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## **Domestication of Women in Dettol Soap Commercials**

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**Abstract:** *Mass media is one of the most frequently used promotional tools by industry. Unfortunately, advertising not only contains product marketing but also spreads unfair ideas towards women, especially beauty product advertisements. Ramadan Bersih's version from Dettol Soap advertisement depicts a family containing a husband, wife, and children with their respective roles. This study focuses on women's role as housewives in advertisement using gender theory and Roland Barthes' semiotic model. The study found a tendency to place women as housewives responsible for cleaning the house, cooking, supervising children, educating, maintaining children's righteousness, and washing. This study strengthens the previous study's findings regarding women's domestication in advertising. In conclusion, advertising builds a household member's conception role in an unbalanced gender distinction. As a cultural product consumed by the wider community, the industry should pay more attention to advertisements designed to sell goods without eliminating gender education and justice elements.*

**Keywords:** *Women Domestication, Soap Ads, Dettol, Gender Justice, Semiotics Roland Barthes.*

**Abstrak:** Media massa merupakan salah satu alat promosi yang paling sering digunakan oleh industri. Sayangnya, iklan tidak hanya berisi tentang pemasaran produk tetapi juga menyebarkan ide-ide yang tidak adil kepada kaum wanita, khususnya iklan produk kecantikan. Iklan Sabun Dettol versi Ramadhan Bersih menggambarkan sebuah keluarga berisi suami, istri, dan anak dengan perannya masing-masing. Penelitian ini berfokus pada peran perempuan sebagai ibu rumah tangga dalam periklanan dengan menggunakan teori gender dan model semiotik Roland Barthes. Studi tersebut menemukan kecenderungan menempatkan wanita sebagai ibu rumah tangga yang bertanggung jawab untuk membersihkan rumah, memasak, mengawasi anak, mendidik, menjaga kebenaran anak, dan mencuci. Studi ini memperkuat temuan studi sebelumnya tentang domestikasi perempuan dalam periklanan. Kesimpulannya, iklan membangun peran konsepsi anggota rumah tangga dalam perbedaan gender yang tidak seimbang. Sebagai produk budaya yang dikonsumsi oleh masyarakat luas, industri hendaknya lebih memperhatikan iklan yang dirancang untuk menjual barang tanpa menghilangkan unsur pendidikan gender dan keadilan.

**Kata Kunci:** Domestikasi Wanita, Iklan Sabun, Dettol, Keadilan Gender, Semiotika Roland Barthes.

### **Introduction**

Women representation in mass media's widely used as a reference for the general public to see women. How the media presents women's figure is often a reference and example used to evaluate women in general (Auli & Jamiah, 2017). Not only those who are different gender towards women, but also women see themselves even other women. In Indonesia's media, women's stereotypes are attached to various shows from soap operas, infotainment, news, and advertisements.

The depiction of an angry, jealous, vengeful woman is in soap operas. Infotainment shows propagandize couples as the most critical thing in women's lives. If a female artist is not a



pair, she will continue to be chased by infotainment workers' questions. Single status is a bad status for women put by infotainment on television. Another thing is the pretty quality inherent in the television media industry. Anyone who appears as a celebrity on tv must always be beautiful at all (H. Hermawan & Hamzah, 2017; Siregar, 2004).

If she is not beautiful, then a woman will get ridicule that is not sexy, less white, her face is less selling and less prestigious than other beautiful women. Whereas women in the news, for example, there is news about violence, the blame is women because women are considered weak so they cannot fight back. In advertisements, women are always depicted as playing a role in the domestic sphere, while men are in the public sphere (Muwarni, 2018; Novarisa, 2019).

This social inequality is evident in various advertisements, including soap ads. The soap advertisement that is supposed to teach clean living has contributed to strengthening the patriarchal system. Dettol Soap advertisement is one of the ads that is mostly played by women who are married and become a mom, one of which is the Ramadhan Bersih by Dettol Soap ad in the Holy Month. Dettol soap advertisements are significant to research because Dettol soap ads are advertised every day on television and also broadcast on YouTube. Moreover, related to Ramadan it represents a belief in religion. The concept of mass media advertising has a very influential role in society.

Mass media today has a significant influence on providing information to the public (Muslim, 2013). With various developments in existing communication technology, the mass media often used in obtaining information is television. Television is considered efficient because, in addition to being in audiovisual form, the public does not need to read like print media in obtaining information so that the public can well receive the message conveyed (Artha, 2016). Television is free to reinforce the views, beliefs, attitudes, and women norms that already exist through its advertisements (Fernandez, 2013).

Suppose it is seen that advertising is very influential in television media. In that case, it can be ascertained that advertising growth will increase from year to year by the community needs. According to (Rivers, 2010) mass media, like spoken messages and gestures, have become an inseparable part of human communication. In essence, media is an extension of the tongue and hands, which is credited with increasing the human capacity to develop their social structure (Gora, 2016).

According to research conducted by (Darwis & Ismail, 2018) concerning women's image in Electronic Media Soap Ads, it is concluded that women are required to have fit physically to be accepted in a vast social arena. Meanwhile, the physical image also illustrates that women's personalities must be attractive. The woman in the ad's visualized as a white woman, has a proportional body, namely a slim, flat stomach, firm breasts, and plump butt. The beauty concept in the advertisement is constructed as an ideal that focuses on body and physical beauty.

This concept can lead to the notion that what is shown in advertisements is true in real life and must be followed. It seems as if women are required to be what the advertising industry expects. Not a few advertisements tend to make portrayal positions gender as trading tools that help strengthen brand or product even though they have to put the talent position in a marginal portion. In the advertising industry, most of them still use women's bodies to attract consumer

interest. It is as if women are required to be what the advertising industry expects both in print and electronic media (Fazri & Hartati, 2018; Rafdeadi, 2015).

Women themselves are not aware that their bodies have been controlled and exploited for advertising's sake. Women's image, role, and status have been directed to incorporate patriarchal values such as requiring that an ideal woman be tall, slim, white skin, etc. Meanwhile, married women have to take care of housework, take care of their husbands and children, but still do not get any awards (Muwarni, 2018).

Gender structuring in talent advertising sees contrast with the advertising campaign goal itself. Advertising is a real reflection that exists in society. The reality is reflected in the advertisement in re-socializing equality gender form, or it can be the opposite; it is called gender injustice that has been happening in society (Strinati, 2016). The women's involvement in media is very concerning; the media have spread the doctrines of what kind of principle should be a woman and the Dettol Soap advertisement existence.

According to (Parawansa, 2012) about mass media and women, of course, can be seen in two main aspects, namely seeing the discourse of women displayed by mass media, and seeing the mass media role. Seeing the current discourse in the mass media, the condition of women is still apprehensive. The mass media still reflects and preserves a set of values and systems that are still male, patriarchal, and sometimes capitalistic. The media are constantly feeding this concept to women regarding the concept of gender with a wrong conception. At the same time, a woman must be the perfect mother, a voluptuous servant in bed, and an obedient wife. Everything is packaged in attractive, but not educational, presentation for the equality of men and women.

Everything is packaged in attractive dishes but does not educate women to be independent. If the discourse developed by the mass media is still like that, it will fail to realize its objective ideals. This fact is unfortunate, especially mass media aimed at women, which is a very useful medium in providing correct information or creating a conception and media language that's unique to women and supports women. It would be nice if women are not always seen as objects exploited by the mass media (as gender bias) for investors benefit only. Still, women can also be seen as subjects capable of delivering messages in an advertisement.

According to (Fakih, 2016), gender differences are not a problem as long as they do not create injustice gender. For example, these gender injustice forms marginalize, making a woman cornered from an economic perspective, coordination that considers men to be higher in rank than women, and stereotype, namely labeling that leads to negativity towards women. Then there is also violence both physically mentally against women, and the last is the excess workload for women but not being recognized as an equal with men.

All scenes in the film will be analyzed using feminism terms with Roland Barthes' semiotic method. Semiotics, or in Barthes's name, are called semiology and want to study how humans interpret things. Barthes made an essential breakthrough in the conventional semiotic tradition because he could reach other cultures related to popular culture and mass media. Barthes is the leading developer of Saussure's ideas in all social life areas, even though initially Saussure only used it to analyze language (A. Hermawan, 2011).

Barthes presents the connotation concept and denotation as the key and analysis. Barthes explains that the first stage of significance is the signifier's relationship and signified through this

model. Barthes calls it with a denotation concept, which is the most apparent sign meaning. The connotation is the term Barthes uses to denote the second stage of significance. The purpose has a subjective or at least intersubjective meaning. In other words, denotation is what a sign describes against an object, while the importance of connotation is how to describe it (Seto, 2011).

The second stage of significance is related to the content of the sign working through myth. Myth is how culture explains or understands some aspects of reality or natural phenomena. Myth is a product of social class that already has domination (Sobur., 2013). Barthes stated that myth is a communication system, too, because it ultimately functions as a marker for a separate message (Barthes, 2018). From the feminism analysis and semiotics, this study's objectives will be obtained, namely to find out the domestication of women in Dettol soap advertisement.

### **Research Methods**

This research uses a qualitative approach. The qualitative research method is based on the philosophy of post-positivism and is used to examine natural objects (Sugiyono, 2012). Researchers in a qualitative approach has become a critical instrument that provides interpretation and meaning to social reality. The data collection technique was triangulated with an inductive analysis model on the research object, namely the Ramadhan Clean version of the Dettol soap advertisement in the Holy Month.

The advertisement will be analyzed using Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory. Barthes divides the sign and its relationship with the representative into two levels: denotative and connotative. denotation is what a sign describes against an object, while the importance of connotation is how to describe it. After being divided into several scenes according to the semiotic level, the analysis was continued by looking at women's gender injustices. The narrative built by advertisement shows a particular inclination towards the women's role in the household so that it deserves to be analyzed using gender concepts.

The data analysis was carried out in stratified ways. *First*, the researcher had documented the entire scene, according to the researcher's needs. *Second*, advertising scenes are then sorted according to the narrative constructed by the advertisement, and divided according to the semiotic level. *Third*, researchers interpreted scenes that represented domestication and other gender injustices. *Fourth*, researchers make conclusions from the analysis that has been done.

### **Results and Discussion**

Talking about women and their social life position is undoubtedly impressive, especially in the patrilineal society in general. Concerning the Dettol Soap advertisement, women are the mothers who then carry the burden of domestic household work. Moreover, in today's modern world, this is commonly referred to as emancipation, widely known as feminism. According to (Utaminingsih, 2017), feminism is a women's movement regarding the resistance to labor division, which establishes men as the public sphere's rulers. Women are housewives who work without wages in the domestic sphere.

This condition brings something unfavorable for women, where women who have the potential due to patriarchal culture do not have the right to exist in all aspects of life, resulting in

less opportunity to participate in the public sphere. The role of women in a household is a social construction that is formed because of the habits carried out by the community within a social sphere itself. The role of women itself is shown in gender differences.

The message on women's role in Dettol Soap advertisement describes it in educating and fostering a household. The presence of women in Dettol Soap advertisement is also inseparable from domestic work. For example, in one of the ad scenes, a mother reminds her child to wash her hands because it will be imminent. According to (Fakih, 2016), a stereotype is the labeling or marking of a particular group. In there, stereotype women are always depicted as having a role in taking care of children. An example is in one of the scenes below:



Figure 1. A mother's activity in the bathroom with her child.



Figure 2. The activity of a mother who cooks and prepares the dining table for family sahur

At the denotation level, a mother can be seen approaching her child in the toilet and reminding her child to wash their hands because it near dawn time. It can be analyzed that women's presence is very close to children so that they always pay attention to their children. At the level, it signifier can be analyzed that the women's function in family scope is determined by the perspective of how women can organize and manage the domestic sector and provide protection to their children. When a woman tends to look after and protect her child, it is a success and a measure of success as a mother (Novrinda & Yulidesni, 2017).

The mother's role as a nurse is the figure who cares most about the cleanliness and her child's health. Mothers always give their best to maintain their children; mothers are also role models who instill religious values in children; a good mother figure gives good role models to imitate these good deeds. At the connotation level above, a mother wants her child to be free from germs and clean while fasting; it can be interpreted that a mother is very concerned about her child. She wants her child to be clean and healthy in fasting and also in his daily life.

The social culture implies that women must take care of children so that women are always there in every child's activities and can be good role models for their children. Stereotypes of women in society are described as good wives and mothers. They must always support and accompany children in any condition and encourage all efforts to succeed and succeed. Gender view can lead to women's subordination, resulting in an attitude that places women in an insignificant position.

The second picture is depicted as a mother who has to suhoor's prepare food for her family. In this advertisement, it appears that a mother works alone with her child and prepares the meal, while her husband wakes up and eats immediately. The role of women in the Dettol

household has multiple jobs or has numerous parts: childcare and cooking. The double load is also depicted in the scenes below:



Figure 3. A mother, in front of the house with her child, while her husband is leaving for work



Figure 4. A mother is at home with her child while her husband works outside.

The picture above can be analyzed that men have an ordinate role (primary) in society because they are considered more substantial, more potential, and felt more productive. Meanwhile, women are considered to have a subordinate role (controlled) because they are considered less productive. The consequence of this assumption is that men have the head role of the family and breadwinner by working in the public sphere (working outside the home) while women take positions in the domestic sphere.

The image above can be analyzed that the women's role in the family is always there in their husband's and children's busy lives. They have to do all housework and also make it their daily routine. This condition proves that the family needs women's roles in a household. However, women are even reduced in their role in reproductive functions and other household chores.

At the level of the meaning of connotation above, it can be analyzed that the men's positions and women are different also unequal, meaning that there are differences in roles and functions between them reflect the domination of power or ordinate and subordinate. As in the manifestation of gender justice subordinated, there is an assumption that women are irrational or emotional so that women cannot appear to lead, resulting in the emergence of an attitude that places women in an insignificant position. For example, if the family's finances are very limited in a household and have to decide to send their children to school, boys will get top priority.

There is an assumption that women are nurturing and diligent and are not suitable to be the head of the household, resulting in all domestic work being the women's responsibility. Consequently, women have to work hard for a long time to maintain the cleanliness and tidiness of their household, from cleaning and mopping floors, cooking, washing, preparing water for bathing, and raising children. As seen in the scene below, women experience multiple roles, where they have to look after children while cleaning the house at the same time.





Figure 5. A mother is mopping the floor at home after her husband leaves to work outside.

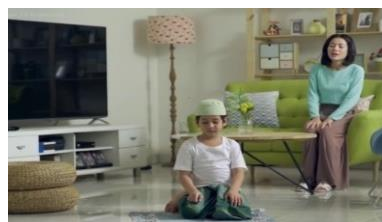


Figure 6. After cleaning the house, a mother teaches and watches her child pray.

At the level of denotation meaning above, it can be seen in the picture that a mother pours Dettol into a holding container to mop or clean her house. The woman depicted in the ad also pays attention to her child's behavior so that she continues to supervise and reprimand her if she makes a mistake. From the dialogue and visualization described above, it can be analyzed that the women's responsibility in a family is not only related to the maintenance or cleanliness of the physical house itself and to protect their children from all external conditions that can affect their children.

In the picture above, we can see a child running around so that the mother admonishes her not to over-run. The mother is worried about her child's health. It can be analyzed that there is an assumption that women are nurturing and diligent and are not suitable to be the head of the household, resulting in all domestic work being the women's responsibility. Consequently, many women have to work hard for a long time to keep their home clean and tidy, from mopping to cooking to looking after children.

A sign of a mother cleaning or mopping her house using Dettol Soap, in the scene above, the mother says to her child, "Come on in, do not run around if you are tired" from where it can be analyzed that a mother is always worried about home cleanliness and health. Her son wants his house to stay clean and healthy so that their family is free from germs. Due to social construction, gender women are known to be gentle, emotional, and motherly, so that women are considered suitable for doing domestic work and caring for children.

The woman's role or housewife is narrowed to only caring for the house so that it is clean and looking after and caring for children. Women are managing the household, so many women bear the domestic workload resulting in the traditional growth and public confidence in all domestic work implementation. The socialization of gender roles creates a feeling of guilt in women if they do not carry out these domestic duties.

The advertisement's connotation is to show a good woman who always pays attention to her child, including maintaining cleanliness in her house. Because he wants his family to be clean and free from dirt and dust and protect his family members so that every family member feels protected and feels safe, another analysis shows women experience a double burden role where they have to clean the house and look after children. Any family and society have accepted this condition because it is continuously socialized to each gender. Their roles in personal life, household, and social life seem to have been determined.

A mother who is watching her child perform prayers signifies the responsibility of a mother who must introduce and invite her child to pray to instill confidence in morality and religious aspects that govern life in the world then hereafter. This fact can be related to the injustice of gender manifestation in stereotypes. It is negative labeling or tagging for specific groups or sexes and generally occurs in women. In this case, a mother is considered a reflection of her family. When the child commits deviant deeds, the person to be blamed is the mother. The role of women is constructed always to prioritize cleanliness in their families, both physically and spiritually.

The marginalization of women is even supported by the existence of biased religious interpretations, traditions, and other constructions that cannot be denied. The social construction that occurs is considered natural and is interpreted as a provision that comes from God. Most of the nature of women currently believed is a social construction that can be refuted and corrected. This understanding is supported by the reality in a patriarchal society, that in construction gender, men are given a special position to be free from anything related to domestic activities and taking care of children because of their public interests.



Figure 7. A mother watching her child who is playing then advises him to keep clean because, according to Islam's teachings, 'cleanliness is part of faith.'



Picture 8. A mother brings a towel and soap to her child after he plays.

The denotation sign above shows a mother having a dialogue with her child, and in the next picture, that mother takes Dettol branded bath soap with a towel and gives it to her child. From the scene, it can be interpreted that denotation meaning is as follows: the mother's role in a household also always gives its impression. Not only educating her child to perform prayers so that the cleanliness of her faith is maintained and still behaves well, but a mother also supports the physical cleanliness of her child by giving bath soap and towels and immediately telling the child to take a shower. It can be analyzed that women's real condition in society has a different position from men, namely that women are fully responsible for taking care of children and taking care of physical and children's spiritual cleanliness and families. Meanwhile, for men, not only do they feel they are not responsible, even in many traditions, men are traditionally prohibited from engaging in domestic work.

The meaning of the picture or scene above is that a mother is depicted in a mother role, which is a wise action so that we can see that the woman or mother positions herself as a caregiver or nurturer who is identical with full of love and deep concern for her child and family. Mothers also prepare their children to become useful members of society by educating and advising their children. The connotation of a mother who is always worried about her child's

cleanliness and health must also be able to foster and mature the personality of the child and family as well as possible. Gender differences cause women to be constructed as gentle, patient, and loving creatures and are suitable for caring for and educating children.

### **Myth in a Dettol Soap Commercial**

Myth is a second level semiotic system, and finding the myth in advertisement is not easy. What we see, hear, and read is the first level of semiotic system. Therefore, myth analysis must be directed at the second level semiotic system formation by looking at connotation elements (Barthes, 2018). The myth in the scenes is that doing domestic work and taking care of children is a women's duty. The role of women has been socially constructed to be responsible for caring for children, which is often seen as a woman's nature.

The task of women is also described as not only taking care of children but also having to take care of cooking, mopping, bathing children, being friends to confide in, and teaching worship. A woman must do all this work. As a result, women get excessive work roles but are always considered not working. Women have been constructed that their main task is to manage the household while men are constructed to play a role in the public sphere. With all domestic work being the responsibility of women, the consequence is that many women have to work hard for a long time.

Meanwhile, because of gender assumptions about women have been socialized to pursue their roles; on the other hand, men aren't culturally obliged to follow various domestic work types. The community already has a women construction with parts, namely caring for the family, serving husbands, caring for children, and managing the household. In the symbols above it strengthens the mother to be domesticated. The form of these values serves to prove that mothers must be at home to take care of children and do domestic work so that it becomes a myth that is believed in society that educating children and taking care of household chores are women's duties and responsibilities.

### **Conclusion**

In this Dettol Soap ad, there is no violence experienced by women. Women are considered to have a subordinate role, while men are considered to have an ordinate role. The existence of this negative labeling of women shows the existence of discrimination and injustice against women. The many stereotypes attached to women have resulted in the emergence of implicit restrictive measures not to take part in the public sphere. Even though women have had many conveniences nowadays, in various advertisements, women are still considered second-class human beings.

Women's representation in Dettol Soap ad shows that women are always in the domestic sphere, while men work in public. The women's subordination is shown by the women who are always dealing with domestic work and care of children. Women in the ad portrayed as responsible and multitalented. The double workload of women in charge of maintaining and taking care of children and preparing food for her family, keeping the house clean, and maintaining the cleanliness of their physical and spiritual is shown with a woman who always educates their children to pray.

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