OBJECTIFICATION OF THE MARGINAL IN POLITICAL ADS DURING INDONESIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN 2014

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ABSTRAK


Kata Kunci: iklan politik, marginal, objektifikasi, pemilu, representasi, semiotik, stereotype

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I. INTRODUCTION
The latest Presidential Election in Indonesia was held on July 9, 2014. Months before the big day, the president candidates used the campaign period to attract public attention through political ads in mass media, including print media. Political ads in print media are still considered as a strong imaging strategy to attract attention and trust from the voters. As Piliang states (cited in Tinarbuko, 2009: vii), politics in information era, political image of a figure, which is built from variety of media – regardless of the skill, leadership, and the political achievement, - seems to be a mantra that determines political choice.

Unfortunately, in an attempt to attract voters’ attention through ads, the candidates often objectify, verbally or visually, certain people, including the marginal. This leads to an objectification of the marginal who are often pictured in political ads in variety of text and visual, which is not more than candidates’ gratification of their political narcissism. By using the identity of the marginal, the candidates build their image, even though it might not be the same or even contrary to their real character, such as “close to farmers”, “be friendly to market merchants”, “defender of the marginal, etc. (in Tinarbuko, 2009: vii).

These prove that political ads are basically the same as commercial ads (Tinarbuko, 2009: 1) that show a gap between the shown image and the reality. Image of “love the marginal”, “care about the poor”, “farmers’ best friend” etc., is no more than image that become one signs and semiotics but never be reality (Piltang in Tinarbuko, 2009: xiii).

The concept of marginal itself derives its meaning from marginalization. According to Jenson (2000: 1), marginalization is not only a phenomenon of material resources, but also includes, limited participation in terms of politics and culture, market and so on. He also argues that a marginalized group is characterized by certain condition such as an absence of economic resources, lack of knowledge, political rights and capacity, recognition and power.

This article discusses the objectification of the marginal in political ads during Presidential Election campaign 2014 in Indonesian national newspaper in March – July 2014 edition in order to give an understanding on how political ads represent objectification of the marginal and how this objectification is strengthening the existing stereotype about marginal groups in the society. National newspaper is chosen because Nielsen Media Research Indonesia survey (in Tinarbuko 2009: xv) shows that political ads mostly appear in newspaper worth 1,3 trillion rupiah or equal to approximately US $ 93,000.

II. FRAMEWORK
Media content and representation
Mass media are economic entities that distribute its content to be consumed by society. Rocha (2013: 2) states that media use common and familiar language to maintain the continuity of the production and consumption process of its product. However, the language, which is produced and disseminated through mass media, is not neutral. It is a language that reflects the ideology of the related media.

The disseminated ideology is an ideology that is shaped by the representation of the relevant audiences, which is then constructed, repeated, and transformed into media products; such as text and images in advertisements, newspaper, soap opera, magazine, film, etc. (Rocha 2013: 2). Representation, as mentioned by Stuart Hall (1997: 17), is production of concept meaning in our mind through language. Those meanings, which are reflected
through the relation between language and concept, will, in the end, help the mind to refer to the real or imaginary world about a thing, a person, or an event. Hall also states that word, sound or visual image (language) that have meaning is called as sign, whereas sign represents concept that influences the meaning system of a culture (Hall 1997: 18).

There are two systems in representation. Firstly, a “system”, which all the objects, persons, and events, are correlated with the concept in mind. The second system is language that can help to correlate concept and idea into words, sounds, or visual images (Hall 1997: 17 - 18).

The visual language that is used in political ads makes it possible to maintain and preserve the identity stereotype of the marginal. According to Dixon (2000), Domke (2001), Brown-Givens and Monahan (2005), stereotype is a cognitive structure or category, which is used to evaluate a group and its member (in Muñiz 2013: 292). Stereotype is commonly used to separate between “our” world and “their” world, as stated by Eriyanto that text can be used to show negative characters of someone, a group, a class, or an act (Eriyanto 2001: 126).

Usually, stereotypes can be done by “simplifying or exaggerating”, “justification and rationalization” of a group’s characters in relation to other groups, and also the values that are held by the group (in Muñiz 2013: 292). Paez (in Muñiz 2013: 292) supports that stereotype can be shaped through particular description, which is about (a) physical appearance, (b) behavior, (c) personality, and (d) job of the outside member of the group.

Rocha (2013:3) argues, when an identity is translated into media product, it will change into a code or pattern that refers to idea, style, and act, which is no longer based on individual judgement but has become a collective classification like social value. In political ads, the stereotypes are used to objectify the marginal. Thus, it is the mass media, which play a big role as social learning source, including in spreading as well as strengthen the stereotype, that a society always has a relation with a group that is “different” from them (Peez in Muñiz 2013: 293).

Political advertisement (ad) is an ad that offers something related to politic, such as political party, political participation, and individual role, which are intended to raise attention, interest, attitude and also awareness from the targeted audiences (Tinarbuko 2009: 58).

In this research, political ads are understood as media that contain communication messages. As part of communication, message element in political ads has to be wrapped to be right on target. It means that, political ads are determined by the targeted audiences and through what media it is delivered (Tinarbuko 2009: 1). Not only as communication form, political ads are also part of political business, so that economic logic often dominates its practices (Tinarbuko 2009: 14). Therefore, the identity of marginal commonly is often posited as commodity to sell in political ads. The problem occurs when the political ads are documented and published through mass media, whether print, online, or electronic, it becomes media reality (Tinarbuko 2009: 4). Tinarbuko (2009: 4) also states, when a social reality, including in political ads, is documented and published in mass media, then it becomes media reality; a reality that is believed by society.
Objectification of the marginal in mass media

The term “the marginal”, mostly refers to those who are socially, politically, economically, or culturally marginalized. Those are including, proletarian, beggar, disabled, etc. Freire (2002) states, in educational context, the marginal can be differentiated into two groups, which are disabled and street children, and the poor that used to violence.

In addition to that, Peter Leonard (in Kagan, 2002: 3) defines social marginality as 'being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social reproductive activity'. Indeed, the concept of marginal is unfixed one. Kagan (2002: 2) believes that,

“Whole societies can be marginalized at the global level while classes and communities can be marginalized from the dominant social order. Similarly, ethnic groups, families or individuals can be marginalized within localities. To a certain extent, marginalization is a shifting phenomenon, linked to social status. So, for example, individuals or groups might enjoy high social status at one point in time, but as social change takes place, so they lose this status and become marginalized. Similarly, as life cycle stages change, so might people's marginalized position.” (Kagan, 2002: 2)

The marginal are often unfairly treated, whether in education or other areas. Even in political context, the marginal are often treated as asset/ commodity to boost image and electability. In this research, the concept of the marginal refers to the poor, disabled, and labor. The marginal often get unpleasant treatment from mass media. Mass media, which have been dominated by capitalism, make the marginal not well placed in mass media. Mass media see the marginal as market, as well as commodity to sell. Exploration, if we cannot call it exploitation, of the marginal in mass media can be seen in media content, that full of stereotype. For example, the marginal likes trifling things, or they must have health problem, etc.

The discourse about the marginal in Indonesia is still full of stereotype and objectification. At one side, they are considered as the weak, the helpless, and need to be protected. At the other side the marginal are also considered as, according to Wasserman (2010: 30), a tempting targeted market. Therefore, it is not surprising if the marginal also gets “space” in political ads because they can be the center of public attention. Though, according to Adichie (2009), the problem of stereotype is not on the unrighteousness, but it is never complete and not representative, so that using the identity of the marginal based on its stereotype will just perpetuate the stereotype itself.

This indicates the objectification of marginal in mass media during Presidential Election Campaign. Objectification means to disregard an individual’s personhood and positioned them as a thing (Johnson, 2015). Objectification of the marginal in president candidates’ political campaign ads can be seen in the visual language that is used to show stereotype concepts or meaning about the marginal itself. Thus, objectification of the marginal in political ads can be receipted or potentially directs to single perception, which perpetuates the incomplete stereotype.

In addition, political discourse in media, including in advertisement, is also dominated by media logic (capitalism), that emphasizes political simplification (Tinarbuko 2009: x). The objectification of the marginal is part of that simplification. By objectifying, political ads become more “simple”, so it is easier to be understood and more interesting. Thereby,
The objectification of the marginal in political ads in print media will be also believed by the society.

**III. METHODS**

Using semiotics, the methodology of this research is interpretive. Therefore, this research interprets the message in political campaign ads for presidential election in 2014. Semiotics is suitable for this research, mainly because semiotics tries to understand the meaning behind a sign. As mentioned by Sobur (2004: 87), semiotics as a model in social science, understands the world as a relation system with sign as the fundamental unit.

Sign can be simply defined as something that based on previous convention, can be considered to represent something else (Eco in Sobur 2004: 95). Besides, according to Saussure, sign consists of image and sound, called signifier. While the concept about sign that is understood by human mind, is called signified (in Berger 2000: 37). Sign is the result of the association between signifier and signified, and both of them always appear simultaneously and inseparable, which signifier is meaningless without signified, and vice versa (Chandler 2007: 15, 17).

In this research, the signifier is text (verbal or visual) in president candidates’ political campaign ads, which represents stereotypes of the marginal. Meanwhile the signified is the concept that can be understood from the text. In this regards, semiotics is useful to explain how the meaning shaped by the president candidates is disseminated by mass media through advertisement. Table 1 below can help to explain Saussure’s model in details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Semiotics Saussure’s Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SIGN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signifier</td>
<td>Signified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image/sound</td>
<td>Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image “Shabby old man with hat”</td>
<td>Beggar, which because of his economic condition has to ask for money on the street, exposed by sunlight and dust.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Berger (2000: 37)

Signifier and signified always have connection and inseparable. However, the relation is arbitrary, depends on cultural convention of the related society (Chandler, 2007: 28). Thus, the concepts of the marginal stereotype in Indonesian culture become a significant aspect in this research.

In addition, this research also observes image as part of symbol and typography. Tinarbuko (2009: 66) states, image is one of symbol or visual language, in which contains form structure, like line, color, and composition. Typography is selection of letter shape, letter size, and technique and how the letters are arranged into word or sentence that in line with message’s character, socially and commercially (Tinarbuko, 2009: 70).

Primary data for this research is president candidates’ political campaign ads 2014 in national print media, and the secondary data is the supportive data for this research, like book, journal articles, or other sources that can be used to strengthen the analysis. This is a
qualitative research, which not trying to generate the phenomenon. Therefore, sample in this research is chosen purposively, which refers directly to political campaign ads that show stereotype of the marginal in accordance with the research’s objective.

The print media in this research are those, who published political campaign ads with representation of the marginal from March – July 2014. These newspapers are *Kompas, Jawa Pos, Republika, Media Indonesia, and Koran Sindo.*

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of national newspapers from March 2014 – July 2014, can be found some political ads that objectify the marginal. Those newspapers are *Jawa Pos, Koran Sindo, Republika, Media Indonesia, and Kompas.*

Using Saussure’s model of semiotic, the result can be seen in Table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Date of publication</th>
<th>SIGN</th>
<th>Signifier</th>
<th>Signified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Koran Sindo</td>
<td>12 June 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence “Bersatu Melawan Kemiskinan” (Fight Against Poverty)</td>
<td>The word “poverty” represents labour or working class society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence “Bersatu Melawan Pengangguran” - (Fight Against Unemployment)</td>
<td>The word “unemployment” represents part of society that has no permanent job, which is also identical with labour or working class society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence “Bersatu Melawan Ketidakadilan” – (Fight Against Injustice)</td>
<td>The word “injustice” represents oppression that often happens to labour or working class society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Republika</td>
<td>21 June 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td>The image of President holds tomato and stands side by side with a man with cap, who is the tomatoes seller.</td>
<td>The image refers to the closeness to working class society and the willing to blend with the proletarian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Koko and cap that wear by the tomatoes seller.</td>
<td>It shows respect from the proletar that still feel ‘a distance’ or reluctant to the leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Signifier</td>
<td>Signified</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Media Indonesia</td>
<td>18 June 2014</td>
<td>Big smile from the candidate.</td>
<td>It shows happiness to be near to the people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional market as image location</td>
<td>Down to earth and willing to be friend with the working class society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence “lahir dari rakyat” – “Born from the people”</td>
<td>Shows that the candidate comes from ordinary people and not for the royal family or upper class society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image of the candidate’s visiting the traditional market and having</td>
<td>Shows the will to understand and listen what the people want.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>conversation there.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image of the candidate’s patting the back of a seller in the market.</td>
<td>Refers to sympathy and compassion to the working class society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image of the candidate’s touching goods in the market, like vegetables,</td>
<td>Shows the will to be involved and populist.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>spices, and even animals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The word farmer, fisherman, crafters, and proletar’s profession</td>
<td>Refers to profession that commonly does by working class society</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jawa Pos</td>
<td>25 June 2014</td>
<td>Image of a man in Madura’s clothes</td>
<td>Represents Maduranese with profession of working class society, such as sate seller.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Image of a man bear a hoe</td>
<td>Refers to farmer, that identical with working class society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Republika</td>
<td>24 June 2014</td>
<td>Image of the candidate’s hugging an old woman.</td>
<td>Shows compassion to the elderly, which also part of the lower society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As stated by Tinarbuko (2009: 53), advertisement, as a realization of mass culture, not only offers and influences people but also internalized certain values in it. This also happens in political ads of presidential campaign 2014. From the findings, can be seen that the representation of the marginal in the political ads still full of objectification. For example, from Koran Sindo, 12 June 2014, the ad is dominated with sentences that emphasize impartiality to the marginal, in this sense the working class society. The use of the words “poverty”, “unemployment” and “injustice”, is meant to create an impression that the marginal are those who have to be protected, saved, and considered by the president candidates. By doing so, the candidates want to create an image that they are able to protect and save the marginal.

As a proof, the images in in Republika, 21 June 2014, show the visualization of the candidates as the bearer of good news, Superman who is ready to help, or Santa Claus who give presents. The advertisement can be seen through two angles. First, in the ad, the candidate looks down to earth, willing to visit traditional market, greeting and blending with the working class society. According to Tinarbuko (2009, p. 66), visual language has typical characters to cause certain effects to the audiences. By stressing on the scene, where the candidate shows a big smile while holding a tomato in the traditional market, this ad wants to create a perception that the candidate is familiar with the marginal, including market traders. Second, the scene also shows that the marginal is the lower part of the society, dirty, and sometimes (sorry) disgusting, so that the act of touching or standing side-by-side to them can be considered as an achievement, and not just a common act.
But from the marginal’s point of view; they are conditioned to consider themselves as lower than the candidate. It can be seen from the clothes worn by the tomatoes seller. He wears special clothes, cap and *koko*, instead of daily working clothes. Cap and *koko* are special clothes that are usually worn in special occasions. It shows that it seems to be improper if the marginal wear their daily clothes to meet and greet the candidate. And it is reconstructed by the media and strengthen the stereotype that the marginal is lower that the candidate, so that they have to show respect to the candidate but changing their appearance to be more appropriate.

*Setting* (location) of the related political ad is a traditional market that is related to stereotype of the marginal. The marginal tend to be described as part of the society that usually gather and do activities in traditional market. The marginal are identical with non-modern place, such as traditional market. Combined with the sentence “born from the people”, this ad tries to legitimate that the marginal want to have a leader from their class or minimal close to their class (*promotion from the within*).

Besides, the political ads show clearly the profession of the marginal, such as farmer, fisherman, market traders, etc. For example, in Media Indonesia, 18 June 2014, those professions are written clearly and in capital because the ad producer, in this case political actor, wants to emphasize the candidate’s sympathy to the marginal. But most likely, it is only a political strategy to gain sympathy and support from the marginal, based on the stereotype that the marginal need to be protected and saved.

The same result can be seen in the political ad in Jawa Pos, 25 June 2014. It shows images that are full of stereotype and objectification of the marginal. In that ad, the identity of the marginal is highlighted based on stereotype that the marginal are identical with certain type of clothes and property. This ad also objectifies the Madura people and the farmer. A Madura is presented with typical clothes of the Madura, and a farmer is identically presented with shouldering a hoe.

Tendency to objectify the marginal in political ad is also shown in cliché scenes, such as the candidate hugs, kiss, and carries a child of the marginal. In political ads in Republika, 24 June 2014 and also Jawa Pos, 13 June 2014, there are some scenes, in which the marginal are posited as people who wanted to be noticed and cared. Thus, they are look very happy and peaceful when the candidate hugs or carries them. This kind of positioning is based on the stereotype that sees the candidate and the marginal in a dichotomy or binary opposition. In addition to that, this ad also objectifies the marginal as someone who need the candidates to be happy. These objectifications are used to reinforce the image of president candidates by creating contrasts between them.

As mentioned by Tinarbuko (2009: 16), a figure in political ads, including president candidate, is always shown as the bearer of the good news, an angel, or a savior. Meanwhile, the marginal are described as those who are sad, grim, unhappy, need to be saved and defensed. Even though the reality might be different. It is possible that what the expectation of the marginal is not to be protected because it refers to inferiority, but participation and equality. Nevertheless, stereotype is never complete and cannot be used to represent a population even if the stereotype is slightly correct.

So far, there is no political ad that sees the marginal equally and free from any stereotype and objectification. It happens because of the patronage logic in media products
that makes the political ads are almost produced with the same formula. As an impact, the media reality often replaces the social reality. The society tends to believe what they see in media as a single truth. It makes the stereotype and objectification in political ads is seen as common thing, and finally it becomes common for the society to do the stereotyping to the marginal in real life.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the marginal are objectified stereotypically in presidential election 2014’s political ads. It can be seen through text, verbal and visual, that is published in national newspapers from March – July 2014. Using semiotics, political ads in national media (Kompas, Republika, Jawa Pos, Koran Sindo, Media Indonesia) are analyzed by focusing on symbol, color, diction, nuance, etc.

Even though some of the ads do not show stereotype and objectification, the stereotypical ads still dominate the media. These ads perpetuate the stereotype in society and make the position of the marginal in society is more and more marginalized.

Saussure states (in Sobur 2004: 87), our view and perception about reality, are constructed by words and other signs in social context. In this research, political ads shape our view and perception about the marginal that always presented as the weak. Thus, the society tends to see the marginal as the group that need attention, and need to be protected but not recognition. Moreover, we also tend to objectify the marginal in real life based on what we see in the media. In other words, in social reality we also see the marginal stereotypically based on what we see in media, or in this sense is newspaper.

However, this research is focused only on the text of political ads. Thus, the next research in similar topic needs to be conducted to give a more comprehensive understanding about the representation of the marginal in mass media, including TV, radio, or internet. So that the understanding of the marginal will be more comprehensive and the society can avoid the tendency to objectify the marginal stereotypically.
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