A Semiotic Analysis of the Representation of Indonesian Muslim Women on ANNISA Magazine’s Front Covers

Cakti Annisa Putri
Diah Ariani Arimbi

English Department, Universitas Airlangga

Abstract

This study aims to reveal the representation of Indonesian Muslim women in ANNISA: a Muslim women magazine. Since the 2000s, Muslim women's magazine in Indonesia has become one Islamic dissemination media packed with interesting pictures. It also becomes a phenomenon because of the emergence of Muslim women in Indonesia is limited to the New Order era. The study also will describe one by one the hidden meaning in ANNISA using Barthes' semiotic theory. Data are analyzed using the stages of the process, namely linguistic semiotic messages, non-coded iconic messages, coded-iconic messages and myth. The results show that Muslim women in ANNISA magazines are represented to be fashionable, stylish, modern and pious. Muslim women magazines are packed to attract the attention of the Indonesian Muslim women. As a Muslim women magazine ANNISA has a specific purpose in spreading concept of Muslim beauty.

Keywords: ANNISA magazine, Muslim women, Muslim women’s magazine, representation, semiotic

Introduction

After the collapse of the New Order regime in Indonesia at 1998, the developing of Islamic media has been springing up. During the New Order era, the societies did not have the freedom to express their ideas and opinion. It also occurred in Islamic media in Indonesia. They were not given a place and space to appear in the media. After the emergence of Reformation era, the media has begun to show the portrayal of Muslim through electronic and printed media. They have began to appear on television with Islamic programs and Islamic-themed soap operas in Ramadhan. Then, the Islamic printed media such as magazines, bulletins, pamphlets, books, and novels have achieved prominence (Rinaldo, 2009, p. 230). In Muslim magazine industry, the Muslim women's magazines become more popular among the others. Since 2000’s ‘Glossy magazines for Muslim women are a brand new trend in Indonesia such as, near which its target from middle class Muslim woman readership with high-fashion ads, cooking sections and health and beauty tips’ (Cooke, 2007, p. 146). The content of these Muslim women's magazines is almost equal to women's magazines in general especially in Indonesia such as Femina, Kartini, Cosmopolitan, and many more. Even so, those are different packages because Muslim women's magazines are Islamic themed.

As argued by Winship, women’s magazines appeal to their readers by means combination of entertainment and useful advice’ (cited in Storey, p. 153); it is through rubrics or articles that appear in women's magazine which aim to help women by providing solutions to their problems. Furthermore, each Muslim women's magazine in Indonesia actually displays the same things. There are some popular Muslim women's magazines in Indonesia such as NooR, Paras, Aulia, Oase, Annisa, Ummi, and many more Muslim women's magazines sprung up, making the competition more rapid in this era. They also offer new innovation so that the magazine can be accepted and sold on the market. Therefore, Muslim’s women's magazine is packed very interestingly on the front cover in order to attract buyers, especially women.

Muslim women's magazine ‘as a form of reflection towards the need of Muslim women to see themselves defined with identities related to piety, modesty and yet at the same time urban, cosmopolitan, and desirable’ (Jones, 2010, cited in Beta). Most of Muslim women's magazines feature a representation
of Muslim women that look modern and fashionable. It is as if the Muslim women's magazines want to teach the Muslim women in Indonesia to look stylish and modern without losing the impression of piety.

However, the aim of delivering of urban and cosmopolitan things is so that Muslim women in Indonesia can adjust in any situation, including the demands of cosmopolitan. None of the Muslim women’s magazines in Indonesia show the conventional representation of Muslim women; all of them feature pious Muslim but still fashionable women. These reasons make the writer to choose Muslim women's magazine as an object of research to reveal how the real representation of Muslim women who appear on Muslim women's magazine in Indonesia is and how Muslim woman’s magazines is possible to spread the concept of Muslim beauty.

Indonesia becomes one of the countries which has the largest Islamic population in the world. While in Southeast Asia, ‘Indonesia and Malaysia have a strong image as populous Muslim countries mean a lot to the magazines’ (Lewis, 2010, cited in Beta). Each front cover of the magazines has certain meaning through sigs appeared on it. Furthermore, the meanings of signs and representation sometimes are not realized by the reader themselves. In this study, the writer chooses ANNISA magazine which is a monthly magazine and the front covers of three editions for the research object to be analyzed.

Front covers become one of the important parts in the magazine because it aims to ‘construct identity through the text and images can also attract the attention of women in different aspects of personality such as women as a friend, mother, wife, worker, lover, individual, etc.’ (Sheet, 1996). The reason of the writer to choose ANNISA magazine because this magazine is fairly new, it emerged in the mid of 2012, and it displayed Islamic teachings more through implication rather than theory.

In this study, the writer uses a qualitative approach because this study attempts to analyze the representation of Indonesian Muslim women on the front covers of this Muslim women's magazine. The analysis focuses on how the representation of Indonesian Muslim women is featured in ANNISA magazine. It also includes color, jargon, headline, article title, pose, and the model as well as the way they dress. After that, the results of the analysis are then associated with the representation of Muslim women in Indonesia. The data are analyzed by using a semiotic approach by Roland Barthes. The whole results of the data analysis are in the form of text. In this study, semiotics approach becomes a tool to elaborate and read the meaning of signs. Furthermore, semiotics is also concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign (Eco, 1976, p. 7 cited in Chandler).

The data used in this study are from three editions of ANNISA magazine in November 2012, December 2012–January 2013, and February 2013 as the sample for the object of the study. These editions are considered as a representation throughout the year and fashion shift while for January and February 2013 edition as the predictive mode in the following year. The writer considers that the front cover of the magazine has an important role to ‘construct identity through the text and images which can also attract the attention of women in different aspects of personality such as women as a friend, mother, wife, worker, lover, individual, etc.’ (Sheet, 1996). Moreover, the front cover of the magazine becomes an important part in the marketing of the magazine. Barthes has four steps to read the meaning of the signs shown in the magazine. The four steps are the linguistic message, coded iconic message, non-coded iconic message, and myth.

For the first step to analyze the data, the writer examines the words that appear on the front cover of ANNISA through headlines and sub-headlines by using the semiotic approach which is linguistic message. Secondly, the writer examines the data from the front cover of the magazine with the step of non-coded iconic messages and coded-iconic messages. Finally, the data are linked with myths and codes supported by the theory of Beauty Myth by Naomi Wolf. After the data have been analyzed, the conclusion are then shaped in a statement.
ANNISA magazine is a relatively new magazine in the magazine industry for Muslim women in Indonesia which appeared in the mid of 2012. The magazine uses several veiled celebrities as models for the front covers. On the front covers, the readers are not addressed by using the sign 'you' but by listing a series of metonymic items roommates which are components of a signified 'women's world'. Then, this 'women's world' is not including 'all' women but addresses white, Western, young, and heterosexual women (Nielsen, 2008, p. 28). Moreover, this is done to promote the magazine ANNISA which is still relatively new to be accepted by the community, especially the Muslim women in Indonesia.

First, the analysis of linguistic message is from the name ANNISA itself which is located at the top of the magazine. The name ANNISA in this magazine uses white color with the capital letters for the whole letters. The use of capital letters for the word ANNISA is to confirm the name of this magazine product and the white color selection on this edition represents purity and simplicity. They do not choose colorful colors and the use of white color tends to mean maturity in this magazine.

In this case, ANNISA is one of the four letters (surah) in Al-Quran which means women. In accordance with the meaning of ‘ANNISA’, the magazine is aimed for Muslim women. Muslim in here means not only because this magazine is a magazine for Muslim women; instead, ANNISA itself is the name of a Surah in the Quran which is the holy book for Muslims. ANNISA magazine has a tagline or jargon located in the lower left of the name ANNISA using smaller letters which reads WOMEN INSIGHT. This magazine uses English for its tagline. The meaning of WOMEN INSIGHT here is that each Indonesian Muslim woman should have extensive knowledge. It is as if ANNISA magazine wants to reveal to the readers that reading this magazine will make Muslim women have more extensive knowledge. Then, using English language for the jargon 'WOMEN INSIGHT' is to show that English is an international language. As women who have high intelligence, Indonesian Muslim women should be able to speak English. Moreover, the use of English language is intended to show the intelligence and modernity.

On the front cover of ANNISA magazine, there are seven different positions and size of the headlines with large size under the model; two sub headlines are on the left side and four sub headlines are on the right side of the models. The first sub - headline is titled 'UP CLOSE JENAHARA NASUTION'. This title gives the reader information about the personal life of Jenahara Nasution. The name 'JENAHARA NASUTION' uses bold and capital letters. It is to emphasize that this title will illustrate the article about family, career, and personality of Jenahara Nasution.

For the second sub headline is titled ‘BEAUTIFUL ME IN BALI’ which lies under the sub headline UP CLOSE JENAHARA NASUTION. Similar to the previous sub headline, this sub-headline uses white color, capital letters, and is in the bold form. The name BEAUTIFUL ME is emphasized in the sub headline because it uses white bold. It shows the confidence of a woman calling herself beautiful and who should be beautiful. While the statement about beauty as described by Naomi Wolf is 'beauty is a myth, the beauty myth itself is not about women at all. It is about ‘men's institutions and institutional power’ (Wolf, 1991, p. 13). Beautiful women seem to be intended for men. Patriarchal culture is still felt in
Indonesia where a woman is required to take care of her body and use makeup in order to be beautiful for men.

Another sub-headline on the front cover of ANNISA magazine lies at the right side. There are three titles sub headlines on the right of the model. One of the sub-headline is titled 'Bonus 1st fashion and Hijab Guide'. This sub headline is made to be different than the other sub headlines because it uses the circle and the pink color. In the November 2012 issue, the ANNISA magazine gives bonus to the readers in the form of a catalogue of hijab tutorial.

Then, the next sub-headline on the right side is titled ‘FLAWLESS BEAUTY’. This rubric wants to express that a Muslim woman should have a flawless beauty. Muslim women should be prosecuted as if they have flawless beauty. FLAWLESS BEAUTY means an incomparable beauty perfection. Finally, the headline is titled ‘My Glorious Marriage’. This headline uses a combination of capital letters and Latin letters. Then, the headline also uses a mix of white and crimson color in it.

Wedding theme offered in this edition becomes more apparent when the headline also emphasizes on a precious wedding. In this edition of ANNISA magazine, the theme is about wedding and the word 'My' in the headline ‘My Glorious Marriage’ seems to be referred to the readers. Moreover, the use of larger letters for the headline actually attracts the readers to read the headlines first. The meaning of ‘Glorious’ is used to describe a precious wedding.

Non Coded Iconic Messages

Through the character of the female model that appears on this edition of ANNISA magazine, it is shown that she is very fashionable and expert of makeup. She uses make up and dressed in elegant clothes. Her eyes are not looking towards the camera; she tends to look toward the top right to interpret that she looks at her future. Regarding to the theme carried by ANNISA magazine in this edition, the model is also wearing a long dress and carrying a bouquet of flowers suitable for the wedding theme. The model is wearing clothes that are not so fancy; the clothes are simple and she is also wearing high heels.

The picture of the model on this issue depicts that she is a Muslim woman who is very trendy and she also follows the current fashion trend. She uses the modern hijab with a model that is in trend right now. Her eyes and movements make her appear to walk. Furthermore, on the front cover, it is only the right foot of the model shown; she is wearing high heels which match the color of her dress. Moreover, ANNISA magazine uses glossy and simple paper.

Coded Iconic messages

On the front cover of this issue, the model is featured to wear modern hijab and a long white dress with a combination of long white vest along with sequin details. The model is covered in depth from the neck by wearing head scarf called ninja as the inner. The model uses high-heeled shoes that cover the entire toe. ANNISA magazine does not too discuss deeply about the model in this edition. It only gives the model’s name, Katya, without giving details about her background. Katya is the name from Eastern Europe (Arimbi, 2013, p. 52). On the front cover of this edition, the model seems to bring a small flower bouquet. The model also uses modern makeup. She looks beautiful and elegant with her dress and makeup. It is as if to convey that the woman who appears on the cover of this edition is a woman who knows how to use good make up.

Myth

The model in the front cover of ANNISA magazine is not a public figure in Indonesia; she is only a model of an agency who was asked to be photographed for the front cover of ANNISA magazine. In this edition, ANNISA raises the issue of marriage. It can be seen from several sub headlines and the headline on the front cover of the magazine. The model shown by ANNISA magazine on this issue is a woman who has the characteristics of high posture, sharp nose, and white skin. Moreover, the model that appears on the front cover of this edition is a fashionable woman concerned about her appearance (it can be seen through the make-up and her dress). The picture shown is a woman who wears a long dress and the hijab with contemporary fashion as well as high-heeled shoes as a symbol of feminine woman.
The Linguistic Messages

In this edition there are six sub headlines and a headline. Three of sub-headlines are placed on the left of model and the other three are on the right of the model along with the headline. A headline titled ‘Plan and Make it Happen’ has larger font size compared to the other sub headlines. In addition, this sentence is also using white letters which are different from the other sub headlines on the front cover of this edition. A headline on the front cover of the magazine often has larger size compared to the sub headlines. In this edition, the meaning of this headline is addressed to the readers who are Muslim women to not just make plans but make the plans happen.

The Non Coded Iconic Messages

In this edition of ANNISA magazine, there is no significant difference between this edition and the previous edition. The model who becomes the icon on the front cover of this magazine is the same person. She has the characteristics of high body posture, white skin, sharp nose, and wide eyes. She wears clothes which are usually used for winter such as fur brown leather jacket combined with patterned trousers. In addition, she wears a matching veil combined with a knit hat and black high heeled boots. Through the wardrobe she wears, she looks very Western because she is wearing clothes commonly worn in the winter such as leather jackets and fur knit hat even though winter does not exist in Indonesia. Winter occurs only in non-tropical countries that have four seasons.

The Coded Iconic Messages

On the front cover of ANNISA magazine in this edition, the first thing which can be seen is the model's make up. The model is using detail makeup, it is clear that this woman is good in makeup. The woman who appears on the front cover is also very fashionable and stylish. It can be seen from the way she was dresses that is capable of mixing and matching clothes well. Then the other element to consider is the pose of the model.

Myth

The myth contained in the front cover of this issue in ANNISA magazine is similar to the previous edition. ANNISA is using a model named Katya as an icon on this cover. Katya is the name from Eastern Europe (Arimbi, 2013). She has Western/mixed race face and beautiful. She is very fashionable and stylish. She is good in make-up.
The Linguistic Messages

ANNISA magazine cover for the last issue is February 2013. In this last edition of the magazine cover of ANNISA, there is not too much difference from the previous edition. The setting of the headline and sub headlines is not much different from previous editions. The difference lies only from the number of sub headlines which are more on this issue; there are five sub headlines.

The first sub-headline is '80 + STYLE OF MUSIC'. The sub headlines are almost the same as the previous edition. In this edition, the magazine ANNISA wants to present fashion styles of music on page 80. The readers will find sections or columns that give an overview of the various styles associated with music. In each edition, the magazine ANNISA always gives a special section on fashion for the readers. It indicates that fashion is something that cannot be separated from Muslim women.

Non Coded Iconic Messages

The first element of non-coded iconic message is through the iconic picture of the model on the cover of this edition ANNISA who is the same as the previous editions. In this edition, ANNISA displays the model who has white skin, high posture, sharp nose, and Western face. It can be identified from the model’s pose that she appears to be looking towards the camera. She does not seem to smile to the camera. Her lips are slightly parted and shows few teeth. In terms of wardrobe, it seems that the model is wearing clothes for work. She is wearing a brown hijab, a matching long red shirt combined with a blazer and patterned pants. She also wears bracelets and carries ethnic patterned carry bag. In term of wardrobe that fits well with the subject raised by ANNISA magazine in this edition ‘MEANINGFUL CAREER’; the model’s clothing matches the headline of this edition’s theme.

Moreover, in terms of the make-up worn by the model who is wearing brown makeup for the eyebrows and pink eye - shadow and lipstick; it is shows that she can make up her face. She looks fashionable and stylish from the clothes she wears. Furthermore, on the front cover of this issue, there are three sub headlines on the left of the model and two sub headlines on the right of the model. There is also a headline entitled 'MEANINGFUL CAREER’ with large size and green light color in the middle of the bottom.

Coded Iconic Messages

The three editions of this magazine have not too much difference in the appearance of the layout, the model, and the arrangement of sub headlines and headlines. In terms of models, the three editions of ANNISA magazine features models with the same characteristics which are white, tall, and having a sharp nose. All three models on the front cover of these three issues of ANNISA magazine have Western face. Then, in terms of make-up, it is shown that these women are good in make-up. While in terms of wardrobe, they are extremely stylish and up to date. They wear clothes with suitable combination. In terms of pose, the models show that they are good at posing in front of the camera. They look very confident. It was seen from one of the model who enters her left hand in her pocket. From the front cover of this issue, it is concluded that the dross female model is very able to express herself.
In addition to these elements, the background color should also be considered. On the front cover of this edition, ANNISA magazine uses white for the background. In terms of semiotics, the term color is a verbal sign that encourages people to tend to pay attention; moreover, hues are also encoded markers (Danesi, 2004, p. 84). The meaning of white color is always associated with purity and cleanliness.

**Myth**

It is the same thing as the front cover of ANNISA in the previous editions, they do not provide more information about the model that becomes the icon of this edition. In the magazine content, it is only included the name ‘Dora’. She comes from a model agency named ‘AMORE MANAGEMENT’. Through the description of the female model displayed by ANNISA in this issue, she is a beautiful woman who was offered to appear on the cover of this magazine. Physically, the iconic women on the front cover of this magazine are those who have high posture, beautiful, white skin, and sharp nose. This model also looks very fashionable, stylish and up to date. She wears clothing which strongly reflects the trend of today. She is wearing a an unusual hijab which is a contemporary veil that has been modified.

Besides, her face does not like the face of Easterners. Her face is very western because she has white skin. The women who live in Indonesia tends to not have white skin because Indonesia is a tropical country. In this edition, the headline is titled ‘Meaningful CAREER’ to show that in economic terms, the model is a successful career woman. It is seen from the clothes, she wears an outfit for work. She looks so confident in her successful career. While in terms of pose, she looks very good at posing in front of the camera.

**Result and Discussion**

After analyzing the three editions of ANNISA magazine, there are several interpretations as the result of the data. The analysis has been carried out using the four processes by Roland Barthes’ semiotic approach which are linguistic message, the non coded iconic messages, coded iconic messages, and myths. Through the analysis by using a semiotic approach, it is discovered about how the representation of Indonesian Muslim women and Muslim concept of beauty is displayed by the ANNISA Muslim women's magazine. The writer has used the three editions of NNISA which are November 2012, December 2012 - January 2013 and February 2013 as research object.

The results show that the representation of Indonesian Muslim women displayed by ANNISA magazine is that they are fashionable, stylish, and pious. Another results also indicates that ANNISA magazine always offers beauty and fashion concept in every issue of the magazine. The three editions of this ANNISA magazine clearly show the phrase 'fashion and beaut’. In addition, ANNISA also uses English language more for the headline and sub headlines on the front cover of this magazine. It is as if to indicate that English language becomes a symbol of a person's intelligence. Furthermore, in terms of the models, those who appear on the front covers of ANNISA are Western looking women. They are very fashionable and stylish. They also have different skin color and posture compared to Indonesian women in general.

**Conclusion**

The development of Indonesian Muslim women's magazines nowadays has grown rapidly. Muslim women's magazine industry has begun competing to create concept, characteristics, and new fashion displayed in magazines. Every Muslim women's magazine features a Muslim woman wearing a modern hijab combined with stylish clothes. Moreover, most of the poses are also like International models’. The magazine presented for Muslim women has no significant difference with women's magazines in general. Each magazine has a definite women fashion section. It is the same thing that in the three editions of ANNISA magazine, fashion is always on the front cover of the magazine.

Fashion is always inseparable from women, as in the case of Muslim women's magazine. Muslim women's magazines are always offering new ideas and new concepts about fashion so that readers always want to know and try fashion trends booming today. It can be concluded that fashion is the most important thing for Muslim women because it is related to lifestyle. Muslim women compete to present themselves with veils and Islamic dresses with various modifications. As for the ANNISA magazine, the writer...
concludes that ANNISA magazine brings something different from Muslim women's magazines in general. In these three editions of ANNISA magazine, it is presented a woman model who has beautiful and Western face and tends to be fashionable. The use of the English language becomes the domination of headlines and sub headlines. In these three editions of ANNISA magazine, it can be seen that they use English to explain a headline.

From the explanation in this study, it is found that ANNISA magazine features representations of Muslim women who are fashionable, stylish, and up to date. Moreover, ANNISA magazine gives out western standard for the female models shown on all three front covers. Through a semiotic approach undertaken in this study, it is explained that the semiotic theory can be applied to read the meaning on the front cover of the magazine and read cultural phenomena in surrounding it.

Works Cited