

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Background

2.1.1. Commodification and Sign-Value by Jean Baudrillard

In his ideas, Baudrillard focuses on exploring the possibility that consumption has become the very basic aspect of our social order or in the other words, consumption is the main power in structuring the social order and behavior within the order. Nowadays, consumption is not only a way to overcome the need, but also as a way to celebrate, for example people buy the fireworks to celebrate the new year eve or even Christmas eve and other things. According the example, people no longer purchase commodities because they are useful and can be traded again, but in the modern era, these kinds of activities are easy to find especially in the advertisement. Advertisements show us the meaning of being ‘this’ and to be ‘this’ you have to consume ‘that’. We are all attracted by the symbolic meanings that projected through the commodities offered to us. The projections are done through advertisements where every object is displayed as ‘individual item’ – every object has their own meanings that they have to be combined with other objects and create a network of signs that aimed to create desire (Baudrillard 30).

To explain this condition, Baudrillard proposes the concept of sign-value. As explained previously that sign-value refers to the social status a commodity confers

on its owner (Tyson 62) or it is the 'individuality' and 'difference' that attached on every object that displayed whether in advertisements or other media. This makes a commodity is no longer purchased for its utility and price, but also for its 'symbol'. For example, a girl buys ZARA's bag for her daily use, it is the use-value when she buy the bag to carry on her goods. The brand of ZARA's bag is the exchange-value because in reality, we know ZARA is one of prestigious brand with the expensive price. Then if she buys it because she wants people to think that she is wealthy, there goes the sign-value. The same process happens in other commodities. In other words, signs and meanings are inseparable; signs create meanings and to understand meanings we can begin with understanding signs. The connection between signs and meanings extends even further to things we use in our daily activities and our habits. Sign-value underlines differences and that is the root of identity construction just like previous example when a girl prefer using ZARA's bag rather than use EIGER or EXPORT's bag product, simply because she wants people to think that she is fashionable and wealthy women in the modern era, here the identity is constructed.

Baudrillard argues that sign-value has replaced both the use-value and exchange-value of commodities in contemporary culture. Here, it is argued, is a culture in which value is determined through the exchange of symbolic meanings rather than through usefulness. Thus a commodity is not an object with use-value but a commodity-sign (Barker 29).

To complete the use-value, exchange-value and sign-value, Baudrillard adds the concept of commodification. If commodity can be briefly defined as “something that is sold in order to make a profit” then commodification can be defined as a process that objects, whether it is physical either non-physical such as experience, can be traded as long as it is profitable (Allan 305). The process of commodification automatically initiates a further development, namely the transformation of commodities into culture. Anthropological functionalism theories look at goods as objects of use, which have a functional reason and are complemented by adding social value (Dunn 83). Again, while the social and hedonistic meanings of consumption are never completely separable, the desires and pleasures of self have become just as significant as the commodity’s social meanings (Dunn 111).

Culture also contributes to establishing the relationship among different goods. The process of consuming is just a simple routine of buying goods according to their purpose. On the other hand, consumption constitutes a significant component of culture as the latter expresses the social meaning of the good. According to Douglas and Isherwood, they recognize that goods can be regarded either from standpoint of their meanings or their functions (Slater 150) which means the sign-value and commodification also makes it possible to trade non-physical things, such as experience as in our lifestyle. Commodities can run out, but experience leaves memories and sensation, and that makes it valuable.

Baudrillard has been particularly important in this context, especially his theorization of the commodity-sign. He argued that “*the stage where the commodity is immediately produced as a sign, as sign value, and where signs (culture) are produced as commodities*” (Baudrillard 80). From the explanation, this study decided to use Jean Baudrillard’s sign-value and commodification because in the Earth Hour Indonesia advertisement, advertisement is displayed as something meaningful because while buying or use some products, people are told that they can also do ‘something’ to the environment and part of green community or lifestyle. This ‘something’ is the sign-value that attached into the advertisement as the main commodity advertised – the ‘doing something for the nature’ that offered in the advertisement is the ‘different’ that works as the unique selling point, as the writer has mentioned earlier in Baudrillard’s concept.

Since the object of this study is an advertisement, therefore Roland Barthes’ semiotics analysis is applied as the tool of analysis in order to find the myth of the image and afterwards, the myth or ideological level can be interpreted with Baudrillard’s idea.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1. Roland Barthes’s Semiotics

Barthes fundamental principle is to track down the “decorative display of what goes without saying” by adopting Saussure’s schema of “signifier/signified = sign and add it into second level of signification” (Storey 18).

In brief, Barthes' model can be explained in the diagram quoted from Johns and Gyimothi (Johns and Gyimothi 322)

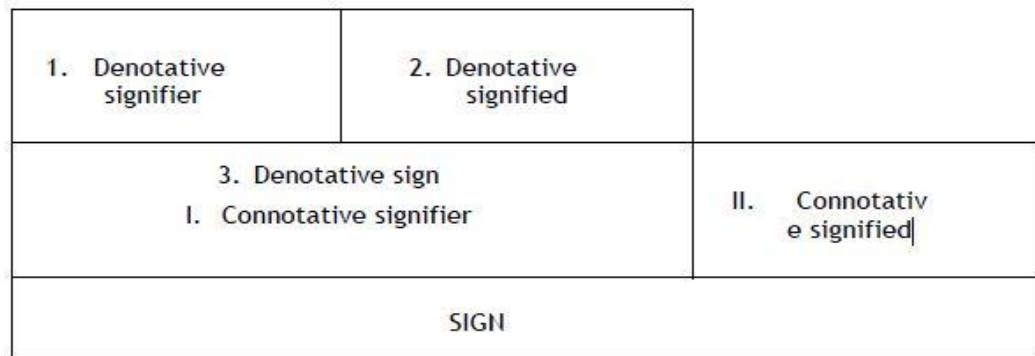


Figure 2.1. Roland Barthes' Semiotic

Barthes divided his approach into three levels of significations, which are the upper level is the denotative meaning, followed by connotative meaning and closed by myth (Barthes, quoted in Johns and Gyimothi 322). His methods basically consist of three big branches of signs; the first is linguistic message, coded iconic message and non-coded iconic message.

Linguistic message is essential because the caption helps the reader to "choose the correct level of perception" (Barthes 39), direct the focus, gaze and the understanding. Barthes believes that linguistic messages are not illustrated by the image, instead, "it is the text that amplifies the connotative potential of the image" (Storey 123).

Barthes splits the linguistic message into two items, anchorage and relay. Anchorage refers to the texts which "direct the readers through the signified of the

image” (Barthes 39), or in the other words, anchorage is the control which holds the responsibility of how the message signified by the readers. This responsibility is held together with its companion, relay. Relay is the additional text written to extend the power of anchorage, which Barthes refers as “images and texts stand in a complementary relationship” (Barthes 41). Another aspect is the non-coded iconic message which refers to the “visual message without any code”. The last one coded-iconic message refers to the “symbolic code” and it is called so because opposing the non-coded iconic message, this item consists of ideological aspects in our daily life (Crow 76). All of these items are analyzed in the mode of signifier-signified and broken down into denotative and connotative meanings. In the denotative level, or the first system, the expression of the signifier of the connotative level is produced – it is the surface level which needs to be interpreted into the connotative level. Later on in the connotative level where metaphors and other signs and values which socially constructed are taking their play, myth is produced (Barthes 89). Myth is the ideology level which reveals the “values and interests of the dominant groups in a society” (Storey 119). After the myth is revealed, then we can interpret the myth by using Baudrillard’s commodification.

2.3. Review of Related Studies

There have been a number of studies on semiotic analysis, but the writer took three examples of studies that have more similarity within this studies. The first thesis is about “The Commodification of Tourism in Taman Safari Prigen: A

Barthesian Semiotics Analysis of Taman Safari Prigen's Brochure" written by Vema Novitasari (2013). Her thesis discuss on how advertisement in Taman Safari brochure's commodifies tourism by offering an opportunity to be close, 'coming back and responsible to the nature and this memorable experience is only available for those who are able to afford the ticket with semiotic analysis. To sum up, Taman Safari Prigen's brochure offers a place where human interaction and relationship that established during the trip, education and reservation can happen in the same place. These activities are actually masking the actual value they are offering: a feeling that by visiting Taman Safari Prigen and doing those activities, the visitors feel like they have already done their responsibility to the nature. What makes interesting is the writer can find the absence through presence and vice versa. From why people are interested and should be interested in coming to nature-based theme park, we can trace that nowadays life is basically lack of connection to the nature world. The difference between the writer analyses is from the primary data, while she analyzed brochures of Taman Safari Prigen, the writer analyzed audio visual media which is advertisement video. The similarity in using semiotic is very useful in building the writer's analysis.

The second thesis is about "Commodification Culture: How can culture be economically used without selling it out?" by Natasha Pröschel (2012). Her thesis discuss on how culture nowadays can derived people to consume something in order to approve adapting culture. The study gave insights into the traditional as well as

modern aspects of culture. The process of commodification was generally perceived as positive. At the same time, customers seem to distinguish between the importance of culture in general and the authenticity of the product itself. The study also revealed that the application of responsible practices was necessary in order to combine culture and commodification successfully. The difference between the writer analysis is this from the object, she focuses in one clothes company which is ibonica that commodified fashion from traditional pattern of Maya embroidery from Yukatán and modern fashion aspects. This study has no relation within advertisement and also semiotic analysis. But, this study using commodification and related with cultural aspects. It is become the similarity of the study, because the writer also concern about commodification and also cultural aspects.

The third thesis is about “Analisis Semiotika Visual Model Perempuan Dalam Iklan Sabun Lux Pada Kampanye Iklan Print Ad Majalah Femina Tahun 2007” written by Fauzi Priambodo (2013). His thesis discuss on how women presence in Lux soap advertisements became major commodity and to analyze the connotation and denotation of meaning contained within the female body language contained in the Lux soap advertisement in a print advertising campaign in Femina magazine 2007 – 2011. The lux soap advertisement constructing a restriction or similar definitions of female skin, which has a white skin, clean, smooth, healthy and shiny. This image is further enhanced with the presence of advertising model is fitted, as if they are a woman who has an ideal skin. The difference between the

writer analyses is from the primary data which taken from magazine. But the similarity is from the analysis which is semiotic. The writer inspired to border his knowledge to any kinds of data which can be analyzed by using semiotic analysis.

Thus, the closest related study with the writer analysis is Vema's work. Vema analyzed the tourism brochures by using semiotic analysis in order to find the commodification which happens on the Taman Safari through their brochures. The writer will focus on how advertising in filler Earth Hour Indonesia 2013 shown the viewer some symbols of green lifestyle which are commodified into some product by using semiotic analysis by Roland Barthez.