

The Representation of Beauty in Indonesia vs. USA Dove Shampoo Advertisements; A Semiotic Study

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the representation of beauty in Indonesia and US Dove shampoo advertisements since Dove has made phenomenal breakthrough by portraying various women with different characteristics of beauty compared to the common concept of beauty. Semiotic theory is applied to analyze the data since semiotic is the appropriate theory to examine every verbal and non verbal signs contained in the advertisements. Barthes semiotic theory is the proper theory to decode the signs because it is the best theory to reveal the implicit meaning of text or visual culture product. Barthes' theory analyzes the text into three steps: linguistic messages, non coded iconic messages, and coded iconic messages. Qualitative method is applied in this study because this analysis needs an intense interpretation to perform a deep signification process. After completing the analysis, similarities and differences of beauty concept is found between US and Indonesia Dove shampoo advertisements. Dove US portrays beauty in various ways that covers all women with different skin colors, hair colors, hair styles, body sizes, and races. On the other hand, Dove Indonesia does not reveal a significant difference with the common beauty concept though it still opposes few common standards. Both Indonesia and United States advertisements invites readers to choose every style they prefer to have because Dove believes that all styles are beautiful.

Key words: beauty, coded iconic messages, linguistic messages, non coded iconic messages, semiotics, sign

Dove is one of the famous cosmetic brands in Indonesia produced by Unilever company. It has several beauty products such as soap and shampoo. Dove is an international company which has already spread in several countries. People can find numerous beauty products that work in the same business in Indonesia. Many participants join in the business, make these companies find ways to survive in the competition. One way is through advertisement.

Most of multinational organizations and companies have their company branch in several countries that drive them in making a multinational advertisement. Culture plays a quite important part in making a multinational advertisement. Different language, culture and custom could become the obstacles in creating a successful advertisement. Unilever, for example, tries to create a universal perception of the definition of beauty which is "white = beautiful" through its product, Ponds. Ponds supports this concept by inventing whitening products series. Ponds advertisements mean to make consumers belief that women need to have a white skin to be beautiful. However, multinational advertising could become a less effective way to perform because every country has its own culture and trend. Different culture and trend in different countries modify company's way to communicate with their consumers (Anindityasasti, <http://gmarcom.wordpress.com/2008/02/page/2/>).

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To gain people attention, an audiovisual advertisement applies certain attractive elements. Synnott (1993) believes that using famous actors and actresses with certain beauty quality could give a value-added to the advertisements (Vidyarini, 2007:18). In other word, Beauty interests people. Sumbo (2007) states that women are commonly exposed in advertisement for their beauty. Therefore, advertiser and company often use women's body in the advertisements. In fact, the visual image in the advertisements, that use women as its illustration, does not actually have any relation with the product it self, for example in the advertisements of: lubricating oil, cell phone, electronics, and other products. In most product advertisements, which actually have both target market of men and women, the advertiser prefer to choose woman than man as its model because women considered as having a more aesthetical value than men. Aesthetical value of women is exposed to attract consumer for buying the product which makes advertisement as a persuasion tool. However, advertising has developed its affect to consumers, not only to get consumers' attention to the product but also to build the brand's image. In beauty product advertisements, the advertiser show woman that represents the image of beauty according to the company's standard. The image of the products is represented by the model illustrated in the advertisements (Permana, www.mail-archieve.com/keluargasejahtera@yahoogroups.com/msg03016.html).

In 2006, Dove made a phenomenal breakthrough in beauty product world. Dove in US made an audition for women in several countries to participate in its campaign for "real beauty" and revealed them in the new Dove advertisements. What makes it different from other beauty products advertisement is that the chosen women do not reveal the common beauty concept (white, blonde, slim), in fact each of them presents different profile. Unlike other advertisements that use supermodels with their skinny body, white, and blonde, these women are different. Some of them are white and some are black, some of them are skinny and some are overweight, some of them are blonde and some of them are not. In one of Dove products, Dove pro-age, the advertiser creates an advertisement using a naked old lady to support "real beauty" campaign. Dove wants to redefine the concept of beauty in society and also to re-build the image of the brand since the previous beauty characteristic of Dove is the same with other products'. Dove proposes new image by campaigning for real beauty through its advertisements. This unique beauty concept brought by Dove in US becomes the focus of this study and to know the different profile of beauty in Western and Eastern countries, this study compares advertisements from US as the representative of Western countries and Indonesia as the representation of Eastern countries. The object is printed advertisements exists in US in 2006 because it was the place and time that the advertisements were firstly published and in Indonesia to represent Eastern countries because Unilever Indonesia becomes one of the "50 ASIA 2007 Top Performing Company" based on Businessweek version (Balfour, http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/07_38/b4050420.htm).

Unilever Indonesia is awarded to be the no.1 unilever company in Asia. The position of Unilever Indonesia in Asia might give a better influence as the research object than using Dove advertisements from other Asian countries. In order to acquire the beauty concept of Dove, all advertisements that use women as the model are chosen as the research object. Most of Dove shampoo advertisements in Indonesia are using women as the model unlike other products of Dove that use the product itself instead of human model in the display, therefore Dove shampoo is chosen as the research object. The main question is that how do Dove advertisements in US and Indonesia define the concept of beauty semiotically?

Advertising and Semiotics.

As mentioned in the previous chapter that advertisement becomes one of marketing steps to promote product both goods and services. Goddard (2002) in her book *The Language of Advertising* finds that advertising is not just a simple text; instead, the idea of advertising is more complex because it forces viewers to work in decoding the message and understand

different relationship that is transferred. Suyanto (2004) indicates that without advertisement, any kind of products will be hard to be distributed smoothly to distributor and even to the consumers, because products including its image, appearance, and price are reflected through advertisement. The advertiser's intended message about the product could also be communicated effectively both to build the product image and also the brand image. Since advertisement is an effective way to capture consumers' intention, then it should contain attractive message that presented in an attractive way.

Goddard (2002) claims that advertising text can sometimes refer to other text. Readers could understand the references if they have some knowledge about the textual system in the culture. The knowledge which refers to cultural knowledge is important since different culture may have different rules about how texts operate. If the advertiser does not calculate the cultural different, then it could bring the possibility of marketing failure.

Another important part of the advertisements than message presentation styles are tagline and color. Tagline becomes important to shape what the product is and what contribution of the product to the consumers is; for example, the tagline of Nokia-connecting people, Lux-play with beauty, and others. Other function of tagline is to make the product recognizable and has special distinctiveness (Goddard, 2002: 9). Color also considers as an important part to make the advertisements more interesting and eye-catching. Colors are picked to shape certain image of the product. For example, the use of white as the primary background color of a beauty product could reveal the image of purity.

Those styles, tagline and colors are communication styles that could give certain contribution on the meaning of the intended message of what product or services that being advertised and its quality over other similar products. All of the signs in the advertisement including the text, images, numbers, and colors are the language used to persuade consumers for buying the product. Thus, Harris (1989) beliefs that advertisers create a semiotic world to reveal the feeling of "rightness" to consumers for buying the product advertised.

Ferdinand de Saussure (1983) states that semiotic is a branch of science that studies the role of signs in social life. Semiotic is also defined as branch of science that investigates the nature of signs and the laws that govern them (in Chandler <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem01.html>). Eco (1979) defines semiotic as a discipline that relates to everything called signs and signs are everything that can be used to represent something else. This concept of semiotic is similar to semiotic definition by Charles Morris who states that something can be interpreted as a sign if it is becoming the sign of something by some interpreter. Eco's model of signs agrees with Peirce theory that identifies sign as something that means something to someone (in Simpkins, www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/srb/cyber/sim1.html).

Carter et al. (2001) explains that the origin idea of semiotic comes from Saussure who suggests that there are at least two types of signs which are iconic and symbolic. Iconic is type of signs that has the function of being direct picture of what it refers to (referent). Symbolic sign is not the picture of what it refers to but it is a picture of something that can be associated with the referent. Signs, both icon and symbol, refers to certain meaning; in advertisement, readers or viewers are expected to decode sign and understand the possible meaning of signs sent by the advertiser. Saussure also divides language into two components which are together produces the third component. The first component is 'signifier' and the second is 'signified', both components create 'sign' (Storey, 1996).

Human as the subject or individual in communication exchanges signs with other individual. Based on Saussurean semiotics, this process should follow the model of signifier and signified. A message is sent by the sender to the receiver through a set of codes (Piliang, 2003: 155) Eco believes that meaning could be understood from the combination of codes. Since the code could come from different cultural segments, a misunderstanding on author's intended meaning and reader's interpretation will appear (Piliang, 2003:168-169).

Barthes considers language as a sign system which reflects the assumptions of certain society in certain period (Sobur, 2006: 63). Barthes extends Saussure's semiotic theory by adding second level of signification or soon called as connotative. Barthes' concept of connotative meaning completes Saussure semiology which stops in denotative level (Sobur, 2006:69).

There are several articles in some journals that have similar topic about advertisement and semiotic. The first article is written by Grow (2006) entitled 'The First Ten Years of Nike Women's Advertising' in which she uses semiotic analysis to explore the evolution of the women's brand from its launch in 1990 through 2000, and includes twenty-seven print campaigns. In her study, she investigates the signifiers that reflect social and cultural experience of women. She believes that the advertisements produced has significant role in sifting the way female are represented in the media in United State.

A journal entitled "Images of women in tourism magazine advertising: A content analysis of advertising in "travel + leisure" magazine from 1969 to 1999" written by Bowen (2002) analyzes the portrayal of males and females as tourists using semiotic analysis. Her study reveals that American gender stereotypes are exposed in tourism magazine advertisement. She finds that heterosexual couples are dominated the advertisements. She also finds that female tourists are likely described in doing activities in beaches with swim suit than doing outdoor activities and sports. On the other hand, male tourists are likely illustrated in doing outdoor activities and sports. The advertisements are suggested to reveal tourist's value through familiarity and portray relaxation to motivate tourist in making vacation decision. McKeown (1998) in her study "Le Parfum de Washing Up: A Semiotic Analysis of Two Ads for Persil Liquid" states that advertisers already know who the target markets are and they use specific signs (image, highlighting, typography, focus, camera angle, etc) to build the image of the product by the means of connotative association to make their product as the desired one. Therefore, every advertisement carries many messages, although the advertisers have their intended messages but it leaves to the reader to interpret it and the interpretation is based on the reader or viewer's cultural codes.

In this article, the printed advertisement of Dove shampoo in Indonesia and US are being analyzed using semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes in order to find the different and similar representation of beauty in both countries. The data analyzed are collected from several advertisements taken from magazines published from January to December 2006 since this particular period is the first time when the phenomenon occurred. The data are analyzed to reveal the different representations of beauty appear in US and Indonesia Dove shampoo advertisements. Seven advertisements are chosen as the data which consists of three US published and four Indonesian published. The data is divided in two categories: US published and Indonesian published. The first data entitled Dove therapy taken from "People" April 24, 2006 vol. 65 No. 16. Second data entitled Dove advanced color care: 1 taken from "People" october 16, 2006 vol. 66 No. 16. Third data entitled Dove advanced color care: 2 taken from "People Extra" December 6, 2006 vol. 66 No. 23. The fourth data entitled Dove Wynne: 1 taken from "Kartini" No. 2159 16 February-2 March 2006. Fifth data entitled Dove Wynne: 2 taken from "Seventeen" April 2006. Sixth data entitled Dove Maia: 1 taken from Femina" No. 9/XXXIV 2-8 march 2006. The last data entitled Dove Maia: 2 taken from "Cita Cinta" No. 07/VII 5-19 April 2006. The data are being read to gather the information about the product and the intended message that are being transferred by the advertiser. The reading process focuses on the representations of beauty that exists in the advertisements. Semiotic analysis theory of Barthes is applied to reveal the representation of beauty.

Results and Discussion

All advertisements from both countries reveal the name and the logo of the brand, Dove, beside the web address. The web address in US ads is "campaign forreal beauty.com" and in Indonesia is "forrealbeauty-id.com". It is already stated in the analysis that the web address is applied to declare Dove's, as the brand advertised, mission to campaign for real beauty. In US advertisements, readers are given the freedom to choose styles that they want to perform to

their hair. It shows that Dove's real beauty is not represented by one particular style. Beautiful woman is those who dare to choose and be different as long as they are comfortable with their chosen style and appearance. In Indonesia, the advertiser gives readers freedom to choose hair style by giving two different concepts of beautiful hair in each advertisement.

Both advertisements also give general information about the product. However, each country performed different ways in giving the information. In US, the advertiser explains the specialty of Dove hair care product in a paragraph that contains the negative effect of specific hair treatment and how Dove could overcome the damage. While in Indonesia, the advertiser shows Dove's ability by conducting a quiz to make readers familiar with the products. Dove also presents the information through a testimonial of the models after they use the product.

The similarity of beauty concept that Dove presents in Indonesia and US is the freedom of choosing. Dove invites readers to choose several styles proposed by Dove. Dove represents beauty in various hair style and hair color. It does not need to be black or blonde; it could be brunette, burgundy, or even colorful. However, the difference occurs in the concept of beautiful skin. Dove US represents beauty through all skin color, black and white, while Dove Indonesia presents beautiful skin with flawless white skin only. Basically, Indonesian consumers are the fanatics of Western products because they want to look like westerners (Muhandaz, http://www.arthazone.com/feature_detail.php ://www.arthazone.com/feature_detail.php?aid=593).

Indonesian people normally have brown skin and black hair but they want to have white skin and colored hair like westerners. Dove completes Indonesian desire through its new advertisements by revealing women with white skin and colored hair.

On the other hand, freedom becomes one of American main cultural value. Through history, Americans believe that they have the freedom to choose. This cultural value is reflected through the competition of various brands and products (Wongkeban, <http://wongkeban.wordpress.com/2008/06/03/pengaruh-budaya-terhadap-perilaku-konsumen/>). To complete consumers' desire on choosing, Dove US offers various beauty characteristics so that consumers could choose appropriate style according to their preference. Various options of styles also complete American value of individualism. Self interest, self confidence, self esteem, and self fulfillment are the form of American individualism (Wongkeban, <http://wongkeban.wordpress.com/2008/06/03/pengaruh-budaya-terhadap-perilaku-konsumen/>).

Dove, through its advertisements, proposes various styles to complete American needs on individuality by presenting something unique. Different concept in US and Indonesia also occurs from the model chosen in the advertisement. Dove US advertisements use common and ordinary women to represent the real beauty, while Dove Indonesia uses famous and successful women in the advertisement.

Kaputra (2006) states that the culture of Indonesian is very paternalistic which means that the spreading of effect comes from top to bottom, thus Indonesian advertiser believes that the product could gain consumer awareness by using the attractiveness of public figures. They believe that public figures (top) could influence consumers' (bottom) thought. On the other hand, US advertiser uses ordinary women as the model in the US advertisements that could support the concept of beauty to say that all women are beautiful with their chosen style. The advertiser serves its message by using "slice of life" style which portrays people in normal circumstances (Suyanto, 2004), while Dove Indonesia creates "testimonial evidence" and creates "fantasy" toward the readers. Dove Indonesia invites women to be beautiful by being active and successful.

Conclusion

US advertisements give the power of choosing by written certain words and sentences in a question form. The advertiser offers readers to select their own style and be satisfied with it. The advertiser shows that being beautiful could simply be your own self or performs different and unique style as long as they feel comfortable. Dove invites women to be different because every woman carries different kinds of beauty. In order to gain reader's trust on Dove's ability in hair matter, Dove presents the linguistic messages of advertisement in didactic style. Dove positions itself as an expert by giving readers information about the effect that

might occur in every treatment. Dove intends to convince readers about its capability in order to make them follow Dove's standards of beauty. The advertiser selects certain words used in the advertisements to personify hair as if it is human. It shows that Dove tries to convince readers to treat their hair as well as they treat themselves and other people. This personification also applied in Indonesian advertisement version.

Dove US uses different women with different characteristics to become the image-identity of the product. The description of real beauty according to Dove does not only lay on one particular style which in Western countries is commonly described as a long straight blonde woman with a blue eyes, flawless white skin, and slim, but Dove also illustrates real beauty in a more various styles including straight hair and curly hair, burgundy hair color, brunette hair color, blonde hair color, black hair, light and dark hair color, slim and overweight, white skin and black skin, flawless skin and freckles skin, feminine style and masculine style (punk style), Mongoloid, Caucasian, and Negroid race. The use of various women from different races shows Dove intention to unite the diversity into one notion of beauty. It also describes that beautiful hair is healthy hair. Dove US uses ordinary women as its model to support the message that beauty is for everyone.

The Indonesian versions also perform the linguistic message in didactic style to acquire reader's trust on Dove capability so that readers follow its standards of beauty. Indonesian version gives readers freedom to choose different style by presenting the advertisements differently to the US versions. The advertiser presents the advertisement in testimonial evidence of a famous and beautiful people after they are using the product. The testimonial statement is intended to increase consumer's awareness of the product since Indonesian people tend to believe something after they seen the exact result and because Indonesian is considered as a paternalistic society that tend to believe the influence or information given from the public figures (the top). Various styles present in the advertisements signify that Dove does not refer to one particular style to describe beauty. It is the same with the US version which invites reader to choose one over several styles.

The concept of beauty according to Dove Indonesia could be black hair or colorful hair which opposes the common standard that only believes beautiful hair as black hair only. However, it still carries several common characteristic such as long straight hair, slim figure, and flawless white skin. One different characteristic is that the advertisement uses active and success women to represent real beauty. It contradicts the characteristic of femininity that expects women to be small, delicate, quite, and tentative (Eckert & McConnel, 2005:49). Physical strength is expected for men only. The use of a multi-talented woman and an athlete in the advertisements shows that Dove's characteristics of beauty carry the sense of masculinity.

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