

## Mass Media Role in Shaping Public Opinion Depicted in Campaign Video Advertisement by Gillette

Reihan Alfarisi<sup>1</sup>✉, Raudlotul Jannah<sup>2</sup>,  
Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya<sup>1,2</sup>  
✉ [reihanalf19@gmail.com](mailto:reihanalf19@gmail.com)

### Abstract:

This study aims to examine the influence of discourse in mass media in shaping the public's attitudes and behaviors. This research focuses on the portrayal of masculinities in a campaign video about gender empowerment, presented in the form of an advertisement product by Gillette razor company. The researcher applies Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, focusing on the Social-Practice theory to narrow the scope of the study. The data objects for this study are Gillette's advertisement campaign video which was uploaded on YouTube platform, and articles from various media websites. The findings reveal that the depiction of masculinities in the campaign video is divided into two aspects: positive and negative. The initial premise of the video is the negative masculinity of men, which then transitions to a positive representation. Furthermore, the researcher examines how media discourse responds to the campaign. The study discovers that each media discourse has a different point of view in responding to the campaign video, illustrating how media can influence the public's thoughts and opinions. The researcher concludes that mass media play a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing readers. The discourse applied in online media articles has the potential to influence public opinion, reflecting the capabilities of the media and the motives of certain parties. Therefore, the researcher suggests that media consumers must be more careful in receiving information to avoid media biases.

**Keywords:** Discourse in Mass Media; Critical Discourse Analysis; Advertisement Video; Campaign Video; Masculinities

### Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh dari diskors di media massa dalam membentuk opini dan perilaku publik. Penelitian ini berfokus pada penggambaran maskulinitas dalam video kampanye tentang Pemberdayaan gender yang ditampilkan dalam bentuk video iklan produk oleh perusahaan pisau cukur, Gillete. Peneliti menerapkan teori Three-Dimensional model oleh Norman Fairclough, dengan lebih berfokus pada teori Social-Practice dengan tujuan untuk mempersempit fokus penelitian. Objek data penelitian diambil dari video kampanye iklan produk dari Gillette yang diunggah di *platform* media sosial YouTube dan juga artikel-artikel di internet yang terkait dengan topik penelitian. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa penggambaran maskulinitas dalam video kampanye iklan dari Gillette dibagi kedalam dua aspek: positif dan negatif. Premis awal pada video menampilkan maskulinitas negatif tentang pria, yang kemudian bertransisi ke penggambaran positif. Peneliti juga menganalisis bagaimana diskors di media massa menanggapi video kampanye iklan tersebut. Studi menemukan bahwa media-media memiliki tanggapan yang bervariasi, mengilustrasikan bahwa media dapat memengaruhi opini dan pandangan publik terkait video tersebut. Peneliti menyimpulkan bahwa media massa sangat berpengaruh dalam membentuk opini publik atau pembacanya. diskors yang diaplikasikan di dalam artikel di media massa bisa menggiring opini publik sesuai dengan kapabilitas media dan kemauan pihak-pihak tertentu. oleh karena itu, peneliti menyarankan agar penikmat media internet harus lebih teliti dan cermat dalam menerima informasi agar terhindar dari bias media massa.

**Kata kunci:** Diskors di Media Massa Critical Discourse Analysis; Video Iklan; Video Kampanye; Maskulinitas.

## INTRODUCTION

Mass media plays as a pivotal influence in shaping contemporary society particularly in an era of rapid distribution such as news, advertisements, political issues, social movements, campaigns as the consequences of the advancement technology. Discourse presented in mass media has the power to influence societal attitudes and beliefs, potentially affecting an individual's perspective or even their cognitive processes (Happer & Philo, 2013). Furthermore, the language and tone used in media discourse can serve to reinforce or challenge social norms and values, which in turn influence attitudes and behaviour. In this context, discourse in mass media not merely reflect the values and biases of the society it serves, but also has the potential to shape and mold those values, thus making it a powerful tool for socio cultural and political influence. It is important for media consumers to be critical in consuming mass media to foster a more informed and thorough understanding the information around them.

In recent years, social media campaigns concerning gender empowerment have been a prominent feature of public discourse. One of the prominent movements regarding women empowerment has been started in 2017, the #Me Too Movement. Starting as a hashtag on social media, it quickly grew into a global movement, empowering individuals to break their silence and speak out against the rampant issue of sexual harassment. The movement gained momentum with high-profile cases and allegations against public figures, highlighting the prevalence of sexual harassment across industries. The #Me Too movement gains a lot of concern among society as the awareness of sexual harassment and sexual abuse on women in a workplace (Brittain, 2023). Many of the beauty products companies have joined the campaign by producing videos about their support to gender empowerment issues. Interestingly, the men's razor company Gillette has also created an advertising campaign about this movement. Gillette is an American brand of safety razors belonging to Procter & Gamble Corp upoaded a video campaign entitled "We Believe" in a concern with this movement on January 13th. 2019

Gillette's "We Believe" video campaign about toxic masculinity drew a lot of controversy and criticism after it's published. While some praised the ad for its attempt to address important issues such as toxic masculinity, harassment, and bullying, others criticized the brand's approach. Critics argued that the ad seemed to generalize and stereotype all men as perpetrators of toxic behavior, which they found unfair and alienating. They also argued that using a product traditionally associated with male

grooming to convey this message seemed opportunistic and insincere. Some questioned whether razor companies should be the ones to deliver such messages, while others felt that the campaign simplified a complex social issue. The campaign sparked a wider conversation about the role of brands in addressing social issues and the challenge of balancing commercial interests with meaningful social messages. The criticism surrounding the Gillette campaign illustrates the complexities and challenges of addressing sensitive and important topics in advertising and how different audiences may interpret and respond to such messages.

In this article, the researcher focuses on the influence of discourse in mass media to shapes public thoughts and opinions. The researcher examines how men are portrayed in the advertisement campaign video, how media describe thiss issues to be consumed by readers, and how readers respond to it. Researcher provide two research problem to be discussed in this researh as follows; How masculinities portrayed in Advertisement Campaign Video by Gillette? And How mass media websites shape public's thoughts & opinions?. This study highlights the role of media in shaping public perception of masculinity through advertisements like Gillette's campaign. By examining media responses, it reveals how discourse control public opinion and reinforces or challenges gender roles. It contributes to discussions on media responsibility, gender representation, and the power of discourse in shaping modern masculinity. It is hoped that the findings presented in this study will encourage readers to think critically about the information they consume and to be more concern in their choice of media sources, in order to ensure that they are able to make informed decisions about which sources of information they consume. Studies concerning gender issues focus on how masculine or feminine ideals are portrayed in advertisements. while in this study analyze of how masculinity is deconstructed and reconstructed in the same campaign. Furthermore, this study of CDA in media discourse emphasizes how media can influence or reinforce power dynamics, this study positions itself by analyzing both the content of the advertisement and how media discourse shapes segmented public's opinions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

According to Weiss & Wodak (2003) on critical discourse analysis (CDA) stated that “common interests in demystifying ideologies and power through systematic investigation

of semiotic data, be they written, spoken or visual.” Critical discourse analysts such as Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Van Dijk view language as a part of social construction as language shapes and is shaped by social structure. “Critical is used to reveal the relationship between language, power and ideology” (Fairclough, 1989). Critical discourse analysis or CDA is a type of discourse analysis that studies how abuses of social power, domination, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by texts in social and political contexts (van Dijk, 1993). One theory developed by Fairclough is three-dimensional theory Textual analysis, Discursive practice, and social practice.

### **Three-Dimensional Theories by Norman Fairclough**

Three-dimensional theory is a comprehensive framework used to analyze discourse, particularly in the context of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995). The theory consists of three interconnected dimensions: texts, discursive practices, and social practices (Fairclough, 1989). The first dimension, text, focuses on the linguistic features and structures used in a discourse. The textual analysis examines the structure and content of the language used in a particular text or discourse and involves careful analysis including of the grammar, vocabulary, rhetorical devices, and stylistic features of the language present in the text. The second dimension is discursive practice. The discursive practice focuses on the processes involved in the production, distribution, and consumption of discourse. Discursive analysis highlighted that the creation and distribution of texts are not isolated acts, but rather embedded in complex social and institutional contexts. Discursive analysis considers the roles of different actors, such as writers, media organizations and audiences, and how they influence discourse through their choices and actions. The third dimension, social practice, is the broadest that studies the socio-cultural, political, and historical contexts that shape and are shaped by discourse. Social practice acknowledges that discourse is an essential part of discourse, considers how discourse is influenced by, and in turn affects, social norms, cultural beliefs, and political ideologies.

The study of mass media influence has been a prominent area of interest within the academic discipline over the past five years. a study by Ratna sari et. Al in 2018 entitled “Bridging Critical Discourse Analysis In Media Discourse Studies”. This study explores the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in media discourse studies. It examines how CDA can uncover hidden ideologies and power dynamics within media texts. The study reviews 25 journal articles, highlighting the contributions of prominent

CDA scholars like Teun van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, and Norman Fairclough. It discusses their methodologies and theoretical frameworks, emphasizing the role of CDA in analyzing social phenomena, power relations, and ideological constructs in media discourse. The findings suggest that CDA is instrumental in revealing the underlying power structures and ideologies that shape media representations and influence public perception (Sari et al., 2018). Next study is done by Emi Sahmeni & Nur Afifah entitled "Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in Media Discourse Studies: Unmask the Mass Media" in 2019 explores how CDA reveals hidden ideologies and power structures in media discourse. By reviewing sixteen journal articles, the study highlights the extensive use of Teun Van Dijk's CDA theory, focusing on macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. The findings indicate that mass media often portray dominant groups positively while marginalizing others, thus influencing public perception and reinforcing social hierarchies. The study underscores CDA's role in critically analyzing media texts to uncover biases and power dynamics, contributing to a deeper understanding of media's impact on society (Sahmeni & Afifah, 2019).

Another previous study regarding discourse in advertisement campaign product had been conducted by Xu & Tan, (2020) entitled "Can Beauty Advertisements Empower Women? A Critical Discourse Analysis of the SK-II "Change Destiny" The study explores verbal language and visuals in three ads and video ads in beauty products SK-II "change destiny" based on Kress and Van Leeuwen. The researchers found that SK-II used various strategies to deliver the product. Furthermore, gender ideology still remains in the Ad although the text shows woman empowerment. The new ads model just plays discursive practice to gain costumers. Another previous study that related to advertisement product conducted by Janata Shoji Al Falaq & Dian Puspita in 2021 entitled "Critical Discourse Analysis: Revealing Masculinity Through L-Men Advertisement". examines how masculinity is portrayed in L-Men advertisements using Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis. The study reveals that these advertisements promote an idealized form of masculinity equated with physical strength and muscularity, reflecting societal norms and ideologies. The analysis is conducted on three levels: textual, discursive, and social-cultural, highlighting the use of pronouns, imperatives, specific vocabulary, and scientific terms to persuade consumers. The findings suggest that the advertisements reinforce toxic masculinity by promoting the notion that men must be strong and dominant, aligning with

societal expectations and cultural values in Indonesia. This study contributes to the understanding of how media and advertisements shape and reinforce gender norms and ideologies (Al Falaq & Puspita, 2021).

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Research Design

The researcher uses a descriptive qualitative descriptive to analyse and elaborated the data. The researcher chose YouTube as a platform to gather the data as the video campaign is being uploaded in YouTube. The researcher applied the theory by Norman Fairclough named three-dimensional model, there are description (textual analysis), interpretation (Discursive or processing analysis), Explanation (social analysis). Hence as the limitation of the study, the researcher only focuses on Social Practice, how society perceives the Discourse, how discourses can change people beliefs and perspective, and how media views on this campaign video ad.

### Research Instrument

In the process of conducting this study, the researcher assumes the role of a research instrument, as the researcher is responsible for acquiring, classifying, and analysing the data. In order to conduct an analysis, the researcher collects data by watching Ad video and gathering information from various media websites. No other instruments were employed in this study, including questionnaires, interviews, or observations.

### Research Procedures

The researcher Identify the issues to be studied, Formulate RQ's to be discussed, Collecting the data, Analyze the data, arranging the data and elaborated it, lastly the researcher review the paper.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Potrayal of Deconstructed & Reconstructed of Masculinity



**Figure1: (scene when program tv normalize men do sexual harassment is part of a joke)**

The *figure.1* presented above reveals scene on a TV program, when a man is shown approaching a woman and engaging in inappropriate behavior. Specifically, the man is depicted touching a sensitive area of the woman, which is not something that should be done, especially on a television program. However, in this campaign video, everything appears as if it is a normal occurrence. In this particular scene, the audience is depicted laughing heartily at his actions, as if such behavior is socially acceptable. The narrative accompanying the video states, "It's been going on far too long," implying that Gillette aims to oppose the normalization of such actions. They assert that behaviors like these should be stopped as they constitute a form of harassment, particularly against women. Gillette highlights that this conduct is not what defines masculinity for men, and that they must abstain from exhibiting such behavior.



**Figure 2: (scene at workplace during meeting showing hegemony masculinity)**



**Figure 3: (scene when woman feel ashamed by her co-workers (men))**

In *figure.2* & *figure.3*, we can observe a scenario where, during a corporate meeting, a man is standing while casually placing his hand on the woman's shoulder, stating; "What I actually think she's trying to say..." These words indicate that the man is discrediting the woman by suggesting that he is guessing what she is attempting to express. It appears as if he is undermining the opinions or ideas that the woman is about to convey. Such actions are inappropriate among colleagues, and the workplace atmosphere should ideally be maintained as conducive as possible, free from any inappropriate conduct. Everyone involved, whether male or female, has an equal right to express their opinions or ideas.

However, in this scene, it is evident that all the members of the meeting are men, with only one woman present, potentially illustrating hegemonic masculinity. In the subsequent data, the woman's expression reflects astonishment, and she appears unable to respond further to the man's remark. She seems pressured by the situation. Gillette seems to depict that stereotypically men often engage in hegemonic masculinity during specific moments. The portrayal is structured to convey the premise at the end of the video that, once again, men should refrain from engaging in inappropriate and arbitrary behavior, especially towards women in any given situation.



**Figure 4: (scene portrays what men should do in that situation)**

Data *figure.3* appears at the end part of the video, the focal point of Gillette's perspective on masculinity in men becomes apparent. Here, two children are seen quarreling, with several men observing the situation. One man approaches and attempts to intervene. In this context, Gillette aims to emphasize that true masculinity in men is characterized by gentle behavior and positive actions, such as assisting, reconciling, showing appreciation, and contributing to the improvement of their surroundings. The essence of the depiction of masculinity at the beginning of the Gillette video is to contrast with the portrayal in this final part of the video. However, the premise established by Gillette at the beginning of the video is deemed excessively harsh in portraying men in such a manner. Men are depicted as consistently engaging in negative behavior and demeaning others. As a result, there has been a misinterpretation by the public, with some considering the video inappropriate for publication, leading to controversy. Despite Gillette's well-intentioned effort to create a video in support of addressing sexual harassment, it has gathered negative comments and reactions from the community.

### **Mass Media Depicted the Issue**

The controversial Gillette advertisement sparked public debate, encouraging men to reflect on their behaviors and societal roles. While some praised the campaign for its bold stance on social issues, others saw it as an unwarranted critique of male identity, leading to polarized reactions. This controversy ignited discussions about the evolving expectations of masculinity and the role brands play in addressing cultural shifts. These mixed reactions underscore the complexities of corporate responsibility in navigating sensitive social issues, particularly when challenging long-established norms and values.

In this chapter, the researcher will explore how mass media portrays and shapes public opinion, reflecting its own concerns and interests.

The researcher will gather data from three major news sources across the globe CBC, The Telegraph (UK), and NBC to examine the differences in discourse presented within their news articles. To identify potential media biases, this study will reference the AllSides website, a platform designed to evaluate the political bias of various news sources. AllSides' Media Bias Ratings employ a multifaceted approach that includes editorial reviews, blind bias surveys, independent assessments, and reader feedback. This system helps users diversify their news sources by revealing biases and highlighting various perspectives across the political spectrum. By using AllSides, the researcher aims to ensure a balanced understanding of how different news outlets narrate similar events.

### ***CBC***

“The best a man can get? Why some men are brushing off Gillette's ad campaign.”

The first data source is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), a leading news outlet in Canada with a strong national reputation (Allside, 2022). Two days after the release of Gillette's controversial ad, CBC published an article titled ‘The best a man can get? Why some men are brushing off Gillette's ad campaign,’ authored by journalist Sophia Harris. This article focuses on the criticism the ad received, particularly from men who felt it did not represent them fairly. Harris highlights multiple viewpoints from men who felt targeted by the ad's gender empowerment message, expressing that they found it unfair to portray men negatively in such a campaign. Further, the writer emphasizes the outrage some men felt at being used as a subject to address sensitive gender issues, drawing a comparison to the frequent portrayal of women as objects of similar discussions. The discourse in this article may come across as harsh towards men, possibly leading readers to assume that men are overly sensitive to criticism. This portrayal in a reputable outlet like CBC's could potentially lead to misinterpretations, causing readers to view men as unwilling to embrace discussions on evolving gender roles.

### ***Telegraph UK***

“The best an ad can be: no regrets for Gillette after controversial campaign.”

The second data source comes from the Telegraph UK, one of England's most prominent media outlets. Written by journalist Sophia Smith, the article highlights how the Gillette ad campaign reflects a larger objective encouraged by its parent company,

Procter & Gamble. According to Procter & Gamble's Grooming Chief, Garry Coombe, the campaign aimed to engage with consumers on a deeper level, with the belief that 'to engage closely with consumers, brands need more than just product branding' (Smith, 2019). While some view the controversial ad as a marketing strategy, the article presents Gillette's purpose as focused on promoting gender equality, extending beyond mere controversy to drive sales. The Telegraph takes a discourse approach that centers on why the ad was made, framing it as part of a bigger mission rather than a mere marketing tactic. By narrating the campaign in a positive light, the article helps readers understand the ad's intended purpose and encourages them to see the campaign as a step towards a broader social engagement.

### *NBC News*

"Gillette is woke now? When brands try to keep up with the times."

The third data source originates from an American corporation, the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). The discourse in this news article maintains a balanced and neutral stance, presenting the issue from both perspectives. Through a variety of expert opinions, NBC allows readers to understand the underlying rationale and arguments, creating a comprehensive picture from multiple angles. This approach not only informs but also deepens readers' insight, encouraging them to appreciate the issue's complexity and form their own informed opinions based on the the diverse perspectives presented.

## CONCLUSION(S)

The data collected demonstrates that mass media has a significant impact on the shaping of public opinion on sensitive issues such as masculinity and gender roles. Each media source, including CBC, The Telegraph, and NBC, employs a distinct discourse approach, reflecting the perspectives and biases that align with their regional audiences and editorial stances. The CBC, for example, has focused on the potential criticism and sensitivity that the advertisement might evoke in some male viewers, particularly in relation to its portrayal of masculinity. In contrast, The Telegraph offers a more positive framing, aligning with Gillette's intent to promote gender equality and suggesting a broader mission beyond marketing. NBC, in contrast, presents a balanced viewpoint, offering a comprehensive overview of both the campaign's criticisms and its social objectives. These disparate approaches demonstrate how media discourse can steer readers

towards different interpretations of the same campaign, thereby underscoring the media's role in influencing how individuals perceive gender-focused initiatives.

In conclusion, the data demonstrates the intricate nature of media influence in addressing the complexities of evolving cultural values. By employing framing, language, and source selection, each news outlet shapes narratives that encourage readers to align with certain viewpoints or remain neutral, depending on the stance presented. In this way, media outlets can act as powerful tools that reinforce or challenge long-standing societal norms, particularly those related to masculinity and corporate responsibility. This study highlights the importance of critical media consumption, as it allows readers to better understand how underlying biases impact the presentation of issues, encouraging a more accurate and nuanced perspective on how brands and society navigate gender discussions.

## REFERENCES

- Al Falaq, J. S., & Puspita, D. (2021). Critical discourse analysis: Revealing masculinity through L-Men advertisement. *Linguistics and Literature Journal*, 2(1), 62–68. <https://doi.org/10.33365/lj.v2i1.764>
- Allside. (2022). *Allside media bias rating, NBC News*. <https://www.allsides.com/news-source/nbc-news-media-bias>
- Brittain, A. (2023). *Me Too Movement Definition, History, Purpose, and Societal Impact*. Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Me-Too-movement>
- Fairclough, N. (1989). Language and power. In © Longman Group UK Limited 1989 by (Vol. 9780813141). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315549354-11>
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. In Longman Group Limited 1995. Longman Publishing.
- Happer, C., & Philo, G. (2013). The role of the media in the construction of public belief and social change. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 1(1), 321–336. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v1i1.96>
- Sahmeni, E., & Afifah, N. (2019). Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in Media Discourse Studies: Unmask the Mass Media. *REiLA: Journal of Research and Innovation in Language*, 1(2), 39–45. <https://doi.org/10.31849/reila.v1i2.2764>
- Sari, R., Putri, S. E., Herdi, H., & Hamuddin, B. (2018). Bridging Critical Discourse Analysis in Media Discourse Studies. *Indonesian EFL Journal*, 4(2), 80. <https://doi.org/10.25134/iefj.v4i2.1379>
- Smith, S. (2019). *The best an ad can be: no regrets for Gillette after controversial campaign*. Telegraph UK. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2019/05/23/best-ad-can-no-regrets-gillette-controversial-campaign/>
- van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principals of discourse analysis. In *Discourse and Society* (Vol. 4, Issue 2).



- Weiss, G., & Wodak, R. (2003). Introduction: Theory, interdisciplinarity and critical discourse analysis. *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 1–32. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230514560\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230514560_1)
- Xu, H., & Tan, Y. (2020). Can beauty advertisements empower women? A critical discourse analysis of the sk-ii's “change destiny” campaign. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 10(2), 176–188. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1002.05>