

Decoding Inclusive Beauty: Audience Reception to Beauty Standards and Disability in Digital Media Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how Indonesian audiences interpret beauty standards in digital advertisements featuring models with disabilities and examines how digital media shapes perceptions of beauty and diversity. Drawing on a qualitative approach grounded in a constructivist paradigm, this research applies Stuart Hall's reception theory and Roland Barthes's semiotics to analyze two popular beauty advertisements: Pond's #WajahmuKekuatanmu (2022) and Wardah #BeautyMovesYou (2021). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight informants aged 18–25. Findings indicate that although both advertisements incorporate models with disabilities, their messages are interpreted differently. Pond's ad was perceived as reinforcing conventional beauty myths, focusing on flawless skin and idealized aesthetics, whereas Wardah's ad was more positively received for promoting empowerment and inclusion, though still subject to critique for retaining elements of perfection. Audience responses were categorized into dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings, revealing a critical engagement with how disability and beauty are portrayed. The study highlights a gendered dimension in audience interpretation, with female informants generally more receptive to inclusive messages. It recommends that advertisers ensure authenticity by involving disability communities in production processes to avoid tokenism and misrepresentation. This research contributes to digital media and disability studies by underlining the need for deeper shifts in narrative, substance, and visual representation to achieve meaningful inclusion.



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INTRODUCTION

Marketing media, particularly beauty advertising on digital platforms, plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of beauty standards. However, such advertisements frequently feature models who conform to narrowly defined aesthetic ideals (de Lenne et al., 2021; Veloo & Mustafa, 2023). Beauty advertisements disseminated through mass media—including television and online platforms—often promote unrealistic representations of female beauty, such as flawless, poreless skin; a fair complexion devoid of acne; a slim physique; long, straight hair; and a slender facial structure. These portrayals construct and perpetuate myths surrounding a restricted and idealized notion of female beauty, thereby influencing individuals—particularly women—to aspire to these standards in an effort to resemble the appearance of models featured in such advertisements (Lestari, 2020).

According to Statista Market Insight (2024), the beauty product market in Indonesia is projected to experience continuous and substantial growth. This trend is driven by the increasing emergence of local beauty brands and the expansion of beauty advertising campaigns employing diverse conceptual approaches. Beauty advertisements also serve as a medium through which prevailing notions of Indonesian women's beauty are constructed and disseminated. The concept of beauty, as reflected in these advertisements, can be understood from two interrelated dimensions: inner beauty and physical beauty. Inner beauty refers to qualities that emanate from within an individual, such as positive character traits, intellectual capacity, and a commendable personality—attributes including confidence, courage, and optimism. In



contrast, physical beauty pertains to outwardly visible features, including bodily appearance, skin tone, hair color, and facial characteristics (Abid, 2021).

In recent years, beauty advertising has increasingly embraced inclusivity and begun to portray more diverse representations of beauty (Houston, 2019). Slater and Demangeot (2021) further underscore the necessity of integrating political, social, and historical dimensions into marketing strategies to foster diversity in consumer representation. Notably, the inclusion of women with disabilities in beauty advertisements has started to emerge. Over the past three years, two beauty brands—Wardah and Pond's Beauty—have featured models with disabilities in their advertising campaigns. The concept of disability can be understood through two distinct but related perspectives: “impairment” and “disability.” Impairment refers to an individual's biological or psychological limitations that result in the loss of physical, sensory, or cognitive functions, whereas disability encompasses the broader inability to fulfill personal and social roles, often shaped by societal attitudes and structural barriers (Forstner, 2022).

The term *disability* refers not only to physical or cognitive limitations but also to the social stigma and prejudice frequently directed toward individuals with disabilities, often resulting in marginalization and systemic disadvantage (Akhtar, 2024). In mainstream beauty advertising, models are predominantly portrayed as physically ideal, thereby reinforcing beauty standards based on the appearance of nondisabled women. The proliferation of new media—particularly social media—has further amplified narrow beauty ideals that are widely internalized by Indonesian society. Women with disabilities are especially vulnerable to the negative impacts of these standards, as they often lack reference models that reflect their realities, making it difficult for them to align with dominant societal and media narratives (Houston, 2019). In digital media, women with disabilities are frequently depicted as perpetually vulnerable and positioned as “the other,” a portrayal that intensifies their sense of marginalization and sustains exclusionary beauty discourses (Murillo Lafuente, 2023). Moreover, women's bodies are subjected to various societal pressures, including body shaming and sexual harassment, contributing to intersecting forms of violence and discrimination (Swastika et al., 2022). These portrayals significantly influence women's experiences with beauty standards in Indonesia, where physical perfection remains a dominant societal expectation. Advertising content plays a critical role in shaping women's perceptions of their bodies, their emotional responses, and their self-concept (Amalia et al., 2024). Misrepresentation in the media may further perpetuate stigma toward people with disabilities (Henderson & Rank-Christman, 2016). As such, beauty brands bear a cultural responsibility in shaping the image and meaning of beauty from the past to the present (Wolf, 2002).

Advertising possesses the capacity to reach a vast global audience and plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding of various social groups. Consequently, advertisers must navigate the complex intersection of aesthetics, ethics, and representation in media (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2002). Across diverse digital platforms—including the internet, advertisements, news media, and social media—there is a persistent tendency to portray unrealistic expectations regarding women's physical appearance. Such portrayals reinforce and normalize stigmatizing attitudes toward women who do not conform to these idealized standards (Selensky & Carels, 2021).

In advertising, women with disabilities remain significantly underrepresented, as media portrayals predominantly feature women who are perceived as “normal”—those with complete physical faculties, conventionally attractive faces, and normative body types. Prior studies indicate that media representations of individuals with disabilities often perpetuate passive narratives, reinforce the “supercrip” stereotype (Bolt, 2014), or function as forms of “inspiration porn,” wherein people with disabilities are objectified as motivational figures for nondisabled audiences (Shelton & Waddell, 2021). In the Indonesian context, such stigmatization manifests in multiple ways. Advertising and media campaigns rarely include women with disabilities, further marginalizing their presence in the public sphere. These portrayals influence societal perceptions, as reflected in the varying terminology used to refer to this population, such as “*penyandang cacat*,” “*difabel*,” and “*people with disabilities*” (Maftuhin, 2016). When disability is represented in Indonesian media, it is often framed in ways that emphasize limitations (Al Fajri et al., 2024), with narratives that are frequently biased and shaped by underlying capitalist motives (Setyowati et al., 2020).

According to data from BPS (Statistics Agency of Indonesia) in August 2021, women with disabilities in Indonesia outnumber men, comprising 55% of the disabled population (Rosadi, 2022). Furthermore, the data reveal that approximately one in ten Indonesians lives with a disability, underscoring that individuals with disabilities constitute a significant segment of the national population. Given this demographic reality, it is imperative for the media to portray people with disabilities in ways that foster mutual understanding and empathy between disabled and nondisabled individuals (Foster & Pettinicchio, 2022; Nelson & Cook, 2023). This necessity forms a crucial foundation for the relevance and urgency of the present research.

Two beauty product advertisements that feature models with disabilities are those of Pond's and Wardah—both of which are highly popular in Indonesia. According to Katadata Insight Center (2023) data from the Top Brand Award, Pond's is the most widely used facial soap brand among Indonesian consumers, while Wardah is recognized as one of the leading brands in the teen beauty product segment. Given the high visibility and influence of these two brands, this study aims to examine how audiences—particularly Generation Z—interpret representations of beauty and the inclusion of models with disabilities in these advertisements. This analysis employs Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding model within

the framework of reception theory. First introduced in 1973, Hall's model distinguishes between encoding, the process through which specific meanings are embedded in media texts by producers, and decoding, the process by which audiences interpret those meanings. Hall posits that audiences are active agents who interpret media messages in ways that align with their own cultural frameworks and lived experiences (Griffin, 1998). The encoding-decoding model is based on three key assumptions: media messages are polysemic, meaning they can carry multiple interpretations; media texts are not transparent, as they embed particular ideological meanings; and audiences are not passive recipients but cultural agents who actively negotiate meaning (Hall, 1973; 1982). In this view, media consumers are understood to exercise interpretive agency rather than simply accepting dominant messages at face value.

Several prior studies have examined the representation of women with disabilities in advertising. One such study analyzed the depiction of individuals with disabilities in Dove's advertising campaigns (Bolt, 2014). The findings indicate that Dove's trilogy of advertisements explicitly features women with visual impairments, marking a relatively progressive effort in comparison to most commercial advertisements by representing disability across multiple dimensions. However, the study also notes a tendency to exaggerate or overemphasize the visible aspects of the models' disabilities, highlighting the need for more nuanced and inclusive portrayals. Current advertising practices often still fall short in adequately representing people with disabilities, frequently reinforcing stereotypes rather than dismantling them. Further, research by Prianti (2013) highlights the ongoing irony in representations of women's beauty in advertising, where diversity is often constrained within a singular, generalized concept of beauty that adheres to unrealistic standards.

Beauty advertisements of similar types often perpetuate alienation and marginalization, particularly for women who are unable to identify with the beauty ideals presented. This condition reinforces stereotypes and creates the assumption that alternative beauty narratives—those that fall outside the dominant advertising discourse—are neither visible nor valid. A study by Kusumawati et al. (2016) examined the construction of beauty among women wearing hijab in the “Mazaya” cosmetic television advertisement through semiotic analysis. The findings reveal that beauty in this advertisement is portrayed through specific physical attributes: a woman in a hijab with an ideal physique, fair and radiant skin, a pointed nose, thin lips, a fashionable appearance, and a modest character. Makeup use is also depicted as an integral part of the identity of modern hijab-wearing women. These representations suggest that cosmetic advertising continues to rely heavily on narrowly defined physical beauty standards. Meanwhile, Houston (2022) argues that advertising serves not only as a space for women to affirm their self-confidence but also as a medium of socio-cultural critique, especially regarding the misrepresentation of women with disabilities. Women with disabilities, who do not conform to “normative” physical standards, remain significantly underrepresented in beauty advertisements that continue to promote idealized concepts of perfection.

Research on women with disabilities in beauty advertising within the Indonesian context remains largely centered on representational studies. A search conducted through the SINTA database using the keyword “disability in beauty advertising” yielded only one relevant journal article. The study, authored by Niyu (2017), examined the representation of individuals with disabilities in the “We Are The Superhumans” advertisement for the Rio Paralympics. Employing Peirce's semiotic analysis, the study found that disability was portrayed through the lens of “superhuman” capabilities—emphasizing talent, passion, and achievement. Meanwhile, a separate search using the keyword “beauty in advertising” on the Garuda web portal identified 30 related articles, the majority of which also employed semiotic approaches.

This indicates that prior research has predominantly concentrated on the production of meaning, sign analysis, and media representation, rather than exploring how audiences interpret the messages conveyed. To date, no studies have specifically examined how audiences interpret the presence of women with disabilities in beauty advertisements. Yet, meaning does not solely originate from advertisers; it is also constructed through the audience's decoding process. It is therefore essential for advertisers to understand not only how signs are encoded in media content but also how these signs are received, interpreted, and negotiated by audiences. Addressing this gap in the literature, the present study seeks to investigate how audiences interpret the concept of inclusive beauty and the representation of models with disabilities in beauty advertisements. Audience reception provides valuable insight into how beauty narratives—particularly those involving models with disabilities—are read, accepted, or challenged by viewers (Hall, 1973). This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the underexplored concept of inclusive beauty within the field of digital media studies.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach grounded in a constructivist paradigm and applies Stuart Hall's reception analysis to examine audience interpretations of the portrayal of women with disabilities in Indonesian beauty advertisements. The constructivist paradigm posits that reality is not objectively given but is instead constructed by individuals based on their cultural contexts, personal experiences, and social interactions. Consequently, each individual develops a subjective understanding of reality (Denzin et al., 2024). The selected advertisements for this study are #WajahmuKekuatanmu (2022) and Wardah #BeautyMovesYou (2021), both of which explicitly feature women with disabilities as models. These advertisements were chosen not only because they include representations of disability but also due to the brands' significant popularity within the Indonesian beauty market. The Pond's Beauty #WajahmuKekuatanmu advertisement has garnered 7.2 million views and 473 likes on YouTube, while the Wardah #BeautyMovesYou advertisement has received

67,000 views and 746 likes. In addition to their online presence, both commercials have been broadcast on Indonesian television, thereby reaching a broad and diverse audience.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with eight informants, consisting of four women and four men. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants, wherein informants were chosen on a non-random basis due to their perceived competence and familiarity with the research phenomenon (Etikan et al., 2016). The inclusion criteria for participants were as follows: members of Generation Z (aged 18–25), familiarity with Pond's and Wardah beauty products, and having watched both the Pond's Beauty #WajahmuKekuatanmu (2022) and Wardah #BeautyMovesYou (2021) advertisements in full. Generation Z was selected as the focal demographic based on findings from the Pew Research Center, which indicate that this cohort tends to be more progressive and socially aware compared to preceding generations (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). The objective of this study is to explore how Indonesian audiences interpret beauty standards presented in advertisements that feature models with disabilities, and to examine how digital media influences perceptions of beauty and diversity. The following section provides detailed information about the research participants.

Informant Demographics

Informant Initial	Informant Demographics			
	Age	Gender	Occupation	Domicile
A	24	Female	Private Employee	Semarang
V	24	Female	Private Employee	Semarang
AL	25	Female	Private Employee	Central Jakarta
N	26	Female	Student	Tangerang
D	23	Male	Private Employee	South Jakarta
I	21	Male	Model	Bekasi
H	29	Male	Trainer	Semarang
U	26	Male	Civil Servant	South Jakarta

The initial stage of analysis involved a simple semiotic examination to identify how symbolic elements were presented within the advertisements (Kumala & Sukmono, 2023). Using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, the analysis focused on three levels of meaning: denotative, connotative, and mythical (Allen, 2003). This approach was used to determine the preferred reading embedded in the advertisements. The semiotic analysis began by segmenting each advertisement into several scenes that featured models with disabilities, highlighted their roles and interactions, and explicitly depicted the forms of disability. The researcher then examined key signifiers within each scene—including visual elements (e.g., color, camera angles, facial expressions, gestures, characters), auditory elements (e.g., dialogue, music, sound effects), and accompanying textual components—to interpret the denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings conveyed.

Following the semiotic analysis, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with informants, during which the Pond's and Wardah advertisements were shown. The interview data were subsequently analyzed using Stuart Hall's reception analysis model (Hall, 1973), which categorizes audience interpretations into three positions: (1) Dominant, where the audience fully accepts the meaning encoded in the media; (2) Negotiated, where the audience generally accepts the intended meaning but introduces alternative interpretations based on personal or contextual factors; and (3) Oppositional, where the audience actively rejects the dominant meaning presented by the media.

To ensure the validity of the qualitative findings, this study employed member checking (intercoder agreement) as described by Creswell (2009). This process involved reconfirming the research interpretations with the original informants to ensure credibility and accuracy. While the analysis was interpretative in nature, it remained grounded in the lived experiences of the informants. Each participant was invited to review the findings and provide feedback, thereby validating the extent to which the interpretations reflected their original responses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Myth of Beauty Standards in Digital Media Advertising

The representation of women's beauty in Indonesian advertising continues to be shaped by unrealistic beauty standards and remains insufficiently inclusive, particularly with regard to women with disabilities (Rohmah & Suhardi, 2020). The recent emergence of beauty advertisements featuring models with disabilities invites a critical examination of how these portrayals are received and interpreted by audiences. This study centers on two such advertisements: Pond's Beauty #WajahmuKekuatanmu (2022) and Wardah #BeautyMovesYou (2021). In the Pond's advertisement, the voice-over states: "Your face can inspire others. Use Pond's Bright Beauty Cream for a smooth, glowing, spotless face. Pond's, your

face, your strength.” The Wardah advertisement, by contrast, delivers a broader message: *“Your beauty moves change, your beauty moves others, benefits the world, your beauty moves the steps of the future, your beauty moves courage. With local and global collaboration, Wardah presents halal cream beauty innovation so that your beauty is free to step, move, and bring benefits. Wardah, beauty moves you.”*

The preferred reading in the Pond’s Beauty advertisement indicates that the creators aim to highlight beauty as defined by a smooth, glowing, and blemish-free face, which is portrayed as capable of inspiring others. The message emphasizes that the power of beauty lies in physical appearance. Meanwhile, the preferred reading in the Wardah advertisement suggests that the creators emphasize a definition of beauty that is not based on appearance, but rather on the ability to motivate, provide freedom, and inspire others, as reflected in the tagline, *“Wardah, beauty moves you.”*

After analyzing the scenes using Roland Barthes’s semiotic framework, the researcher examined audience reception of the myth of beauty standards in digital media advertisements through Stuart Hall’s reception theory, categorizing the audience responses as follows.

Audience Reception Positions Based on Stuart Hall’s Model

Informant Initial	Pond’s Advertisement	Wardah Advertisement
A	Negotiated	Dominant
V	Negotiated	Negotiated
AL	Dominant	Dominant
N	Negotiated	Dominant
D	Oppositional	Negotiated
I	Oppositional	Negotiated
H	Oppositional	Oppositional
U	Oppositional	Oppositional

Note: Audience responses were categorized into dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings based on Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model after viewing Pond’s Beauty #WajahmuKekuatanmu (2022) and Wardah #BeautyMovesYou(2021).

B. Representation of Model with Disability in Digital Media Advertising

The first ads that the researcher shows to the audience is Pond’s Beauty #WajahmuKekuatanmu (2022) Ads. From the denotative meaning, the model of a deaf friend shown in the ads uses a hijab and sign language when conveying a message. The connotative meaning shows that despite having a hearing impairment, the model’s flawless look aligns with our social expectations of beauty standard, implying that the external perfection is bigger and more important than their limitations. The preferred reading in Pond’s ads is that the woman’s strength lies in her face that appears to shine flawlessly. Although models have hearing impairments, with smooth, smudgeless, and luminous faces, they still have the power to inspire others. This reinforced the social myth that physical perfection and traditional beauty standards are essential for strength and influencing people, overshadowing their quality and achievements.

Besides Pond’s, the Wardah ads featured an advertising by a woman with physical disability on her legs. From the denotative meaning, the model is seen walking confidently on stage using one prosthetic leg. The connotative meaning show us that the model signifies empowerment and breaking her barriers. There is a scene in the advertisement that highlights the legs of a model who uses a prosthetic leg walking in the background of the fashion show audience as if they are watching the model show herself on the runway. The preferred reading in Wardah’s ads seemed to highlight about beauty that can encourage a woman to be brave despite having physical limitations. This aligns with the tagline that Wardah aims to convey to the audience, namely “Beauty Moves You”, suggesting that beauty has the power to inspire and empower another women.

The presence of models with disabilities in digital media provides a breath of fresh air in the beauty industry and the advertising industry. The fact that the representation of people with disabilities is often misinterpreted, unrealistic, or even not shown at all makes friends with disabilities don’t have equal space for their expression in popular culture or mainstream space (Barnes, 2008). Based on the literature, the representation of people with disabilities on digital media often worsens their experienced about stigma in real life. At another part, the representation will able to provide an overview of what and how disability means for groups of people with disabilities and non-disabilities. Images in digital media can shape the way people think about groups of people with disabilities, gaining awareness about people with disability (Bakombo et al., 2023).

After analyzing the scenes using Roland Barthes's semiotics, the researcher examined the eight audiences's reception about the representation of model with disability in digital media ads through Stuart Hall's reception and categorized the audiences as follows:

Audience's Positions		
Initial Informant	Pond's Position	Wardah Position
A	Negotiation	Dominant
V	Oppositional	Negotiation
AL	Dominant	Dominant
N	Negotiation	Dominant
D	Oppositional	Negotiation
I	Oppositional	Oppositional
H	Oppositional	Negotiation
U	Dominant	Negotiation

C. Dominant Position

Audiences in the dominant position regarding the Pond's advertisement accept the message that beauty is a source of strength derived from physical appearance, such as glowing, smooth, and blemish-free skin, consistent with the tagline "*Wajahmu Kekuatanmu*" or "*Your Face Your Power.*" Most audience members did not challenge the advertisement's reinforcement of conventional beauty standards, even though the ad featured a model with a hearing impairment. The model was depicted with flawless skin, aligning with prevailing social expectations of beauty and supporting the myth that a woman's strength is rooted in her physical appearance.

Audiences in the dominant position regarding Wardah's advertisement interpret the message as conveying that beauty is not solely defined by physical appearance, but also by the ability to inspire and motivate others. Themes of empowerment are communicated through the presence of a model with a disability who appears confident while using prosthetic feet. The tagline "*Beauty Moves You*" is understood by the audience as promoting an inclusive and progressive message. Overall, audiences in the dominant position tend to accept the messages represented in both Pond's and Wardah's advertisements. However, the dominant position is more prevalent in responses to Wardah's advertisement, as its message of inclusivity and empowerment is perceived as clearer and more accessible. In contrast, Pond's advertisement elicited fewer dominant readings, as its message was viewed as reinforcing conventional beauty standards rather than challenging or redefining them.

D. Negotiation Position

Audiences in the negotiated position regarding Pond's advertisement interpret the message as suggesting that the model's smooth, clean, and bright face can serve as a source of inspiration for others. While they acknowledge that the advertisement attempts to demonstrate that women with disabilities can align with societal beauty standards, they also offer critical reflections. The advertisement is seen as placing excessive emphasis on physical appearance, while overlooking other important attributes such as personal achievements, character, and inner values. As a result, the intended message is perceived as less meaningful when compared to broader, more inclusive, and empowering conceptions of beauty.

Audiences in the negotiated position regarding Wardah's advertisement respond more appreciatively, as the values of empowerment and inclusivity presented are perceived as more realistic. The audience agrees that the concept of beauty should extend beyond physical appearance and can serve as a source of inspiration for change. However, they also critique the advertisement for continuing to reflect conventional standards of beauty. For instance, the model featured is portrayed as fashionable from the outset, which, according to the audience, does not fully represent the everyday reality of people with disabilities. While the empowerment message in Wardah's advertisement is seen as stronger and more acceptable than that of Pond's, the audience notes that the ad still retains elements of the "perfection" narrative to capture consumer attention.

E. Oppositional Position

Audiences in the oppositional position regarding Pond's advertisement reject the narrative that a person's strength is rooted in physical beauty, particularly in the form of smooth, radiant, and spotless skin. These audiences view the advertisement as reinforcing conventional beauty myths that perpetuate stigma, discrimination, and a lack of inclusivity—especially toward people with disabilities. The portrayal of a model with a disability who nonetheless appears flawless is seen as ironic, as it reinforces the notion that individuals, particularly women, are only valued when they conform to socially accepted physical beauty standards. As a result, Pond's advertisement is perceived as having failed to convey a transformative or inclusive message and instead as reinforcing exclusivity.

Audiences in the oppositional position regarding *Wardah's* advertisement criticize the campaign for presenting an inclusive narrative of diversity and empowerment while still commodifying women's beauty through the use of models who conform to conventional beauty standards. These audiences argue that the inclusion of models with disabilities does not effectively challenge stigma or promote equality, but instead functions as a marketing strategy centered on idealized beauty. The tagline "*Beauty Moves You*" is perceived as disconnected from the actual challenges faced by women with disabilities, rendering the message less relevant to their lived experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes two beauty advertisements—Pond's (2022) and Wardah (2021)—in relation to the representation of beauty and the inclusion of models with disabilities, using an audience reception analysis framework. The findings reveal that informants interpret the advertisements in diverse ways. In the case of Pond's, the majority of informants rejected the advertisement's intended positive message, perceiving it as still bound to traditional Indonesian beauty standards, such as fair, glowing, and smooth skin without blemishes. While some informants adopted a dominant reading, others expressed skepticism, viewing the representation of facial skin issues as artificial and unconvincing. Despite appearing inclusive, digital media advertising continues to perpetuate stigma toward people with disabilities. The inclusion of models with disabilities was often interpreted not as a genuine effort to advance equality and empowerment, but rather as a commercial strategy aimed at expanding market appeal. This reinforces the notion that beauty advertising remains largely driven by economic imperatives rather than social transformation (Qayyum et al., 2023; Södergren et al., 2023).

In contrast, Wardah's advertisement was more positively received by informants, as it featured greater diversity and presented a more realistic depiction of beauty compared to Pond's. The majority of respondents appreciated Wardah's messaging, which portrayed beauty not solely in terms of physical appearance, but also through character traits. The inclusion of a model with a disability was viewed as a positive step toward representing diversity. However, several informants adopted negotiated or oppositional positions. Despite efforts to promote inclusivity, the advertisement was still perceived as adhering to traditional beauty standards (Amalia et al., 2024). The use of models with disabilities was, at times, interpreted as a marketing strategy or gimmick rather than a sincere effort to challenge prevailing norms. These findings indicate that audiences do not passively accept advertising messages but actively engage with and critique the representation of beauty in media. This reflects the broader role of digital advertising in shaping social discourse. While digital media advertising offers a platform to promote diversity and inclusive beauty ideals, it remains deeply intertwined with enduring social myths surrounding conventional beauty—potentially reinforcing stigma and exclusivity. The inclusion of disabled models signals a broader spectrum of diversity in representations of female beauty; however, the underlying beauty standards still largely align with idealized notions of facial perfection constructed by advertisers.

In accordance with Stuart Hall's reception theory (Hall, 1973), audiences in dominant positions are more receptive to, and aligned with, messages that challenge social boundaries rather than those reinforcing conventional beauty narratives. Audiences in the negotiated position tend to interpret meaning reflectively, aligning the advertisement's message with their own personal values and social experiences. In contrast, audiences in the oppositional position reject the message conveyed by the advertisement, viewing it as a failure to present a truly inclusive and realistic representation of women with disabilities. This study demonstrates that Stuart Hall's reception theory is highly relevant to the analysis of digital media, as narratives surrounding beauty and disability significantly influence public discourse and the construction of social meaning.

This study also reveals a notable finding: female informants were generally more receptive to the advertising messages in both the *Pond's* and *Wardah* campaigns compared to male informants. Several female participants acknowledged and appreciated the emphasis on diversity in the advertisements. In contrast, male informants tended to engage in more critical discussions, often expressing skepticism and characterizing the representation of models with disabilities as a mere "gimmick." This highlights a gender dimension in audience interpretation of advertising content. Furthermore, the study found that participants were particularly attentive to the form and consistency of the inclusion messages conveyed. Many informants emphasized the importance of authenticity and criticized advertising efforts that appeared tokenistic or insincere. It is therefore recommended that advertisers undertake more in-depth research involving individuals with disabilities or disability advocacy groups during the production process. Authentic representation in beauty advertising requires more than visual inclusion; it necessitates a fundamental shift in narrative, substance, and the core values conveyed through the advertisement.

A limitation of this study is its exclusive reliance on audience reception analysis and the concept of inclusive beauty. Future research should adopt a critical paradigm to further explore the intersection of beauty and disability in digital media, particularly by centering the perspectives of individuals with disabilities. Such an approach would provide deeper insights into how inclusive messages influence self-representation, challenge dominant stereotypes, and contribute to broader processes of social inclusion.

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