

COMPLETION REPORT

This research project started as an attempt to identify how Indonesians perceive the construct of Japanese beauty through the advertisements of Japanese cosmetic products presented in Indonesian print media. The reasons for this are obvious since advertisements serve as promoter of values, most Indonesian females will constantly look at the presented construct of beauty, identify themselves with it, and adopt the values within. With generous and unprecedented support of the Sumitomo Foundation, the research was able to take a first step in exposing the construct of Japanese beauty as perceived by Indonesian females.

During period of research, I travelled to Japan to engage first-person understandings on how Japanese beauties are exposed and constructed in Japanese print media. Using advertisement images of cosmetic products, a follow-up informal discussions were set with several Indonesian female students resided in Tokyo and Chiba; in order to omit their opinions on Japanese beauties as they have experienced and encountered with in their daily life. Out of dicussions, I elicited 22 adjective words associated with the image of Japanese beauty, although only 12 (twelve) adjective words (*silky-white, tidy, slim, petite, soft, delicate, simple, polite, unique, cute, contemporary and attractive*) that were deemed to be significant and worth to be included for the survey in Indonesia..

The survey conducted in 2 (two) major cities of Indonesia, Jakarta and Bandung, admitting 258 Indonesian female as samples that represent 3 (three) different age groups: Under 20 (<20), between 20-40, and over 40 (>40) years old. 6 (six) Japanese cosmetic products' (SK-II, Kanebo, Kose, Kao, Kozui, and Shiseido) advertisements in Indonesian print media were selected as stimuli accompanied by 12 (twelve) chosen adjective words. By identifying perceptual valuation of the presented images of Japanese cosmetics' advertisements in Indonesian print media and its association with ideas of beauty, this research was able to expose the construct of Japanese beauties as perceived by Indonesian females. Result indicates that Indonesian females associate Japanese beauty with the images of *silky-white skins, delicate expressions, petite body, cuddly face, and attractive looks*. Furthermore, the research shows that Indonesians look into the construct of Japanese beauty as a portrait of *exquisiteness of appearance* and *cuteness character* of Japanese persons. What makes this result special, is because Indonesian females acknowledge cuteness character of Japanese beauty to be applied across different gender and age groups, which seemed to be in contrast with the mainstream association of 'cuteness' in Indonesian cultures that is merely labelled for young female. Further, the identified construct of beauties as visually represented by Japanese cosmetic products in Indonesian print media, is defined as desirable and positive. Thus it is not coincidental that Japanese cosmetic products are perceived to possess higher quality and associated fitness for desirable females' beauty by the Indonesians. Out of many Japanese cosmetic brands in Indonesia, SK-II (48,5%), Kose (23,2%), and Kao (12,5%) are the most recognizable brands and have the highest purchase desirability among Indonesian females.

Basically, the study has exposed meaningful points as follow:

- (1) The presented advertisements of Japanese cosmetic products in Indonesian print media portray Japanese beauty to be attractive, pure, cute, yet looks natural on the same time. Results of study

indicate that Indonesian females perceive Japanese beauty to be unique (70,4% responds associating natural looks with purity, white and softness) and modern (29,6% responds associating attractiveness with cuteness character). It means that Indonesian media expose Japanese cuteness with naturalness of appearances. Idea of purity strongly appears as many advertisements use image of natural objects (such as running water, misty-drop on leaves) and/or color (such as white rice on SK-II advertisements) in association with it.

- (2) Advertisements play important role in ‘creating’ sort of values that consumers look up to. The portrays of Japanese beauty on cosmetic products that those advertisements presented creates consumers’ interests and serve as definitive characters of what modern Asian females should look like. Results of study strongly support this notion as 67% use magazine as referent for cosmetic consumption, compare to 27% of friends as referents and 6% of others. Many Indonesian females felt that they consume and use Japanese cosmetic products due to ‘the promise’ of becoming purely and naturally attractive, many Indonesian females (73,2%) cites skins health and suitability as their main reason of using and consuming Japanese cosmetic products. A prominent indication that Indonesian females look more upon the image of ‘natural-ness’ of Japanese beauty as opposite to the ‘artificiality’ of Western beauty, and therefore creating the ‘binary’ construct of opposition between Eastern and Western ideas of beauty.

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