

**MEDIATED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS:  
NEGOTIATING METROSEXUALITY WITHIN  
*L'ORÉAL MEN EXPERT'S* PACKAGING DISCOURSE**

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## ABSTRACT

Gender, the social rules and standards of behaviours imposed on male and female, has been a popular social debate. The modern pursuit of body beautiful and fashion among metrosexuals that trespasses feminine space causes uncertain social acceptance. Hence, the study aims to explore the marketing strategies in the grooming industry to overcome this uncertainty. Choosing the giant beauty producer, *L'Oréal*, the case study investigates its success story in cross-gender brand extension to *L'Oréal Men Expert (LME)*, while continues to thrive in both female and male markets.

Using Scollon's (2001, 2004) *Mediated Discourse Analysis*, the qualitative research aims to analyze how metrosexuality is negotiated through social interactions within the packaging discourse of *L'Oréal Men Expert (LME)*, in comparison to *L'Oréal Paris (LP)*. Approaching through actions, the study analyses how each social action within the packaging discourse is mediated by multimodal features strategized by gendered practices. Incorporated along are elements from structural semiotics, i.e. Barthesian Order of Signification and paradigmatic analysis, as well as Difference Framework from language and gender. The latter aims to depict the interaction (or tension) between traditional gender dichotomy (which causes gender stereotyping) and contemporary gender diversity (referring to queer identities, e.g. metrosexuality) that give rise to social controversies pertaining to metrosexuality. The ultimate aim is to uncover the marketers' manipulating (negotiating) strategies in overcoming traditional gender dichotomy to accept contemporary gender diversity.

Narrowing the scope to whitening products, the analysis on a total of twelve (12) product packaging (consisting cleansers, toners and moisturizers) reveals different conceptual emphasis between male and female products. In *LP/White Perfect*, luxury, aesthetic,

sensuality, vanity, attractiveness (beauty), passivity, femininity and skin-whitening are emphasised, while expertise, problems, functionality/performance, manual, unattractiveness, activeness, masculinity/anti-femininity and skin-brightening in LME/*White Activ*. These propose two different sets of gendered concepts in beauty and grooming contexts, separating metrosexuality from femininity.

The study also depicts the strategies of negotiating metrosexuality in LME through both gender dichotomy and gender diversity, using binary/digital oppositions (either/or) and/or analogue oppositions (more/less) of both signifiers (multimodal features) and signifieds (meaning). Negotiation through gender dichotomy includes: 1) construct masculinity (claim masculinity); 2) avoid femininity (deny femininity); and 3) juxtapose masculinity and femininity (challenge femininity). On the contrary, negotiation through gender diversity is conducted through three ways: 1) downplay femininity (reduce femininity); 2) overshadow femininity (highlight masculinity); and 3) compromise femininity (add autonomy in femininity/add femininity in masculinity).

Another significant discovery is the different portrayal between LP and LME for the same concepts. This includes portraying LP as a luxury worth-spending, aligns with the slogan "Because you're/I'm worth it", whereas LME sells the concept of cheap but highly functional products that are worth-buying "because it's worth it".

Last but not least, the study uncovers the complementary nature between linguistics and marketing and further proposes the potential collaboration between both realms that serve as 'heuristic/explanation tool' and 'verification tool' respectively. In other words, it proposes the collaboration between the "grammar" and "dictionary" of semiotics.

*(Keywords: metrosexuality, masculinity, gender stereotyping, product packaging, mediated discourse analysis, Difference Framework, paradigmatic analysis, Barthesian Order of Signification)*

## ABSTRAK

Jantina, peraturan sosial dan piawaian tingkah laku yang dikenakan ke atas lelaki dan perempuan, telah menjadi perdebatan sosial popular. Fenomena mengejar kecantikan dan fesyen dalam kalangan lelaki jelas mencerobohi ruang feminin, justeru mengakibatkan penerimaan masyarakat yang tidak menentu. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk meninjau strategi pemasaran dalam industri dandanan dalam mengatasi ketidakpastian ini. Memilih pengeluar produk kecantikan terkenal, *L'Oréal*, kajian kes menyiasat cerita kejayaannya dalam melanjutkan pemasarannya kepada lelaki melalui *L'Oréal Men Expert* (LME), manakala terus berkembang maju dalam kedua-dua pasaran wanita dan lelaki.

Melalui *Pengantara Wacana Analisis* Scollon (2001, 2004), penyelidikan kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana metrosexualiti dirundingkan melalui interaksi sosial dalam wacana pembungkusan *L'Oréal Men Expert* (LME), berbanding *L'Oréal Paris* (LP). Kajian ini menganalisa bagaimana setiap tindakan sosial dalam wacana pembungkusan direalisasikan oleh ciri-ciri pelbagai mod yang dimanipulasikan dengan elemen jantina. Unsur-unsur Struktur Semiotik juga diaplikasikan, iaitu Barthesian Perintah Penandaan dan analisis paradigmatic, serta Rangka Kerja Perbezaan dari bahasa dan jantina. Yang terakhir ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan interaksi (atau ketegangan) antara dikotomi jantina tradisional (yang menyebabkan stereotaip jantina ) dan kepelbagaian jantina kontemporari (merujuk kepada pondan identiti, contohnya metrosexuality) yang menimbulkan kontroversi. Matlamat utama adalah untuk mendedahkan strategi rundingan dalam mengatasi dikotomi jantina untuk menerima kepelbagaian jantina.

Merapatkan skop kepada produk pencerah kulit, analisis pada dua belas (12) pembungkusan (pembersih, toners dan pelembap) mendedahkan penekanan konsep yang

berbeza antara produk lelaki dan perempuan. Dalam LP/*White Perfect*, kemewahan, estetik, keghairahan, kecantikan, daya tarikan (keindahan), pasif, kewanitaan dan pemutihan ditekankan, manakala kepakaran, masalah, fungsi/prestasi, manual, ketidakeindahan, keaktifan, kejantanan/anti-kewanitaan dan pencerahan dalam LME/*White Activ*. Hal ini mencadangkan dua set konsep jantina dalam konteks kecantikan, mengasingkan metrosexualiti dari kewanitaan.

Kajian ini juga menggambarkan strategi rundingan metrosexualiti dalam LME melalui dikotomi jantina dan kepelbagaian jantina, dengan menggunakan tentangan binari/digital (sama ada/atau) dan/atau tentangan analog (lebih/kurang) daripada kedua-dua signifiers (ciri-ciri pelbagai mod) dan signifieds (makna). Rundingan melalui dikotomi jantina termasuk: 1) membina kejantanan (mendakwa kejantanan); 2) mengelakkan kewanitaan (menafikan kewanitaan); dan 3) penentangan kejantanan dan kewanitaan (mencabar kewanitaan). Sebaliknya, rundingan melalui kepelbagaian jantina dijalankan melalui tiga cara: 1) meremehkan kewanitaan (mengurangkan kewanitaan); 2) membayangi kewanitaan (menegaskan kejantanan); dan 3) berkompromi kewanitaan (menambah autonomi dalam kewanitaan/ menambah kewanitaan dalam kejantanan ).

Satu lagi penemuan penting adalah gambaran yang berbeza antara LP dan LME untuk konsep yang sama. Ini termasuk menggambarkan LP sebagai kemewahan yang berbaloi dibelanjakan -- menyahut slogan "Kerana anda begitu berharga", manakala LME menjual konsep produk murah tetapi sangat berfungsi yang berbaloi dibeli "kerana ia begitu berharga".

Akhir sekali, kajian ini mendedahkan sifat pelengkap antara linguistik dan pemasaran dan mencadangkan potensi kerjasama antara kedua-dua bidang, di mana linguistik memainkan peranan sebagai 'alat heuristik/penjelasan' dan pemasaran sebagai 'alat pengesahan'. Dalam

erti kata lain, ia mencadangkan kerjasama antara linguistik and pemasaran, bagaikan "tatabahasa" dan "kamus" semiotik.

*(Kata kunci: metrosexualiti, kejantanan, stereotaip jantina, pembungkusan produk, analisis wacana pengantara, Rangka Kerja Perbezaan, analisis paradigmatic, Barthesian Perintah Penandaan)*

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*At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.*

Albert Schweitzer

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