
Scientised Lexes of Local Skincare Products

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ABSTRACT

In mediascape, women are overrun by alluring beauty products which claims for their promising improvement to women appearance. Often the advertisements boost the connection between beauty and science. Even, contemporary western advertising is often saturated with references to DNA, cell coding, systems and formulas, in addition to scientific sounding ingredients such as hyaluronic acid, bioactive glycoproteins, and biotechnological peptides (Ringrow, 2019). This paper, thus, attempts to disclose these 'scientised' lexes of the local beauty products particularly skincare series as well as to reveal the use of scientific language as marketing strategies. The most top three popular brands, *MS Glow*, *Scarlett Whitening* and *Something* serve the corpus. Focusing on the skincare series, the researcher picked out the data then interpreted them descriptively. The results demonstrated that these top three brands employed scientised lexes such as retinol/retinoid, Niacinamide, salicylic acid, Tranexamoyl Dipeptide-23 and hyaluronic acid most of which are perceptibly beneficial to solve aging issue. These products range from whitening day cream, night cream, serum, moisturizer cream, and toner. These scientific lexes are selected by the producers to achieve product authenticity, product efficacy and consumer reassurance. By these 'scientifically magic' ingredients, it helps boosting women skin for continual improved appearance. The motto of the MS Glow company which is *the Magic for Skin*, from which the MS derived, confirms this premise.

INTRODUCTION

Over the age, women have been flooded by captivating beauty product advertising which claims for their promising improvement to their appearance. Often do the advertisements boost the connection between beauty and science. Even, contemporary western advertising is often saturated with references to DNA, cell coding, systems and formulas, in addition to scientific sounding ingredients (Ringrow, 2019). Accordingly these become intriguing phenomenon to explore. This paper attempts to disclose these 'scientised' lexes of the local beauty products particularly skincare series as well as to investigate the use of scientific language as marketing strategies.

Examining beauty products advertising can be difficult, either at first glance or even after much investigation, to determine whether it is scientific or simply scientific sounding. Taking this into consideration, this study uses term 'scientised' (Ringrow, 2019; Coupland 2003, 2007; Chaiken, 1987) to mean using a register associated with science, regardless of whether it is merited or not. This proposition is applied to identify the lexes throughout the corpus. Moreover, to disclose the use of scientised language in the selected brands, Martin & White (2005) on positive and negative evaluation is employed along with the problem-solution pattern proposed by Hoey (1983, 2001).

Studies on beauty advertising have been carried out so far with different focus. Bai (2018) investigated the characteristics of language in cosmetic advertising, Arroyo (2013) focused his study on the scientific language in skincare advertising; Somadi & Said (2021) explored more about the use of verbal language in Wardah cosmetics; Prianti (2013) revealed the way Indonesian commercial of female beauty products portray

Indonesian women beauty concept while Ringrow (2013, 2019) concerned about cosmetics advertising in UK and French Magazine. Her research drew on broader issues relating to the use of pseudo-scientific discourse in cosmetic advertising including questions of (mis)representation of science, consumer response, gender, and advertising regulation in both French and English context. The current research, however, is different from the previous ones that it brings up the current phenomenon of the increased skincare brands in the past five years, selecting the local brands and points out scientised terms issue related to the marketing strategies. Based on these premises, this study is worth conducting since it is significant to shed light on the way producers of beauty products employ and exploit scientific sounding terms to gain improved market.

METHOD

This study is classified as descriptive qualitative research to explore socio-cultural phenomena in the society. Wolcott (in Cresswell, 2009:36) argues that qualitative research develops a description of the setting, analyzes data into several categories and makes interpretations from a personal point of view based on social and cultural backgrounds. In addition, this research presented the data as it is in a systematically relation to the current issue. In this case, scientised lexes of skincare products were systematically and descriptively presented to reveal the phenomenon.

The research involved the top three popular local skincare products namely *MS Glow*, *Scarlett Whitening* and *Somethinc*. The data were taken from their official websites (<https://msglowid.com/>, <https://scarlettwhitening.com/> and <https://somethinc.com/>). The data are in the form of lexes containing scientific registers related to the ingredients and formula of the beauty products. Here, the researcher selected the description of the products including day cream, night cream, serum, moisturizer, and toner. From the selected texts, the researcher identify any scientific lexes found in *MS Glow*, *Scarlett Whitening* and *Somethinc* products. The next step was explaining how those lexes are scientised as well as its use as marketing strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This reseearch reveals that all of the selected brands namely *MS Glow*, *Scarlett Whitening* and *Somethinc* make use of scintific sounding lexes in the description of the products advertisement. They are available in their respective official websites and attached to the products as well. Several lexes are identified and presented in the result section while the interpretation about the use of those lexes are further elaborated in the discussion section.

Results

From the research locus, data in the forms of lexes containing scientific claims are identified. The data are presented as follows.

Table 1. Data distribution of scientised lexes in *MS Glow*, *Scarlett Whitening* and *Somethinc*

No	Lexes	MS Glow (MG)	Scarlett Whitening (SW)	Somethinc (ST)
1	Niacinamide	√	√	√
2	Salicylic acid (Beta Hydroxy Acid (BHA)	√	√	-
3	Hexapeptide-8	√	√	√
4	Retinoid/Retinol	-	√	√

No	Lexes	MS Glow (MG)	Scarlett Whitening (SW)	Somethinc (ST)
5	Bakuchiol	-	-	√
6	Hyaluronic acid	-	-	√
7	Alpha arbutin	-	-	√
8	CI 77891 (Titanium dioxide)	√	-	-
9	Zinc Oxide	√	-	-
10	Tranexamoyl Dipeptide-23	-	-	√
11	Sodium PCA	√	-	-
12	Creatine	-	√	-
13	Beta glucan	-	√	-
14	Glutathione	√	√	-
15	Triceramide	-	√	-

The table demonstrates various distribution of the scientised lexes of the three brands. The above-displayed lexes are identified from the top three local skincare products mostly consumed by Indonesian women. Some formula are found in all three products, 2 out of three products while the others are only identified in certain product. For instance, Niacinamide and Hexapeptide 8 are identified in all three brands. Salicylic acid (BHA), and Glutathione are identified in both MG and SW. Similarly, retinol is used in SW and ST.

However, there are items that can only found in certain products. From the table above, we can see that Bakuchiol, hyaluronic acid, alpha arbutin, and tranexamoyl dipeptide - 23 are the ingredients that can be found in ST only. Likewise, creatine, betaglucan and triceramide become the distinctive features that SW owns. Lastly, Sodium PCA, Zinc oxide and titanium dioxide are identified in MG not others. Apparently, each brand brings up their specific ingredient for their products strength.

Discussion

This part elaborates the findings stated in the previous section. The discussion is then subdivided into two namely the explanation of the selected lexes along with its claims for skin improvement and the explanation of its persuasive techniques as marketing strategies.

1. Scientised lexes of MG, SW and ST and their claims for skin improvement

This section provides extended description of the use of scientised lexes in the skincare brands.

a. Niacinamide

Niacinamide is a form of vitamin B3, an essential nutrient that supports many cellular processes and found primarily in animal-based products and is the preferred form of vitamin B3 for treating pellagra. Dealing with skin treatment, it functions as anti inflammatory, anti oxidant and moisturizer. This ingredient is found in both MG and SW products.

b. Salicylic acid (Beta Hydroxy Acid, BHA)

It is a chemical exfoliate that smooths texture, kills acne causing bacteria, regulates oil production and unclogs pores. This acid has several benefits to skin. First, as anti bacterial agent, BHA can kill the bacteria responsible for causing acne. In other words, it can treat and prevent acne. Second, as anti inflammatory agent, it can help reduce swelling and redness associated with pimples. Third, due to its oil soluble nature, it can through the oil on the skin to exfoliate deeper into the pore. This ingredient is used by both MG and SW.

c. Hexapeptide-8

Hexapeptide-8 is a synthetic peptide made from a protein found in Botox. It's primarily used as an active ingredient in anti-wrinkle and anti-aging creams or serums. It is designed to reduce wrinkles around the mouth and eyes, and on the forehead and cheeks among other areas. This is the only ingredient that is identified in all three brand. Apparently, it is a key formula to deal with skin improvement especially aging issue.

d. Retinoid/Retinol

Retinol increases skin cell production, helps unclog pores, exfoliates skin and increases collagen production, which can reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. Retinoids are the skin-care ingredient most commonly used to address wrinkles and fine lines, and they are available by prescription. Considering its benefits, it is chosen by SW and ST to be put in their products.

e. Bakuchiol

Bakuchiol is considered a natural alternative to a retinoid, and it may activate similar pathways to boost collagen production and a plant extract. It is claimed that this ingredient is safer and more friendly to all skin type including sensitive one. ST selects this to support their product while MG and SW do not.

f. Hyaluronic acid

Hyaluronic acid helps skin stretch and flex and reduces skin wrinkles and lines. Hyaluronic acid is also proven to help wounds heal faster and can reduce scarring. As one of common hydrating agent, only ST uses this to their skin care product.

g. Alpha arbutin

Alpha arbutin effectively lightens and reduces UV induced pigmentation and free radicals, without increasing sun sensitivity. It fades discoloration caused by inflammation and environmental stressors while evening skin tone. This claim is confirmed by ST that applies this ingredient for their products.

h. Titanium dioxide

It is used in cosmetics and personal care products to obtain a rich opaque color in the formulations. It can further be mixed with other colorants to obtain different shades in a product. It is also beneficial for blocking potentially harmful UV rays and widely used in sunscreens. This formula is picked out by MG to support their skin care products particularly which deals with UV impact on skin.

i. Zinc Oxide

A white colorant and has slightly better performance in protection from sun rays than titanium dioxide. Besides, it functions as sun protection agent and commonly applied in sun screen products as MG does.

j. Tranexamoyl Dipeptide-23

As a double brightening effect without causing skin irritation. It is also able to even out skin tone, brighten up skin, reduce acne scars & dark spots. ST chooses this formula to promote their skincare products.

k. Sodium PCA

Sodium PCA as hydrating agent. It hydrates by attracting water to and trapping it in the skin while also helping to restore the protective skin barrier. It is also believed effective in preventing signs of aging as well as anti-inflammatory agent. In this research, this substance is found in MG brand products.

l. Creatine

It helps combat signs of ageing, like wrinkles and fine lines, protect the skin from UV damage, and help with the overall youthful appearance of the skin. Creatine may help reduce the signs of ageing by supporting and improving skin health. Out of three brands, SW selected this ingredient supporting their claims of providing products that protect skin for UV impact.

m. Beta glucan

It functions as anti oxidant, skin barrier booster, and skin smoother. In skincare, beta-glucans are safe and effective ingredients. Since beta-glucans have antioxidant properties and are anti-inflammatory, they are excellent ingredients for improving the look of redness and other signs of sensitive skin. This might be one of the reasons why SW uses this ingredient to support their skincare products.

n. Glutathione

It serves as whitening agent and anti aging. Glutathione benefits for skin are seen when it removes these damaged cells and whitens skin. It is used so widely including MG and SW in their skincare products.

o. Triceramide

Triple Ceramide works to immediately refine skin for a softer, smoother complexion, while advancing skin's moisture barrier to protecting against environmental stress. It also significantly reduces the look of fine lines and wrinkles. Therefore, it is commonly found in anti ageing series product including SW which trusts this ingredient to promote their skincare products.

To put it briefly, these lexes are exposed to emphasize their functions that bring significant factors in realizing skin improvement. They play roles as anti-inflammatory, anti oxidant, moisturizing, whitening and anti aging agent. Those functions are believed to be crucial need for skin to prevent it from early aging as well as maintaining the natural skin properties.

2. The use of scientised language as part of marketing strategies

When it comes to the discourse of skincare advertising, claims of skin improvement and enhanced appearance always take the spotlight. According to the results of the research, this study reveals that the selected brands exploit scientised lexes for various claims. They are (1) product authenticity, (2) product efficacy, (3) consumer reassurance. Further explanation is provided as follows.

a) Product authenticity

In ever-growing market, skincare brands are highly demanded to provide distinct features of their products. They need to differentiate their products from other competitors. In doing so, companies often exploit scientific-sounding terms or lexes to authenticate their products. MS Glow, for instance, bringing up the motto *Magic for Skin*, offers natural-based skincare series with reasonable price. In their products, several ingredients are involved to be significant factors to build an authoritative brand. Observe the following sample of whitening day cream:

"Mengandung perpaduan Licorice Root, Beeswax, Zinc dan Extract Pisum Sativum sebagai whitening agent dan mampu menyamarkan noda di wajah. Whitening Day Cream dengan dengan tekstur foundation super lembut bisa cover noda dan pori-pori di muka dan memberikan efek glowing. Whitening Day Cream cocok ntuk dipakai semua jenis kulit."

(source: <https://msglowid.com/products/Whitening-Day-Cream>)

In this excerpt, the brand emphasizes its nature-based ingredients namely licorice root, beeswax, zinc and Pisum Sativum. In other part of this advertising, it also provides information of detailed ingredients among which are Sodium PCA, Titanium dioxide and zinc oxide believed to be the significant factors to protect skin from sun rays, UV as well as brightening effect without skin irritation. By this claim, they expect that their product authoritative comparing to other brands. So far, MS Glow still dominates Indonesian market share, Even, in 2021, they broke MURI record on highest sale (<https://www.suara.com/bisnis/2021/08/25/111448/ms-glow-raih-rekor-muri-penjualan-tertinggi-owner-akui-sempat-gemetaran-gegara-hal-ini>).

b) Product efficacy

Frequently, beauty advertising including skincare products apply problem-solution pattern. Problem-Solution pattern starts from the point that the female body is in someway inadequate and solution can be found for that particular inadequacy through an appropriate cosmetic products (Ringrow, 2019: 32). In this sense, the selected brands propose 'solution' for handling women *inadequacy*. *Somethinc* brand, for example, recommends their product as a solution for common skin problems. Here is *Somethinc's Dark Spot Reducer Ampoule*:

Dark Spot Reducer Ampoule

Dark Spot? Acne Scar? No More!

PIH & PIE Targeted Treatment Ampoule that is formulated with a combination of the best ingredients & clinically tested active ingredients one of which is Tranexamoyl Dipeptide-23, functions as a double brightening effect without causing skin irritation. It is also able to even out skin tone, brighten up skin, reduce acne scars & dark spots.

The excerpt above is initiated by common skin problems, **dark spot** and **acne scar**. The problem is discursively constructed by the producer which this may or may not be already regarded as a problem by target consumer. Linguistically, the problem is constructed inscribed appraisal which is explicitly encoded evaluation (see Martin & White, 2005). After that, the solution is introduced by positive evaluations and positive result. In this data, it starts from introducing the name of the product, PIH&PIE targeted treatment ampoule, along with the explanation of ingredients. Several positive evaluation is shown by the lexes **best** ingredient, **clinically** tested, **double brightening** effect, **even out** skin tone, **reduce** acne scar and dark spot, **fades** hyperpigmentation, **brightens** skin tone, **non-irritating**, **vegan friendly**, **non-comedogenic**, and **dermatologically** tested. These lexes are deliberately exploited to bring positive effect to target consumer. Furthermore, to enforce its efficacy, the description is also provided with quick fact about the strength and effectiveness of the proposed product. This also attaches BPOM certificate number to validate the quality of the product.

c) Consumer reassurance

Nowadays, people especially women are flooded by a wide variety of skincare products. It ranges from low to high budget each of which recommend as well as promise a better result of after treatment. In this research, some scientised lexes in terms of ingredients are exploited to reassure the consumers that the beauty products are founded on scientific research. The phrase 'dermatologically/clinically tested' is familiar

to topical skincare products to convince the potential consumers that the product is safe since it is scientifically proven. Likewise, scientific-sounding product names are one of persuasive technique to gain consumer reassurance. Dealing with this study, Scarlett Whitening and Somethinc brands obviously apply this strategy. In Scarlet Whitening products, some product names are *Niacinamide 5% Beta Glucan 7 Phyto extract*, *Phyto Biotics Renewing Moisturizer*, and *Hyalu B9 + Bio Plavita & Ceramide Essence Toner*. Meanwhile, Somethinc does more in this case. Most of their product names sound scientific. Specifically in serum, this brand offers various serum in accordance with the related skin need. Most of the names explicitly state the main or key ingredient in it. They are *3% astaxanthin + Chlorelina serum*, *Granactive Snow Retinoid 2%*, *Revive potion 3% arbutin + Bakuchiol*, *Skin Defender Bakuchiol + COQ 10 Serum*, and *Lemonade Waterless Vitamin C + Ferulic + NAG*. The name of the products are constructed to convince the consumer that this products has gone through scientific observation and research.

CONCLUSION

At present, captivating beauty products advertising overrun mediascape which promise women to body improvement including skincare products. Even, scientific sounding registers are recognized in this kind of beauty products. Aiming to reveal scientised lexes in the top three local skincare brands (MS Glow, Scarlett Whitening and Somethinc), the findings demonstrates that various scientific sounding lexes are employed particularly in terms of ingredients they involve to formulate their products. The use of these scientific sounding lexes is perceptibly beneficial to solve aging issue while product authenticity, product efficacy, and consumer reassurance become parts of marketing strategies to reach enhanced market.

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