

Counter-Myth Representation In The Multimodality Of TV Advertisement: *Wardah Halal From The Beginning*

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Abstract: Cosmetic advertisements often serve as a medium for constructing and reinforcing certain dominant myths about beauty in society. This article aims to examine the phenomenon of Wardah's cosmetic advertisement as a form of counter-myth representation related to the identity of Muslim women in Indonesia. The main focus of this study is the analysis of counter-myth representations in the television advertisement *Wardah: Halal dari Awal* ("Halal from the Beginning"), using Roland Barthes's semiotic theory and Umar Junus's concepts of culture and meaning construction. Barthes's semiotics is employed to explore how the advertisement both constructs and challenges established beauty myths, particularly in the context of halal cosmetic products. Meanwhile, Umar Junus's theory helps to interpret how the meaning-making process in the ad reflects the sociocultural context of Indonesian Muslim society. This research adopts a qualitative descriptive method by analyzing the visual, verbal, and audio elements of the advertisement to uncover the embedded meanings. The findings reveal that *Wardah: Halal dari Awal* goes beyond promoting halal cosmetics, it offers a redefinition of beauty norms that are more inclusive. The advertisement portrays Muslim women as confident, modern, and religious, while reinforcing religious values within beauty discourse. In doing so, it constructs a counter-myth to conventional beauty standards, which are often rooted in Western ideals. More than just a marketing strategy, Wardah's advertisement functions as a cultural medium that voices diversity and spiritual values within the modern beauty industry.

Keywords: Counter-myth representation, multimodality, TV advertisement, semiotics, beauty culture.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cosmetic advertisements play a significant role in shaping public perceptions of beauty, which are often distorted by homogenized and idealized standards. These standards not only construct particular images of the body and physical appearance but also reproduce beauty myths deeply rooted in global popular culture. In the context of contemporary Indonesia—characterized by cultural plurality and increasing religious awareness among the younger generation (Heryanto, 2011)—advertising attempts to reflect local values to remain relevant. The Wardah cosmetics advertisement is particularly interesting to analyze as it offers an alternative representation through its halal product campaign, which manifests beauty rooted in religious values, cultural nationalism, and the identity of modern Indonesian Muslim women (Nilan & Parker, 2013; Sosrohadi, 2024).

Specifically, the television advertisement "Wardah Halal dari Awal" (Wardah: Halal from the Start) presents a narrative that highlights not only aesthetic aspects but also emphasizes halal values, spirituality, professional diversity, and the aspirations of modern Indonesian women. This representation reflects a paradigm shift from the physical interpretation of beauty toward ethical, spiritual, and social dimensions, while also embodying a sense of nationalism grounded in local values—what may be termed glocalised beauty. In this advertisement, the image of Muslim women is not merely a symbol of piety but an active, empowered subject who participates in public, professional, and national development spheres (Titaley, 2019; Muslimat et al., 2025; Cahyani et al., 2025). This article analyzes how Wardah advertisements construct counter-myths against conventional Western and hegemonic beauty standards in the global cosmetic and media industries (Barthes, 1972), while simultaneously building a more inclusive and socially grounded narrative reflective of contemporary Indonesian realities.

Through the integration of visual, verbal, and audio elements, the “Wardah Halal dari Awal” advertisement constructs an alternative narrative that challenges narrow, Western-oriented definitions of beauty. Wardah represents beauty not merely as a visual or physical aspect but as an expression of spirituality, collective identity, and contemporary Indonesian Muslim women’s culture. This representation portrays Muslim women as confident, modern, and active in the public sphere while upholding religious and local cultural values. Such an approach clearly establishes a counter-myth that broadens the meaning of beauty into something more inclusive, contextual, and empowering.

Within the framework of Umar Junus’s (1989) cultural theory, beauty—as portrayed in this advertisement—is not a universal concept but a construction born from a dynamic and evolving cultural system. The Wardah advertisement functions not only as a commercial promotional medium but also as a cultural communication instrument that integrates the value of halal as part of Indonesia’s distinctive Islamic lifestyle. The halal concept in this context encompasses ethical, spiritual, and social dimensions that merge into the identity of contemporary Indonesian Muslim women (Hidayat, 2021). This representation reinforces narratives of beauty grounded in religious values, spirituality, and diversity while reflecting the transformation of Muslim women’s roles in modern Indonesian society. Thus, the advertisement presents a discourse of beauty that is contextual, grounded, and aligned with Indonesia’s social reality, which is currently moving toward the integration of modernity and traditional values (Abdullah, 2022).

This study employs Roland Barthes’s (1972) semiotic approach to analyze the structure of signs in the “Wardah: Halal dari Awal” advertisement, focusing on the relationship between the signifier and the signified. To enrich the multimodal analysis, Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) theory of visual representation is also utilized to examine how the interplay between text, visuals, and audio forms cohesive meaning. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, this research explores how multimodal strategies are employed to deconstruct the hegemonic and exclusive beauty myths and replace them with alternative discourses that are more inclusive, grounded, and aligned with contemporary Indonesian women’s identities.

Through its contextually designed and conscious representation strategies, the “Wardah Halal dari Awal” advertisement not only responds to diverse perceptions of beauty at individual and collective levels but also functions as a medium of cultural transformation. The advertisement reflects the identity of Indonesian women within a plural and dynamic social landscape and strengthens Wardah’s position as a brand that values not only aesthetics but also sensitivity to Indonesia’s social, religious, and cultural values. The findings reveal that the representation in this advertisement contributes to shaping a new discourse of beauty that is contextual and inclusive, highlighting the diversity of social backgrounds, professions, and authentic expressions of Islamic identity. This narrative serves as a counterpoint to the global beauty paradigm that tends to be homogeneous, physical-oriented, and Westernized (Barthes, 1972; Heryanto, 2010; Nilan & Demartoto, 2021).

Furthermore, the visual and verbal narratives in Wardah’s advertisement depict Indonesian Muslim women who not only emphasize physical appearance but also embody values of spirituality, independence, and active participation in the public sphere. Women are portrayed wearing attire consistent with syariah principles while playing roles as professionals, activists, and leaders—reflecting the spirit of emancipation and the capacity of women as agents of social change. This representation strategically deconstructs outdated stereotypes about Muslim women’s roles and demonstrates that beauty can serve as a medium for empowering Indonesian women’s identities from religious, social, and cultural perspectives (Saraswati, 2016; Suryakusuma, 2020). Through its multimodal approach that combines visual elements, audio, and inspirational narratives, the campaign effectively constructs a counter-myth against conventional beauty standards and reinforces Wardah’s position as a cosmetic brand that not only sells products but also carries the values and identity of a pluralistic, religious, and progressive nation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study conducted by Kurniawati (2024) focuses on the representation of diversity in Wardah's latest cosmetic advertising campaign. Referring to John Fiske's television semiotics theory, Kurniawati analyzes how women from diverse backgrounds—encompassing variations in skin tone, body shape, and disability—are portrayed equally in the visual narrative of the advertisement. The findings indicate that Wardah explicitly promotes values of inclusivity and body positivity, serving as a deconstructive effort against conventional myths surrounding women's beauty standards. This representation broadens the understanding of beauty, which has long been hegemonic, into a more democratic and decentralized concept, marking a shift in aesthetic paradigms within the landscape of contemporary popular culture (Kurniawati, 2024).

Conversely, the research conducted by Hermawan (2023), using a critical discourse analysis approach, highlights the aspect of cultural resistance embodied in the representation of Muslim women in Wardah advertisements. Hermawan emphasizes that the Muslimah figure is portrayed not only as a spiritually devout individual but also as an active subject in public spaces—including professionals, athletes, and community leaders. This representation demonstrates a complex negotiation of urban Muslim women's identity, integrating religiosity, intelligence, and a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Hence, such representation challenges long-standing mythological constructions that position Muslim women as passive and subordinate figures (Hermawan, 2023; Faisal et al., 2025; Andini et al., 2022).

In comparison with the present study, which focuses on reading counter-myth representations through a multimodal approach, there is a clear intersection in the interpretation of the transformation of women's imagery—from passive objects to active agents. Both studies recognize the strategic role of advertising as a space for meaning production that enables resistance to patriarchal ideologies. However, this study takes a more integrative approach by simultaneously examining the relationship between verbal and visual textual elements. For instance, the slogan "*Starting with confidence without waiting*", paired with the visual depiction of a woman performing *silat* (martial arts) in a competitive setting, illustrates the synergy between modes that construct a counter-myth narrative both symbolically and performatively. This approach aligns with Kress and Leeuwen's (2006) theory of multimodality, which asserts that meaning in media is not produced by a single mode but through the interaction of multiple integrated modes.

Furthermore, this study identifies the spiritual dimension within the discourse of beauty constructed in Wardah advertisements. The confidence of Muslim women depicted is not only represented visually but also as an articulation of internalized religious values embodied in a halal lifestyle. Thus, Wardah advertisements do not merely present a progressive and inclusive beauty aesthetic but also display a concept of beauty rooted in Islamic spirituality. This enriches the discourse of beauty amid the commercialization of the cosmetic industry while offering an alternative paradigm that combines ethics, aesthetics, and religious identity into a coherent narrative.

III. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the representation of meaning in the commercial television advertisement *Wardah: Halal dari Awal*. This approach is relevant because it focuses on in-depth interpretation of socio-cultural phenomena within their natural context, without being bound by statistical generalizations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moleong, 2021). In this context, the qualitative approach allows for a reflective examination of visual and verbal signs constructed as symbols of Muslim women's identity and the concept of *halal* that has been claimed since the brand's inception. These representations are analyzed as part of the ideological discourse operating within the realm of media and popular culture (Syafitri, 2022).

Data were collected through participant observation and repeated screenings of the advertisement, with detailed note-taking of multimodal elements such as text, imagery, sound, music,

color, and non-verbal expressions. In addition to observation and multimodal analysis, documentation from various literary and theoretical sources was used as a foundation for interpretation. The literature includes theories of multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), social semiotics (van Leeuwen, 2005), and media and visual communication studies (Jewitt, 2016; Sari & Wulandari, 2023). The researcher serves as the primary instrument, conducting interpretive analysis through inductive and thematic approaches. The analysis process involves descriptive categorization and critical interpretation to uncover hidden meanings in the advertisement and its connection to the evolving social, religious, and cultural contexts in Indonesia (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Sadulloh & Sukmayadi, 2020).

Within the framework of Theo van Leeuwen’s (2005) multimodality theory, this research investigates how various semiotic modes—visual, textual, gestural, and musical—collaborate to construct ideological meaning within the advertisement. These modes are not merely viewed as aesthetic components but as social practices that construct and reproduce power relations, religious values, and cultural identities (Jewitt, 2016; Machfud & Mulyana, 2021). The analysis focuses on how religious symbols, the imagery of pious Muslim women, and narratives of purity and authenticity in halal cosmetic products are visually and verbally constructed in Wardah advertisements.

Thus, the multimodal approach in this study enables a critical reading of advertisements as a site of contestation for meaning and ideology. Language, images, sound, and narrative in advertisements not only shape consumer preferences but also frame societal perceptions of beauty, religiosity, and the role of Muslim women. This approach is particularly relevant in contemporary Indonesia, where religious identity and halal symbols occupy a strategic space in media communication (Aziz & Fatmawati, 2020; Hapsari, 2021) and simultaneously become part of cultural nationalism discourse within the global market.

This study draws upon Roland Barthes’s myth semiotics, which posits that texts, including advertisements, do not merely convey denotative meanings but also construct connotative meanings that form social myths (Barthes, 1972). In the beauty industry, dominant myths often represent beautiful women as fair-skinned, glamorous, and associated with Western values. The advertisement “*Wardah: Halal dari Awal*” is analyzed as a form of counter-myth—an alternative narrative that reverses dominant meanings by representing Muslim women as religious, active, and empowered, framed within Indonesian local identity. For Barthes, myth is not simply a cultural falsehood disguised as natural truth but an ideological form of power that can be dismantled through alternative representational strategies (Chandler, 2007; Sobur, 2009; Yaumi et al., 2024).

To analyze the visual, verbal, and auditory dimensions of the advertisement, this study applies Theo van Leeuwen’s (2005) multimodal analysis theory, emphasizing that meaning in media is constructed through the interaction of multiple modalities such as language, imagery, color, music, facial expression, and body movement. In the Wardah advertisement, coherence among these modalities is evident in the use of soft pastel colors, calming spiritual narration, slow-tempo music, and the depiction of confident, modern *hijabi* women. Furthermore, Junus’s (1985) discourse theory contributes to understanding advertisements as ideological products that can serve as counter-discourses to dominant cultural values. In this context, the Wardah advertisement does not merely represent women as visual objects but repositions them as active subjects with strong religious identities.

Table 1. Myth Alignment

Myth Alignment		
Myth →	Reality →	Myth Reinforcement/Alignment
Myth →	Reality →	Anti-Myth/Counter-Myth
Myth →	Reality →	New Myth

Source: Junus, 1981: 100; see also Fatimah, 2018, and Sosrohadi, 2024.

Counter-myth is a concept that emphasizes that the existence of myth is never singular or absolute, but rather exists in a dialectical tension with opposing narratives that function as forms of ideological resistance (Sosrohadi, 2023). In this context, each emergence of a new myth potentially operates as a counter-myth to the previously established dominant myth. Cultural discourse is therefore never free from conflicts of meaning; the dominance of one myth is often questioned and challenged by alternative narratives that reflect society's openness to the plurality of values and meanings, particularly in culturally dynamic environments that are not ideologically closed.

Junus (1981) suggests that counter-myths are often manifested through value conflicts between Western education and local traditions, as depicted in Indonesian literature. For instance, the character Hanafi in *Salah Asuhan* by Abdul Muis is portrayed as being torn between Western culture and Minangkabau customs. Similarly, the ideological opposition between the modern female character in *Layar Terkembang* by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana and the traditional woman in *Belunggu* by Armijn Pane illustrates the existence of counter-myths, which take form in differing values, characters, and cultural orientations.

In the realm of media—particularly in the Wardah cosmetic television commercial—the counter-myth is articulated through the slogan “*Berawal dari yang halal*” (“Halal from the Start”), which shapes the user’s identity as a Muslim woman. In this context, beauty representation is no longer centered solely on physical appearance but rather on the harmony between outward appearance and religious values, especially the principle of *halal*. This representation serves as a counter-narrative to conventional beauty myths that position physical appearance as the sole measure of beauty. The counter-myth presented here emphasizes the inner dimension—the concept of “*beauty from the heart*”—as a form of resistance to exclusive and materialistic aesthetics.

As emphasized by Barthes (2010) and Junus (1986), no myth exists in absolute isolation without the presence of another myth that functions as a discursive balance. Therefore, in open and dynamic societies, myths and counter-myths continuously engage in dialogue and competition in constructing and distributing social meaning. Consequently, the emergence of new slogans and narratives in Wardah advertisements can be understood as a manifestation of counter-myths against the constructions of beauty in popular culture, broadening the meaning of beauty to include spiritual and religious identity dimensions that are more inclusive.

The advertisement “*Wardah Halal dari Awal*” constructs a structured promotional narrative through eight main textual expressions that represent ideological, spiritual, and social values within a cohesive visual and verbal message.

The eight expressions in the *Wardah Halal dari Awal* advertisement cohesively construct a counter-myth narrative against three dominant constructions in the discourse of beauty and women’s identity that have long been hegemonic. First, through statements such as data number (6) “*Kecantikan sejati dimulai dengan inovasi tanpa henti*” and data number (2) “*Memulai dengan percaya diri tanpa menunggu.*” Second, through texts number (1) “*Selamat pagi, untuk yang selalu memulai dengan yang halal,*” number (7) “*Kebaikan dimulai dari yang halal,*” and number (8) “*Wardah Halal dari Awal.*” Third, through statements number (2) “*Memulai yang pertama dengan semangat,*” number (3) “*Memulai menyebarkan inspirasi,*” and number (5) “*Memulai dengan penuh motivasi sebelum didahului.*”

IV. RESULTS

A. Counter-Myth against Western Beauty Standards




1. True beauty begins with endless innovation (*Kecantikan sejati dimulai dengan inovasi tanpa henti*)

In the advertisement, the counter-myth representation against Western beauty standards is identified in section six, featuring the text “*Kecantikan sejati dimulai dengan inovasi tanpa henti.*” This statement emphasizes that the definition of beauty is no longer centered on physical attributes aligned with Western standards but is instead transformed into a result of intellectual processes, scientific experimentation, and continuous innovation.

This text is supported by visual representations that reinforce its connotative meaning. In data 1.1, a female figure is shown inside a laboratory, symbolizing her involvement in scientific processes and product research. Subsequently, data 1.2 depicts the activity of examining materials in the laboratory, indicating a process of quality control and scientific accuracy. Meanwhile, data 1.3 shows an image of product observation, representing the final stage of research-based cosmetic innovation.

This visual sequence constructs the narrative that true beauty is not something biologically inherited or determined by Western visual standards, but rather the result of intellectual pursuit and ongoing innovation, as illustrated in the following data table.

Table 2. Data 1: True Beauty Begins with Endless Innovation

Data Code	Image	Description
1.1		"The female figure is in a laboratory, using a microscope to examine the components of a cosmetic product."
1.2		"Material testing in the laboratory is carried out using a test tube."
1.3		"The young woman is carefully observing the results of the Wardah cosmetic product."

In this part, the text “*Kecantikan sejati dimulai dengan inovasi tanpa henti*” represents a statement functioning as a counter-myth to the dominant construction of beauty that has long been rooted in Western visual standards—such as fair skin, ideal body shape, and other physical attributes. From Roland Barthes’s semiotic perspective, myth is understood as a second-order system of signs that disguises particular ideologies as something natural and self-evident. When beauty is reduced merely to its physical dimension, society becomes unaware that such a definition is actually a product of social and cultural ideological construction. Therefore, the text in this advertisement serves as a critique of that hegemonic narrative while simultaneously building a new system of meaning that emphasizes that beauty does not stem solely from biological inheritance but is instead the result of

intellectual processes, scientific experimentation, and continuous innovation. Thus, the meaning of beauty shifts—from body to mind, from inheritance to achievement, and from aesthetics to a knowledge-based work ethic.



The connotative meaning of this verbal statement is reinforced visually through the representations shown in data 1.1 to 1.3. In data 1.1, a woman is shown inside a laboratory—a space often stereotyped as masculine and distant from the feminine realm of aesthetics. This visual symbolically dismantles the myth that science and beauty are two separate entities. The female figure is portrayed as an active agent in research and production processes, affirming that beauty can be constructed through intellectual labor and scientific experimentation. Furthermore, data 1.2 shows the activity of testing materials in the laboratory, indicating quality control and accuracy in the production process. This demonstrates that the beauty product in this narrative not only offers aesthetic appeal but also carries functional value and scientific validation. Meanwhile, data 6.3, which shows the observation of the final product results, serves as a visual marker of the final stage in a responsible and research-based cosmetic innovation cycle.

The entire sequence of visuals forms a strong counter-narrative to the traditional myth of beauty as something instant, passive, and exclusive. Instead of presenting women as mere visual objects for aesthetic consumption, the advertisement repositions them as active subjects and producers of knowledge. Beauty in this context is understood as something that can be shaped through hard work, creative thinking, and consistent innovation. Within the framework of counter-myth, this representational strategy deconstructs established sign systems and creates new discursive spaces that are more inclusive and empowering. The advertisement not only challenges the hegemony of Western beauty standards but also affirms that beauty can—and should—be associated with creative, collaborative, and scientific processes rooted in local values and the spirituality of modern women.

2. Start with confidence without waiting (*Memulai dengan percaya diri tanpa menunggu*)

In the fourth part of the multimodal advertisement, the text “*Memulai dengan percaya diri tanpa menunggu*” is accompanied by visual representations as follows: in data 2.1, a young woman is shown preparing for exercise, performing silat movements; in data 2.2, her movements are open and witnessed by others; in data 2.3, the young woman’s martial arts movements are being competed; and in data 2.4, the judging process is visibly taking place. The details can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3, Data 2: Start with confidence without waiting (*Memulai dengan Percaya Diri tanpa Menunggu*)

Data Code	Image	Description
2.1		"The young woman is preparing to exercise by performing silat movements.
2.2		“The young woman’s silat movements are performed in an open space and watched by several people of different genders.”

2.3



“The young woman’s sports movements are being competed in a tournament, with three judges—two men and one woman. In fact, in activities based on Islamic values, there are rules that distinguish the roles and spaces of men and women.”

2.4



“The judging process shown in this depiction reflects the actual outcome of the activity.”

In this part, the text “*Kecantikan sejati dimulai dengan inovasi tanpa henti*” accompanied by visuals of a woman working in a laboratory not only presents a new representation but also challenges the long-standing myth of female beauty. According to Roland Barthes, myth is a narrative that makes certain cultural values appear natural and self-evident. In contrast, counter-myth is a conscious effort to deconstruct that narrative and offer alternative meanings that resist dominant ideological norms. Traditionally, women in beauty advertisements are often represented as passive objects focused solely on physical appearance—closely tied to myths of femininity, glamour, and sensuality. However, in this data, the counter-myth is constructed through the repositioning of women’s images as active, rational, and intellectually empowered subjects.

The first image, showing a woman using a microscope, shifts the narrative that laboratories belong exclusively to men. This challenges the gender myth that separates beauty from intellect. The counter-myth emerges when the laboratory—symbolizing science and technology—is merged with women and cosmetics, two domains rarely placed within the same discursive space. The second image, showing an experiment using a test tube, signifies that women are no longer just users of beauty products but also creators and innovators behind them. This challenges the old myth that scientific authority lies beyond women’s reach in the cosmetics industry. The third image, showing a woman carefully observing the final cosmetic product, represents a process of reflection and responsibility. She is not merely “beautiful because of cosmetics,” but beautiful because of understanding and hard work. Here, the counter-myth operates most strongly: beauty is no longer positioned as something bestowed or merely consumed, but as the outcome of intellectual effort and innovation.

Thus, this data presents an alternative narrative that rejects dominant myths and articulates a counter-myth about women, beauty, and science—affirming that women can create, not just use; can lead, not just be led; can think, not just be judged. The text “*Memulai dengan percaya diri tanpa menunggu*” and its accompanying visuals can be read as a form of counter-myth against cultural constructions and patriarchal ideologies that have traditionally positioned women as passive, waiting, and confined to domestic spaces. Within Barthes’s (1972) framework, a counter-myth functions to deconstruct dominant mythological messages embedded in society through alternative symbols and narratives. This aligns with Junus’s (1989) view that a text can serve as a site of resistance against hegemonic symbolic systems by embedding oppositional interpretations that deviate from established norms.

In data 2.1, the depiction of a young woman performing *silat* directly challenges classical myths that associate femininity with gentleness, obedience, and powerlessness. Martial arts are not just physical activities but symbols of resistance against traditional labels that suggest combative or vigorous sports are not for women. This conveys a counter-narrative that courage and physical

strength are also inherent in women's identities. In data 2.2, the image of the woman performing *silat* in a public space observed by people of various genders represents a counter-myth against the separation of spaces between men and women—particularly in conservative Islamic societies. The image dismantles symbolic boundaries between private and public spaces, rejecting the domestication of women.

In data 2.3, where the woman is evaluated in a competition by two male and one female judges, the image reverses the myth of masculine authority in judgment. In counter-myth interpretation, this serves as a deconstruction of masculine objectivity, demonstrating that women's competence can and should be validated publicly and formally, free from gender-biased norms. In data 2.4, the judging and acknowledgment of results reinforce the narrative that formal systems (even those linked with Islamic values) can be inclusive and fair to women. This forms a counter-discourse against symbolic systems that justify gender segregation in the name of religion, illustrating that Islamic values can be interpreted progressively and gender equality can coexist with religious identity.

Overall, these texts and visuals construct a cultural counter-myth—a counter-narrative that not only advocates gender equality but also dismantles long-standing ideological symbols that have confined women. Within the frameworks of Barthes and Junus, this represents a conscious and ideological strategy of representation aimed at resisting the dominance of entrenched social myths.

B. Counter-Myth toward Religious and Halal Values




The next counter-myth in the *Wardah* advertisement relates to the construction of *halal* as a core of identity and value orientation in cosmetic consumption. The texts “*Selamat pagi, untuk yang selalu memulai dengan yang halal,*” “*Kebaikan dimulai dari yang halal,*” and “*Wardah halal dari awal*” emphasize the religious values that form the brand's ideological foundation. These texts explicitly create a narrative that beautification is not merely an aesthetic act but is also bound to spiritual principles and Islamic ethical consumption.

The discourse of *halal* in this advertisement functions as a counter-myth to the secularization of cosmetics, which in global discourse tends to frame beauty as a value-neutral practice detached from religion. In this context, *Wardah* not only offers a product but also frames consumption as part of a moral practice. Each text is supported by visual representations that strengthen its connotative dimension, showing how *halal* values are materialized in the everyday lifestyle of modern Muslim women. Below, each piece of data will be discussed in detail:

1. Good morning to those who always start with what is halal. (*Selamat pagi, untuk yang selalu memulai dengan yang halal*)

In the first section, the verbal text above is followed by visual data: Data 3.1: The image shows *Dewi Sandra* drinking tea in the morning while walking toward the living room. Ideally, a Muslim woman should not drink tea while walking. Data 3.2: The image shows her applying face cream as part of her morning skincare routine before leaving home for work. Data 3.3: The image shows her finishing her makeup routine, smiling confidently at her reflection in the mirror, symbolizing the completion of her preparation process.

Table 4. Data 3 Good morning to those who always start with what is halal. (*Selamat pagi, untuk yang selalu memulai dengan yang halal*)

Data Code	Image	Description
3.1		The character, Dewi Sandra, is seen drinking tea in the morning while walking toward the living room.” However, as a Muslim woman, she should ideally not drink while walking, as such behavior does not align with Islamic etiquette.
3.2		“The application of face cream is done as an initial step before using cosmetics, right before she leaves for work.”
3.3		“After finishing her makeup, the character feels satisfied with the result. She smiles freely while looking at her reflection in the mirror.”

The text and images in the advertisement, beginning with the line “*Good morning to those who always start with what is halal*”, on the surface seem to construct a positive narrative about a Muslim woman who maintains religious values in her daily life. However, when analyzed through the framework of counter-myth as proposed by Roland Barthes, complemented by Junus’s (1989) concept, it becomes evident that the text and visuals not only reproduce dominant myths but also subtly embed forms of reversal or deconstruction of established myths surrounding the image of Muslim women.

The first image, showing Dewi Sandra drinking tea while walking toward the living room, can culturally contradict Islamic etiquette that encourages eating and drinking while seated. In this context, there is visible tension between a religious image and a modern lifestyle. The counter-myth emerges from the fact that although the character is depicted as a Muslim woman starting her day with “what is halal,” she simultaneously violates certain symbolic norms within Islam. Barthes (1972) refers to this as a strategy of *démystification*—the dismantling of myth, wherein a text or image juxtaposes its connotative meaning with prevailing social representations. Junus (1989) similarly argues that cultural texts can generate reversals of meaning against socially entrenched symbols.

In the second image, the act of applying face cream before work conveys the impression that Muslim women still need to look presentable in public spaces. Yet here lies the counter-myth: women are not only required to appear religious but also to meet modern aesthetic expectations. This reverses the traditional myth that has often marginalized women within narrowly defined domestic and religious roles. Beneath the message of halal and religiosity lies an implicit message about women’s autonomy in managing their bodies and identities.

The third image, depicting the woman smiling at her reflection after finishing her makeup, can also be read as a counter-myth against the traditional notion that beauty belongs solely to women in private spaces. Here, the character’s confidence is built through control over her body and appearance—yet still framed within the concept of religiosity (halal). This represents resistance to old myths that subordinate women’s bodies under religious norms. Although the advertisement appears

religious, it actually challenges the dominant discourse separating religiosity and modernity, obedience and female agency.

Thus, through the counter-myth approach, this advertisement can be read not merely as reproducing the myth of the ideal Muslim woman—beautiful and pious—but as expressing a symbolic reversal of the singular standard of the passive, submissive Muslim woman. It portrays a woman who is active, autonomous, and capable of managing her own life, even within the symbolic framework of “halal.” In this sense, the representation becomes a **space of resistance** against the hegemony of traditional and patriarchal values in the portrayal of Muslim women in the media.

2. Data 4 reveals the message “Goodness Begins with What Is Halal.”

In this section, the verbal text “*Goodness begins with what is halal*” is accompanied by the following visuals:

Table 5. Data 4 reveals the message “*Goodness Begins with What Is Halal.*”

Data Code	Image	Description
4.1		The character, Dewi Sandra, is seen drinking tea in the morning while walking toward the living room.”
4.2		“The atmosphere in the designer’s workspace looks dynamic and creative, filled with sketches, fabrics, and other design tools.”
4.3		“The young woman sits on a park bench while reviewing the photos that inspire her.”

In the context of Barthes’ semiotics, myth is understood as a second-order system of signs that frames reality through ideological representations presented as natural. Counter-myth, on the other hand, highlights how a text or representation can offer an alternative narrative that challenges the dominant myths within society. In Data 7, the text “*Kebaikan dimulai dari yang halal*” (“Goodness begins with what is halal”) functions as a counter-myth against the constructions of beauty and female identity that are often dominated by secular, materialistic, and consumption-oriented values. The slogan signifies a shift in meaning from “beauty” as something visual and glamorous toward spiritual and ethical values, with *halal* as the foundation of goodness.

The visuals in Data 4.1–4.4 reinforce this counter-myth message through representations of women engaged in natural, inclusive, and grounded everyday activities. Data 4.1 (the scene inside a city bus) depicts women in a simple and egalitarian public space, not in the exclusive spaces typically associated with elite beauty myths. Data 4.2 (the workspace) portrays women in professional roles, challenging the stereotype of the ideal woman as passive and appearance-focused. Meanwhile, Data 4.3 (a woman sitting on a park bench reviewing photos) captures a reflective and personal moment, emphasizing that beauty and goodness can grow from lived experience rather than mere physical appearance. Data 4.4 (a young woman resting after exercising) represents an active and healthy body in a functional context, rather than a sexualized object.

Altogether, these visual narratives conclude the sequence of previous representations and construct a counter-discourse to dominant beauty myths emphasizing glamour, exclusivity, and Western standards. Thus, the advertisement not only articulates the image of an empowered and active Muslim woman but also foregrounds *halal* spiritual values as a form of genuine goodness that resists the reduction of women to visual objects. Through the lens of counter-myth, the meaning of “halal” becomes a symbol of resistance against the commodification of the female body, repositioning women within the narrative of virtue and empowerment.

3. Data 4 *Wardah Halal dari Awal*

Visually, the text “*Wardah, halal dari awal*” (Wardah, halal from the beginning) displayed alongside four product images serves as a direct and literal representation of the elements featured in the commercial advertisement. The slogan “*Wardah, halal dari awal*” is explicitly presented as the main statement that reinforces Wardah’s brand identity—its commitment to halal principles from the earliest stages of production. The four accompanying product images represent the range of cosmetic products featured throughout the advertisement. These images do not stand alone; rather, they symbolize the entire product series offered by Wardah. Thus, the verbal element (the slogan) and the visual element (the product images) work together to convey a clear message to viewers: that Wardah provides a complete line of beauty products that fully adhere to halal principles, as depicted in the television commercial.

Table 6. Data 5: Wardah, halal from the beginning (*Wardah Halal dari Awal*)

Data Code	Image	Description
5.1		“The slogan ‘ <i>Wardah, halal dari awal</i> ’ is displayed along with four product images as a representation of the product range featured throughout the TV commercial.”

In Data 5, from a mythological perspective, the slogan “*Wardah, halal dari awal*” affirms the moral superiority of halal cosmetics by framing beauty as an extension of religious obedience. However, within the counter-myth framework, this narrative can also be interpreted as a form of commodification of spiritual values—where the halal label functions not merely as an ethical commitment but as a branding strategy to build market loyalty, especially among Muslim female consumers. The aesthetic, clean, and elegant product representation creates the impression that only halal-labeled cosmetics are legitimate or appropriate to use. Consequently, the advertisement implicitly constructs the myth of the ideal woman—beautiful, religious, and choosing *halal* as her identity from the beginning.

The counter-myth challenges this narrative by critiquing the reduction of women’s complex identities into a singular, religiously infused beauty standard, raising critical questions: must beauty always be linked to religious morality? And does using halal products become a measure of one’s faith? When religious values are packaged as marketing tools, spirituality risks being reduced to mere brand identity, and the commercialization of religion may establish a new form of “religious beauty standard” that limits self-expression and overlooks the diversity of women’s experiences in the public sphere.

Thus, while the global cosmetic industry has long perpetuated the myth that beauty products are ideologically neutral and value-free—emphasizing only effectiveness or brand popularity—Wardah’s advertisement serves as a counter-myth that repositions the meaning of cosmetic consumption through a religious lens. Here, the concept of *halal* is not merely a label of religiosity but is reinterpreted as a representation of ethical consumption grounded in spiritual and moral

integrity. Expressions such as “*Selamat pagi, untuk yang selalu memulai dengan yang halal*” (“Good morning to those who always start with what is halal”) function as verbal signs that build a narrative connecting product choice with values and faith—even in everyday practices like beautifying oneself. Hence, the advertisement ideologically challenges the hegemony of secularism in beauty discourse, reconstructing *halal* as a symbol of purity of intention and action aligned with an urban, modern lifestyle that remains rooted in religious values.



C. Counter-Myth of the Empowered Muslim Woman

The following analysis maps the representational meanings in the Wardah advertisement through counter-myths found in texts such as “*Memulai yang pertama dengan semangat*” (“Starting first with enthusiasm”), “*Memulai menyebarkan inspirasi*” (“Starting to spread inspiration”), and “*Memulai dengan penuh motivasi sebelum didahului*” (“Starting with full motivation before being preceded”). These expressions not only convey motivational messages denotatively but also connote meanings closely tied to the construction of modern Muslim women’s identities as active, progressive, and inspirational figures. Within the counter-myth framework, these messages can be interpreted as efforts to deconstruct passive stereotypes of veiled women and affirm their position as empowered subjects in social spaces.

1. Starting the first with enthusiasm (*Memulai yang Pertama dengan Semangat*)

In the section featuring the text “*Memulai yang pertama dengan semangat*”, the visuals include Data 2.1 (a city bus interior scene), Data 2.2 (the woman applying pink lipstick), Data 2.3 (the young woman smiling kindly while helping an elderly woman), and Data 2.4 (the same young woman holding her bag while offering the elderly woman her seat). The details are shown in the following table.

Table 7. Data 6: Starting the first with enthusiasm (*Memulai yang Pertama dengan Semangat*)

Data Code	Image	Description
6.1		“The atmosphere inside the city bus appears crowded. Many passengers are standing while holding onto the available hand straps.”
6.2		“The character applies lipstick in a shade of her choice, adding an elegant touch to her appearance.”
6.3		“A young female character smiles warmly as she helps an elderly woman inside the city bus.”
6.4		“The young woman holds her bag firmly, then politely offers her seat to an elderly woman on the city bus.”

In data 6, the text “*Memulai yang pertama dengan semangat*” serves as a narrative entry point that embodies a counter-mythic spirit against the dominant construction in beauty advertisements, which often position women as visual objects—passive and focused solely on aesthetics. In Barthes’ theory, myth is not merely a system of signs but also an ideology that frames reality to appear natural. Within this context, the advertisement presents an alternative representation that reconstructs the meaning of beauty and womanhood through the visuals in data 6.1 to 6.4. The image in data 6.1 shows the atmosphere inside a city bus—an inclusive and egalitarian public space—representing women’s mobility and social engagement in everyday life, rather than confinement to exclusive spaces typically associated with the idealized beauty image.



Furthermore, in data 6.2, the female character is shown applying pink lipstick. Although the color pink is symbolically tied to traditional femininity, its use here is not to conform to patriarchal aesthetic standards but rather to symbolize readiness and enthusiasm in daily activities. The woman is positioned not as an object of consumption but as a subject who chooses to express herself for her own empowerment. The counter-myth becomes more evident in data 6.3 and 6.4, where the young woman smiles warmly as she helps an elderly woman and offers her seat. This representation dismantles the myth of individualism often embedded in beauty ads and replaces it with a narrative of empathy, ethics, and intergenerational respect. The woman is portrayed as not only physically beautiful but also as having character and social consciousness.

Thus, the visual sequence presents a counter-discourse to the dominant myth that situates women within a framework of glamorized imagery and symbolic competition. The narrative “*Memulai yang pertama dengan semangat*” creates a new meaning—that true beauty arises not only from outward appearance but also from genuine actions grounded in social and spiritual values. In Barthes’ framework, this represents a process of *remythologization*, shifting meaning from an oppressive sign system toward a more inclusive and liberating representation.

2. Starting to spread inspiration (*Memulai menyebarkan inspirasi*)

In this section, the Wardah advertisement features the text “*Memulai menyebarkan inspirasi*” followed by visuals in data 7.1 showing a young woman applying eyeliner, in data 7.2 showing her preparing to photograph an object, and in data 7.3 showing her playing with children. All of these can be seen in the following data presentation.

Table 8. Data 7: Starting to spread inspiration (*Memulai menyebarkan inspirasi*)

Data Code	Image	Description
7.1		<p>“The young woman is applying eyeliner while wearing a hooded outfit and letting her hair down. The eyeliner she wears symbolizes sharp perception and intelligence in interpreting life.”</p>
7.2		<p>“The young woman is preparing to photograph an object that she finds deeply inspiring for living her life.”</p>

7.3



“A cheerful atmosphere fills the playground, with balloon and ice cream vendors adding to the children’s joy. How wonderful it would be if we could enjoy life as they do—free from burdens and heavy thoughts, filled only with laughter and happiness.”

In **Data 7**, with the text and images under the theme *Memulai Menyebarkan Inspirasi*, the concept of **counter-myth** emerges as a means to deconstruct the ideological meanings shaped by dominant myths, as discussed by Barthes (1972) and Junus (1989). In the text *Memulai Menyebarkan Inspirasi*, the advertisement’s narrative presents a young woman wearing eyeliner, a hooded outfit, and letting her hair fall freely. Within the framework of popular cultural myths, such imagery often affirms the notion of feminine beauty as a source of power and allure — a deeply ingrained patriarchal construction. However, through the lens of **counter-myth**, this image can be reinterpreted: the eyeliner becomes not merely a symbol of aesthetics, but an assertion of the woman’s sharp vision and intellectual courage in interpreting life. Likewise, in the scene where the woman photographs an inspiring object, her act shifts the narrative from a passive to an active and creative stance — she is no longer the object to be admired, but the subject who observes, selects, and spreads inspiration.


Furthermore, the playground setting featuring laughing children, along with balloon and ice cream vendors, presents an idealized image often associated with the innocence of childhood happiness. Yet, from a **counter-myth** perspective, this joyful scene transcends mere romanticization of childhood — it becomes a reminder of the importance of inner freedom and authenticity in adult life. The emphasis on laughter and unburdened joy serves as a critique of the social pressures often placed upon adult women to appear perfect, successful, and perpetually pleasant. In this sense, the advertisement’s narrative does not merely celebrate feminine beauty and gentleness, but also proposes an alternative discourse that dismantles normative constructions by portraying women as reflective, inspirational, and liberated individuals — free from the weight of hegemonic cultural myths.

3. Starting with full motivation before being preceded (*Memulai dengan penuh motivasi sebelum didahului*)

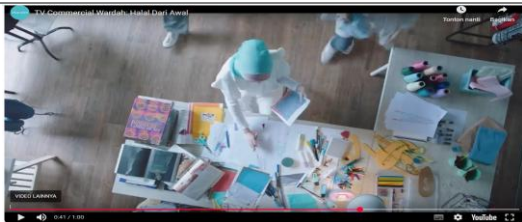
In this fifth part, the text *Memulai dengan penuh motivasi sebelum didahului* is accompanied by: **Data 8.1**: an image depicting all employees working in a laboratory, **Data 8.2**: an image showing data analysis in the laboratory, and **Data 8.3**: an image showing the examination of laboratory results.

For more details, these can be presented in the table below:

Table 9. Data 8: Starting with full motivation before being preceded (*Memulai dengan penuh motivasi sebelum didahului*)

Data Code	Image	Description
8.1		<p>“All employees are carrying out their duties in the beauty laboratory, focusing on both cosmetic products and fashion development.”</p>

8.2



“Laboratory data examination is conducted meticulously on every element contained within it.”

8.3



“The laboratory test results are shown to fellow colleagues working in the laboratory.”

The following is an analysis of the data using the counter-myth theory applied to the text and images: “*Memulai dengan penuh motivasi sebelum didahului*”, with three visuals: (1) employees’ activities in the beauty and fashion laboratory, (2) a meticulous examination of laboratory data, and (3) the presentation of results to colleagues.

Within Roland Barthes’ (1972) myth theory framework, myth is understood as a second-order sign system that overlays denotative meaning with dominant cultural or ideological values, making them appear natural. However, when this myth is deconstructed, what emerges is the counter-myth—a counter-narrative that consciously exposes or resists dominant mythological messages and opens space for more critical interpretation.

The verbal and visual depictions in the data above initially appear to reinforce dominant myths surrounding modernity, professionalism, and the advancement of Muslim women in the beauty industry. Yet, when read as a counter-myth, this sequence can be seen as a discursive strategy rejecting women’s subordination within scientific and industrial narratives, and challenging the stereotype that beauty is constructed only through passive or consumerist symbols. In data 8.1, women are depicted not as objects but as creators and main agents in defining beauty standards. This represents a reversal of the old myth that positioned women as aesthetic symbols without authority. The counter-myth here conveys that Muslim women possess full capacity to contribute to innovation and research—even within industries often dismissed as superficial because they relate to appearance.

In data 8.2, the meticulous process of examining data serves as resistance to the notion that the beauty world is irrational or unscientific. The counter-myth dismantles the false dichotomy between science and aesthetics by showing that the cosmetics field is also grounded in careful and standardized scientific methodology, not merely trends or market preferences. This produces a new narrative that modern Muslim beauty is the result of a measured, responsible process. In data 8.3, the depiction of results being presented openly to colleagues can also be read as a counter-myth to the competitive or individualistic culture often associated with industry. Instead, it builds an image of togetherness, professional solidarity, and collectivity as core values within contemporary Muslim work ethics—rejecting the neoliberal myth that glorifies individual achievement alone. Thus, the counter-myth constructed in this data emphasizes that: (1) women are not passive objects but active agents within the worlds of industry and beauty science; (2) aesthetics and beauty are not irrational, but research-based and ethically responsible; and (3) Muslim work culture upholds cooperation and collective values rather than individual ambition.

As a whole, this counter-mythic reading reveals how the Wardah advertisement reconstructs the image of Muslim women from passive and domestic figures into active, progressive, and inspiring individuals. Through diction such as “*memulai*” (to begin), “*menyebarkan inspirasi*” (to spread inspiration), and “*penuh motivasi*” (full of motivation), the advertisement frames Muslim women as empowered agents of change in social spaces—without abandoning their religious identity. This representation functions as a symbolic strategy to create a more equitable, transformative, and

relevant portrayal of modern Muslim women.

V. CONCLUSION

The Wardah advertisement “*Halal dari Awal*” constructs a positive discourse that symbolically breaks the old stereotypes surrounding Muslim women, who have long been portrayed as passive figures confined to domestic spaces. Through the lens of social semiotics and multimodality, this advertisement presents a representation of religious women who are active, progressive, and inspirational. The repeated use of the word “*memulai*” (to begin) reinforces the message that Islamic values such as halal are not at odds with modernity, but can instead harmonize with the social dynamism of contemporary women.

The counter-myth constructed in this advertisement emphasizes values such as enthusiasm, innovation, confidence, and goodness. These values are rarely associated explicitly with religious women in conventional advertising media. Through a combination of verbal, visual, and audio elements, Wardah effectively repositions women not as visual objects, but as spiritual and professional subjects capable of autonomously determining their life choices and appearance. Thus, the advertisement presents a symbolic resistance to the construction of beauty as passive and consumerist.

In the research context, the conclusion encapsulates the answers to the hypothesis and research objectives—not merely by repeating the discussion, but by affirming the main finding that the counter-myth emerges as a critical response to dominant myths that often disguise specific ideologies as natural and unquestionable. In this study, religiosity becomes a foundation for strength and the renewal of Muslim women’s identities. This advertisement serves as evidence that media can play a vital role in shaping inclusive and transformative discourses. Therefore, the Wardah “*Halal dari Awal*” advertisement deserves to be read as a form of counter-myth that successfully challenges dominant narratives and opens up space for the representation of empowered, modern, and equal Muslim women.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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