

COMMODIFICATION OF LOCAL CULTURE IN CIGARETTE COMMERCIALS: SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS ON DJI SAM SOE COMMERCIAL “MAHAKARYA INDONESIA 2016”

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ABSTRACT

Being restricted directly displaying cigarettes on commercials forces cigarette manufacturers and creative teams to work hard to create a cigarette commercial that can attract consumers' attention. This is the reason why many cigarette manufacturers show scenes laden with local culture elements in their commercials as an effort to bring their products closer to the consumers. Local culture-themed commercials beginning to bloom on the television aim not only to preserve Indonesian local cultural values but also to protect them from being claimed by other countries. This research aims to get an overview of an alleged exploitation of Sumbawa local culture in Dji Sam Soe cigarette commercial Mahakarya Indonesia 2016 version. The research method used here is semiotic analysis with approaches from Roland Barthes, which are linguistics and connotative and denotative iconic message. Several vital scenes indicate practices of exploitation of Sumbawa local culture in the advertisement. These practices of local culture exploitation are marked by the emergence of scenes where Sumbawa people work together to build boats and houses (denotation), a long-time characteristic of Indonesian society, along with verbal and written message (linguistics) shown through the back sound of a man saying, "From the youths to the elders, to the youths." and "One Nusantara collaborate to create an effort in which equal burden is bore on the shoulders!". These sentences send both denotative and connotative messages that are important to be analyzed further.

Keywords: Culture; commercial; semiotic.

INTRODUCTION

For a company, commercials are important to promote its products to the public. A commercial is a media to communicate messages or information regarding a product or a service offered to the consumers.

In advertising communication, a commercial uses not only language but also other means of communication such as motion pictures, colors, and sounds; a mixture of which will produce an effective advertising communication (Mulyana, 2017:45).

A commercial itself is a symbol visualized through various aspects of communication signs, which are arranged in the commercial's textual structure. Signs in a commercial's textual structure are a unified sign system that consists of verbal and non-verbal signs in the form of words, colors, or pictures, with certain meanings adjusted with the interest of the marketed or informed products. The huge influence that a commercial has on the society's subconscious mind are used by advertisers for various purposes, ranging from introducing a product to boosting sales to strengthen their product or companies' images.

TV commercials are interesting for consumers because of its strength, which is showing audio and visual aids simultaneously. Television as an advertising media is among the most effective tools to promote products and services to the public.

Television as an advertising media greatly supports companies in promoting their products which eventually

will boost their sales and gain them profits.

Since TV commercials, especially the ones for cigarette products, come in many shapes and types, creative teams and agencies are required to always find ideas when creating TV commercials. They need to be easy to remember and attract positive responses to the image of the promoted products since for most people, especially Indonesian society, television is already a part of a lifestyle that seeks the most up-to-date information.

The development of cigarette commercials, especially by PT. HM Sampoerna Tbk. (which produces *Dji Sam Soe* cigarettes) and HM Sampoerna creative team, brings many themes with Indonesian cultures and traditions as the background. This is an appropriate step considering Indonesia's sundry cultures; thus, themes loaded with traditions, cultures, and languages are often used.

Nevertheless, the use of themes with local languages and cultural and traditional values is oftentimes utilized by the company just to boost sales. The cultural values, traditions, and languages are made as mere commodities by the companies, and they are incorporated to the commercials with cultural values, traditions, and languages as their themes.

HM Sampoerna, a public company that produces cigarettes including *Dji Sam Soe*, frequently incorporates cultures, languages, and local elements in the making of its commercials. One of the cultural themes that they carry relates to Sumbawa culture. A glance at this commercial will reveal the obvious commodification of Sumbawa cultural theme here.

Relating the concept of Sumbawa cultural ethnic theme with a semiotic analysis that depicts Indonesian culture, or in this case Sumbawa culture, is an appropriate step taken by HM Sampoerna. The word semiotics itself originates from the word semiotic or semiology, which refers to the same study of signs. The writer uses semiotic analysis to detect an effort of commodification on this cultural theme. The commercial was aired with an endorser by wearing the traditional costume of an ethnic society of Sumbawa while showing clearly the condition of Sumbawa society, natural geography, and local culture.

The writer chose PT. HM Sampoerna, with *Dji Sam Soe* cigarette as its product, because this company uses many Indonesian cultural values; one of which is Sumbawa local ethnic theme carried in the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by *Dji Sam Soe*.

METHODS

The writer of this research uses a qualitative research method. This method allows the writer to delineate the research object holistically based on the social reality on the field. The characteristics of a qualitative research are: (1) The source of data is a natural setting, and the researcher is a key instrument, (2) The qualitative research is descriptive, (3) the qualitative research focuses more on the process instead of the end product or result, (4) the researcher tends to use inductive approach when analyzing data, and (5) the meaning is an essential issue in a qualitative approach (Hamdi and Bahrudin, 2014: 2-16)

Bogdan and Taylor (1957: 5) define qualitative methodology as a research procedure that produces descriptive data from the observable people and behaviors in the form of written or spoken words. A descriptive research does not explain nor seek for the existence of relationships, is not testing a hypothesis or making predictions, and does not test any theory (Rakhmat, 2001). This type of qualitative research is used because the research on commodification of objects in the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by *Dji Sam Soe* is also related to the interpretation process that aims to understand the signs, codes, and symbols in the research object.

The research method used in this research is Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. This technique is intentionally chosen because it can reveal the meaning behind the signs. Semiotic analysis is an analysis of signs, which, in this research, are cultural signs incorporated in the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by *Dji Sam Soe*. The object of this research is the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by *Dji Sam Soe* broadcasted by various private television channels.

In a qualitative research, data collection is done in a natural setting with the primary data source, participation, direct observation, in-depth interview, and documentation results (Sugiyono, 2018, hal.18). Therefore, since the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by *Dji Sam Soe* was aired in 2016, the primary data used in this research comes from Youtube (<http://m.youtube.com/results?q=dji%20sam%20soe%20iklan&sm=1>), and the

secondary data come from books, websites, articles, and news coverage related to the research.

The first data collection technique used in this research is documentation, which is collecting data from documents such as textbooks about related theories and concepts, a Youtube video of the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe, and supporting articles from various sources related to this research. Observation was also done directly by watching the commercial when it was aired on the television. In this case, direct observation was also conducted by watching the commercial via Youtube.

The analyzed units in this research are the images or texts in the commercial under the researched category. After the primary and secondary data were gathered, they were then coded and analyzed. After that, the data was analyzed descriptively using Roland Barthes' semiotic analytical technique. Based on analyzing commercials according to the messages they send, Barthes developed semiotics into three categories: coded iconic message, non-coded iconic message, and linguistic messages. Various concepts and theories that had been delineated before were then formulated into a conceptual framework. This conceptual framework consists of the categories based on Barthes and Berger's semiotic concept and acts as a guideline to answer the problem this research is trying to answer.

To understand the acquired research data, some processing was necessary. Hamdi and Bahrudinn(2014: 2-16) in their book "Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Aplikasi Dalam Pendidikan. " stated that:

"Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcript, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others".

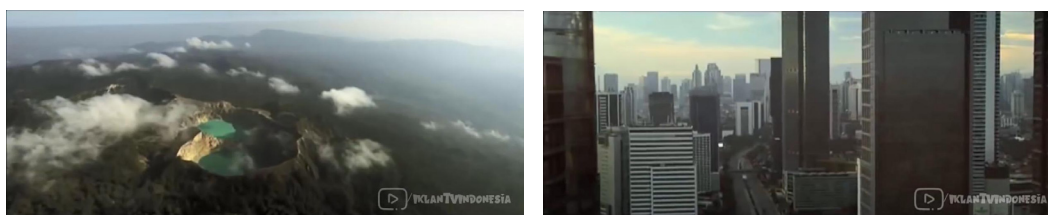
Data analysis is a process to systematically search and arrange the data collected from interviews, field notes, and other materials. Data analysis is done by organizing the data, dividing them into several units, synthesizing them, arranging them into a pattern, choosing which data is important and going to be studied, and drawing a conclusion that can be shared with other people.

The data analysis technique thought to be appropriate for this research is the interactive model of data analysis by Miles and Hubberman (Rohidi, 2011: 233). In this technique, the collected data will be presented and reduced according to need and then will be concluded into the core of the problem. In this case, through a semiotic analysis it is indicated that there is a process of commodification on Sumbawa local culture in the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe is a commercial by PT. HM Sampoerna Tbk., a manufacturer of cigarettes with the best quality of tobacco. This commercial was produced on February 3rd, 2016, consisted of 14 scenes with a total duration of 44 seconds

The coded iconic message is the connotation from the visual elements used to attract potential consumers in relation with a broader sign system in the society. This commercial brings up an arrangement of visual elements that can be interpreted by the audience. This 44-seconds commercial carries many connotative messages. The message is shown during the beginning of the commercial; the first scene displays white clouds around a green mountain with a green crater and the second scene shows black and grey skyscrapers. These two scenes compare the contexts between the traditional side of rural area and the more modern side of urban area.



Picture 1. Scene 1 and Scene 2 of the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe
(Source: <http://m.youtube.com/results?q=dji%20sam%20soe%20iklan&sm=1>,
Downloaded at 09.19 PM Western Indonesian Time/10/08/2017)

These scenes try to suggest a connotative meaning that PT. HM Sampoerna's cigarette has been a part of every Indonesian social class' life, both for the modern and traditional societies.

In the next scene, PT. HM Sampoerna tries to send denotative message. A non-coded iconic message is a denotation that appears in visual elements, which are used to attract potential consumers with direct understanding of the images and the messages without considering the existence of any codes. It aims for a direct understanding of the commercial's images and messages without considering any broader social code.

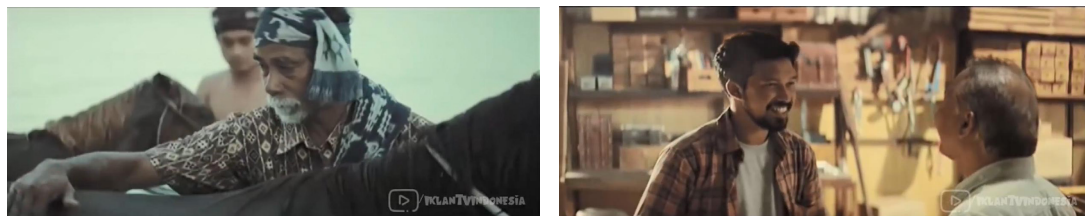
One of the denotative messages in this commercial appears through the selection of the commercial's casts that relates to their decent professional reputations and private lives. The figures are also selected to build the product's positive image in the eyes of the society. PT. HM Sampoerna uses the figures of a young mechanic and an old traditional shipbuilder because these figures are known to have a detailed and refined touch.



Picture 2. Scene 3 and Scene 4 of the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe
(Source: <http://m.youtube.com/results?q=dji%20sam%20soe%20iklan&sm=1>,
Downloaded at 21.19 Western Indonesian Time/10/08/2017)

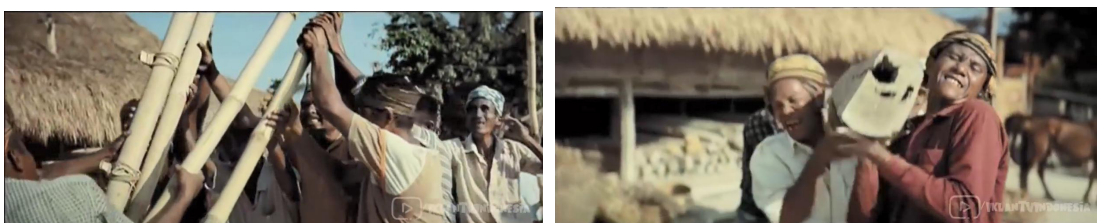
The scene of someone's hand shaving woods and another one showing a young man and an old man building a ship are efforts to build a positive image of PT. HM Sampoerna's cigarette in the eyes of the society. This denotative message gives an impression to the society that PT. HM Sampoerna Tbk.'s cigarettes are made with skilled hands in a detailed and refined way.

In the next scene, PT. HM Sampoerna Tbk. brings up the connotative aspect of its commercial again by showing a young man and an old man in the context of the traditional Sumbawa tribe society who are bathing a horse, followed by the image of a modern society in a workspace.



Picture 3. Scene 5 and Scene 6 of the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe
(Source: <http://m.youtube.com/results?q=dji%20sam%20soe%20iklan&sm=1>,
Downloaded at 21.19 Western Indonesian Time/10/08/2017)

The scene tries to show again a connotative message that PT. HM Sampoerna's cigarette has been a part of every young and old Indonesian's life, both in the traditional and modern societies. Both scenes are then contrasted again with denotative messages of Sumbawa society's cooperativeness, hard work, and solidarity seen in the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th scenes.





Picture 4. Scene 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe
(Source: <http://m.youtube.com/results?q=dji%20sam%20soe%20iklan&sm=1>,
Downloaded at 21.19 Western Indonesian Time/10/08/2017)

These denotative messages are clearly seen in the visuals of Sumbawa people cooperatively building a house; everyone that this commercial can directly feel the meanings in every second of the scene displayed in this commercial.

At the end of the commercial, PT. HM Sampoerna Tbk. shows connotative elements in the 11th and 12th scenes and denotative elements in the 13th and 14th scenes as the big conclusion of the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe.



Picture 5. Scene 11 and 12 of the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe
(Source: <http://m.youtube.com/results?q=dji%20sam%20soe%20iklan&sm=1>,
Downloaded at 21.19 Western Indonesian Time/10/08/2017)

The connotative elements visualized in the 11th scene with a stretch of rocky meadow where two Sumbawa men are riding horses, and in the 12th scene where a young man and an old man in a modern setting are sniffing the scent of tobacco, incorporate senses of beauty, purity, and naturalness into Dji Sam Soe cigarette products put side to side with Sumbawa natural environment. These connotative elements are again contrasted with the denotative element in a scene where the old man and the young man are embracing, which shows senses of wholeness, unity, and common ownership of Dji Sam Soe cigarette, which can bring together many generations, tribes, and cultures in Indonesia.



Picture 6. Scene 13 and 14 of the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe
(Source: <http://m.youtube.com/results?q=dji%20sam%20soe%20iklan&sm=1>,
Downloaded at 21.19 Western Indonesian Time/10/08/2017)

Linguistics is the science of grammar. In relation to a commercial, linguistic message is words or language arranged in such a way that attracts people or potential consumers so that they will be interested to buy the products offered by the manufacturer. When sending out a message, a commercial generally uses signs that can be read or heard by the audience throughout the video. Understanding a credo/jargon of a product can lead the audience of a certain group of age in the social psychology map to a certain understanding.

After studying the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe, several sentences are found to be voiced throughout the video, which are: “*Dari masa ke masa, bangsa ini gigih sepanjang zaman*” (From time to time, this nation persists throughout the ages), “*Dari muda ke tua*” (From young to old), “*Satu*

nusantara berpadu meracik daya, berat sama dibahu” (One Nusantara [Indonesia] collaborate to create an effort in which equal burden is bore on the shoulders). “*Dari generasi-kegenerasi, kita selalu berdiri pada keaslian karya*” (From generation to generation, we always stand in the authenticity of works), “*Karena selalu mengejar satu kesempurnaan*” (Because of always chasing the one perfection), and “*Inilah jiwa Indonesia, jiwa yang menciptakan mahakarya*” (This is the soul of Indonesia; a soul that creates a masterpiece.)

These sentences are able to lead the audience to a cigarette product that can be consumed by all generations from young to old and with a perfect manufacturing process and an authenticity of Indonesian cigarette taste.

The commodification of local culture in the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe is shown clearly enough. Although the duration of this commercial is rather short, the indications of Sumbawa local culture commodification is quite obvious, some of these indications are: two men with headbands washing horses, a group of Sumbawa people building a house together, and lastly two men riding horses on a stretch of rocky meadow.

PT. HM Sampoerna is intentionally using these Sumbawa local cultural elements as a plus point when selling their cigarettes. A statement from Dewi (1997:10) that discusses how commercials that incorporate ethnic identity are more embraced and remembered by the society supports the notion of the existence of alleged commodification. Besides, the television also influences the amount of impact of a commercial because studies also show that TV commercials are recognized faster by the society while having a broader reach; in other words, it embraces all society.

A similar sentiment is also stated by Aitchison who said that most effective and creative Asian commercials use a local content approach that fit each of their culture (Roll, 2015: 350). On the other hand, researchers conclude that all cultural characteristics generally share similar values, which are sense of belonging, excitement, fun and enjoyment, warm relationship, self-fulfillment, respect from others, sense of accomplishment, security, and self-respect (Wells, 2003:99).

According to Mosco, commodification is a capitalist way to reach the goal of accumulating capitals and values through transformations of the use of values to the system of trade. The process of commodification in media goes through two steps, which are the process of producing the program or the media products and then the use of advertising media to initiate commodification in the economic process.

Commodification is an effort to turn anything into a commodity that can give profits. Practically, there is a relationship of mutual influence between the content, the number of audience, and the commercial itself in a commodification process within commercials (Mosco, 2009: 132). Commodification also illustrates how capitalists reach their goal by accumulating capital and realizing that a use value can turn into an exchange value. Commodity and commodification are two things that are related to each other; one as the object and the other as the process.

In the case of the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe, PT. HM Sampoerna gather together the noble values of Sumbawa tribe like beauty, purity, naturalness, strength, fineness, passion, and unity as use values, and then they are processed to become a cigarette commercial as an exchange value. After that, the commercial is turned into a mass commodity, marked by the broadcast of the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe in all television channels on February 3, 2016. These noble values have become an economic commodity in the form of a commercial because of the economic interest of PT. HM Sampoerna Tbk.

The analysis with a semiotic approach in its discussion regarding the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe resulted in a valid understanding that Indonesian local cultural content has a high selling point as a promotional tool of a product in a TV commercial. This finding can be applied in the concept of any commercial productions in the area of communication visual design discipline, especially Creative Advertising, and can be a means to preserve and promote Indonesian local cultural elements to the society/audience.

CONCLUSION

The result of this study concludes that there is a quite strong effort of commodification of Sumbawa local culture in the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe. Although the duration of the commercial is relatively short, it is still able to show the local culture of Sumbawa, some of which are the two

men with headbands who are bathing horses, a group of Sumbawa people who are building a house together, and two men who are riding horses in a stretch of rocky meadow. Several scenes in this commercial present a number of commercial casts with Sumbawa tribal attributes who work together cooperatively in building a house (a denotative iconic message). On the other hand, the connotative meaning of this message is the characteristic of Indonesian society who since forever always work together cooperatively is now starting to erode.

This commercial also uses both written and spoken words and sentences (linguistic message), some of which are back sound narrations saying “*Dari masa ke masa, bangsa ini gigih sepanjang zaman*” (From time to time, this nation persists throughout the ages), “*Dari muda ke tua*” (From young to old), “*Satu nusantara berpadu meracik daya, berat sama dibangun*” (One Nusantara [Indonesia] collaborate to create an effort in which equal burden is bore on the shoulders). Within these sentences, there are both connotative and denotative messages. The process of Sumbawa local culture commodification in the 2016 Mahakarya Indonesia cigarette commercial by Dji Sam Soe is initiated because of the power of local cultural elements that can help a product to be easily accepted by Indonesian society. This is done by combining modern culture elements with Sumbawa noble values in the form of a commercial.

With this research, it is expected that more Indonesian culture-themed commercials can be produced because it helps to preserve and keep the noble indigenous values from being claimed by other countries. Thus, culture-themed commercials should always be produced by further exploring the cultural heritage of the archipelago as the basic concept behind the creation of a commercial. The creation of local culture-themed commercials must be accompanied with a deep understanding of the cultural concepts and values that are going to be carried so as to fit the characteristics of the target market, making it easier for them to accept the commercial when it is produced. This kind of commercial is thought to be quite effective to send a message to Indonesian society because it uses cultural contents that are close to the society’s everyday life.

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