

**CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GILLETTE® AUDIOVISUAL AD  
ENTITLED “WE BELIEVE: THE BEST MEN CAN BE”**

---

Muftihaturrmah Burhamzah  
Department of English Literature,  
Faculty of Language and Literature,  
The State University of Makassar, Indonesia

Lely Novia  
Department of English Literature,  
Faculty of Language and Literature,  
The State University of Makassar, Indonesia

Alamsyah  
Department of English Literature,  
Faculty of Language and Literature,  
The State University of Makassar, Indonesia

**Abstract:** Advertising is one of the ways that can influence people to purchase products, services, or shaping one's mind for a way of life. The audiovisual ad gives more benefits over the audio one or the visual one because it is more attractive and can provide a clear view of the goods or the ideas by combining the audio and visual aspects. Bullying and sexual harassment have become a common issue that happened in society around the world. These issues give a negative impact on society, especially to the victims even to the men themselves. Gillette® had launched an audiovisual ad related to bullying and sexual harassment in 2019. The ad tries to convey the men to stop the bullying and sexual harassment issue caused by toxic masculinity happened worldwide. This study aims to critically study the text, the discursive practice, and the socio-cultural practice of the Gillette® audiovisual ad entitled “We Believe: The Best Man Can Be” by using the Fairclough’s method of Critical Discourse Analyses (CDA). From the textual analysis, it is found that the ad is using: (1) questioning form of sentences invoking the previous tagline of Gillette® “The Best a Man Can Get” to reinforce the campaign message of “The Best Man Can Be”; (2) using three kinds of tenses (present tense, future tense, and present perfect continues tense) in stating the fact related to toxic masculinity which has been going on far too long and also in saying the consequence of the ad's campaign message happened in the future; (3) using the pronoun “We” which refer to Gillette® as the influencer which has taken action in changing the toxic masculinity issue by describing the healthy version of what it means to be a man so it gives the impression of persuading to men; (4) using the conditional sentence to reinforce how important the message of the campaign willing to convey is. The analysis of the discursive practice of the ad that can be found is that Gillette®, as the producer, is using the #MeToo-inspired movement as the way to distribute the message of “The Best Man Can Be” to the men as the consumer. All of those ways are to campaign the healthy version of what it means to be a man motivated by a toxic masculinity phenomenon that happened in society as what has found from the socio-cultural practice analysis.

**Keywords:** *Critical Discourse Analysis, sexual harassment, toxic masculinity, bullying, Gillette® Audiovisual Ads*

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology has had an impact on the birth of various forms of mass media (Khattak et al., 2012). The existence of this mass media encourages globalization that has brought far-reaching impacts on the world community in almost every area of life (Matos and Carolina, 2012). The mass media is a place to share information, including information in the form of products, services, and ideas related to a way of life that are often presented in the form of advertisements (Janus, 1981). Advertising is one way that can influence people to buy products, services, or shape one's mind about a way of life (Baba, 2012). Advertising aims to market while helping people find their daily needs. Advertising has a strong influence on society. Advertising can shape people's minds based on the ideology it wants to convey and can even influence people to buy a product that they have never used before (Fill, 2002). Existing advertisements are currently available in the form of audio, visual and audiovisual. The audiovisual ad gives more benefits over the audio one (ex: radio) and the visual one (ex: magazine) because it is more attractive and can provide a clear view of the goods or the ideas by combining the audio and visual aspects (Alex and Darrel, 2010). Audiovisual advertising is now not only available in television media, but also in other audiovisual media that are currently in high demand by the public, that is Youtube.

Sexual harassment and bullying issues have become a common issue that happened in society around the world and harm society, especially to the victims, even to the men themselves. Toxic masculinity is a condition where a man must consider himself the most dominant and assume weak, other things that are not following how he generally acts and behaves. By that wrong believes, toxic masculinity has giving birth to a severe issue like bullying and sexual harassment. Wikstrom (2019) has studied there is a relation between toxic masculinity and sexual harassment, and a study from Rosen and Nofziger (2018) states that hegemonic masculinity has a role in shaping bullying behavior.

As stated on its official website, Gillette® is a company that has been producing razors for men for 115 years. Thirty years ago, Gillette® launched its tagline “The Best a Man Can Get” as a brand that encourages men to be their best. Gillette® committed to driving change that matters and promoting “The Best Men Can Be”. To make it a reality, Gillette® are distributing 1 Million Dollar per year for the next three years to non-profit organizations executing the most interesting and impactful programs designed to help men of all ages achieve their personal best.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) study is a method of analyzing a discourse that is looking at the language as a "social practice" (Fairclough, 1992). The study is used to describe, interpret, and explain the relationship between language and society. The primary purposes of CDA are to critically analyze those who are in power, those who are responsible, and those who have the means and the opportunity to deal with social problems (Fairclough, 2001). This study is using the CDA method because advertisement ideology is constructed based on social conditions and social needs. Gillette® audiovisual ad presented to campaign the healthy version of what it means to be a man to make a change in toxic masculinity issues, which can cause bullying and sexual harassment. This study aims to analyze the text, the discursive practice, and the socio-cultural practice of Gillette® audiovisual ad by using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis method.

## METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study aims to analyze the text, the discursive practice, and the socio-cultural practice of Gillette® audiovisual ad by using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis method. The data of this study is Gillette® audiovisual ad entitled "We Believe: The Best Men Can Be." The data source was from Gillette® official website. The spoken language of the ad was being transcript and being analyzed by considering its visual aspect too.

The framework of the study was using Fairclough's CDA method (Fairclough, 1995). Three different dimensions would be analyzed, and those are the microstructural (text), mesostructure (discursive practice), and macrostructural (socio-cultural practices). These three dimensions were analyzed in three steps, and those are (i) description for linguistic/textual features, discourse analysis (microstructural dimension), (ii) interpretation to identify the meaning of what has been identified in the descriptive phase (mesostructure dimension), and (iii) explanation which is usually done by exposing the underlying ideological perspectives through social theory (macrostructural dimension).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Description

In this dimension, we discuss what linguistic features that are used in Gillette® audiovisual ads. Some linguistic features, such as questioning sentences invoking the previous tagline of Gillette®, pronoun, tenses, and conditional sentences, will be discussed.

In the beginning, the ad citing the previous Gillette® tagline in the questioning form of a sentence. It can be used to reinforce the campaign message of "The Best Man Can Be."

"Is this the best a man can get? Is it?"

The pronoun that is using in the ad

is "we" which refer to Gillette® as the influencer which has taken action in changing the toxic masculinity issue by describing the healthy version of what it means to be a man, so it gives the impression of persuading to men in society

"Because **we**, **we** believe in the best in men."

The pronoun "we" also used to build a personal relationship with the consumer that is showing agreement.

"**We** can't hide from it."

In the ads, we can found the use of conditional sentences to reinforce how important the message of the ad willing to convey is.

"**It's only by** challenging ourselves to do more, **that we can** get closer to our best."

The tenses that are using in the ads are present tense, present perfect continuous tense, and future tense. Present tense and present perfect continuous tense is used to show facts related to toxic masculinity, which been going on far too long. In contrast, the future tense is used to indicate the consequence of the ad's campaign message happened in the future.

"**It's been going on** far too long."

"And **there will be** no going back."

### **Interpretation**

In this dimension, we discuss how the discourse of Gillette® entitled “We Believe: The Best Men Can Be” audiovisual ad is produced and consumed. The producer of this ad is Gillette®, which has been producing razors for 115 years for men use. Thus, the consumer of this ad is men. The ad is choosing the “MeToo-inspired movement in distributed the message of “The Best Man Can Be.” The video is trying to motivate men to hold each other to a higher standard and prevent every possibility of others to misbehave towards women or each other.

In the ad, the facts served in the form of news in television informing about the issue of bullying and sexual harassment. The ad shows that previously, men generally consider the problem as a common thing. That thing has been going on far too long because of the same old excuses of “Boys will be boys.” The message of the ad then starts to be conveyed by showing some of the men are taking action to change. The ad tries to convey that the change can begin in ways big or small, some already are by saying the right thing, act the right way, but some is not enough. Men are supposed to give a good example to others, especially to boys, who will be the man of tomorrow.

### **Explanation**

The socio-cultural practice is a macrostructural dimension that will be critically analyzed of how the socio-cultural aspect can motivate the birth of an ad ideology and how such thinking can influence the socio-cultural perspective. In this dimension, we discuss the socio-cultural aspects of toxic masculinity that related to the birth of the ideology of the Gillette® “We Believe: The Best Men Can Be” audiovisual ad and how the ad can shape men mind to the healthy version of what it means to be a man.

Toxic masculinity is a condition where a man must consider himself the most dominant and assume weak, other things that are not following how he generally acts and behaves. By that wrong assumption, toxic masculinity has giving birth to severe issues like bullying and sexual harassment. By considering himself the most dominant, devaluation of women may happen then giving birth to sexual harassment issues. Wikstrom (2019) has studied there is a relation between toxic masculinity and sexual harassment, and a study from Rosen and Nofziger (2018) states that hegemonic masculinity has a role in shaping bullying behavior. By assuming weak, other things that are not following how he generally acts and behaves, this may give birth to bullying behavior.

Toxic masculinity has been going far too long, according to what the ad stated. It is reinforced by making the same old excuses, which in the ad is found by the words “Boys will be boys.” The ad showing that we can't hide from the phenomenon of toxic masculinity which shown in the ad in the form of sexual harassment and boys bullying, but still we can't laugh it off after so many cases of them has been harmful to society which is shown in an ad in the form of many television news informing the cases. The advertiser is then starting to campaign the message by stating, “something finally changed, and there will be no going back. Because we, we believe in the best in men. To say the right thing, to act the right way. Some already are, in ways big and small. But some is not enough. Because the boys watching today will be the men of tomorrow”. The ad also closed by showing the text of “It's only by challenging ourselves to do more that we can get closer to our best.” That means that the ad is trying to convey so the men can challenge themselves to do more by saying the right thing, acting the right way, and being a good example for other men to be closer to their best.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded in the text that from the textual analysis, it is found that the ad is using: (1) questioning form of sentences invoking the previous tagline of Gillette® “The Best a Man Can Get” to reinforce the campaign message of “The Best Man Can Be”; (2) using three kinds of tenses (present tense, future tense, and present perfect continues tense) in stating the fact related to toxic masculinity which has been going on far too long and also in stating the consequence of the ad's campaign message happened in the future; (3) using the pronoun "We" which refer to Gillette® as the influencer which has taken action in changing the toxic masculinity issue by describing the healthy version of what it means to be a man so it gives the impression of persuading to men in society; (4) using the conditional sentence to reinforce how important the message of the campaign willing to convey is. The analysis of the discursive practice of the ad that can be found is that Gillette®, as the producer, is using the #MeToo-inspired movement as the way to distribute the message of "The Best Man Can Be" to the men as the consumer. All of that ways are to campaign the healthy version of what it means to be a man motivated by toxic masculinity phenomenon that happened in society as what has found from the socio-cultural practice analysis.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Authors thank to The State University of Makassar for providing facilities in conducting this study.

## REFERENCES

- Alex Wang & Darrel D. Muehling (2010) The effects of audio-visual and visual-only cues on consumers' responses to co-branded advertising, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 16:5, 307-324, DOI: [10.1080/13527260902970190](https://doi.org/10.1080/13527260902970190)
- Baba, Mubashir. (2012). THE CHANGING ROLE OF ADVERTISING. *Journal of Research in Commerce and Management*. 2. 37-43.
- Fairclough, N. 1992. *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N. 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. 2001. *Language and Power* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- Fill, C. (2002) *Marketing Communications: contexts, strategies and applications*. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- Janus, N. Z. (1981). Advertising and the mass media: transnational link between production and consumption. *Media, Culture & Society*, 3(1), 13–23.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/016344378100300103>
- Khattak, Waseem & sultan, khaid & Khan, Jahangir. (2012). The Role of Information Technology in Media Industry.
- Matos, Carolina. (2012). Mass media and globalization.
- Rosen, N.L., Nofziger, S. Boys, Bullying, and Gender Roles: How Hegemonic Masculinity Shapes Bullying Behavior. *Gend. Issues* 36, 295–318 (2019).  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-018-9226-0>.

Wikstrom, Malin C. 2019. Gendered Bodies and Power Dynamics: The Relation between Toxic Masculinity and Sexual Harassment. *Granite Journal: a Postgraduate Interdisciplinary Journal*: Volume 3, issue 2 pages 28-33.