

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays it is easy to find popular magazine that is dedicated for female – young and mature women – with a look of “lux” and “modern” which price is not exactly cheap. This condition certainly gives an indication of the magnitude of the market opportunity that is still available to use magazine to advertise or promote some company products by involving women as model participants in their advertisements. More and more magazines from “outside” published in the Indonesian edition, such as *Cosmopolitan*, raise the theme of modern women’s lifestyle. The discussion on the lifestyle in women magazine would indirectly affect the lifestyle of its readers. As one of the agents of socialization that plays an important role in society, the message delivered by the advertisements in the popular magazine, either expressed or implied, will shape the perception and mindset of the readers. In this context, women magazines through the advertisements will be able to form the image of women that are considered “ideal” in society as modern cultural phenomena.

As it empowers some big companies to specifically set their sights on young women for promoting their products through advertising, this makes the advertisements has been able to dictate what women should look like, what is sexy and desired which unconsciously causes the consumer continues to blindly consume without taking a good look at what is being sold and what messages are being sent.

Such indications of phenomena become the reason of this study as the reality of such phenomena can be found in our life. Consequently, for decades advertisers have

come up with an “ideal” for the perfect woman. It is supported and proven by a research performed by Kilbourne (2000) that the “ideal woman” represents what five percent of women look like, yet this body type represents 98% percent of the women seen in the media. As an illustration, media reconstruct beautiful woman as of woman who has fair skin and slender body through cosmetic and diet products. For those who do not meet these criteria are not pretty, and to them supplied the product that can make their skin white and body slim. In fact, the skin color pigment formed due to the gene factor that cannot be eliminated that she rightly carries. In addition to such subjects, female bodies are still used as sexual objects in advertisements of magazines. This can be seen from various advertisements that use sexy bodied female models through clothing, perfume, jewelry accessories, etc. Not only does advertising send these messages, according to Kilborne (2000) advertisers also glorify and perpetuate stereotypes and make ideals out of images of models with vacant expressions and wasted bodies. The advertisers create a concept of image that conformed to a product that woman carries out. For examples, product of foods and drinks that portrays woman as a loving and caring figure, product of beauty cosmetics and fashion which portray the beauty of woman’s physical appearance which sexy and desirable for men, and so on. Thus, it generates different views of ideal images of female.

The ideal images of Indonesian females are adhered to patriarchal culture that demands female in family sphere and also the social roles that necessitate them only in work fields suitable with their womanhood natures of maternity, tenderness, and uncompetitive. In other words, good female are those cling to domestic sphere that must be responsible for household matters even if they work. However, such representations are scarcely found or slightly omitted in most of women magazine contents, for example the advertisements on women magazine like *Cosmopolitan* in Indonesian edition. It has

been known pervasively that Cosmopolitan is a commercial female dedicated magazine that provides worldly issues of modern lifestyle for modern-minded women ranges from beauty and physical appearance, sex, celebrity, fashion, and career. The issues are somehow also obviously portrayed in advertisements inside of it. Although women are depicted as modern with high class fashion and smart looks, they mostly appear in “ideal” physical appearance that do not represent the average looks of women and also very revealing yet provocative dress. Consequently, what can be seen in the magazine is there are representations of women as perfect creature with the “ideal” body shape, being sexual object and having sexual appeal under the name of modern life even though it doesn’t match to Indonesian culture.

As the reality problems related to this study explained above, it is expected that young women, especially Indonesian ones, should be more aware and smart in understanding and evaluating any advertisements that promotes some products shoved to them in order to not be psychologically influenced which could impact their dignity as a woman. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to examine women’s representation in Cosmopolitan magazine advertisements and how they portray the culturally gendered stereotypes. In other words, this research focuses on the social construction and cultural representation of young women who are in control of their sexuality through language and image. That’s because advertisements do not only contain with visual codes which culturally has potential meaning (based on facial expression, gesture, way of dress, and the choice of color) but words as well which linguistically has particular aim or interest to influence the viewers.

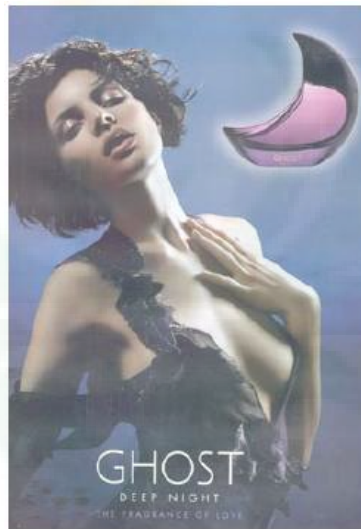
Images can mainly function to persuade, while words then become only informative supplement (Macario and Boyte, 2008). It means that images are able to express information much faster as the message is visual and understandable. However

the amount of information contained in images is limited, above that it is impossible to transform certain words or sentences into images. Thus, images are used to capture consumers' attention whereas words are used to convince them. In the other hand, when language is used in terms of social context, the language itself is ideologically and subjectively driven based on particular interest through some linguistic aspects such as passivization, nominalization, lexicalization, emotional adjectives, rhetorical questions, and even negation in which they must have certain meaning.

To conduct such purpose, an in-depth research by combining textual and semiotic analysis will be employed to explore females' representation in advertisements of cosmopolitan magazine as they are tightly and socioculturally pertinent to women's representation. As advertisements contain many signs and sometimes symbols, semiotic approach is suitable to interpret the advertisements in a broad way in order to obtain the hidden meanings within the advertisements. Thus, advertisements are message systems designed to organize perceptions and create structures of meaning (Williamson, 1997: 12).

To make it clear, a data example is provided here through the application of semiotic and linguistic aspects which can be observed in this perfume advertisement taken from a page of Cosmopolitan magazine which suggesting sexuality. From the visual or nonverbal aspect in the image, the model is being less dressed that makes her breasts as the center of attention and exposed in an attractive position with a seductive sexual look and invitingly opened lips, also the dark blue night color of atmosphere. Semiotically, they must mean something! The perfume advertisement is in general presented with the product and the model picture; while from the use of language or words, the brand name *Ghost* with the verbal text *Deep Night* and the slogan *The Fragrance of Love* describes the product status or quality. Linguistically, there's a hidden

message about the advertisement if textual analysis is conducted. The model's suggestive sexual position is stronger than words themselves. Based on the deep semiotic and linguistic investigation, it can be proposed that she was engaged in taking off her lingerie as if she was ready to give pleasure before sleep. Therefore, this image is exaggerated and provocative in the Indonesian context where the majority of people are Muslims in which the woman's private part of the body that should be covered is exposed in public.



Picture 1. Woman as sexual object in a perfume ad

Mainstream and liberal women's magazine like Cosmopolitan boost millions of subscribers every year and each of these magazines are packed with messages that women need to "improve" themselves as "modernly sexy" as possible. This is an important study because as these messages become more and more prevalent, young women are becoming affected by these messages. Only through awareness of what these messages are truly saying and symbolizing can the consumer understand what they are being sold and it is rarely merely a product.

1.2 Problems of the Study

- 1) How are women represented verbally and visually in the advertisements of Cosmopolitan magazine?

- 2) What myth or ideology is semiotically implied in the advertisements of Cosmopolitan magazine?
- 3) What are stereotypical representations of women which appear in the advertisements of Cosmopolitan magazine?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- 1) To describe how women are represented in the advertisements of Cosmopolitan magazine through verbal (linguistic) and visual (semiotic) aspects
- 2) To discover and reveal the myth or ideology in the advertisements of Cosmopolitan magazine from the perspective of semiotic.
- 3) To find out the stereotypical representations of women in the advertisements of Cosmopolitan magazine.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study involves both linguistic and semiotic aspects. The linguistic features covers lexical, semantic, syntactic, and cohesion; while semiotic features cover visual aspects such as appearance, gesture, facial expressions, color and environment settings. They help the researcher to figure out the current society's dominant ideology about women attributes and behavior that are valued most in our society.

The samples that will be used as data consist of 12 advertisements that use woman as model participant from *Cosmopolitan* magazine in the edition of January 2016. The rationale for choosing the magazine is that it is a popular franchise magazine from USA that is published as Indonesian version. In addition, the chosen January 2016 edition can be considered as representative of the previous and coming editions as it is the beginning edition in the present year 2016, besides, the price of the magazine is quite expensive, let

alone the original version, American one, so this makes the writer cannot get the latest edition to analyze due to her financial and time limit.

The image of *Cosmopolitan* as a magazine for young independent women is very strong. Thereby, it will be worth-observing the women stereotypes either in general or specific.

1.5 Significances of the Study

This study is expected to be useful theoretically and practically in some respects as follows:

- 1) Theoretically, this study will be additional resources in learning studies about advertisement from the perspective of semiotics and linguistics, especially for students who want to observe hidden strategies and message in print advertisements as it is known that every print advertisement has particular concept.
- 2) Practically, this study is expected to be useful resources for other researchers who are interested in analysing meanings such as ideological and cultural values that strategically hidden in advertising discourse that is printed advertisement, as we know that every kind of printed advertisements has particular concept.