

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Beauty standards means variable standards that society construct about what it means to be attractive. This is related to physical appearances that all women should strive to achieve or maintain in order to be considered as beautiful woman in society. Beauty standards are mostly reflected with models and celebrities that appear on the media. According to Frith, Shaw, & Cheng (2009) state that models in mass media and advertisements create cultural norms and define standards of beauty in society. The certain characteristics of the content media advertisements create certain perception of how ideal beauty or beauty standards are reflected in certain society. That is why beauty standard is very subjective and makes every country has its own image of real femininity.

According to The Body Project developed by the Women's Studies Program of Bradley University, Illinois, beauty standards are arbitrary and they vary greatly both from one culture to another and over time. On the other hand, the massive development of globalization and media advertisements have a great power in construct people behavior and perspective. Goldie Hayko (2010)

states that most advertisements present us with set of images that idealize certain life circumstances. They present the information in a way that is easily absorbed so that we do not have to do a lot of thinking in order to take in the concept and apply it at a later time subconsciously.

In Indonesia for example, traditional values of beauty standard are being replaced by the media influences, especially cosmetic industry and their advertisements as seen on the media such as magazines and television. This media constantly bombarding Indonesian women with one specific characteristic of models that reflect the ideal beauty. The models are usually portrayed to have a long straight hair, pointed nosed, and light skin tone.

This phenomenon, makes the mainstream beauty-industry along with the advertising agency partake an important role in delivering beauty standard. It is not difficult in Indonesia media to find commercials that promote girls with light complexion as an embodiment of the ideal women, despite the fact that the range of natural Indonesian's complexion is very high, as Fitriyani (2009) states in her research, that the depiction of women's stereotype in the media has influenced the Indonesian society to be obsessed with light skin, which later led to numerous efforts to achieve their obsession, even by doing unsafe treatments.

On the other hand, in a multi-racial country like Singapore with

its variety of skin tones, facial features and body types, the beauty standards itself is hard to describe and classified. Although in May's edition of 2015 Cosmopolitan Singapore, senior beauty writer Elizabeth Lee gave her thoughts on the local idea of gorgeousness and the "perfect" Singapore girl. According to Elizabeth Lee (2015), looking flawless and well-groomed is a Singaporean woman's aim. Singapore women look a lot to South Korean and Japan for products and trends. Moreover, Singaporean women stay out of the sun due to their fair, porcelain complexion. Lin Wei Tan (2020) states that the colour of skin tone in Singapore often shapes a big part of their identity. Not only do people often use it as a sign post for one's race or ethnicity, some have used it to read into the lives people supposedly lead.

Although from both countries define fair complexion as one of the aspects of ideal beauty, both of them have some particular differences when it comes to beauty standards. In Indonesia for example, having a long black hair is considered charming and associated with femininity. This is proven by the number of shampoo advertisements that portray a model with black thick hair. On the contrary for Singapore's perspective, the idea of charm is associated with a cute and youthful look, as according to Elizabeth Lee (2015), Singapore women tend to look up to Japan and South Korean as their role model as an ideal beauty.

According to Pamela K. Morris (2013), although beauty is a major industry, beauty is elusive and based on culture. Beauty and the media such as advertisement is interconnected to each other, as it has been known that beauty is an important concept used in advertisements to help companies to sell their products. As a result, the development of technology and the power of media has allowed the companies to reach more people and distort their perception. There are so many companies on the beauty industries have created cultural and societal norms that paint women as only beautiful often very specific with the unrealistic high beauty standards.

Moreover, the beauty portrayal in the media is a serious matter that should be studied further. Although there are a number of studies that have focused on how beauty is portrayed in media, the cross-cultural studies of beauty in advertisements are very limited. There are only a few that have compared attractiveness and beauty portrayals in terms of cross-cultural. One of the researchers that have studied conduct research on constructed beauty standards from one nation to another are Yan Yan and Kim Bissel (2014). They focus on the portrayal of female beauty worldwide through content analysis by using coding categories method, with the title "*The Globalization of Beauty: How is Ideal Beauty Influenced by Globally Published Fashion and Beauty Magazines?*" The differences between their research and this one lies on the focus and the method that they use.

The focus of this research will be on the Asian countries which are Singapore and Indonesia, and theories that will be deployed are Systemic Functional Linguistic and Social Semiotic Analysis.

The other research that discussed about beauty standards and advertisement is *The Construction of Beauty: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Women's Magazine Advertising*, conducted by Katherine Frith, Ping Shaw, and Hong Cheng in 2005. This research focuses on the content analysis on comparing on how beauty is encoded and found a noticeable difference between the portrayals of women from the U.S. and from the two East Asian societies which are Singapore and Taiwan in terms of sexual portrayal. Their research uses the feminist theory critiques in analyzing the positioning of women as sexual object in the advertisements. The data from their research were analyzed by using the quantitative descriptive analysis, which used specific code to analyze the data. While on this study, the main focus will be on analyzing the beauty construction that appear in the magazine advertisements which reflected from the verbal text and visual text on the magazine advertisements by using Systemic Functional Linguistic by Halliday to analyze the verbal text, and Social Semiotic theory to analyze the visual images.

This research provides the base of analyzing the concept of beauty and attractiveness in Indonesia and Singapore which is

reflected through magazines advertisements. This study also will analyze the development of the globalization and how it will affect the idea of beauty from these countries from women's fashion magazines in Indonesia and Singapore. Indonesia selected as it is a country that has numerous commercials beauty products that deliver the message of ideal beauty, while Singapore selected as it is one of multi-racial country with its variety of skin tones, facial features and body types with its westernization that construct ideal beauty in advertisements. In addition, many scholars have called for researchers to expand cross- cultural investigations of advertisements and this study will help to fill that gap.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions are these three following questions:

1. How beauty idea is portrayed in skincare and makeup advertisements from Indonesia and Singapore magazines advertisements?
2. How is the influence of Western beauty ideal play a role in skincare and makeup advertisements in Indonesia and Singapore magazines?

1.3 Purpose of The Study

By conducting this study, the researcher would like to show to the reader of how the concept of beauty in advertisements can make different impact on cultural priorities and the beauty idea that construct beauty standard from certain countries such as Indonesia

and Singapore. The research would also like to make a point about the differences and similarities in terms of beauty standards in both countries that are reflected on the skincare and makeup advertisements in Women's Weekly, Singapore magazine and Femina, Indonesia magazine.

1.4 Scope of The Study

This study focuses on analyzing the beauty construction which reflected from the models and the taglines that appear on the most famous women's fashion magazines advertisements from both countries. Femina Indonesian magazines is selected from January and February 2019 edition and Women's Weekly magazines Singapore is selected from January and February 2019 edition. The taglines of the advertisements will be analyzed by using Systemic Functional Linguistic by Halliday and Social Semiotic Analysis by Kress and Van Leeuwen to analyze the visual images and the models that are portrayed in the magazines

1.5 Significance of The Study

The writer hopes this research can be useful for the readers as the references especially in the related fields such as cultural study and media advertisements. Also, the result of this study is aimed to give an academic input in cultural studies field especially through the cultural product.