

Orientalism in Semiotics of “Whiteness” in the Indonesian Context: An Analysis of Pond’s Advertisement

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the Pond's advertisement which in every scene always tries to show the beauty, luxury, feminine and elegant side of whiteness. This study discusses the Pond's version of the advertisement "Wajahmu Mengalihkan Duniaku". The concept of whiteness in the Pond's advertisement version of "Wajahmu Mengalihkan Duniaku" is a standard of female beauty that is depicted in many beauty product advertisements in Indonesia. This study used a qualitative method and a semiotic approach. The researchers find out what the influence of orientalism on the concept of whiteness advertising. The result of this research is to show by manufacturers of skin whitening products contained in the advertising promotion of Pond's "Wajahmu Mengalihkan Duniaku" slogan. Women are invited to whiten their skin to make them more beautiful and attractive (of the opposite sex). So the researchers conclude that the western concept of female beauty has colonized our society's thinking.

Keywords: Whiteness Concept, Semiotics, Orientalism, Pond's Advertisement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Most of Indonesian women are eager to have fair skin due to the influence of advertising as part of the colonial context, while whiteness is still a conventional symbol of cleanliness, purity, and civilization Prabasmoro (2003, p. 30). As stated by Prabasmoro (2003, p. 33) that the opposite of the symbol of whiteness is 'darkness' which contains the meaning of uncleanness, filth, ugliness, and uncivilized culture. This is in line with the orientalism theory which raises colonial discourses which greatly hegemony the Eastern world.

Therefore, the concept of whiteness as the values of "beauty" based on advertisement is an image that is forced from a beauty advertising and mention that whiteness is beauty. This is because whiteness is accepted by the Indonesian people as a result of colonial construction which is implanted as the norm in society.

Indonesian people who have dark skin crave a fair skin. The image of beauty in each region is also reduced to a representation that is limited to a few sides. It is commonplace that in television now days show that the main image of a beautiful woman must be whiteness, apart from being skinny, having long hair and so on. Moreover, Indonesians call their skin tan, it can be said that Indonesians fall into the mixed category then it becomes a problem because it is suspected

that the concept of "whiteness" is also carried out in beauty advertisements in Indonesia. So that, as mentioned before, the researcher assume that there is a racist value in the image of women because not all women who are gifted become whiteness.

Advertising has become a part of popular culture that creates beliefs, presents values, and even instills ideology. Interestingly, advertisements can also represent class, race, and the construction of views to instill a symbolic meaning that is still pervasive in society and it becomes a powerful tool for gaining new standards of value in everyday life.

Advertisements depict the ideal image of beautiful women so that indirectly television as an advertisement broadcaster becomes the party responsible for the fetishism of body culture. In this context, there is also a tendency to spread the image of beautiful women is whiteness. Whiteness has become a new culture resulting from the construction of the colonial view, namely orientalism. Orientalism places the Eastern world as an environment that does not know civilization, so it is necessary to civilize it by instilling western cultural values.

Of the hundreds of advertisements circulating in Indonesia, one of the phenomenal beauty advertisements is the Pond's advertisement. Pond's was first introduced in 1846, when pharmacist Theron T. Pond and he developed Pond's extracts, a product based on witch hazel. In 1914, Pond's role as a beauty innovator was developed with the discovery of Pond's Cold Cream, a product became a staple of women in the world. Since 1950, Pond's introduced the 'Beauty Plan in 7 days', it is a promise that Pond's to keep today.

Therefore, the researcher examined the Pond's advertisements which in every advertisement always try to show the beauty, luxury, feminine and elegant side of whiteness. In this case, the researcher discussed the Pond's version of the advertisement "Wajahmu Mengalihkan Duniaku" because there are elements of whiteness and blushing represented by the Pond's star model, thus making a famous young actor, Afgan Syah Reza.

Based on these reasons, the researcher formulated two the objectives of this research, 1) to find what kind of concept of whiteness that interpreted in Pond's cosmetic

advertisement "Wajahmu Mengalihkan Duniaku", and 2) to analyze the whiteness concept in Pond's cosmetic advertisement "Wajahmu Mengalihkan Duniaku" using semiotics theory.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper would review related literatures

Semiotics and Orientalism

A. *Semiotics*

The term semiotic comes from the Greek semeion which means "sign". Signs are defined as the basis of previously established social conventions which can be considered to represent something else (Eco, 1976, p. 16). Modern semiotics has two fathers, namely, Charles Sanders Pierce (1839-1914), and Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Pierce wanted to identify the basic particles of a sign and recombine all the components in a single structure. For Pierce a sign is "something that represents something".

Pierce distinguishes the types of signs into three, namely (1) icons, signs that contain "similarity" so that they are easily recognized by the speaker; (2) index, a sign that has a phenomenal or existential relationship between the representation and its object; and (3) symbols, types of signs that are arbitrary and conventional in accordance with the agreement of a number of people or the community. Furthermore, according to Wibowo (2011, p. 15) linguistic signs in general are symbols.

Meanwhile, Ferdinand de Saussure divides semiotics into two parts (dichotomies), namely (1) signified, seen as physical forms that can be recognized through the form of architectural works; and signs (signified), are seen as meanings that are revealed through the concepts, functions and values which contained in architectural works (Hoed, 2008, p. 3).

B. *Semiotics Roland Barthes*

Barthes uses the term semiology for semiotics. In his view, it is the science of form because it studies meaning separately from its content (Barthes, 2004, p. 156). Therefore, semiology should study how humanity interprets things. Meaning (to signify) in this case cannot be compared with communicating (to communicate).

Barthes' semiology refers to Saussure by investigating the relationship between the signifier and the signified in a sign. Like a linguistic sign, a semiological sign is also a combination of a signifier with a signified (for example the green at a traffic light which is an order to go), but the substance between the linguistic sign and the semiological sign is different. So it can be said that Barthes develops the distinction between signified and signifier dynamic direction. Barthes (2012, p. 33).

Barthes in Sobur (2009a, p. 127-128) uses the terms denotation and connotation to indicate the level of meaning. The denotative meaning is the first level objective meaning

that can be given to the symbol, which is directly related to the symbol with the reality or symptom shown. Then connotative meaning is the meaning that can be given to symbols by referring to cultural values namely the second level.

1. Signifier	2. Signified	
3. Denotatif Sign		
4. Connotative Signifier		5. Connotative Signified
6. Connotative Sign		

Figure 1. Roland Barthes . Sign Map

According to Bertens (in Sobur 2009a: 63), Roland Barthes is known as a structuralist thinker who is active in practicing Saussure's linguistic and semiological models. Barthes builds a second system called connotative, which in his *Mytologies* he clearly distinguishes from denotative or the first level system. Then Barthes created a map of how signs work (Cobley & Janzs, 1999).

From the Barthes map above, it can be seen that the denotative sign (3) consists of a signifier (1) and a signified (2), but at the same time, a denotative is also a connotative (4). In other words, it is a material element: only if it known the sign of the "lion" the connotations of self-respect, ferocity, and courage.

C. *Orientalism*

Orientalism was considered as a pure research model to find out the conditions, intricacies, and the nature of the Eastern world as a whole (Ratna, 2008, p. 27). Therefore, orientalism is considered as research related to the Eastern world. Said (in Ratna, 2008: 113) divides study orientation into three stages, namely as: a) academic studies; b) the pursuit of power; and c) creating self-image, as the center, by creating a latent dichotomy.

In his book Yang Said (1985, p. 1, 15, 125) defines orientalism as a way, method, even as a science, which is carried out systematically and created to understand the Eastern on the basis of Western understanding. Orientalism contains geopolitical awareness, West and East, which is applied both in aesthetic texts such as works of art and science (economics, sociology, history, philology, and so on).

Meanwhile, Sardar (2001, p. 109) defines orientalism as follows.

1. The classical tradition of studying an area by using the methods that exist in the area. Therefore, the area studied is in the eastern hemisphere, so it called oriental, while the people are called orientalist;
2. The style of thinking based on the ontological epistemological difference between East and West;
3. The attitude that is continuously sustainable in the East; and
4. Corporate institutions associated with the East, Western style to dominate the East.

In Said's Orientalist thought, the East is considered an integral

part of and material European culture because the East has helped define Europe (the West) as the images, ideas, personalities, and civilizations that contradict it. Orientalism as a way of understanding the East also expresses and presents this integral part as a form of discourse with institutions, language vocabulary, scholarly studies, symbols and doctrines that support it (Said, 1985, p. 2).

Orientalism is a form of Western hegemony over the East to form a world opinion of a rational, advanced, human, and superior Western dichotomy, while the East is considered to have the opposite identity, namely heretical, irrational, backward and inferior (Ratna, 2008, p. 34). . Then the abstraction and terrorization of the East are based more on classical texts (textual studies), while the development of society is not determined more precisely. The Eastern world is considered to be so sustainable (not) uniform and unable to define, and more importantly, it admits or doubts the validity of science that develops from religious texts.

Orientalism creates epistemological and ontological differences between East and West that perpetuate stereotypes in binary form: advanced < barbaric, developed < primitive, superior < inferior, superior < inferior and so on which in the end is a polarization of "self" and others".

The relationship between East and West is a relationship of power, dominance, a complex relationship of various degrees of hegemony (Said, 1985: 5). Timur is not just easted because it is found to be "Eastern" in all respects that are generally considered by the average to be easy to make Eastern. Orientalism is not an empty European fantasy about the East, but a deliberately created theory and practice.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research are 1) to find out Orientalism in Whiteness Concept in Semiotic Advertisement Pond's "Wajahmu Mengalihkan Duniaku", 2) examine the Pond's advertisement which in every scene always tries to show the beauty, luxury, feminine and elegant side of whiteness.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The researcher used Roland Barthes' semiotic theory and Orientalism by Edward Said by using qualitative method. Bogdan and Taylor (1982, p. 5) state that qualitative methodology is a research procedure description of data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. This approach is directed at the background and the individual holistically (whole).

Moleong (2007:6) also states that qualitative research aims to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by research subjects, for example through behavior, perception, motivation, and action. It described in full descriptively in the form of words and language, in a special context that is scientific and utilizes various natural methods.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the Ponds advertisement "*Wajahmu Mengalihkan Duniaku*" tells that Afgan Syahreza is attracted to beautiful girl. It is accompanied by a song sung by Afgan with the same title as the advertisement's tagline, and there is no accompaniment dialogue and it is divided into three scenes or events, namely meeting, search, and reunion. All the signs of the advertisement are (1) Afghan interest in beautiful girl who has fair skin, (2) whiteness and (3) Afghan attempts to find the girl.

While the advertisement markers are (1) the concept of men's view that the whiteness woman is beautiful, (2) the desire of Indonesian women to be whiteness, (3) the concept of our society's view that men must pursue the woman. In the second stage of Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis examines the denotation and connotation of Ponds advertisements on a connotative level, the advertisement depicts a successful man who is attracted to a whiteness girl and he tries to pursue and find her until he meets an unexpected encounter. Meanwhile, at the connotation level, the advertisement makes it clear that fair skin is the beauty desired by the Indonesian people, both men and women.

In the advertisement of Pond's version of 'Wajahmu Mengalihkan Duniaku', shows that there are various sign. The first sign is the figure of Afgan who is looking at a whiteness girl who passes in front of his cafe. Afgan admires to the beautiful women as described by the figure of Kiki who has glowing whiteness skin. As seen from the situation above, there is a gap that commodities beauty as something that can be achieved through beauty soaps that bridges the gap. The act of gazing suggests that is required to become (like) a star. The effort itself is a recurring theme in hybridity and passing.



Figure 2: Afghan is looking at the girl whiteness skin

The second sign is Afghan's pursuit of whiteness girls. It is a form of hegemony that is emphasized on the cultural (ideological) aspect, that whiteness is an absolute symbol of beauty that must be owned. Because fair skin is more acceptable than other skin types, it is related to the existence of a body concept that is considered universally, and then becomes the benchmark for other body concepts. In this case, the normalized whiteness type becomes a universally preferred body concept, in constructing a woman's self-identity construction. Afgan, who represents Indonesian men in this advertisement, openly states that he accepts, admires, and even seeks whiteness women. In other words, the whiteness concept has been agreed upon as a body concept that is accepted and even admired by the Indonesian people.



Figure 3: Afghan is chasing a girl

The third sign, namely the black and white as a symbol and conventional meaning, which is often expressed, about race and sexuality. The black and white dichotomy in this advertisement refers to whiteness as a symbol (racial and sexual), namely purity, cleanliness, beauty and civilized culture.



Figure 4: whiteness girl

The analysis of these advertisements leads us to the fact that the function of soap has expanded far beyond cosmetics, which in this case is to cleanse the skin (literally). Because the beauty of a woman is not enough just to have clean skin but also whiteness, smooth, soft and absolutely perfect skin.

The concept of whiteness carried in this advertisement is associated with Indonesian culture cause new problems. This is because the concept of whiteness is actually created by the West to hegemony the 'black' people, while Indonesia itself is 'not white' position. Indonesians prefer to tan rather than 'black'. The fact that Indonesian culture and physically neither white nor black is more appropriate.

The following are some images and phrases/slogans that support the denotation and connotation of this advertisement:



Figure 5: The women standing under the sun

Based on picture 5, a girl stands under the sun and gives the impression that after this situation, her skin will look dull and dark, and it shows that after it happens there must be an effort to take care of it so it looks brighter.



Figure 6: Women wash her face with Ponds product

As seen in the picture above (figure 6), show that the effort to

take care of the girl's skin is by washing her face with Ponds face wash, so it looks brighter like the dreams of most women in Indonesia. It causes the impression that when women use this face wash product, it makes skin brighter and this effectively used. As mention before about beauty standard in Indonesia is to have whiteness skin.



Figure 7: Happy woman with fair skin

After using Ponds face wash, in image 7, the girl looks very happy with her bright skin. This indicates that when a girl has whiteness skin, it automatically creates happiness and makes their day more cheerful.

As the slogan in this advertisement, "Halo hari cerah, bye bye kulit kusam", indicates that a bright day is determined by bright skin. The denotation of this slogan is very visible, to say goodbye to dull skin and welcome a bright day. While the connotation of the slogan explains that to create a bright day, the skin must be bright and will bring happiness throughout the day. Orientalism in this slogan makes people think that besides being beautiful, whiteness also promises a happy day. This Ponds product advertisement really prioritizes whiteness and it intended for someone who wants fair skin, so that it gives the impression to the audience to apply this product, especially for women because this product is very good benefits.

The Effect of Orientalism on the Ponds Advertisement "Wajahmu Mengalihkan Duniaku"

The rise of skin whitening products in the Asian market especially in Indonesia, it found that the discourse carried by cosmetic advertisements is more directed at the idealization of fair skin as a symbol of female beauty. According to Prabasmoro (2003, p. 30) whiteness is a symbol of cleanliness, the main beauty of women, purity, innocence, smoothness, and purity.

Whiteness cannot be separated from the historical context in the past. Indonesia were former colonies of white nations, the advertisements for skin whitening products construct women as creatures who must always be 'pure' and 'pure'. Here, women's beauty is closely related to traits that symbolize innocence, cleanliness, and flawlessness. So, the construction that was built was how to conceptualize 'normal women' as 'good' women.

Regarding the race issue, the white race is still considered the highest and best race in the existing skin color hierarchy. Thus, the desire to get whiteness skin can be interpreted as a

desire to be closer to the most perfect race. It seems that the advertisement for skin whitening products is aimed at dark skin consumers.

In cosmetic advertising, consumers are actually invited to identify themselves with darker skin as a symbol of ugliness and incivility. Invitations from skin whitening advertisements that tries to persuade female consumers to whiten their skin to be synonymous with chastity and chastity, in other words being a good woman in accordance with the colonial image.

Interestingly, how the construction of chastity, purity, and goodness is associated with whiteness. Based on Barthes' concept of myth which is a new sign of secondary signification, then the myth raised is the myth of whiteness as a superior race.

This myth theory, seems to be inseparable from the historical aspect. Colonialism in the past by white people seems to be one of the factors driving the emergence of this myth. Nations other than white people are conceptualized as other or 'the other' who are in all respects opposite and inferior to white people.

Likewise, issues of race and sexuality are often found in Said in Orientalism. As noted by Loomba (1998); Ratna (2008), colonialism has contributed to the construction of local/indigenous women's sexuality as the antithesis of whiteness women's sexuality.

This image is used by manufacturers of skin whitening products contained in the advertising promotion of Pond's "Wajahmu Mengalihkan Duniaku". Women are invited to whiten their skin to make them more beautiful and attractive of the opposite sex.

In soap and cosmetics advertisements to have whiteness means to go beyond natural/scientific boundaries and taking into account the colonial nostalgia in the advertising image of Pond's soap, the desire and even the obsession with whiteness can both manifest and reinforce the colonial idea that white are the superior race. Whiteness product advertisements can be interpreted as a way to overcome trauma by placing the Indonesian looks as an object, as a whiteness of the colonized version.

Thus, it can be interpreted that investment in whiteness becomes fuel not only for capitalism and imperial consumerism, but also for identity construction, including body image, beauty, femininity, sexuality, and class.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of whiteness concept in the advertisement of Pond's version of "Wajahmu Mengalihkan Duniaku", using Roland Barthes' semiotics and Edward Said's orientalism discourse, the researcher conclude that the concept of whiteness in the beauty of Indonesian women in Pond's advertisements is interpreted as civilized, cultured, and universal in Indonesian cultural localities. The fantasy soap has the power to treat the skin from dark to whiteness.

Moreover, the representation of whiteness creates not only a desire or need to be physically to be whiteness, but also to be civilized and cultured. Meanwhile, universality is shown through an equated body image, namely whiteness. The universality of the whiteness not only arises from or is produced by a desire for physical or natural transformation, but it arises and is produced by a desire for cultural or cultural transformation, the white symbol depicted is interpreted as superior, acceptable, acceptable, beauty, and femininity.

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