first century, football becomes a common thing for women to do (Bohuon et al., 2020). Even in America, there is a major alliance for women's football, this alliance is called the Women's Football Alliance.

### 2.2.2 NM Crème



Figure 2. 2 Visual Sign Signification on NM Crème

In Figure 2.2 it can be seen a process of making the product offer. The first scene shows a man making a cane for the product package with welding. After the package is welded, the next scenes show a man making side grips as detailed, to make the product more detailed, in another room there is a man in charge of coloring the package of the product. In the end, all the workers and the scientists gathered to test the product on a man. Finally, the product functions according to its purpose.

From Figure 2.2, it can be known that men are portrayed as detailed humans, which means they are careful in choosing to make decisions in life. It signifies that men are logical, they think about something carefully because men are foresighted (Heilburn in Suriyani, 2019). Based on this advertisement, the colors silver and dark blue represent masculinity. According to Mofaral (cited in Zhang, 2015), silver signifies riches, natural, conservative, formal, and high-tech. While blue signifies trustworthiness, stability, confidence, and intelligence (Mofaral in Zhang, 2015). In addition, according to Chafetz (cited in Merdeka & Kumoro, 2018) the physically virile actor; wearing a white shirt unbuttoned collar, blue shirt, small eyes, short hair and a beard reflects the characteristics of masculinity.

### 2.2.3 PM Acne Solution



Figure 2.3 Visual Sign Signification of PM Acne Solution

As can be seen in Figure 2.3, the data is talked about an employee who will make a presentation of his work. The man looked in the mirror and realized that there was an acne on his face after that, his confidence to make a presentation suddenly dropped drastically and he started to lose his focus. However, when that happened, he kept trying to look calm, until he finally found a solution to get rid of the acne, the man used the product. So, in the end, the man can focus and be confident again and continue his presentation satisfactorily.

In this advertisement a man is portrayed as a person who can solve his problem and does not get panicked when something happens to him. As known before, when the actor prepares for a presentation, he sees acnes in his face. At first, he gets panicked but no longer he becomes calm again. Thus, it can be seen that a man should face something calmly. It is in line with Beynon (2002) that a man should be a sturdy oak, it signifies man needs rationality, force, and autonomy. A man has to act calmly in various situations, not show emotions, and not show his weakness (Beynon, 2002).

### 2.2.4 PM Energy Charge



Figure 2.4 Visual Sign Signification of PM Energy Charge

Figure 2.4 shows the men look exhausted after doing their job. Through Figure 2.4 the portrayal of masculinity in this advertisement reflects through the setting and the properties. As explained the setting signifies ambitiousness and the properties signify strong, responsible, disciplined, and success oriented ambition. This is in line with Chafetz (cited in Merdeka & Kumoro, 2018), that success-oriented ambitious, strong, and disciplined are the characteristics of masculinity.

### 2.2.5 GM AcnoFight Anti-Pimple Face Wash



Figure 2.5 Visual Sign of GM AcnoFight Anti-Pimple Face Wash

In Figure 2.5, it can be seen that a man is generally associated with various outside activities. He runs from pimples caused by germs and oil attacks. Exercising is quite hard as seen in the picture, besides that men are also synonymous with social butterflies where they can easily socialize.

In this advertisement, the portrayal of masculinity is shown in the actor's appearance and setting. Through appearance, the actor has muscle, a beard, a mustache, and small eyes. Muscle signifies healthiness, athlete, and strong. According to Chafetz (cited in Merdeka & Kumoro, 2018), the physical image of masculinity is athletic and strong. Beard signifies dominance and aggression (Travers, 2019). According to Barnard (1996), mustache signifies old and conservative, and small eyes signify serious sight. In addition, in this advertisement, the portrayal of masculinity is also described as someone who has high mobility, is active and productive, has good relationships, and is easy to get along with those around him. Or shortly, man often do their activities outside..

### 2.2.6 GM Power White Moisturizer



Figure 2.6 Visual Sign Signification of GM Power White Moisturizer

Figure 2.6 shows the actor riding a sports motorbike where in the middle of his journey he encounters various things including pollution from other vehicles, the scorching heat of the sun, and road dust. This made the actor's face dirty and dull.

In this advertisement, the portrayal of masculinity is reflected in the appearance, the setting, and the property used. According to Chafetz (cited in Merdeka & Kumoro, 2018) the appearance of the physical image that shows masculinity is athletic, strong, and brave. This

suit with the appearance of the actor in this advertisement, who has a muscular body. The setting and the properties used in this advertisement signify adventure and discipline. Both are other interpersonal characteristics of masculinity in traditional (Chafetz cited in Merdeka & Kumoro, 2018).

### 2.2.7 VM 2 Steps to Bright Skin



Figure 2.7 Visual Sign Signification of VM 2 Steps to Brighter Skin

As can be seen in Figure 2.7, a man who rides a motorsport and carries out his busy activities as an artist, especially a musician.

The portrayal of masculinity in this advertisement shows in the actor, and the properties used. Masculinity in the actor is reflected when the actor walks in front of a lot of people, it signifies he is the leader, dominating, successful, and has power. According to Beynon (2002) ) one of the characteristics of masculinity is being a big wheel, which means masculinity can be measured in success and power. This is also in line with Chafetz (cited in Merdeka & Kumoro, 2018) that interpersonal leadership, domination, and success are the personality of masculinity.

### 2.2.8 VM Range



Figure 2.8 Visual Sign Signification of VM Range

In Figure 2.8, it shows a male actor who is reviewing the results of his shooting. The actor was dissatisfied with the shooting results because the spots on his face were clear on the camera.

The portrayal of masculinity in this advertisement lies in the actor's ambition. He wants everything perfect according to his wishes. It is also related to the actor's abilities to solve the problem; the perfect performance in front of the camera. According to Bem (1981), one item that portrays masculinity is ambition. Moreover, when the actor solves his problem; spots, to

make his performance perfect in the camera signifies he can solve his problem. According to Radhakrishnan (2022), men dissect each aspect of the problem individually.

### **2.3 Semiotics of Gender: Confirming Masculinity in Men's Skincare Advertisement**

Through Roland Barthes' theory, the analysis of narratives and visual signification in men's skincare advertisements reveals a complex portrayal of masculinity. By analyzing the interplay between narratives and visual elements, a nuanced understanding emerges of how these advertisements convey multifaceted aspects of male identity. The narratives within these advertisements not only promote skincare products but also reflect broader societal shifts where men increasingly integrate skincare into their grooming routines, men care about their skin condition because it is related to physical appearance, which people pay attention to. It is in line with Byrne (2019), in this modern era, men are fascinated with their appearance and use an array of goods, including facial skincare to maintain their looks. Traditionally, skincare has been stereotypically associated with femininity, yet societal norms have evolved, allowing men to embrace skincare without stigma. This shift signifies a broader cultural acceptance that men, like women, benefit from skincare routines that enhance confidence and align with societal expectations regarding personal presentation. Men are not taboo to use skincare. Because better-looking skin can improve their confidence. It is also related to the societal expectation that men should consider their image, Cooley (cited in Byrne, 2019) stated the imagination of men's appearance to others and the perceived judgment of this was important over a century ago. Skincare products for men offer a discreet improvement to appearance. Thus, men's skincare advertisements serve as more than just commercials; they reflect evolving perceptions of masculinity, demonstrating how semiotics continues to evolve in response to shifting cultural ideals and expectations.

### **3. Conclusion**

Based on the findings and the discussion in the previous section, the researcher found the character of masculinity which is portrayed in men's skincare advertisements, especially in NM, PM, GM, and VM advertisements. Firstly, several characteristics of masculinity are found based on the denotative and connotative meanings of narration in those advertisements. Through the narrations, the characteristics of masculinity are shown by men are intellectual, have leadership abilities, love challenges, strong, and adventurous.

Secondly, based on the portrayal myth of masculinity through visual elements of those advertisements; actors, setting, properties, and color saturation. In the first advertisement; NM Deep, the myth of masculinity reflects men love sports, especially football, and have leadership abilities. In the second advertisement; NM Crème, the myth of masculinity shows men are foresighted. The third and fourth advertisements are PM Acne Solution Facial Wash and Pond's

Energy Charge, in these advertisements, the myth of masculinity portrayed is men should be sturdy oak, which means they are strong, do not show their weakness, ambition, and discipline. Next, the fifth and sixth advertisements are GM AcnoFight Anti-Pimple Face Wash and GM Power White Moisturizer, the portrayal of myth masculinity is reflected through men's appearances; have muscular bodies, beard and moustache. In these advertisements also show that men often do their activities outside. Last, the seventh and eighth advertisements; are VM 2 Steps to Brighter Skin and VM Range. In these advertisements, the myth of masculinity shows men are strong, dominating, have power, a sense of pride, and are ambitious. The narrations and visual elements are balanced in reflecting masculinity, the narrations reflecting it by the denotative and connotative meaning, and the visual elements reflecting it by the myth.

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**Acknowledgment:** The author appreciates parties who have contributed to the research.