

The Ideal Female Body on the Packaging Design of Traditional Medicine (Jamu)

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ABSTRACT

Jamu, an Indonesian traditional medicine used for treating ailments or sicknesses is also well known as a product for slimming especially for women. Through its packaging design, *jamu* for women depict female body in the form of photographs and illustrations. The female body is constructed to be seen attractive and become the ideal body. The research aims to read the ideal female body on the packaging design of *jamu* and to reveal the ideology behind them. We analyzed the packaging designs of *jamu* related to the formation of female body produced by five major manufacturers of traditional medicine that have survived for at least three generations: Air Mancur, Sido Muncul, *Jamu Jago*, Nyonya Meneer and *Jamu Iboe*. This analysis uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory that reveals the linguistic message, the denoted image and rhetoric of the image. Ideal body is still struggling around the stereotype that physically described as thin and also plump with the emphasise on slim waist, big hip and breast. In keeping with the Javanese philosophy, female body is identical to the nature. The construction of female body is closely related to social and cultural context. Through the object and the pose, female body is depicted as traditional and modern, natural and cultural.

1. Introduction

At the level of the individual, weight is turned from an incidental feature of a person into an identity. Being "overweight" becomes a numerically defined status as well as a marker of individual failure to regulate the body appropriate (Heyes, 2011: 170). Shaping the ideal body is important especially for women. In Javanese tradition there is a traditional medicine that is well known as a product for slimming named *jamu*. *Jamu* is traditional medicines that are made from plants, animal materials, mineral materials, extract or mixtures of these materials used for treating ailments or sicknesses based on experience and handed down through generations (Harmanto, 2007: 13). Besides treating sickness, *jamu* is used to maintain the beauty and health. It is believe that drinking *jamu* regularly can make the body fresh and healthy. *Jamu* is derived from ancient Javanese language *jampi* or *usodo*. The Javanese dictionary of herbs (*primbon*) mentions that there are four classifications of *jamu* based on usability: *jalu usada*, *wanito usada*, *rarya usada*, and *triguna usada*. *Jalu usada* is *jamu* for men's health and virility. *Wanito usada* is used to treat women's health and beauty including reproductive health, beauty, and postpartum care. *Rarya usada* is *jamu* for children to cure intestinal worms, cough, diarrhea. *Triguna usada* is *jamu* for all people who suffered common diseases such as dizziness, cough, flu, or vomiting (Trubus, 2010: 6). Among many kinds of *jamu*, this research is focused on *jamu* for women (*wanito usada*) in the form of powder that is used to shape female body.

It is very interesting to find out how *jamu* as a health product places the image of women in their packaging. Uniquely, the image of women in photographs featuring women in many kinds of fashion, hair style, gesture or in illustrations that describing women naked or abstract have been used for more than decades. *Jamu* through packaging design seems distinguishing itself from other health products, especially medical drugs. We believe that *jamu* packaging designs have an important role to depict the ideal female body. The research aims to read the ideal female body on the packaging design of *jamu* and to reveal the ideology behind them. It can give a description about the culture and the construction of female body on the packaging design media.

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2. Methodology

We analyzed the packaging designs of *jamu* related to the formation of female body produced by five major manufacturers of traditional medicine that have survived for at least three generations: *Air Mancur*, *Sido Muncul*, *Jamu Jago*, *Nyonya Meneer* and *Jamu Iboe*. Among ninety *jamu* for women that we found, there are nine *jamu* for slimming to be analyzed. We collected *jamu* packaging design as our main data through the official website of *jamu* producer and did the survey in *jamu*'s kiosk or retail. We also got some complementary data through observation and informal interview with retailers.

This research is a qualitative study that investigated through textual approach/ literature by using semiotic as a method of analysis. The analysis uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory that reveals the linguistic message, the denoted image and rhetoric of the image. Semiotic helps us not to take representations for granted as reflections of reality; enabling us to take them apart and consider whose reality they represent (Chandler, 2007: 82). In semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. Contemporary semioticians study how meanings are made and how reality is represented (Chandler, 2007). There are two linked operations that are required to complete the representation process by which meanings are produced. First, we need a basic code which links a particular piece of material which is cut and sewn in a particular way (signifier) to our mental concept of it (signified). Second, a wider level, which links these signs to broader, cultural themes, concepts or meanings. Barthes called the first, descriptive level of denotation. The second level, that of connotation. Denotation is the simple, basic, descriptive level, where consensus is wide and most people would agree on the meaning. At the second level, connotation, wider meaning is no longer a descriptive level of obvious interpretation. Connotations are not purely personal meanings; they are determined by the codes to which the interpreter has access. According to Barthes in his book photographic message, there are connotation procedures, the first three (trick effect, pose, objects) should be distinguished from the last three (photogenia, aestheticism, syntax) (Barthes, 1984: 20-25). The analysis of the image emphasize on poses and objects that directly related to female body.

Connotation and denotation are often described in terms of level of meaning. The second level of signification, Barthes suggest, is more 'general, global and diffuse...'It deals with 'fragments of ideology (Barthes, 1977, Barthes, 1981; Barthes 1983). This common domain of the signifieds of connotation is that of ideology, which cannot but be single for a given society and history, no matter what signifiers of connotation it may use. To the general ideology, correspond signifiers of connotation which are specified according to the chosen substance. These signifiers will be called connotators and the set of connotators a rhetoric, rethoric thus appearing as the signifying aspect of ideology (Barthes, 1987: 49). Ideology propounded by Barthes mostly operates at the level of connotative (Procter. 2004: 66).

3. Findings

3.1. Linguistic Messages

There are many linguistic messages in *jamu* packaging design but the main linguistic message refers to the name of the product. There are variety names of *jamu* for shaping the body, like *Galian Singset*, *Galian Montok*, *Tetep Langsing* and *Patmosari*. Mostly the producers of *jamu* use *Galian Singset* to name their slimming products. *Galian* comes from Javanese ancient language *galih*, which means bone; stem veins; liver/ terraces. According to Sanskrit dictionary, *galih* has many meanings and one of the meaning that related to *jamu* means *jamune wong wadon* or *jamu* for women (Poerwadarminta, 1939; Prawiroatmojo, 1988). The use of Sanskrit that is believed come from Kawi language or Javanese language seems to confirm the presence of Java on *jamu* products, besides it indicates the presence of the past. Sanskrit is considered as mystical language so it connotes 'traditionality'. In Javanese culture, there is a term *slirane sidhet singset*, which means compact and slim body. The term *singset* is only referring to slim female body, so this text is a metonymi of the meaning 'femininity.'

Another text that describes about female body is *Galian Montok*. The function of *Jamu Galian Montok* is to increase appetite. *Montok* in Indonesian language means fat, solid body or plump, it is generally intended for women, infants, or children to have larger body size but not considered obesity.

There is a slimming product that use another text *Tetep Langsing*. This product helps reducing body fat and lose weight. One producer has produced three slimming products which are *Galian Singset*, *Tetep Langsing* and *Patmosari*. The word *tetep* in Javanese language means steady. *Langsing* in Indonesian language means

slim, the body shape that is not thin or fat. The combination of the words *Tetep Langsing* means stay slim. There is one of product name that refer to a numbers, *Patmosari*. *Pat* stands for *empat* means four. *Mo* stands for *limo* means five and *sari* means essence. So *patmosari* means *inti empat lima* or the essence of fourty five . This product is especially for girls to maintain their body fresh, slim, solid and make their faces shine.

3.2. The Images of Women in Photographs

The photograph doesn't stand alone. The 'meaning' of a photograph, does not lie exclusively in the image, but in the conjunction of image and text. Two discourses, the discourse of written language and the discourse of photography are required to produce and 'fix' the meaning (Hall, 1972). Reading a photograph also depends closely on the reader's culture, knowledge of the world, and ethical and ideological stances (Barthes, 1961: 29). Barthes adds that 'the viewer receives at one and the same time the perceptual message and the cultural message' (Barthes, 1964: 36). Photography 'seems to found in nature the signs of culture, masking the constructed meaning under the appearance of the given meaning' (Barthes, 1964: 45-46). John Tagg argues that 'the camera is never neutral. The representation produces is highly coded' (Tagg, 1988, 63-63; cf. 187).

In *jamu* packaging designs for women, we see a sign that prominent presence there, the idea of representing women. Women that become the point of interest look at the age of 40s. The shape of the body, face, gestures and objects in particular clothing worn become an index for most middle-aged women. The women represent mother figure. The medium shot photograph of women in *jamu Galian Singset* show the body from head to hip. These images make women look personal and feminin, women are displayed by accentuating the contours of their body, so that there are the connotation 'sensuality'. In one of a woman gesture, her hand pose slightly bent and holds *kebaya* leads right in front of her stomach. While the other woman holds a fan with both hands and positioned in front of her stomach. The positions of the hands in front of the abdomen become an index for a flat stomach, which indicate slimmer body. In addition, the hands that are slightly bent emphasize waist line so that the slimmer body curves will look more prominent. These two women wear *kebaya* made of brocade material. *Kebaya* worn by these women are a kind of *putu/kutu baru* with transparent brocade *kebaya*, so the underwear and color of the skin of the women become slightly visible. *Kebaya* is a traditional Javanese cloth that nowadays is mostly weared only in formal occasion. How to wear *kebaya* is dictated by strict rules. *Kebaya* fabric as a national dress indicates few things. First, *kebaya* defines women as wives submit to higher authority, her husbands. In addition, the use of *kebaya*, is very limiting. *Kebaya* fabric often means clothes hamper movement, as well as expose and highlight the contours of the female body shape (Suryakusuma, 2012). Moreover, there is an objects that are hidden behind *kebaya* which is *setagen* or in modern terms named corset. *Setagen*, the shape like long cloth that serves as a belt has a noble philosophy. The long form is a symbol that is closely related to Javanese proverb "*dowo ususe*" or long intestines which means be patient. *Setagen* generally has a slender shape, so there is the impression and harmony with a long span. Slender implies be "slim", not fat, proportional. Long before many drugs and cosmetics emerge, the Javanese are already aware of how the appearance of the body become more suitable. Deep inside slenderness, *setagen* is very tight and pressed the abdomen. It has meaning, stop greedy. *Kebaya* and *setagen* can represent 'attachment', 'constraint', 'formality', 'traditionality', 'femininity' and 'sensuality.'



Picture 1. Women Photographs in Traditional *Kebaya*

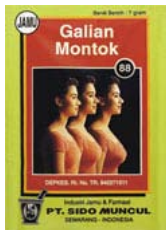
Besides described in traditional look, woman is also depicted in modern appearance. Poses that stand out from this woman is holding her left hand, half bent, while her right hand touching her neck. Woman is chosen as models look skinny, tall, slim, with flat chest. She wears sleeveless shirt in light green color. This shirt looks informal, natural-looking color. This shirt is more convenient for sports activities, shows openness, courage and energetic. The trousers that she wears resembled training pants which can be a mark

that a woman has an exercise activity. The *white color* also signifies something 'neutral', 'clean' and related to 'medical'. Overall, the poses and the objects of this woman connote 'openness', 'freedom', 'modernity', 'femininity' and 'masculinity.'



Picture 2. Woman Photograph in Sleeveless Modern Cloth

The function of *jamu* is not only shaping the female body become slim, but also to make the body become proportionally fatter. In the case of *jamu Galian Montok* the women images in this product refer to the shape of women breast, eventhough the function of *jamu Galian Montok* is to make a whole body fatter. These poses depict three women in the same positions, but with different breast shapes. Three women with the same faces but different body shape indicate changes, this images bring dynamism. Tight cloth in orange color resembles her yellow skin color reminiscent on desired breast that are like yellow young coconut or in Javanese terms *susune nyengkir gading*. The images of these women connote 'modernity', 'femininity' and 'sensuality.'



Picture 3. Women Photograph in Tight Modern Cloth

3.3. Women in Illustrations

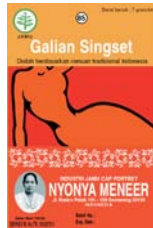
The images on packaging design of *jamu* consist not only photographs but also illustrations. The analysis of the rhetoric of the image distinguish images of photographs and illustrations or drawings, although both have in common substance of the message which based on line, surface, shades. Color nicks, scratches lines, and all other visual elements within an image work together to form a cluster of icons that can be recognized as something, whether objects, people, events geometric shapes and so on (Budiman, 2011: 117).

The illustrations of women in the packaging designs of *jamu* are also depicted as iconic. The most prominent poses of this illustration is a woman who sitting in cross-legged position. In contrast to standing poses, seated poses make a woman with her whole body become visible. This woman wears *kemben*. *Kemben* is a Javanese traditional cloth, which cover the body only limited to the chest like tank top. The pink color of *kemben* strenghten the connotation of 'femininity.' Illustration of a woman wearing *kemben* is described in many Indonesian comics are usually trying to portray a princess, a dancer or a fairy in ancient time. The use of shawl is also support the appearance like a Javanese dancer or a fairy in Javanese culture. The illustration of woman is not skinny but contains. This illustration connotes 'femininity', 'traditionality' and 'sensuality.'



Picture 4. Illustration of Woman in Traditional *Kemben*

The illustration of a woman in the packaging design of *jamu* is also described faceless. Eventhough without a face, we can recognise the body as female body. This very simple illustration showing only the female body especially the waist, hip and chest, so this part of the body support the appearance that the woman is indeed slim. The size of the waist compare to the hip is not proportional, this is an abstract and imaginary body. The body is also illustrated naked with flexible line but firm, it connotes 'femininity' and 'sensuality.'



Picture 5. Illustration of Iconic Female Body

This woman is described not wearing any cloth or naked. Illustration on *jamu* packaging design depicts a woman who seemed to be dancing. A woman who is good at dancing is a graceful woman. Her body is not rigid but flexible, easily conditioned to form movements that can not be done by most women. The position of a woman depicted in sideways gives a clearer picture of the contours of the female body. Object that accentuate a woman who looks naked to be the only object that stands out in this packaging design. This illustration depicts the shape of the ideal female body that usually consists of slim waist, big hip and large breast, the shape that is almost impossible to achieved, this is an imaginary woman body shape. This illustration represents 'femininity' and 'sensuality' of a woman.



Picture 6. Illustration of Iconic Female Body

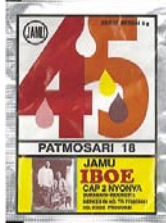
The illustration of female body in the packaging design of *jamu* is also depicted as a symbolic. When observed more closely at the yellow picture with black stripe, we can notice the silhouette of a woman body with large breast, small waist and big hip. Yellow object can be a signifier of body shape, while black and white lines in the yellow object seems to be a signifier of bone or blood flow. The body is very abstract because it is almost impossible to have that size of breast, waist and hip proportions as pictured. The body is illustrated together with the nature, it symbolizes that woman body identic with nature. These three trees can signify the presence of nature. In the context of *jamu*, the body shape is closely related with natural ingredients.



Picture 7. Illustration of Abstract Female Body

On *jamu Patmosari*, there is no image of human objects, flora and fauna. The image is composed of a number four and five which are positioned behind the dropped liquid with white, yellow, pink and purple color that can symbolize water, sweat, blood, or *jamu* liquid. Considering that this product is for slimming, the number forty five should related to the body weight. Related with the function of *jamu* to make the female body especially teenager stay slim and thinner, this figure refers to the ideal teen weight that should be forty five

kilograms. That weight could be a reasonable weight for women and especially teenage girls who want to look slimmer and thinner. The numbers represent the ideal weight. The quantitative measurement constructs the ideal female body, the body is numerically defined.



Picture 8. Female Body as Number

4. Discussions

4.1. Traditional Ideal Body

Since the function of *jamu* is for body, body become an important object in *jamu* product. Through the object, the presence of tradition as a visual construction illustrated by the presence of Javanese women with physical attributes or *kebaya* as clothes and *konde* as her hairdo. The nature of traditional Javanese culture is identical to the *kraton* (palace). In Java, the palace is very instrumental in the authority of the Javanese culture. Javanese culture tends to be *kratonik* (Endraswara, 2012: 167). In socio-cultural, women generally want to look beautiful, fragrant, healthy and graceful. Picture of women in that era are the women in the palace who are socially included in the category of *ndara* or nobility in the sense of the royal family. Nobility usually synonymous with elite people, including face and body which are elegance, beautiful, slim, clean, fragrant and has a gentle nature, patience and always being serviced. This is certainly contrary to her servants which are usually with such unwanted physical or in Javanese term called *cangik* and *limbuk* which are less beautiful, plump, dirty and sometimes smelled of sweat, and they are more rugged and haste (Suseno, 1984). *Cangik* is often described as the elderly woman who is skinny and ugly. Meanwhile *limbuk* is often described as fat and ugly woman. *Cangik* with her daughter '*limbuk*', both are a true friends, act as '*Rewang*' (personal assistant) for princess or empress to vent, contemplating life and discuss her anxiety (Wayang, 2011). Princess and their servants are described as a kind women eventhough they have different physical appearance which are beautiful and ugly.

Furthermore, the characteristics of the Javanese culture formed through cultural symbols in packaging design are found in the form of objects such as *kebaya* (traditional cloth), *konde* (bun), hairpin, shawl, *setagen* (long belt). The objects contain Javanese philosophy and convey a particular message. Culturally, we are still a feudal and hierarchical society that secretly live in a world of kings, queens and sultans (Suryakusuma, 2012: 41). The appearances of elite class women are still reflected in the design of the packaging of *jamu*.

The image of traditionalism also associated with traditional woman roles as housewife. Women are not positioned as individuals who are active and engaged, independent and able to be personalized. On the other hand, women are always reminded of their nature and particular reproductive responsibilities and household such as cleaning, cooking and childbearing (Gardiner, 2002: 102). Family leader or head of household is the father, not the mother. It is true that the mother has a great authority in the household sector. Influence and their power in the region, notably Java, is quite large as can be seen from the results of the study of anthropology. However, it looks like men are considered worthy to occupy the position of the leader in a public position. The position of women remain in the domestic sector (kanca wingking) (Endraswara, 2012: 98). Although women have become mother that usually have bigger body shape, women must work hard to remain slim, to become ideal partner of her husband physically. In traditional point of view, the ideal female body can only be owned by women who have self-control.

4.2. Modern Slimming Women

It turns out that female body images are not always reflect traditionalism, eventhough *jamu* is defined as a traditional medicine. The images also depict female body through poses and objects as a modern women. The pictures of a modern female body are open, free, dynamic and active. Women do not only have their activities inside the house but also outside, in the public domain. The image of a female body wrapped in

modernity, as if to communicate that a woman is a creature that is 'dynamic', 'active', not only 'feminine' but also has a 'masculine' side like a man. *Jamu* is not only represented by an image of passive woman who has traditional nature, but *jamu* is also dynamic, modern like chemical drugs. Woman body can also be strong like a man. Her body that is slim, tall, with flat chest symbolizes that woman exercise and keep moving. This is in contrast with the body of an overweight woman who is often perceived as lazy woman. In the modern concept, a woman with the ideal body is an active and dynamic figures as an actress, singer, movie star, athlete or career woman. The more active a woman, the more dynamic she move her body, she is not only healthy but also becomes slim. In the modern view, women obtain the ideal body, by performing activities.

4.3. Body as Nature

In the illustrations, mostly female body are depicted beyond tradisional and modern. Women are depicted naked brings the connotation of 'nature' or 'natural'. In Javanese traditional metaphor, female body and nature is a mirror. A woman body raises shadow of natural environment: the eyes, teeth, and gums reflect a type of flower, the arms and waist like slender plants creeping, her calves like the curve of pandanus' flower, and her chest like a fantasy coconut (Creese, 2012: 25). The beauty and elegance of a woman body is the mirror of beauty and elegance of nature and vice versa. Moreover, the picture of female body displayed on this *jamu* packaging design for woman can be explained in detail in a Javanese proverbs such as *astane nggendewa gading* (hand like ivory bow), *bangkekane nawon kemit* (waist like a *kemit* wasp who has small waist and big hip), *pundake nraju emas* (shoulders balanced like the scale of gold), *bokonge manjang ngilang* (buttocks like container made of coconut leaves), *susune nyengkir gadhing* (breast like yellow coconut), *wentise mukang gangsir* (feet like crickets), *kempole nyikil walang* (thighs like grasshopper legs), *kempole ngembang pudhak* (thighs like pandan leaves), *slirane sidhet singset* (compact and slim body) and there are still many Javanese proverbs related to woman five sense.

In the illustration, the body which in harmony with nature is described as the ideal body that has been created as a natural. It is as same as the natural beauty that God created. Woman doesn't have to control herself or do some activities to construct her body to become slim or in a certain desired shape. The ideal body is a gift for every woman, the body that is born perfectly, woman just need to treat her body like caring natural beauty.

4.4. Body as Culture

Body is also depicted as cultural. Body is not natural existence but cultural construct. Besides depicted as traditional and modern in certain appearance. Body is also becomes a numerically defined status. Female ideal body must achieve certain number. In order to have a certain body weight, woman must work hard to reduce her body calorie by doing some exercises, diet or drink water and *jamu* as depicted as a dropped liquid symbol. The inclusion of numbers in packaging design obscures the function of *jamu* for slimming, but contextually, the numbers is closely related to ideal body weight.

5. Conclusion

Jamu for women as a sign actually is a product that used to maintain health and treat certain diseases. The use of *jamu* as a product for slimming should aim for health. As a signification, through product names, photos and illustration, packaging design deflect from the notion of health products and naturalized that force people to accept the meaning of *jamu* as something that signifies 'femininity.' Women are considered feminine if she has a particular body shape that considered ideal. The formation of slim female body become the concept of beauty rather than the concept of health.

There are different meaning between the female ideal body on photograph and illustration. In photograph, female body is depicted as traditional and modern. The construction of female body is closely related to social and cultural context. Javanese culture mostly effect the image of ideal female body by referring to the perfect image of Javanese princess. The role of house mother is strong depicted on *jamu* packaging design, likewise her role in society. In traditional point of view, the ideal woman body can only be owned by a woman who has self-control. Slim body can be achieved if a woman eats just a little portion of food, restrain hungry, wear corset, do diet and drink *jamu*.

In the modern concept, women are depicted more dynamic. They obtain their ideal body by performing activities. There is a shift in the discourse of women who used to be passive become active, from static body

to dynamic body. Slim does not mean self-restraint not to eat. Woman is encouraged to eat as many as she want, in order to get slim body she has to be dynamic, active, do some exercises and drink *jamu*.

In illustration, female body is depicted as natural and cultural. Female body is described "naked" like nature, but on the other side, body must be constructed into certain numbers. Body is also become the tool of measurement, determined by its weight. Ideal body shape that is constructed in the image of *jamu* packaging design shows us that the construction of the body is fluid, there is a picture shifts influenced by the discourses of the ideal body. Body shape is not only thin, but also slim, plump, abstract, also related to nature and numbers.

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