

Analysis of Instagram User Reception Against the Use of Korean Actors as Local Skincare Brand Ambassadors @somethincofficial

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Abstract

The Korean wave phenomenon in Indonesia is marked by the increasing number of people adopting Korean cultures such as food, fashion, and language. Until more and more local Indonesian products use BA K-pop, one of which is the skincare brand Somethinc. When examined further, there is a contradiction between the skin color characteristics of Korean actors and the skin color of the majority of Indonesians. This study aims to find out how Instagram users interpret advertisements featuring Han So Hee promoting brightening series products. By using qualitative methods and interpretive paradigms through a reception analysis method approach. This study use interview as data collection techniques. The results of interviews with informants were then grouped into three categories, namely Dominant Hegemonic, Negotiated, or Oppositional Position. This study shows the results from 6 sources that there are 2 people included in the Dominant Hegemonic category, then 1 person in the Negotiated category, and 3 people in the Oppositional Position category.

Keywords: Korean wave; brand ambassadors; reception theory; advertisement; instagram

Abstrak

Fenomena Korean Wave di Indonesia ditandai dengan semakin banyaknya orang yang mengadaptasi budaya Korea, seperti makanan, fashion, hingga bahasa. Hingga semakin banyak produk lokal Indonesia menggunakan brand ambassador K-pop, salah satunya brand skincare lokal Somethinc. Apabila dicermati lebih lanjut, terdapat kontradiksi antara karakteristik warna kulit aktor Korea dengan warna kulit mayoritas orang Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana pengguna Instagram memaknai iklan yang menampilkan Han So Hee mempromosikan produk seri brightening. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan paradigma interpretif melalui pendekatan metode analisis resepsi. Teknik pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini menggunakan teknik wawancara. Hasil wawancara dengan informan kemudian dikelompokkan tiga kategori, yakni Dominant Hegemonic, Negotiated, dan Oppositional Position. Penelitian ini menunjukkan hasil dari enam narasumber terdapat dua orang yang termasuk dalam kategori Dominant Hegemonic, kemudian satu orang dalam kategori Negotiated, dan tiga orang dalam kategori Oppositional Position.

Kata Kunci: Korean wave; brand ambassador; teori resepsi; iklan; nstagram

INTRODUCTION

Korean culture, especially South Korea, has moved rapidly globally in the last two decades to create the term “Korean Wave” also known as Hallyu. According to Margaretha (2014) in Tjoe (2016), the Korean Wave is described as a significant increase in the popularity of South Korean entertainment and culture, which spreads throughout the world, especially in East Asian and Southeast Asian countries. Indonesia is one of the countries affected by the Korean wave. Moreover, the development of technology that makes it easier for anyone to obtain information about cultures outside of Indonesian culture. Korean wave itself begins with the world of entertainment such as drama, music, and variety show, each type of entertainment is packed with Korean culture inherent in it.

K-drama itself became popular in Indonesia in the early 2000s. It was started by several series such as *Autumn in My Heart* (Indosiar-2001), *Winter Sonata* (Indosiar-2002), *Full House* (Indosiar-2005), and several other k-dramas (Rahmawati, 2020). Over time, K-drama fans in Indonesia are increasing.

Furthermore, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) sector presented the results of a survey in April 2020 that there was an increase in the number of K-drama viewers in Indonesia. The data states that the Covid-19 pandemic factor has also contributed to the increasing popularity of K-Drama in Indonesia. The most influential Korean wave phenomenon in Indonesia is K-pop music. Quoting from CNN Indonesia, Twitter has just released data on (26/01/2022) that Indonesia is the country with the largest number of K-pop fans in cyberspace in 2021. With a large number of K-pop fans, then the spread of Korean culture in Indonesia is getting easier and faster to spread.

The results of the pre-study research presented data that one form of the impact of the Korean wave is by adapting Korean culture to daily life. Such as consuming Korean food and drinks, making Korean-style fashion a mecca in dressing, to learning the Korean language either self-taught or by involving certain institutions. The popularity of Korean culture in Indonesia today has even influenced marketing activities for several types of products, for example, skincare products. Several local skincare products in Indonesia are currently vying to make K-pop artists Brand Ambassadors (BA). From K-Pop artists to K-Drama actors and actresses, they are involved in promoting skincare products in Indonesia.

Behind the widespread selection of BA K-Pop

and K-Drama actresses in Indonesia, there are some criticisms that the skin characteristics of Korean celebrities do not represent the characteristics of Indonesian people who are brown in color. Quoted from Intan (2022) mentioned that the wave of protests was carried out by several parties on social media accounts such as Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube. But it doesn't seem like a big problem for local Indonesian skincare business owners. As long as the Hallyu fever is still high, the popularity of Korean actresses and actors in local Indonesian skin care products will also survive.

Somehinc is one of the brands that choose K-Drama actress Han So Hee as its BA. Han So Hee is a Korean actress who has become increasingly popular in recent years after playing Yeo Da Kyung in the drama series *The World of The Married* (2020). In 2021 she got her main role as Yoo Na Bi in the drama series *Nevertheless* (2021).

As BA, Han So Hee promotes various types of Somethinc products, one of which is the Brightening series. Through these advertisements, consumers and potential consumers of Somethinc products seem to be given a message that if you want to get white and smooth skin like the famous Korean actress Han So Hee, you can get it by using the Somethinc Brightening series products. The product claims that it can lighten the skin maximally within 28 days.

Departing from the Korean wave phenomenon, which then increasingly widespread use of BA K-Pop and K-Drama artists on local Indonesian skincare products, as well as the fact that they do not represent the characteristics of the majority of Indonesian skin. Somethinc's Instagram followers interpret advertisements featuring Han So Hee as promoting brightening that is intended for Indonesians. This research will involve six followers of the Somethinc Instagram account as resource persons.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative methods and interpretive paradigms with a reception analysis method approach. According to Moleong (2021), this interpretive paradigm considers human nature as a communicator who is active, creative and has free will where the behavior of the communicator (audience) is internally controlled by the individual. The author uses data collection techniques with interviews carried out to find a picture of the object under study, as well as to obtain in-depth data and information from sources or informants.

The audience reception analysis method

according to Stuart Hall refers to the study of the meaning, production, and experience of audiences interacting with media texts. Reception analysis can see why audiences interpret things differently, what psychological and social factors influence these differences and what social consequences are likely to arise. The focus of this theory is the process of decoding, interpreting, and understanding the content of texts or media messages (O’sullivan et al., 1994). In the reception analysis method, the audience is an active participant in constructing and interpreting the meaning of what is read, heard, and seen in the cultural context.

The results of interviews with informants will be grouped into three categories: Dominant Hegemonic, Negotiated, or Oppositional Position. Dominant hegemonic is a condition in which the audience fully accepts what is seen and conveyed, and what is offered by the creator of the message. Negotiation is a condition where the audience accepts the meaning that the message maker wants to convey, but tries to modify it according to the wishes and needs of self-interest. As for the audience with an Oppositional Position, it means that the audience contradicts or rejects the message conveyed in the message that is seen/observed. Through this method, researchers can obtain an in-depth picture of audience reception in interpreting a message content in an advertisement, starting from the process of receiving information, observing, and processing the message based on experience, values, ethics, and culture respectively.

The technique used in the selection of informants uses purposive sampling, namely by determining or searching for informants according to the characteristics that are following the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2012). Based on this, the author conducted interviews with 6 people followers of @somethincofficial, especially followers who know Han So Hee as Somethinc’s brand ambassador for the brightening series products.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study were obtained from the results of in-depth interviews with six selected informants according to predetermined criteria.

Reception of the Korean Wave Phenomenon and Product Advertising in Indonesia

The Korean Wave phenomenon in Indonesia is currently increasingly rampant, according to speaker Safira, a student and beauty vlogger enthusiast from Bandung, who explained that her environment is currently attached to several Korean cultures. This is marked by the direction of fashion, food choices, and efforts to learn Korean either by self-taught or by involving certain institutions. Music and Korean Drama (Drakor) are the two main things that cause the widespread adaptation of Korean culture in Indonesia.

“Oh, if that happens, especially if you go to Korean food, right, because if you see people in dramas like that, then seeing an artist that we like to eat makes us curious. We want to know what that person likes, what it tastes like, do we have the same taste or not. I also bought some merchandise myself, the fashion models are really cute, and functional too, like cardigans, hoodies, and jogger pants, right, those are things that can be used every day too. If our idols use certain items, it makes us want to wear them too. It’s not just food and fashion, some of my friends are learning Korean, some are self-taught, and some take lessons too.”

In line with Safira’s narrative, the other informant, Dede, who is also an ASN in the Tasikmalaya government, explained that she is a person who adapts to Korean culture in her daily life.

“I’m also quite influenced by the food they show on drakor, I like to try anything in drakor, like kimchi or various kinds of ramen. In the same way, I’ve also bought Korean-style clothes several times, like cute dresses.”

Table 1. Number of respondents and locations of study

No	Name	Age	Employment	Domicile
1	Catherine Yovita	27	Private Employee	Jakarta
2	Swandya Eka	30	Lecturer	Tangerang
3	Monik Irawati	27	Housewife	Tangerang
4	Syifa Safira S	24	Student	Bandung
5	Nadila Anindita	26	Private Employee	Jakarta
6	Dede Susanti	28	Civil Servant	Tasikmalaya

Furthermore, Nadila, a private worker who lives in South Jakarta, also said the same thing, that she and the surrounding environment have adopted some Korean culture in their daily lives.

“Well, when I was watching it, I subconsciously wanted to eat what they ate in the drama, even for me and my friends now Korean food has become one of the menu choices when I’m confused about what to eat. So it’s already in the top 5 food choices that I’m looking for me.”

The rise of the Korean Wave in Indonesia today has an impact on advertising activities in Indonesia. Various kinds of products ranging from electronics, culinary, and e-commerce to local skincare, and uniforms make Korean Idols as Brand Ambassadors (BA). Advertising is one of the promotional elements whose role is to reach a massive audience. Another role is that advertising can be used to create awareness of new products, through descriptions of things related to the products offered. (Cuellar-Healy, 2013). The use of BA Korea then became a form of effort to reach a massive, considering that the number of Idol K-pop fans in Indonesia is currently very large. As the data presented by CNN Indonesia states that Twitter has just released data on (26/01/2022), namely Indonesia is the country with the largest number of K-pop fans in cyberspace in 2021.

According to the informant, Safira believes that the purpose of the use of BA Korea in advertisements in Indonesia is to make these products viral. So that it can be known by more people.

“And if I say, the brand that uses Korean BA, it can make the product viral.”

In line with Safira’s statement, resource person Nadila also believes that the main purpose of using Korean BA is to make the product known to many people.

“In my opinion, those products are the first to pursue branding, so that people know the product, going viral will make a lot of people know about the product.”

The answers from all sources in this study did state that local Indonesian products that used Korean BA were products that were trying to go viral.

When viewed through the concept of advertising, the use of BA Korea is indeed in line with the function of the advertisement itself, namely to inform. In marketing communication activities,

advertising serves as a medium to introduce products. As explained Shimp (2000) As a promotional element, advertising has several functions, namely first; informing to inform about products or companies, as an effort to make consumers aware of the products and benefits offered. Through the informing company introduces both new products and old products, and delivers them to TOMA (top of mind awareness).

Furthermore, this is also in line with the Brand Ambassador concept, that the use of BA is a company’s effort to communicate in introducing its products. Lea-Greenwood (2013) states that brand ambassadors are a tool used by companies to communicate and connect with the public, regarding how they enhance sales, according to Shimp & Andrews (2010) brand ambassadors are cultural icons or identities, where they act as marketing tools that represent a product. A brand Ambassador is a person who supports a brand from various popular public figures. This popular keyword is what strengthens the selection of a brand ambassador from South Korea to market these skin care products.

According to Lea-Greenwood (2013) in Putra & Suharyono (2014), there are several indicators of brand ambassadors: 1. Transference is when a celebrity supports a brand associated with their profession. 2. Congruence, is a key concept in brand ambassadors who ensures there is a ‘match’ between the brand and the celebrity. 3. Credibility, is the extent to which consumers perceive a source (ambassador) as having relevant knowledge, expertise, or experience and the source (ambassador) can be trusted to provide objective and unusual information. 4. Attractiveness, is a non-physically attractive appearance that can support a product or advertisement. 5. Power, is the charisma emitted by the source to be able to influence consumers so that consumers are influenced to buy or use the product.

Some of these points later became the reason why advertisements in Indonesia were busy using Korean actors as BA. The attractiveness of BA then becomes the company’s effort to attract the attention of consumers to make product purchases. Most of the interviewees also agreed that by using BA Korea, the advertisement would be attractive, so that it could attract interest in purchasing the product. As stated by Monik.

“So, it will be very influential on purchasing decisions for a product that uses a Korean artist as its brand ambassador.”

However, according to Swandya, the use of BA Korea in advertising local products does not necessarily make people buy the product. Because each individual has different needs.

“So, for example, if it is not advertised with a Korean actor, if it meets the needs and is suitable, then the product will still be purchased, if it is not needed and does not match, it will not be purchased.”

Efforts to attract the attention of consumers to make product purchases are also another function of advertising. Shimp (2000) explained that advertising has the function to persuade. Because ideally an advertisement is designed in such a way as to attract the attention of consumers to make product purchases. Furthermore, it is stated that the success of persuading consumers can be one of the characteristics of an effective advertisement.

Reception of the Use of Korean Actors as Local Skincare Brand Ambassadors on Instagram

The findings of this study cannot be separated from the theory as a reference for generating data from informants to be analyzed into research findings. During the research process, the researchers used the encoding-decoding theory of Stuart Hall. This theory is used to analyze the audience who is considered active in interpreting the message. This analysis looks at the contextual influence of the use of media and the meaning of the whole experience of the audience (McQuail, 2020).

The six informants have different educational and occupational backgrounds. Although so n, all informants are active users of social media who are no longer unfamiliar with the advertisements presented by various brands there. In addition, all informants also know more or less about the Korean Wave or Korean cultural phenomena that are developing around the world. Therefore, they can actively provide an assessment of the object of this research.

The audience from the perspective of mass media as an individual with their awareness will choose which media and messages they want to access. The audience can also be defined based on the wishes of the sender of the message (defined by the sender), based on the membership of the audience itself (defined by the audience member), and based on the media used (defined by media use).

Stuart Hall’s encoding-decoding method focuses on production, text, and audiences in a framework in which the relationship between these elements can be analyzed. In a production process and text that is run by the media, there is an encoding stage which will

then be decoded by the audience when they receive the text (O’Sullivan et al., 1994). Audiences interpret and examine media texts in ways that relate to their cultural preferences and social conditions.

The reception theory model states that the meaning encoded by the sender can be decoded into different things by the receiver. Hall argues through this model that social inequality such as in terms of social class position can determine the position of recipients in responding to information in the media (Shaw, 2017). Researchers grouped informants according to position according to Stuart Hall, audiences decoded media messages through three possible positions:

Table 2. Group Position Audience

No	Name of Informant	Dominant hegemonic position	Negotiated position	Oppositional position
1	Catherine Yovita			V
2	Swandya Eka			V
3	Monik Irawati	V		
4	Syifa Safira S		V	
5	Nadila Anindita	V		
6	Dede Susanti			V

Source: Data processed by researchers

Dominant (hegemonic) reading means that the reader is in line with the codes (which contain values, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions) and fully accepts the meaning proposed and desired by the maker. or message sender.

Dominant Hegemonic Position

In this position, the code conveyed by the sender of the message is accepted and interpreted in general. There is no difference in interpretation between the producer (writer) and consumer (reader) of the message. The Somethinc Official Instagram account uploaded a promotional message for brightening products using Han So Hee as its brand ambassador without any rejection by the informants, namely Monik and Nadila. In other words, the message conveyed by Somethinc is approved and accepted by the audience.

“In my opinion, it is suitable (using Han So Hee in uploading brightening products), with beautiful visuals and rising popularity, making Somethinc’s products will attract a lot of attention, welcome, especially with fans in Indonesia.” (Monik)

Monik agrees with the value raised by Somethinc in using Han So Hee as a brand ambassador. She felt it was relevant, especially with the rise of the Korean Wave phenomenon in Indonesia. Many Korean Idol fans are loyal to their idols, both in music and actors. From there, Monik argues that the selection of Korean artists as brand ambassadors can affect a person's purchasing decisions.

"In my opinion, yes, it has a meaning that is more than just skin color, it doesn't mean that using BA, which has white skin from the start, is wrong, but it could be an attempt by the product to let you know if, for example, Indonesians use the product, then maybe later it will be white like Han So Hee." (Nadila)

In line with Monik's opinion, Nadila also agrees with the selection of Han So Hee as a brand ambassador for a local skincare brand, especially if the main goal is to pursue engagement with the intended target audience. This form of promotion using the figure of an actor from South Korea has the potential to make it viral and can make the product better known to many people.

Negotiated Position

The second position is the negotiated position, which according to Stuart Hall in (Morissan, 2015) is an audience that generally accepts the message intended by producers but they will apply some exceptions according to their thoughts. These exceptions can come from anything including local cultural and religious rules. Readers within certain limits are in line with the codes or messages received but can modify them in such a way that reflects their position and personal interests.

Syifa who is one of the informants shows her attitude in responding to promotional messages by SomeThinc Official as a follower of the Korean Wave. For him, the use of Han So Hee as a brand ambassador is a natural thing considering her high popularity so that it can increase people's buying interest. Moreover, according to Syifa, Korean lovers are a loyal community. If certain products collaborate with their idols and are accompanied by certain merchandise, sales may increase. Because according to him, Korean fans tend to like to collect typical items related to their idols.

In line with the opinion of Althusser (2006) that when the text in the media utilizes ideology, it will call the audience, and when the audience feels called, the audience will position themselves as a target for the

message of the text.

However, Syifa also does not fully agree with the use of Han So Hee in a promotional message by Somethinc a local skincare brand. According to him, as a local brand, Somethinc should have its characteristics and be proud of its local aspect compared to using artists from other countries as representatives.

"I think it's natural for Han So Hee to be made as BA, she's also getting hype from some of her dramas. Then she's beautiful too, so there must be a lot of people who are interested in Han So Hee. If it's made into a BA, that's right, to attract people's attention with Somethinc's products. Just keep it from me a bit I regret why it has to be a Korean artist, it doesn't work. if you look at the product."

Of the six informants, there was only one person who indicated the negotiated position or was in the middle. Other informants' answers were dominated by dominant hegemonic and oppositional positions. This is an interesting finding that it turns out that in the phenomenon of the use of Korean actors by local skincare brands, audiences tend to agree or disagree with this at all.

Oppositional Position

The third position is the oppositional position that occurs when the recipient of the text understands and signifies differently the message, text, or code conveyed by the producer with its conceptual framework and ideology. The reader is not in line with the codes or messages and rejects the proposed meaning and then determines the alternative frame in interpreting the message.

This study shows the dominance of the informants' answers in this position, namely by Catherine, Swandya, and Dede. In this position, it means that they reject the promotional message for the brightening brand skincare product Somethinc by Han So Hee. According to Hall in (Morissan, 2015), the audience's opposition position has the opposite interpretation and has its thoughts.

In general, the responses of Catherine, Swandya, and Dede in refusing the message were similar. The reason is that the use of Han So Hee as a brand ambassador is irrelevant because her skin type and color are different from Indonesian people. Swandya said that it would be better if local skincare gave testimonials on the results of using their products by artists or local users using these products at a certain

time. According to her, such content is actually much more attractive to buyers, because it can be relevant and related to what they feel.

Catherine even calls this a marketing trick, because there is a clear difference between Han So Hee's skin and the skin of most Indonesians. According to him, it would be better if local skincare brands also campaigned for Indonesians to love their skin color. To be better does not always have to be whiter, especially if basically someone's skin color can not change. Local skincare brands can also promote that every different skin tone can still look beautiful and smooth. Because skincare is not about making the skin brighter than it should be, but about taking care of the skin to make it look cleaner, healthier, and not dull. And this cannot be conveyed if Han So Hee is used as a representation in local skincare products, because her skin color has been white since birth and cannot be equated with the skin color of most Indonesians.

"Maybe you can try it now, right? Many local beauty brands are happy with different skin colors but can still be beautiful, still smooth, maybe a body positivity campaign like that which I think is more suitable in Indonesia instead of using brand ambassadors from abroad."

Not only giving her opinion, but Catherine also provides recommendations for local brands to empower Indonesian figures. Moreover, Indonesia is rich in various types and skin colors that can represent its population. Catherine also thinks that beauty brands in Indonesia will actually be more developed if they use original Indonesian representations that represent more people.

Swandya and Dede have a similar response, namely that the use of Han So Hee as an advertisement star for brightening products cannot display reality to the intended target market. If Somethinc appoints a brand ambassador from Indonesia, it can actually show its effect on the skin before and after use.

"If the brand ambassador is Indonesian, it is more likely that there will be promotions that look at before and after using their products. So it's more convincing for me. I'm sure that if the product is suitable for many people, in the end, it will also go viral, so more people will be curious." (Dede)

Dede's opinion shows a rejection of the use of brand ambassadors from South Korea by local brands. For him, it is better to use local actors or figures who can show more honest testimonials in their use. This

opinion is similar to Swandya's response as follows:

"In my opinion, if local skincare can provide testimonials on the results of using their products within a certain period, it will be more attractive to buyers. Or with a beauty vlogger review, which has the same skin type and problems as local people are better." (Swandya)

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the discussion above, it can be concluded that the same form of promotion can be interpreted differently by the audience. Each is influenced by various factors ranging from the background, and profession to preferences. In this study, it can be seen that the Korean Wave has more or less an influence on product advertising, including those carried out by local brands. To attract consumers, local brands finally adjusted to using South Korean actors as brand ambassadors, as did Somethinc by using Han So Hee as their representative. This is in line with one of the advertising functions, namely to inform, which means an effort to inform the product to potential consumers.

From the results of the analysis using reception theory, it can be seen that the six informants were divided into three different categories. A total of two informants are in the dominant hegemonic position, three informants are in the oppositional position and 1 informant is in the negotiated position. Each informant has their own argument in determining their attitude. Informants with oppositional or opposing positions have the largest number, then followed by the number of informants in dominant hegemonic and negotiated positions. There is only one informant who has agreed with the arguments but with certain notes (negotiated).

The largest number of informants gave arguments in the oppositional position, which means that the audience contradicts or rejects the message conveyed in the message that is seen/observed. Of the three informants who stated this argument, if summarized, there are two underlying reasons. First, the different skin types between Han So Hee and most Indonesian people. The skin color of women from South Korea tends to be milky white, while Indonesian women have darker skin colors such as olive or brown. This makes the selection of a brand ambassador from South Korea irrelevant to the conditions of the target community. Moreover, the products marketed are whitening products. Second, the informants gave an argument that they felt that the selection of a brand ambassador from South Korea

did not show any change from before and after use because basically, their skin was white without using any treatment products. In this case, Somethinc does not show any before-after use or significant changes using the product.

Furthermore, the two informants are in a dominant hegemonic position. If it is concluded, the reason given is similar, namely, the use of Han So Hee as a brand ambassador for Somethinc can trigger the public to know more about the brand. Han So Hee's fame can lift the popularity of SomeThinc, especially in brightening series products. In addition, the characteristics of Han So Hee's clean white skin and also her beautiful face can be an attraction for the target audience to be interested in trying to use the products she sells. And last, only one informant is in the negotiated position. She believes that the use of Han So Hee as a brand ambassador for Somethinc can make the brand more known and trusted by many audiences, although the informant also believes that Somethinc as a local brand should be able to show its identity and local characteristics more by not using foreign brand ambassadors as product representatives. and the brand.

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