

Representation of Indonesian Beauty in Cosmetic Advertisements

Berti Alia Bahaduri, Maranatha Christian University, Indonesia

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Background

Indonesia is a multicultural country, where there are dozens of tribes who lives in different parts of region. Different climate and lifestyle generates different natural looks. According to its history, the busiest ports are in Java. Central of trade and politic, this has been happening since colonial era. Therefore most of economic and political decision were and still highly influenced by Javanese heritage. According to Burke & Stets (2009), an identity is the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him and her as a unique person. Indonesian women share the same nationality, community thus bear the same identity as 'Indonesian woman'. However, as a multicultural society, their physical appearances are varying. The exact definition of Indonesian beauty has not been coined yet. This study is trying to find the visual markings of Indonesian beauty through analyzing cosmetic advertisements by SARIAYU.

SARIAYU (or loosely translated means 'essence of beauty') as cosmetic company was built in 1970, the owner and founder is DR. Martha Tilaar. The promotional campaign using local beauty was started with her concern about Indonesian trend, which always based on western trend. Since 1987 this company started its own color trend, which always based on certain or several Indonesian cultural heritage. Its missions are beauty culture, beauty education, beauty green and empowering women. Use Indonesian beauty as part of its branding strategy.

Apart from imported cosmetic brands, there are several local brands, which made their own product and targeting Indonesian women as their main market. SARIAYU is the only Indonesian cosmetic brand, which features, specific Indonesian region every year as its promotional theme.

This study concentrate on printed cosmetic advertisement because its familiarity and regularity. "Adverts persuade people to consume some commodity or other. They also have a social and cultural function: creating and reproducing social and cultural identities" (Barnard, 2005). According to Reventós (1998), understanding the advertisements as cultural text will reveal the crucial role of advertising in perpetuating the traditional notion of femininity. While as stated by Adorno, the cosmetic industry has a significant contribution to beauty fetish, therefore the cosmetic advertisements gives the visual example to society on beauty benchmarks.

SARIAYU has been placing their ads in Indonesian women's magazine with wide circulation and targeted Indonesian women with high socio-economic status (such as Femina, Female, DEWI and BAZAAR Indonesia). Since 1987 they have been continuously placing their print-ad in leading Indonesian women magazines. Women magazines are still highly popular as entertainment and reference for beauty and fashion trends. While not entirely agree with all information in women's magazine, the readers are taking cues from them (Gauntlett, 2008). SARIAYU has been gradually building the image of Indonesian beauty with these printed images of beauty in Indonesian women magazines. Representational strategy has been used in cosmetic advertisement according to Reventós (1998), it is constructed around the 'ideology of modernity'. In this case the 'beautiful Indonesian women'.

Method

This study will use content analysis to decipher SARIAYU Advertisement and afterwards, story grammar will be used. Content analysis is an empirical (observational) and objective procedure for quantifying recorded audio-visual (including verbal) representation using reliable, explicitly defined categories ('values' on independent variables) (Bell, 2001). While a story grammar is a rule-based system that specifies canonical sequences of story elements. As a theoretical account, a story grammar is envisioned as a key determinant of the manner and ease with which people interpret the stories (Mick; 1987).

SARIAYU has been creating Indonesian women's story in its advertisements. Stories have the function: they preserve the culture by educating others, especially the next generation, social and moral codes reorganize and interpret personal experiences by framing memory in an intricate but cohesive structure that incorporates shared knowledge (Mick; 1987). In ad, the audience is learning the frames within SARIAYU ad. The boundaries are visible in cultural markings in the ads. Therefore the audience could feel familiar with the cultural markings. The consumer narrative has been built.

Analysis of SARIAYU Advertisement

The content analysis will be divided into four design elements: lay out (page structure), typography, color scheme (or fundamentals), and image. The main design elements in graphic design are form and space, color, typography and lay out (Samara, 2007) This visual analysis will be divided into four main parts. The first one is the overall lay out which build the form and space. The second is text (which consist of headline, sub-headline and body text). The third is the images used within the advertisement (which consist of main model, supplementary/ additional model and pack shoot/product detail in photo). Last element is the color scheme used in the SARIAYU advertisements. Those visual parts are building the cultural identity elements.

Overall lay out

The main structures of SARIAYU Advertisement are mostly in this order:

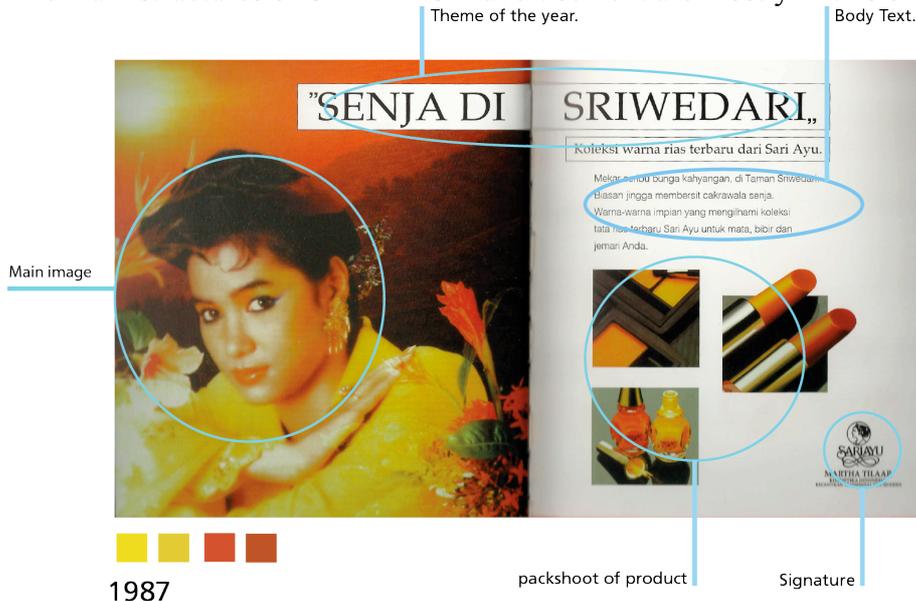


Image 1. Advertisement structure.

Female models are always on recto (left side from the audience) page, while the product photos, body text and signature are always on verso (right side from the audience) page. Reader will see the product first, then the yearly theme, afterwards will be reading the body text. The main image is located on recto page and takes most of the space, therefore the reader could thoroughly examines the usage of make up color. Exceptions are on the year 1997, 2001, 2006, 2007, 2010 and 2013, which put the main image on verso part.



Image 2. Variation in advertisement structure in SARIAYU ad in 1997.

On year 2000 and 2011 SARIAYU was featuring 4 women as the main image. Therefore the main image is spread across recto to verso page. As an example here is the printed ad from year 2000.



Image 3. SARIAYU Ad in 2000 featuring 4 models.

Typography

The specialized typography for theme of the year is always stylized with elements from the featured culture. For instance the Mount Bromo theme in 1990 has replace the letter 'o' with representation of the sun, because Mount Bromo is popular with its magnificent sunrise. While in 1997, traditional Dayak motif were used to enhance the word 'dayak'. In 2005, SARIAYU used traditional Balinese flag to replace the letter 'i' (image 4.) This tendency is practiced since the 1990's.



Figure 4. Stylized headlines examples.

The headline is always put at the top of the ad, and used in balance with the main image. If the main image is in the recto page, the theme or headline is in the verso page, which in all but in year 1987 and 1990. In those two years, the headlines are spread on recto and verso pages. The body texts are always set just below the headline on all advertisements.



Figure 5. The typical typography structure in SARIAYU advertisement.

Color Scheme

In effort to maintain true to its yearly theme, SARIAYU always features specific colors taken from each culture/theme. Thus every year there are different color scheme for the advertisement. In the first two years (1987-1988) only 4 colors were featured. Then the collection escalated and the SARIAYU usually features 8 colors, which happened in 8 years (1991, 1993, 2003-2005, 2010-2013). In 2014, the advertisement highlights 16 colors because on that year the brand drew inspiration from 4 cultures. The Theme was 'Millenium Nusantara', which features East Indonesian cultures (*Jayamanise*), Java cultures (*Jawadwipa*), Bali and Nusa Tenggara islands (*Nusabali*) and Kalimantan cultures (*Kalimamiri*). SARIAYU also always includes neutral colors, which considered will be important for customer. This study took colors from the products featured yearly and bear significant colors for the theme, such as eye shadows and lipstick.

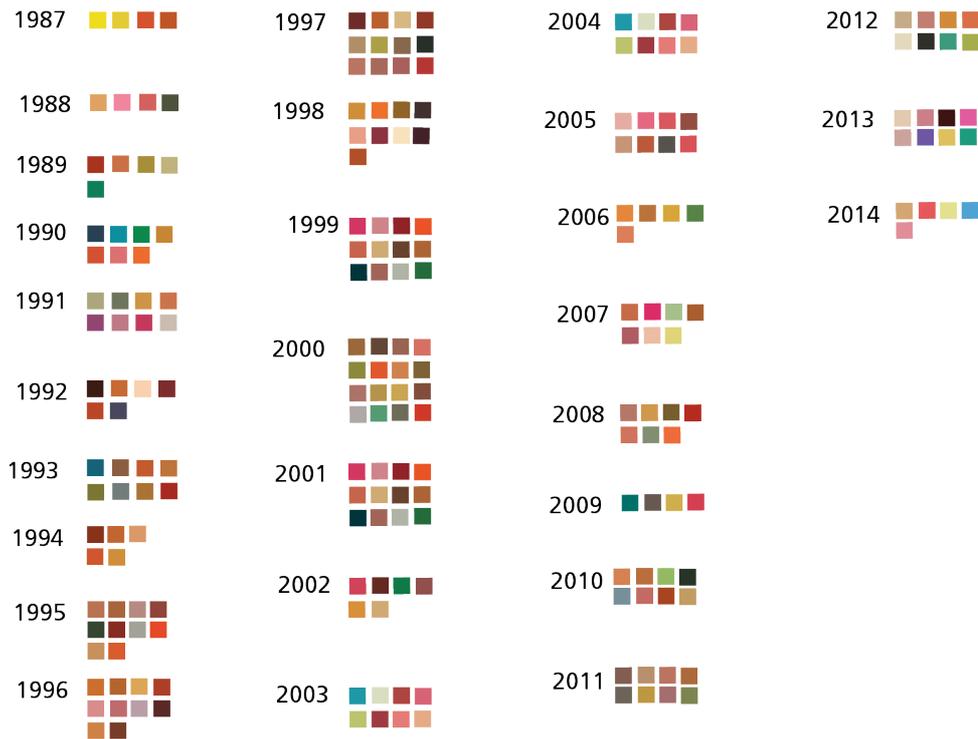


Figure 6. Colors used in SARIAYU advertisements 1987 - 2014

Colors most frequently used are in shades of red and brown and neutral color such as beige. Although the neutral colors were not inspired by Indonesian culture, SARIAYU always includes them due to consumers' needs. In next figure there are Pantone color swatches for similar reference.

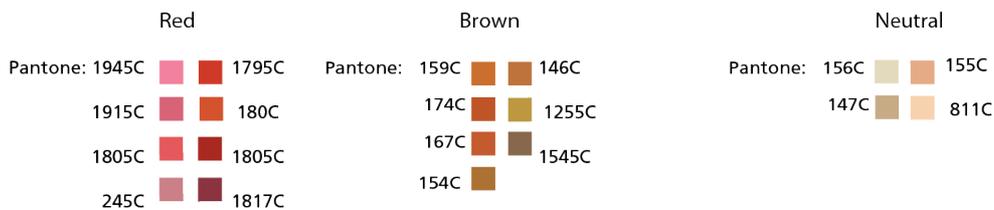


Figure 7. Frequently used colors.

Image

Since 1987, SARIAYU always use female model as the main image. They use the model as exemplar for make up application. In most ads, there is only 1 model in recto page (this tendency happened from 1987 to 1998 used a famous Indonesian model Larasati Gading). She bears the Indo-european look, with Caucasian face feature. In 1999 SARIAYU used a model with Javanese facial features. Afterwards SARIAYU preferred model with Indo-european facial features again, with exceptions in 2000 and 2011. In those two years, SARIAYU used 4 models with distinctive Indonesian look.



Figure 8. Models as main images in SARIAYU advertisements.

Story Grammar

SARIAYU has succeeded to maintain similar lay out to support continuous narrative since 1987 to 2014. Therefore the audience could identify the advertisement as part of this cosmetic brand. SARIAYU most frequently features cultural traits or site from Java. This tendency happened 9 times, on year 1987, 1990, 1995, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2007, 2009 and 2013. There are influences from other Indonesian culture from Sumatra Island (1996, 1998, 1999, 1006 and 2010) and Kalimantan/ Borneo in 1997, 2008 and 2014. Inspiration from Sulawesi/ Celebes in 1993 and 2001 and other Islands in 1992, 1994, 2005 and 2012. SARIAYU celebrated milestones in 2000 (millennium) and 2011 30 years of SARIAYU. Time and trend set the tone for the advertisements as well, thus the colours from Indonesian heritage were combined with the specific year's color trend.

Conclusion

SARIAYU has been giving visual examples of Indonesian beauty through its advertisements. According to content analysis, there are: consistency in lay out, color and typography. Main images are using models with Indo-european facial features. Thus, giving the perception about modernity as Westernized idea.

While according to story grammar, there were keeping continuity in using Javanese cultures and natural heritage, and other Indonesian cultures in between.

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