

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In this era of globalization, advertising is an important component in introducing and marketing products to the public. Advertisements are usually found on television, radio, print media, and Online Social Networks (OSNs). This definition is further written by Firdaus (2018) who believes that the primary purpose of advertising is to persuade people to buy and use their products. Indirectly, advertising does not only offer products but also carries culture or image. According to Aprilia (2005), advertisement is “an agent of propaganda and lifestyle, and beauty is a part of popular culture therefore, advertising is called a work of art in the 20th century. This means that advertising can also deal with popular culture products that try to promote the beauty of someone. The products can be cosmetics such as beauty creams, lipstick or powder. It can also be hair products or even body lotions. All of which can support the beauty enhancement of someone.

One of the biggest enthusiasts for marketing popular culture products commercially is the Youtube platform. Wattenhofer & Zhu (2012) say that Youtube is an international platform, which functions as a liaison for interaction through the media. Youtube cooperates with Online Social Networks (OSNs) such as Twitter, Google+, and Facebook , where the viewers’ reach is more expansive and spreads quickly.

There are many types of products advertised on Youtube. One of them is a beauty product that is currently trending. According to Aprilia (2005), advertising has influenced society, and it has unconsciously brought in the cultural ideology of beauty. In Indonesian advertisements, beauty products often show a certain ideal beauty, where women are idolized to having a proportionate height, with white complexion, and a certain body shape criterion.

Especially for white complexion, a number of advertisements would mention that they have a formula for dark skin to be whiter. Unfortunately, the white skin propaganda is a subliminal message conveyed to the public, which then persuades the Indonesian people's subconscious that a society's assessment of beautiful women is white. This is a form of racism and social status, because, in most cases, advertisements are showing that white women are more beautiful than black women (Prasetyowicaksono, 2012, p150).

The opinion from Prasetyowicaksono above, however, is different from the beauty standard in America, where the trend is not to have white skin, but instead have a healthy tanned or glowing brown skin. In Vannini's article (2004), it is mentioned that Americans find having tanned skin increases their self-confidence, as well as making them sexy. As early as the 1920s, tanned skin began to connote upper-class taste and an affluent lifestyle (Vannini & McCright, 2004, p.310).

Vannini & McCright (2004), explain that in the early 18th century, Americans thought that tans were low class or laborers, but since the Coco Channel declared that tans are chic, then starting in 1929, girls competed for tanning. Thus,

many advertisements, especially for beauty in America, use advertising models that have sexy glowing and tanned skin. Whether someone has white or tanned skin to ascertain someone's beauty, it cannot be denied that the ideal female beauty is considered a valuable asset for the advertising industry.

Advertisers believe, the more beautiful the model, the more they will maximize their sales of advertised products. This is why female consumers who are generally easily influenced by advertisement products who want a beautiful face and complexion can be the target of advertising production. In this study the writer wants to discuss how a popular culture analysis of Vaseline hand body advertisements can enhance the healthy complexion of both Indonesian and USA women. In analysing the advertisements of Vaseline hand body products, the writer will use Roland Barthes semiotics which will not only touch on the textual and visual aspects of the advertisements but also the myth behind the advertisements.

In his book, *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes (1972) stated, the first level (first-level semiological system) is the language level (language). That first level contains signifiers and signified that form denotative or literal signs. The denotation sign becomes the second-level signifier. In other words, the denotation becomes a marker for the second-level system. The mythical signifier then proceeds with the myth signifier so that myth stands as a language at the second level.

In doing the research, the writer is influenced by a previous research by Firdaus (2018), who wrote about the meaning of beauty in advertising for Citra Sakura Fair UV image advertising. The research explains that in every scene, Citra

Sakura UV hand body is advertised use semiotics to find out the representation of beauty resulting from Citra Sakura UV advertisement.

Another researcher that used Roland Barthes' semiotics to analyse *Indonesia Cosmopolitan Magazine* is by Veronika Daflorensia Parera (2018) who wrote an undergraduate thesis about "The Visual and Textual Analysis of Makeup Advertisements in Indonesia *Cosmopolitan* November 2015 and 2016". She found among others that the *Indonesia Cosmopolitan* magazine from the November 2016 issue had 28 makeup advertisements, which showed that the most favorite color used by advertisers is white because it signifies cleanliness and purity. She found that whitening is essential in makeup; the most frequent makeup products are from the U.S followed by Korea, Japan, Indonesia, and France. She also found that the most used vocabularies were those that persuade consumers to the myth of cleanliness, sexiness, and trustworthiness.

This undergraduate thesis will analyse the signifier, signified and myths of advertisements, which are the products of Popular Culture, which are found in YouTube videos rather than from a magazine. Both Indonesia Vaseline hand body lotion and US Vaseline hand body lotion advertisements are important to be compared because the two countries build different beauty myths through their Vaseline hand body advertisements. This is why the title of this undergraduate thesis is "Applying Roland Barthes' Semiotics to Analyze the Indonesian and USA Vaseline Hand Body Lotion."

1.2 Field of the Study

This study is within the Cultural Studies' field of Popular Culture.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the beauty myth of Vaseline hand body lotion advertisements found on television commercials and are documented in YouTube.

1.4 Problem Formulation

1. What are the beauty signifiers and signified of Vaseline hand body advertisements?
2. What are the beauty myths found in Vaseline hand body advertisements?

1.5 Objective of the Study

Based on the problem above, this conducted to aim some following objective:

1. To find out signifiers and signified in the Vaseline hand body advertisements.
2. To find out the beauty myths of Vaseline hand body advertisements.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will help students, and readers to better know how to apply the semiotics theory of Roland Barthes' to find out the beauty myth behind Indonesian and USA Vaseline hand body lotion advertisements.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Popular Culture

According to Storey (1998) popular culture is also known as mass-culture. Using this definition popular culture is a culture that has been mass-created and produced. Once a mass product becomes popular and bought by the mass because of its cheap price, the product may no longer be produced anymore due to no more funding and also due to the fact that what was popular previously may be quickly dropped by a society.

1.7.2 Advertisement

Advertising is impersonal communication of information about products, services or ideas through various media, and it is usually persuasive by nature and paid by identified sponsors (Frolova, 2014). Advertising is one kind of media to introduce a product. Advertisements are usually found on television, radio, print media, and the social media that makes use of the internet.

1.7.3 Semiotics

Semiotics is a study about signs. In semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. Humans create signs that can be understood. Semiotic comes from the Greek word semeion, which means sign semiotics of the signs' knowledge (Pradopo, 1998). Pradopo (1998) continues to define that semiotics is a science that understands the world as something that contains signs and how to understand these signs.

In Ferdinand Saussure's concept there are two types of signs, it is the signifier and the signified. Signifiers can be in the form of sounds or letters called verbal signs. There are signs in the form of visuals that we can see such as art, forms, plants, buildings, and also signs in the form of movements such as dance, action, and films. Whereas, signified is the result of a communication process that uses language in the human mind. After Saussure, other semioticians that developed semiotics are Charles Sanders Peirce, Roland Barthes and many others.

1.7.4 Vaseline Product

According to www.Vaseline.com Robert Augustus Chesebrough is a chemist from England. He became interested in the results of oil drilling located in the Titusville area, Pennsylvania, which contained beneficial ingredients for the skin. Chesebrough's research was refined by five years of extraction techniques. Then in 1865, he found a formula from petroleum jelly which was then refined into wonder jelly as a result of the extraction and refining process. In 1872 Chesebrough registered the name wonder jelly as Vaseline which was taken from the Greek word for oil, oleon.

Vaseline products have been booming across the US with sales of more than 1,400 a day. US citizens use it as a skin remedy in cold weather so that their skin stays moisturised. As a result of the global use of products, finally in the 1900s Chesebrough moved its factory to Perth Amboy, New Jersey and opened factories in Europe, Africa and Canada. In 1955 Chesebrough manufacturing Co. decided to merge with Pond's Extract to become Chesebrough-Pond's, Inc. It does not stop there, in 1987 Chesebrough-Pond's Inc was purchased by Unilever as a

multinational company that houses many brands, so that Vaseline can develop its products with a variety of products such as moisturizers, lotions, and lip care and become internationally acknowledged.

1.7.5 Signifier

Signifier is thing that give a meaning such as word, image and facial expression. In the Saussurean tradition, the signifier is the form which a sign takes. For Saussure himself, in relation to linguistic signs, this meant a non-material form of the spoken word (Chandler, 2002).

1.7.6 Signified

Signified is the concept that signifier refers to. According to Chandler (2002), the signified of the two parts of the sign. Saussure's signified is the mental concept represented by the signifier. This does not exclude the reference of signs to physical objects in the world as well as to abstract concepts and fictional entities.

1.7.7 Myth

Myth is a culture that describes or understands aspects of reality. In Roland Barthes's concept with two levels of significance, according to him, myth is a coding of social meanings and values that are considered natural. According to Barthes (1972) Myth is a type of speech, since myth is a type of speech, everything can be myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse. Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message.