

Women's Stereotypes in Indonesian and Korean Pocari Sweat 2018 Ads

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ABSTRACT: This study analyzes the visualization of gender stereotypes in Indonesian and Korean Pocari Sweat advertisements 2018 using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The research aims to compare and interpret how gender roles are portrayed in these advertisements, reflecting the cultural contexts of Indonesia and Korea. A qualitative method was applied, utilizing Barthes' semiotic analysis to examine the primary data—images extracted from the advertisements. Secondary data, including literature reviews and relevant studies, provided additional context. The data collection process involved selecting advertisements, segmenting visual elements, and analyzing their meanings based on denotation and connotation. Findings indicate that Indonesian Pocari Sweat advertisements reinforce patriarchal values by depicting women in supportive roles, often serving men. In contrast, Korean advertisements promote a feminist perspective, showcasing women engaging in physically demanding activities, challenging traditional gender norms. These differences highlight the cultural disparities in gender perceptions between the two countries. The study concludes that advertising serves as a medium that reflects and perpetuates societal gender norms. Indonesian advertisements maintain traditional gender roles, while Korean advertisements align with progressive feminist movements. This research underscores the role of media in shaping public perceptions of gender and contributes to discussions on gender representation in advertising.

Keywords: Advertisement, Gender Visual, Pocari Sweat, Rolland Barthes, Semiotics.



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia was selected as a host of the Asian Games in 2018 for the second time since the first was in 1962. It is a sports mega event. Through its promotion, Indonesia benefits economically and non-economically (Prasetyo et al., 2021a). Pocari Sweat is one popular isotonic drink product that takes part in supporting and promoting the event (Gewati, 2018). It collaborates with ASEAN

GAMES 2018 to increase engagement. Both events and products have the same target for sports enthusiasts. So, Advertising is the marketing method used to promote these products and events.

Generally, advertisements will convey information about the goods offered. However, in semiotics, advertising has a role in capturing old or new cultural meanings and infiltrating them into consumer products where they are accessible to consumers. McCracken (McCracken, 1986) revealed that advertising helps capture cultural meaning and invest it in consumer goods that are accessible to consumers. Abokhoza et.al (Abokhoza, Mohamed, & Narula, 2019) Also conveys that the content and picture of the advertisement reflect social values that shape cultural norms and introduce diverse cultures. So, Advertisement has a role in capturing old or new cultural meanings.

Pocari Sweats advertisements 2018 contained representations of sports culture in Indonesia with specific gender hegemony. Since Pocari Sweat is an isotonic drink sold in almost all ASEAN countries, we decided to compare Pocari Sweat advertisements with those in Asian countries, South Korea. Both Indonesia and South Korea were struggling to solve the problem of gender inequality. However, advertisements could serve different gender visualisations of each country. As a comparison, we also analyse Pocari Sweat advertisements from Korea in the same year. We chose Korea as the country with the second largest consumer in Asia after Japan. In addition, Korea showed advertisements representing one gender to fight the stigma against one gender and intensively promoted gender equality this year. They have started to show some feminist movements by removing the boundaries between women's and men's roles. For example, the 4B trend, which gain popularity in South Korea, to protest against misogyny, gender discrimination and violence against women (Rosenblatt & Tolentino, 2024). Men and women have the same position and roles, whereas women can freely express themselves to be what they want and even do extreme activities that men usually can only do. In contrast to the role of women in Korea, as a developed country, women in Indonesia have a limited role in doing things. Through the visuals shown in these advertisements, we can compare the stereotyped gender differences in Indonesia and Korea.

In previous research, Wijayanto and Iswari (Wijayanto & Iswari, 2021) Used a mythical semiotic theory by Roland Barthes to the Pocari Sweat advertisement "Sweat for Dream", which the result shows that its ads successfully convinced consumers that Pocari Sweat is used to replace their lost body fluids since the myths have been implanted in consumers' brains when they see and hear Pocari Sweat ads. In Hakim & Monalisa (Hakim & Monalisa, 2022) They also use Roland Barthes's concept of semiotics for the Pocari Sweat Ramadhan 1442 H edition. The result shows that the advertisement intends to promote the product through messages that the Pocari Sweat product is very useful for fasting people. The last is by Adhirahma. (Adhirahma, 2021) Who used Roland Barthes's semiotic concept to analyse the Gudang Garam Cigarette Advertisement. The results indicate that Indonesian culture is represented by four cultural categorisations: traditional clothing, livelihood systems, language, and art.

The researcher used Roland Barthes' semiotic concept to analyze differences to convey the meaning of the gender visualization shown in Indonesian and Korean Pocari Sweat advertisements. Semiotics is a branch of science related to the meaning of signs formed from visual or physical capture by the human senses. Ferdinand de Saussure determined the first semiotic

concept. (Saussure, 1959). He defined signs as entities that consist of physical objects such as gestures, letters, postures, etc. They characterise the signifiers and the pictures or notions to which the signifiers indicate the signified. He used the term “semiology” to refer to the science of signs, which Barthes developed. (Barthes, 1988), which states that semiology studies how humanity interprets an object. He developed the theory of significant signifiers into two levels, the Denotation sign level results in an explicit meaning, while the connotation sign level results in an implicit meaning.

Based on this background, researchers are interested in analysing the visual appearance of Pocari Sweat advertisements in Indonesia and Korea in 2018. This research uses Roland Barthes's semiotic concept to analyze the signs in Indonesian and Korean Pocari Sweat advertisements. It reveals the meaning of the gender visualisation displayed in both advertisements.

Semiotics

Semiotics is a branch of science about systems, rules, and conventions that make it possible to have meaning from a sign that appears. The semiotic tradition includes the main theory of how signs can represent objects, ideas, situations, circumstances, and feelings that are out of control in terms of semiotics related to the sign meaning formed from visual or physical capture by the human senses. By studying semiotics, someone can catch a message implied in a sign.

The theory of semiotics was first introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, in his book *A Course in General Linguistics* (Saussure, 1959). He relates a science that studies signs in society. The dichotomy concepts in the study of semiotics by Saussure are divided into two parts (Saussure, 1959):

1. Signifiers are things our minds capture, such as sound and visual images.
2. Signified is the meaning or impression from our thinking of what we catch in the signifier.

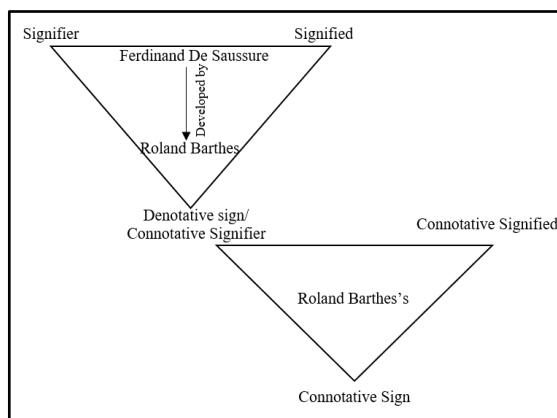
Roland Barthes also mentions the concept of semiotics graphically. He developed the idea of semiotic thought by *Ferdinand de Soccer* and applied it to his research on cultural phenomena and literary works. Barthes (Barthes, 1988) states that semiology studies how humanity interprets an object. Meaning is limited to conveying information and constitutes a structured system of signs (Barthes, 1988). Barthes uses the theory of *significant signifies* developed into two levels (Saussure, 1959):

1. **Denotation** is the sign level that explains the relationship between the signifier and the signified in reality, resulting in an explicit meaning.
2. **Connotation** is the level of signification that explains the relationship between the signifier and the map with an implicit meaning.

This study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to analyze the differences in the meaning of Pocari Sweat advertisements released in Korea and Indonesia in 2018. This research uses Roland Barthes's thought because his theoretical concept is more critical than that of other semiotic thinkers.

Barthes and Saussure believe there is a relationship between *signifiers*—*signifiers formed non-naturally*. However, *Saussure put more emphasis on denotative marking, while Roland Barthes perfected the content of sausages' semiology by developing connotative marking and mythical aspects that marked society*.

Picture 1: Development Semiology Concept by Roland Barthes (Source: Aidatul Fitriyah)



METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method that uses semiotic Analysis by Roland Barthes to analyze signs in Pocari Sweat advertisements in Indonesian and Korean. According to (Sugiyono, 2013) A qualitative method is a research method used to examine a natural object condition, where the results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. We use a qualitative method because the data from the research will later relate to the interpretation of the data found. This interpretation is of the meaning of visual gender in Indonesian advertisements and Korean advertisements.


Researchers used two types of data sources: Primary data was obtained by breaking down Indonesian and Korean Pocari Sweat advertisements into several corpus in images, while secondary data was literature reviews of some journals, books, and research gaps that contain theory to support our analysis. This data collection through various stages: 1) determine products that have a unique side and gender display comparisons from different countries, and we choose Pocari Sweat ads considering that this product is marketed in almost all ASIAN countries; 2) Watching Pocari Sweat ads listed on the official YouTube channels from Korea and Indonesia; 3) Taking several samples from Pocari Sweat ad displays that have gender meanings; 4) Advertising analysis uses the theoretical concepts of Roland Barthes; and 5) interpret the meaning or the message conveyed by the visual images of the model figure activity and the product.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Through Roland Barthes' concept's semiotic analysis approach, the researcher found that the cultural differences between Indonesia and Korea are reflected in the visuals of the Pocari Sweat 2018 advertisement. Korean and Indonesian advertisements show differences in stereotypes between women in Indonesia and Korea.


Patriarchal Cultural Representation in Indonesian Pocari Sweat Ads

Table 1. Scene of Indonesian and Korean Pocari Sweat

Signifier	
Signified	Handing over Pocari products from women's hands to men's hands
Denotative Sign / Connotative Signifier	A woman hands a bottle of Pocari Sweat to a man, with the woman's hand on the left and the man's hand on the right.
Connotative Signified	In this scene, there is a touch between feminine and masculine hands on the Pocari sweat products
Connotative Sign	In this scene, Pocari Sweat products declare that they are suitable for consumption by all levels of society and are not limited to or tend to only one type of gender.

The scene above presents a visual of women serving men's drinks. Indirectly emphasizing that men need a woman's helping hand to meet their daily needs. This is also clarified by the position of the woman's hand on the left and the man's hand on the right as if emphasizing that women have an important role. Although women play an important role in meeting the needs of men, the position of women in this advertisement is not superior to men. This is evident in the position of women's hands lower than men, so men are still considered more powerful.

Table 2. Scene of Indonesian and Korean Pocari Sweat

Signifier	
Signified	A sweaty man drinks Pocari Sweat quickly, closing his eyes and facing upwards and a tired-looking woman drinks Pocari Sweat elegantly
Denotative Sign / Connotative Signifier	Both men and women enjoy every sip of Pocari Sweat after he has done activities that produce a lot of Sweat.
Connotative Signified	Men and women consumed the same drink after outdoor activity. However, in this ads both men and women are depicted with different ways of drinking and body gestures

Connotative Sign	This advertisement displays the male gender with a physical appearance representing masculine men, such as a firm jawline and muscular arms. The sweat dripping down his face adds to the actor's exotic impression. Meanwhile, a woman with a physical appearance that represents a feminine woman, such as having long hair tied back high and soft facial gestures.
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The table above presents people of different genders drinking Pocari Sweat. As if to convey that Pocari is an isotonic beverage product that both men and women can consume. This scene is also dominated by blue as the background. According to Stone & Adams (Stone & Adams, 2017), blue is identified with knowledge, coolness, peace, masculinity, contemplation, loyalty, justice, and intelligence. This follows the background of the Pocari Sweat advertisement, which adopts the color blue to emphasize the meaning of 'coolness' so that it can be concluded that Pocari Sweat offers freshness in every drop of its liquid.

Even though the two poses have the same background, if we look at the angle of the poses, the two genders have different positions. According to the book *Sociology of the Body*, Raditya (Raditya, 2014) states that differences in the position of a person's shooting angle affect each individual's manner. In this frame, the man drinks Pocari Sweat by facing right, and almost all research reveals that the pose facing right represents a person who has an adventurous spirit.

In contrast, the woman faces left, which depicts a cheerful person who can liven up the atmosphere. This is also evident in the ad footage that the woman has a complementary role as a giver of drinks so that the ad's atmosphere looks lively. In addition, the two scenes also try to highlight the natural attitude between men and women regarding how they drink. For example, men are shown as firm and women as soft. From the two scenes, it can be concluded that Pocari wants to emphasize the idealism of gender characteristics between men and women. Last, the difference in the appearance of the two scenes. Even though they consume the same drink, in the Pocari Sweat ad, the male visual is displayed first, followed by the female visual doing the same thing. to emphasize that men are always at the forefront of their roles compared to women.

Feminist Movement in Korean Pocari Sweat Ads

Table 3. Scene of Indonesian and Korean Pocari Sweat

Signifier	
Signified	Women do sports activities, such as bouldering and gymnastics.
Denotative Sign / Connotative Signifier	One woman climbed the wall with a muscleless hand and slim body, while the other danced with a flexible body.

Connotative Signified	Women work hard to pursue their interest in sports, even though they are dangerous. They believe their talent and body appearance don't stop them from reaching their goals.
Connotative Sign	The advertisement shows that women are ambitious and have great talent. Even though they look fragile, they are strong.

Generally, women are stereotyped as fragile and ready to break down whenever and wherever. This stereotype is denied by the model in "Pocari Sweat." It displays a woman who can do extreme activities, such as building. Besides, women do their best at their work. They are hardworking people, which means they have ambition. Women lack the ambition to pursue a career as much as men. However, this advertisement wants to show that women can be ambitious enough to achieve their goals. Ironically, people have never noticed women's talent. According to Majzub & Rais (Majzub & Rais, 2010) It is stated that talented women are underachieving, which is different from their male counterparts. Women also have the right to be acknowledged for their talent since they do their best to achieve it. These statements support a feminist movement that women have similar power and opportunities as men.

Woman Stereotype in Indonesian and Korean Pocari Sweat Ads

Pocari sweat represents the culture of each country by its advertisement. Both Indonesian and Korean advertisements present a different gender visual for each country. Indonesian Pocari Sweat advertisements show men as the main figures in advertisements presented as ideal masculinity figures in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the female figure in the ad has a minor role. In the advertisement, the woman just runs around carrying a Pocari Sweat bottle to serve it to the men. Additionally, Indonesian ads visually show a visual hand between men and women, with the position of the woman's hand lower than the man's. In this case, the Pocari Sweat ad in Indonesia tries to say that even though men need women's help to meet their needs, this does not make women stronger than men. In the advertisement, women are described as male servants who serve Pocari Sweat drinks to the man.

In contrast to Indonesian advertisements, Korean ads display visuals of independent women who can be happy without depending on men. It showed the feminist movement. The bouldering and gymnastics displayed in advertisements by women is an example of its movement. Korean advertisements reveal how potential women are that many people have never thought of before. The women here have an important role like men, such as doing some activities usually done by men. In this way, the advertising visuals at Pocari Sweat try to break the stereotype that women are weak. In line with the advertisement, the Korean president 2018 intensively spread the feminist movement. It seems that Korean ads want to tell people that it is part of Korean culture because the gender equality campaign that was carried out during his reign was used by them to feature the Korean condition at that time. So, Pocari Sweat successfully displayed Korean culture or condition through its advertisement, showing the feminist movement.

Comparing the two gender roles in the two advertisements, we can see that patriarchal culture is still embedded in Indonesian advertising media, with different roles for women and men. In

comparison, the advertisements in Korea highlight the feminist movement, where every woman's abilities are appreciated.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, we can see that both Pocari Sweat advertisements in Indonesia and Korea have visual signs that reflect different cultural backgrounds, particularly regarding gender roles. Through semiotic analysis, this study identifies significant differences in the portrayal of women in each advertisement. Indonesian advertisements reinforce patriarchal values by presenting women in subordinate roles, while Korean advertisements emphasise feminist ideals by depicting women as independent and capable individuals. These portrayals suggest that advertisements play a role in reinforcing or challenging societal gender norms based on the cultural context in which they are produced.

It can be concluded that Indonesian and Korean advertisements present different stereotypes about women. Additionally, both advertisements act as cultural representations, reflecting the gender norms and values embedded within their respective societies.

While this study provides valuable insights into gender representation in advertisements, it has certain limitations. First, the analysis focuses solely on visual elements and does not account for audience reception or interpretation. Future research could incorporate audience studies to examine how different demographic groups, including gender, age, and cultural background, perceive and interpret these advertisements. Second, this study only examines two advertisements from 2018; expanding the scope to include multiple brands, different periods, or various media platforms such as television, social media, and print advertising could provide a more comprehensive understanding of evolving gender portrayals. Lastly, a comparative study incorporating advertisements from additional countries could offer deeper insights into global and regional trends in gender representation.

By addressing these limitations, future research can provide a more nuanced understanding of how advertising shapes and reinforces gender perceptions, influences societal attitudes toward gender roles, and contributes to broader discussions on media representation, cultural identity, and gender equality in local and global contexts.

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