The Construction of Woman through Apartment Advertisement

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Abstract

In this modern era, people can see the sights of advertisements everywhere in their life. Advertisement is encouraging people to buy the product, but it is also influenced the framework of people’s mindset on society. There are many kinds of society concept from the advertisement, for example is how they create certain of woman image. One of the advertisements with a distinctive woman image is a printed advertisement by One East Resident. This advertisement is published on a national newspaper “Jawa Pos” on May, 1st 2013. In this advertisement, the woman has a bigger portion rather than the picture of the product itself. The woman dresses in glaring red dress, and she is standing beside the picture of a luxurious building of apartment. In here, the function of woman may hold the value of the apartment building. Therefore, this thesis will be using the qualitative method to gain a better and accurate result in order to disclose the woman image in this advertisement. This printed advertisement will be dismantle by the Semiotics of Roland Barthes, then analyzed using the theory of feminism and gender in media. The purpose of this thesis is to expand the knowledge of woman image in media, especially advertisement.

Keywords: woman image, advertisement, apartment, semiotics

Introduction

In this modern era, people are exposed by advertisement almost anywhere. Advertisement might look simple and short, it is only lasted for a few minutes or seconds, but it is very important for a company to promote their needs. Advertisement is definitely not a new thing in our life. Advertisement has been there in people’s life since a long time ago, approximately circa 3000 B.C. In the Egyptian era, advertisement was appeared on inscription in Egyptian tombs. While Greek engraved a theater advertisement in stone, there were about 500 advertisements. Advertisement holds up a mirror to our social history, and catches glimpses of the value and aspirations of our culture (Saunders, 1999, pg 7). Here we can understand that advertisement is not only a simple object to see, it is essential. Advertisement is an object to be understood because through the advertisement we can see how is the culture of society. Nixon (2003) quoted on a Wneck’s article in Sunday Times Magazine (14/04.00 : 90), advertising is what gives society resonance and colour. Without it, we are nothing. That’s why it’s so important to put stuff out which is clever and witty and makes you think, instead of being blanket-bombed with mind-less crap. The audience of each media is also different, range from the sex, age, interest, etc. Advertising has occupied an important place within these diverse accounts of economic and cultural change and represented a particularly visible marker of the dynamism of commercial society (Nixon, 2003, pg. 3). Advertisement is crucial because it holds ideology to be planted to the audience. It has been constructing people’s perception in many ways. One of the examples is the gender in the society. Gender is not about the given or biological sex, it is living as the society constructs it unconsciously. Man and woman are born equally as a human, but there is an invisible value that scatters around the society. In the book of Feminist Thought by Rosemarie Tong (1998), Gayle Rubin is stated that the function of gender is appeared as a system from the society to control man and woman, it is also use to define the human activity by defining it from the biological sexuality. The society is defining the gender by the appearance of biological sex to build the role of masculinity and femininity (Tong, 1998). Gender itself is a sexual identity construct by the society. Gender has been separating woman and man with the term of feminine and masculine. Gender is also a construction of culture, the process of identification from the role that happens in society (Lips, 2008, pg. 104). So it is clear that gender is unnatural, because gender is influenced by many aspects. Then, people
define the role of each gender to perform, man as masculine and woman as feminine. Man and woman are living under the traditional gender roles. It is shown by how society treats man as the most important character in the family. *Traditional gender roles* cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive (Tyson, 2006, pg. 85). In the traditional gender roles, woman has to be caring, nurturing, and staying at home, woman is only pictured as the internal manager of the house. No doubt women as nurturers of children and the creators of neighbourliness is a truism in some, perhaps many, instances but this stereotype has become the unseen assumption in housing policy (Vickery, 2012, pg. 3). Woman is the in charge for taking care the domestic jobs. Woman appears as a shade to care the children and husband. Man as a superior character and woman as an inferior character (Tyson, 2006, pg. 86).

In the advertisement, women were found to be more concerned with beauty, cleanliness, family, and pleasing other. Men in ads were only more concerned about achievement and having fun (Gauntlet, 2002, pg 59). From here we can see how gender is constructed on advertisement. The advertisement is shown the constructed role of man and woman in life, especially in the society. In the book of *Gender Advertisement* by Geoffman (1987), gender is depicted through the composition, position, pose, and etc. For example, the feminine touch, it appears on how woman is posing on the advertisement. Woman is portrayed with delicate voice, pretty face, and slender body. Woman is controlled by the image over advertisement that lingers on society. Popular culture is saturated with the image of home, most conspicuously via the inherently domestic medium of television (Hunt, 2009). This woman issues is becoming an advantage from some company. Real estate is a company that deals with the sales and marketing of lots, houses, apartment, and etc. In order to attract some potential buyers, the company creates advertisement. In the advertisement, the figure of product is will be shown. In this case, the developers are using media to reach towards the most prominent media to enhance their property values and also appeal the customer. One of the property products that grows rapidly in Indonesia is apartment. The idea of *vertical living* is a part of property that brings the people into a bright light. The development of property developer who has apartment project in Indonesia is rising as well. They see opportunity to take advantage of this complex issue. Because of residence is a vital factor for human to live, there are many solutions that have been proposed by some agents. One of the solutions to solve the residential issue of Indonesian citizen is by creating a building with a small area but could accommodate many people, it is apartment. The developers are creating many kinds of grades for apartments in Indonesia. They are classifying the apartment grade through the facility they offer, and their potentials. Furthermore, the developers are pointing their projects through various customers, especially from middle to high class.

*Figure 1 Jwa Pos, May 1st 2013 | Jawa Pos, May 11th 2013 | Jawa Pos, June 6th 2013*

The idea of concrete building is deconstructed into some visible idea that happens in society. For instance, apartment is creating an advertisement to sell the place and also the idea of vertical living in urban area. The apartment advertisement is clearly emphasizing the advantage of their skyscrapers building. There are many kinds of apartment advertisement in Indonesia. All of the apartment advertisement is featuring its finest facilities and the luxurious building itself. There are many apartment advertisements found in newspaper, but all of apartment advertisement resembles one object. For
example, in Figure 1 from the left, the first advertisement, Praxis Apartment, an apartment project in Surabaya is using the huge building as the dominant character in the advertisement. The second advertisement, Carlson, is an apartment project in Australia also using the same idea in the advertisement. And the last is also a Surabaya apartment project, Gunawangsa, is the same with the other two apartment advertisements.

However, there is one advertisement from the One East Residence about the on-going project of apartment in Surabaya. The apartment advertisement that use woman figure as their advertisements are interesting. It is because an apartment or a property product is reaching both gender to buy the product. In this case, some apartment advertisements are implemented the gender issues about woman figure to express the image of the building and facilities of the apartment. The name of the apartment project is One East Residence. This apartment on-going project is taking place in Kertajaya, Surabaya. The company that created this project is MNC land, a big company group from MNC group. MNC land is one of the most developing real estate company in Indonesia. For the One East Residence apartment project, they spread out many advertisements in many media, for example billboards and newspaper.

![Image of One East Residence advertisement](image.png)

*Figure 1 Jawa Pos, May 1st 2001*

One East Residence apartment advertisement is symbolized with woman. In these advertisements, there are some significant images that the company constructs the woman’s appearance, she is pictured with an elegant, and stylish woman. The author is attracted to look deeper in this advertisement. The author is trying to capture about the image of woman character in this real estate advertisement. The author will be focusing the research on the second advertisement of One East Residence, because from all of the advertisement, the second advertisement depicted a whole woman body with a small size picture of the apartment building. This apartment advertisement was on May, 1st 2013, on the primary part of Jawa Pos newspaper. What is the relation between the woman and the apartment building in the One East Residence apartment advertisement? What is the advertiser trying to symbolize the product with the image of woman in this advertisement? In order to depict the image on the advertisement, the author uses Semiotics by Roland Barthes. In semiotics, the author will deconstruct each part of the advertisement into
more significant one. Each of the discovered scenes or parts will be identified using the three levels of representation of Semiotics and the codes of Semiotics. The three levels are denotation, connotation, myth and linguistic message, while the codes are coded iconic message, non-coded iconic message. The author may also use social codes, in order to get the details of the meaning from the advertisement. Social codes are verbal language, bodily codes, appearance, commodity codes, and behavioural codes. But the author will only focus on bodily codes, appearance, and commodity codes. After the author gets the result, the author will use the theory of gender in advertisement to get the construction of woman in the One East Residence apartment. The theories of gender that the author will use are Gender Advertisement by Erving Goffman.

Before these research conducted, the author reviews many thesis and journals about the woman image on advertisement study. There is a thesis by Priambodo Fauzi in 2013 with the title of ‘Analisis Semiotika Visual Model Perempuan Dalam Iklan Sabun Lux Pada Iklan Print Ad Majalah Femina Tahun 2007 – 2011’. This thesis is looking at an object of Lux soap advertisement period 2007 – 2011. In this thesis, the author will gain the knowledge to decode a print ad advertisement. Then there is a journal from Esther H. Kuntjara with the title Beauty and The Beast: Images of Woman in Advertisement. In this journal, Esther is explaining woman exploitation on many advertisements. There are also some references about woman in housing, the first one is Repositioning Woman In Housing Development In India by Olotuah and Ajayi. Therefore the author will make these studies as references for conducting the study of construction of woman image in the One East Residence apartment advertisement in Jawa Pos newspaper. This data will be analyzed with the theory of Gender Advertisement in gender representation of Erving Goffman. Before the data will be analyzed by the Goffman’s theory, this data will be analyze using the method of Semiotics by Roland Barthes.

Method

In this research, the author uses qualitative approach and based on textual analysis. Qualitative approach is seen as the best technique to analyze an image of advertisement. This advertisement holds many symbols and signs in regards to achieve the desired image of the apartment. The author conducts an observation on Jawa Pos from the May 2013 to October 2013. The author is using the purposive sampling, so the author is focused only at apartment advertisement in it. Not many apartment advertisements are shown in the Jawa Pos newspaper. After the author decides the most distinctive apartment advertisement, the author will analyze the advertisement with the Semiotics by Roland Barthes. The author uses this method to see the signifier and signified in this printed advertisement. The data will be seen in three elements, coded iconic message, non-coded iconic message, linguistic message. Through these elements, the author will be able to depict the denotative, connotative, and myth level.

Result

There are many apartments advertisement in Jawa Pos newspaper. Most apartment advertisements are using the appearance of the building to strengthen the image of the brand, for example Gunawangsa apartment, Praxis apartment, One Icon apartment, and etc. The author decides to choose on the One East Residences apartment advertisement because it is the only advertisement that use a woman figure to elaborate the advertisement. This data is a newspaper advertisement about One East Residence apartment. It is published on the May 1st, 2013 on the national published page. This data will be analyzed with the theory of Gender Advertisement in gender representation of Erving Goffman. Before the data will be analyzed by the Goffman’s theory, this data will be analyze using the method of Semiotics by Roland Barthes.

Discussion

The advertisement of “Red Lady” One East Residences” is giving the author a challenge to see further behind this text. The author has been dismantled the advertisement through the Barthes’s Semiotic. The author analyzes the elements of this advertisement through the linguistic messages, coded images, and non-coded images. From these findings, the author finds on the class of the apartment, and also the woman image as the culture of patriarchy in Indonesia in this advertisement.
One East Residence is portraying the premium apartment class through the linguistic message in this advertisement. These three taglines are elucidating the advantages of One East Residence. These taglines are also appeared in English language. One East Residence is influencing people with the power of adjective words like elegance, modern, sophisticated, stylish, and luxury. Through these words they are emphasized the values of One East Residences apartment. These texts are targeting for the possible audience who sees and reads the advertisement. It lures the average to high social class audience because it gives them sight of new prosperity living in One East Residences apartment.

The next, non-coded image in this One East Residences advertisement, there are pictures of woman, building, and logo. The background of One East Residence is dominated with the dark colors. For the background advertisement, One East Residence is using the color black. Black here is presented as the background of the woman’s picture. Black dominates almost the whole advertisement. After black, there is another color, it is followed with brown color in the message of the advertisement. The brown color is set on the bottom of the advertisement picture, and the logo of One East Residences. Then, there is also white color for the developer and the supporters. White also appears on the background pictures of the advertisement, it is representing the scribbling lines of One East Residences logo. So, there are three main color in this One East Residence apartment advertisement, they black, brown, and white.

In One East Residences apartment advertisement, the author sees the most distinctive character that dominates the advertisement, the woman. Her portion in this advertisement is the biggest among all images in this advertisement, so it makes her significant in this advertisement. She is embellished with complete set party dress. She is wearing the long red dress, black high heels, and also heavy make – up. Her red lips are complementing her shimmering red dress. Her appearance is definitely not typically Indonesian woman; she has the face construction of Caucasian woman, and a red hair. Her Caucasian face blends well with the outfit. She is also adapting the beauty myth of American. The beauty myth of American are slender, white, and tall woman. The advertiser is using Caucasian woman in the advertisement to strengthen the high class image. Then, the author wants to identify the placement of the elements in this One East Residences “Red Lady” apartment advertisement. The author sees the most element that dominate the whole advertisement is the woman picture with the night scape. Besides her, there is a rendered picture of the apartment building. On top of the building, the author sees the logo of One East Residences and the supporters beneath the advertisement. Next, are the taglines on top of her picture. So, in here the advertiser is trying to relate the Stylish word and the other taglines into a visualization of a woman figure wrapped in a red glamour dress.

The myth in this advertisement is the occurrence of the woman here is vital, because she is presenting the image of the apartment. The woman is put side by side with the picture of the building, the author here is trying to relate the correlation between her and resident. The force of patriarchy system is still strong in Indonesia, so women are likely to be domestified by men. The domesticated woman serves as a sign of a social stability and as real means for achieving it by becoming the incarnation of morality and virtue in her newly exalted roles as mother and wife (Brenner, 1998, pp. 244). Woman is still shackled by the traditional gender role. Woman is captivated by the role of taking care of domestic stuff, and also the biological role where woman has womb and breast to take care the children.

These include maternal, conjugal, domestic, occupational, kin and community roles, and finally the role of the woman as an individual. These roles are played by rural and urban women alike, as they are fundamental to their position as wives, mothers and women.
(Olotuah & Ajayi, 2008, pp. 103)

Woman is taught to stand subordinate and stay obedience to the man. Brenner (1998, pp. 239), stated that woman and man divided by the place of the workplace where woman is demanded to stay at home, taking care of the domestic work, and man is the one who goes out to earn money for family. This statement is strongly supported by the government when Indonesia was in New Order era. So, the society is behaving towards the man and woman with the traditional gender roles. During the New Order era in Indonesia, the best place of a woman is to support her husband. It is supported with many woman organizations that emerged in the era of New Order, such as Dharma Wanita, PKK, and etc. The “ideal” of New Order woman is portrayed as a dedicated wife and mother who devotes her energy to serving her
husband and bolstering his career by joining organization like Dharma Wanita, and to raising the next generation of good Indonesian citizens (Brenner, 1998, pp. 240). From this, the author sees on how the government is practicing patriarchy towards the citizen. Woman is always attached with the image of house, because of her burden in the household. Within the state ideology, there was no room for women as an individual. Instead, they were continually reminded of their inherent nature, and particularly of their household and reproductive responsibilities (Gardiner, 2002, pp. 102). Woman has been idealized with her domestic roles of taking care household, and staying at house. So, in this “Red Lady” One East Residences apartment advertisement, the woman figure is representing the ideal concept of woman in Indonesia. The woman figure is a part of Indonesia’s patriarchy culture where woman is related to the image of house or resident. The advertiser is intending to embrace this ideology into the apartment advertisement. It could have been a picture of a man, young couple, or even nuclear family, but the advertiser is choosing the woman figure.

In order to answer the author’s proposed problem, the author completes the further woman image in this “Red Lady” One East Residences apartment advertisement. After analyzing the semiotics element, the author makes interpretation about this advertisement. The author will interpret these findings into the theory Gender Advertisement by Goffman. This theory is chosen by the author in a hope to proceed a better analysis on the woman figure in this advertisement.

In the book of Erving Goffman (1987), Gender Advertisement, he stated that the advertisement is standing as an artificial scene of life through the situation, characters, and atmosphere. The author learns that advertisement may be identical with the real life, but it is remodeled in order to achieve the intended result until it is delivered to the audience. Advertisement is clearly using the idea of gender in society to present things. For example, the character of house wife will be acted by a female figure. The advertiser must present the product as close as what audiences have in mind. The presentation of this advertisement may contain subjective statement, stereotypes, or hyperbolic situation.

The author takes steps from the theory of Goffman to see “Red Lady” One East Residences apartment advertisement. The presentation of gender in this advertisement is not vague, it is obvious. In the advertisement, the advertiser is only featuring a woman figure to present the One East Residences apartment advertisement. Relating to the rooted traditional gender roles culture in Indonesia, the author sees on how she is depicted. She appears as a woman in the apartment advertisement, the author sees the relation on this image through the domesticity of woman in Indonesia. Woman appears as the visual image of the apartment. The advertisement is seemingly showing the audience on the image of the ideal woman is the ideal home. The author sees on how the woman figure is objectified by the advertiser. She is reflecting the values of apartment building. The author finds on how the advertiser is exposing the adjective words, such as elegance, stylish, luxury, and etc into a more visual. So, the woman here is presenting those words, which she is constructed as stylish as possible, and so on. She is chosen by the advertiser because her appearance will be fit for the One East Residences apartment building. This “Red Lady” One East Residences advertisement is using her to portray the human identity of this apartment building. Even though, her face is not portraying a local identity, the advertiser is giving the idea of gender from the perspective Indonesian culture, where the patriarchy force is still strong.

The woman figure in this advertisement is depicting the perfect woman in order to reflect the values of perfect residences. Her appearance also follows the beauty myth where she has to be slim, tall, pointed nose, and beautiful. She has no lines of wrinkles, young, no scares, pores, and blemishes. She is thin, generally tall and long legged. All “beautiful” woman in advertisement conform this norm (Kuntjara, 2001, pp. 98). Kuntjara (2001) elaborates on how often is woman depicted as a sexual object, and the truth that woman is marked through her appearances and accessories. In this advertisement, the author sees identical idea where woman is presented flawless, and marked with the red long dress, high heels, and make-up. This is depicting on how the advertiser is trying to deliver the message of the advertisement. She is dressed to achieve what the advertiser wants her to be.

Goffman (1987) also shares about the segments of gender commercials. Many advertisements are likely to portray the subordination of woman to man. In the relative size, woman is usually getting smaller
portion than the man. Woman only receives bigger portion when it is matching the products of woman marketing, such as spices, soap, cosmetics, and etc. But here, in “Red Lady” One East Residences the author sees on how big is the woman figure portion in this apartment advertisement. As we know that the target market of this apartment is apparently coming from both genders. She is even bigger than the product, so the author here implies the significant image that she holds. The author sees on how she is posing in this advertisement is relating with Goffman’s theory of The Feminine Touch. She is posing with one hand on the bar of the fence, and one hand is touching her chest. She looks away from the audience and presents a smile. Self-touching can also be involved, readable as conveying a sense of one’s body being delicate and precious thing (Goffman, 1987, pp. 31). Through her pose, the author indicates the self-touching in this advertisement is generally expressing the view that she sees. She is amused with the night scape that she enjoys. Then, her smile is displayed following her excitement on the view. Her dress is also becoming the distinctive image in this advertisement. She could strike a good pose synchronizing with her long dress. She stands firm on both of her legs, but she manages to fly the dress until one of her long slender leg is showing.

In the advertisement, the author sees the representation of Indonesian woman with the Indonesian woman in reality. In the advertisement, she is portrayed as a perfect looking woman, with those glamour embellishments. She is a white woman with the beauty myth of American. Her physical appearance does not reflecting the woman of Indonesia. Her red hair, pointed nose, and fair skin is a construction from the advertiser. She wears heavy make-up and glamour dress. She is also striking a provocative pose. While in the reality, woman in Indonesia does not appear like her. The author sees distinctive difference between the woman in this advertisement with the woman in Indonesia. The woman character here does not provide the facial features about woman in Indonesia. She does not show the characteristic of local woman from her appearances, such as black hair, kuning-langsat or sawo-matang skin color, mediocre nose and etc. There are also many body types of Indonesian woman, they are not only coming in the tall, thin, and slim body type. In fact, Indonesian woman are not only various in sizes, but also the skin colour from different ethnics (Fatmawati, 2013). For the appearance, Indonesian woman does not wear heavy make-up for daily uses. The outfit that the Indonesian woman wears is not a glamour sparkling dress for everyday use, whether it is day or night. This advertisement is not showing the reality of woman in Indonesia. It is such a gimmick for the audiences. She is only constructed as what the advertiser wants her to be.

Here the author comes to a conclusion about the image that advertiser is trying to portray. In this advertisement, she might be constructed into a very happy western woman who lives in One East Residences apartment. She looks happy, so it will attract the audience to be interested in this apartment project. She is representing the thought of ideal woman in Indonesia related with her chores on the domestic sphere. Despite, the woman in this advertisement is a fantasy of Indonesian woman, because she does not reflect the character of Indonesian woman. But then, the author’s analysis is depicting on how the woman figure is an example of a sexualized object. She is turned into the living values of the apartment building. From her appearances, she is constructed to be more desirable. She stands for the apartment building, not for herself.

**Conclusion**

One East Residences is using the woman character to illustrate the woman’s role in the domestic area. The big portion of the woman’s character in this advertisement is an indication of how big is the role of woman in the resident. Through this advertisement, the woman is constructed into what the advertiser wants her to be. This woman character does not stand for the general woman in Indonesia. Moreover, the function of the woman appearance is only as an object to make the advertisement more interesting. So, the woman in Indonesia especially in advertisement is still strangled with the patriarchy system.

**Works Cited**


