

The Exploitation of Women's Body and Sensuality: The Attraction of Newspaper Movie Advertisements in The Local Daily Newspapers (*Waspada*, *Sinar Indonesia Baru*, and *Analisa*) in Medan in the 1970s

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Abstract. Newspaper advertising experienced a significant increase in the 1970s. During that period, three local daily newspapers were established in Medan: *Waspada*, *Sinar Indonesia Baru*, and *Analisa*. These newspapers displayed various advertisements in their publications, one of which was the advertisement to promote the film that would be shown in theaters at that time. In promoting films through these advertisements, many producers use women as a means of promotion. Women have their magnet to attract the audience's interest. This journal explains how women's representation in the local daily newspaper advertisements in Medan in the 1970s and how the exploitation of women's bodies and sexual attractiveness in the advertisements for the film's promotion was related to global discourse, especially in terms of women's appearance. The four stages of historical methods are applied to conduct the research: heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. The research results show that advertising producers often showcased pictures of beautiful and sexy women and even displayed vulgar words to attract the audience's interest which didn't represent the storyline of the film itself.

Keywords: Advertisement, newspaper, women's body exploitation

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1 Introduction

The problem of women's representation in the media industry, in this case in the national film industry, has always been an interesting study to discuss. History records that since the emergence of the cinematography industry, the presence of women has always been interesting to be observed and discussed. The compelling thing is that the presence of women is often highlighted not only in the film itself but also in the film poster. Almost every national film poster in circulation always shows a woman's face and body to attract the audience's interest in watching the film. Unfortunately, women's representation in film posters often gets negative views [1].

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In the 1970s in Indonesia, the political policies carried out during the New Order period greatly influenced various sectors of people's lives, not to mention the national film sector. During that period, the pace of urbanization was growing rapidly, and films became the most popular means of entertainment for people at that time. The development of urbanization gave birth to various new forms of entertainment from an economic and social perspective. It marked the rise of popular cultures such as comics, novels, music, and films [2]. The impact is that there was a conflict between anarchic censorship and the growing diversity of popular cultural expressions. At that time, various national films were shown in theaters, and they always received appreciation from the public, even though it is filmed in Hollywood, Bollywood, and Hong Kong, which dominated the market. The diversity of popular cultural expressions that developed at that time was evident in how the censors were more open to things that were sexual, and this can be seen from the film posters advertised through the mass media, in this case, in the newspapers.

Mass media is interesting because they indirectly profit from consumers and advertisers [3]. Therefore, the media are also competing to create a creative and unique picture so that consumers are interested in the products offered. That's what happened to the film posters circulating in local daily newspapers in Medan at that time. The advertising industry experienced very rapid growth in the 1970s. The economy experienced significant development where the government and private sectors helped each other in playing a major role in all wheels of the economy. In Medan, there were three major local daily newspapers: *Waspada*, established in 1947, and *Sinar Indonesia Baru*, established in 1970. And *Analisa*, established in 1973, added color to the dynamics of advertising, especially newspaper movie advertisements where they often displayed women's bodies and sexual attractiveness to attract the audiences to watch the film.

In its promotion, advertising is promoting its products and trying to build the value or image of the products it offers [4]. The problem that often arises is how to build the value or image of the product. Every so often, the advertisements use politics to invite and attract the public by using signs, images, or words that are gender biased. Gender bias is the most serious and frequent problem and is still happening in various aspects of social life, especially with the depiction of women in newspaper advertisements [5]. Therefore, this paper seeks to find answers to these problems. The focus of the discussion is the exploitation of women's bodies and sexual attractiveness in movie posters in local daily newspapers in Medan, namely *Waspada*, *Sinar Indonesia Baru*, and *Analisa* in the 1970s, which is related to how women were used as an attraction for

the movie promotion. *Waspada*, *Sinar Indonesia Baru*, and *Analisa* were chosen as the objects of writing with the following considerations: 1) They are local daily newspapers established in the post-independence era and the old order. They are still circulating up to this day. That makes them amongst the oldest local daily newspapers in Medan, 2) They have a daily publication schedule, and each publication displays advertisements for movie promotions on a full page.

2. Literature Review

The Dynamics of Indonesian Films

Based on Law no. 8 of 1992 concerning National Film, the film is the result of artistic and cultural creations as a medium of mass communication through sight and hearing, which is made based on the principle of cinematography by being recorded on celluloid tape, videotape and then shown through a mechanical and electronic projection system [6]. The history of cinema in Indonesia was first introduced on December 5, 1900, in Jakarta (formerly Batavia) [2]. The film tells the story of the journey of the King and Queen of the Netherlands in Deen Haag. The first local story film produced was a film entitled "Loetoeng Kasaroeng" in 1926, which NV Java Film Company produced. With a Sundanese legend background, this film was the first silent film in Indonesia.

From Indonesia's independence until 1947, film production was temporarily suspended. It was later in 1948 that films were produced again, such as: *Air Mata Mengalir di Tjitarum* (Tears flowing in Tjitarum), *Anggrek Bulan* (Orchid Moon), and *Jauh Dimata* (Far to the Eyes) [7]. In the early days of independence, the theme of the national film industry was marked by the spirit of revolution. Eight films were produced in 1949, 23 in 1950, and 65 in 1965 (Graphics of Indonesian Story Film Production: Sinematek Indonesia Film Center H. Usmar Ismail). Two major factors played a big role in the development of national films in the 1950s; Firstly, film companies founded by the Indonesians themselves emerged, namely the Indonesian National Film Company (Perfini), which was founded by Haji Umar Ismail and the Indonesian Artists Company (Persari) which was founded by the Indonesian Film Distributors Association (IPEFI). Secondly, the birth of several associations of film distributors and importer organizations, such as the Indonesian Film Distributors Association (IPEFI) on February 19, 1953, and the Indonesian Film Importers Association (GIFI) (Hamidy T. Jamil, and Sutrisno, 2006, hI). Behind the excitement of the development of national films at that time, imported films produced by the United States were also widely circulated, making the development of national films meaningless because people

preferred to watch imported films than local ones. In 1955, the Indonesian Film Festival (FFI) was held for the first time as the highest award event for Indonesian filmmakers. Then, the Indonesian Cinema Entrepreneurs Association (PPBSI) was formed on April 10, 1955 [7].

Entering 1964, national cinema developed into a political issue. It started with a dispute between film producer organizations that joined PPFI and film workers in Sarbufis over the issue of circulation of imported films [8]. Another problem was the demand for restrictions on American-produced films, plus the tension due to the ‘commander-in-chief’ political concept by Lekra in the cultural field. The impact is that there were no less than 13 films produced in 1966, where it decreased to only 9 films in 1969 [7].

During the New Order era, the government banned all films by directors affiliated with Lekra to mark a new era. In addition, the Ministry of Information fully supervised all film and broadcast organizations. At that time, the government established the Television of the Republic of Indonesia (TVRI) as a means of government propaganda to grow and instill the identity and spirit of Indonesian nationalism.

One of the government policies during the New Order era was economic stability, which positively impacted the Indonesian film industry. The year 1974 is considered the turning point of the revival of the film industry in Indonesia, which previously experienced a drastic decline. There were 75 films produced in that year. While in 1975, it decreased to 38 films, and in the following year, it rose again to 55 films. The surge in film production occurred in 1977, with 143 films produced. However, in 1978 and 1979, there was another decline in film production, with 74 and 54 films being produced, respectively [9].

Movie Posters

Movie posters are an effective and efficient visual and commercial communication tool (Aryanto, et al, 2019, p.202). At the beginning of its development, around the 19th century, the technology used in designing poster graphics was still in a simple form which was in the form of fine art. Still, with technological developments, posters are now designed using digital devices such as computers and printers [10].

In the 1950-the 1980s, movie posters were designed manually, using painting techniques with large illustrations. They also displayed the film title in large letters as a point of interest so potential viewers could spot it immediately. In addition, the names of the cast, directors, crews, and the date of the show, known as ‘credit titles,’ are also

displayed. It was used as a promotional advertisement displayed outside the cinema and in the newspaper.

Gender Perspective

Gender bias has become a deep-rooted problem up until now. Society always associates gender with values and norms, which often obscure the understanding of gender itself. Therefore, when talking about women, most people limit it to the biological-reproductive realm. Talking about gender, we must talk about the inherent nature of men and women in socio-cultural construction, which can be exchanged [11]. God distinguishes between men and women sexually or gender, not socially or culturally. Faqih, in her book entitled "Gender Analysis and Social Transformation," states that gender bias has been going on for a long time due to socio-cultural construction, religion, and government policy itself so that gender is always identified as the nature of men and women [12]. This is what causes gender bias or gender inequality still happening to women now.

Indonesia has indeed created regulations and policies through the State Minister for Women's Empowerment to address the problems experienced by women. Unfortunately, gender bias or injustice regarding the position of women still happens, for instance, in how advertisement portrays women. The problem is even more complicated because the mass media perpetuate this discriminatory practice. In the context of newspaper movie advertisements, many of these film posters showed the faces and shapes of women's bodies as an attraction, whether in paintings or real pictures. In addition, many women were depicted as mere sex symbols. Women were like objects that many people enjoyed as mere sex objects. In the newspaper movie advertisements, women were like commodities that had to be shown optimally [13]. The impact is that stereotypes or prejudices against women in advertisements, especially in newspapers, thrived in the midst of society.

3. Method

In this paper, the authors applied a qualitative descriptive approach to the historical method. The stages carried out in the historical method include the stage of data collection called heuristics. This stage aims to collect primary and secondary sources. Second, after obtaining the source through heuristics, the next step is to verify or source critique. At this stage, the authors criticized the sources for verifying the truth value and authenticity. Third, data interpretation or analysis. At this stage, the authors interpreted the data obtained to become objective data. This paper used a qualitative analysis

method. Newspaper movie advertisements were analyzed through the images or words they use, then the content of the message, whether it contains gender bias or not, with the basis of whether they contain exploitation of women's bodies and sexuality, symbols like tight or revealing clothes, visualization or verbalization with stimulating pose or seductive and cheap impression, and the use of women's body or expression as an object to attract attention. Fourth historiography is the last stage in the historical method. At this stage, the author described the facts obtained chronologically and systematically to produce scientific and objective writing. The process of presenting data in this stage used a qualitative descriptive method. Thus, the data are described deeply by following the principle of causality (cause and effect) and are chronological.

4. Result and Discussion

Waspada is a newspaper founded on January 11, 1947, in Medan by Mohammad Sain and Ani Idrus. GM Panggabean founded *Sinar Indonesia Baru* Daily Newspaper on May 9, 1970. *Analisa* was founded on March 21, 1973, by H. Soffyan.

Following the data collection and analysis of advertisements in the newspapers of *Waspada*, *Sinar Indonesia Baru*, and *Analisa* in the 1970s, the overall newspaper movie advertisements in these three newspapers were viewed from the issues of image, meaning, and content related to gender ideology. Thus, the analysis of advertising representation is divided into two: the representation and depiction of women in film posters and whether there is any exploitation and commodification of women's bodies and sexual attractiveness.

Regarding the representation of newspaper movie advertisements which show the exploitation of stereotypes on the woman's body and sexual attractiveness found in *Waspada*, *Sinar Indonesia Baru*, and *Analisa*, there are seven newspaper movie advertisements to be presented and discussed consisting of four national films and three imported films for comparison as shown in Figure 1 to Figure 7 as follows:



Figure 1. Newspaper movie advertisement of *impian perawan* (Source: *Waspada*, September 1977)

The picture above is a representation of a newspaper movie advertisement entitled “*Impian Perawan*” (Virgin's Dream). The film itself tells the story of the two main characters who fall in love with each other. Long story short, it turns out that the father of the male main character and the mother of the female main character was previously married. In this film poster, it can be seen how the female figure object dominates the image. The woman in the poster is illustrated by exploiting her face, which seems sad but seductive, by revealing her cheekbones and sensual lips. Then in the middle of the image, there is an illustration of a woman lying in a quite sexual pose. In addition, women are exploited for their sexuality by showing scenes between the male main character and the female main character kissing in bed.



Figure 2. Newspaper movie advertisement of *Laki-Laki Dalam Pelukan* (Source: *Waspada*, October 1978)

The image is from a movie entitled “*Laki-Laki Dalam Pelukan*” (Man in an Embrace). This film tells the story of the male main character, played by Rudy Salam, where he falls into the arms of different women until he finally finds the woman of his dreams, who turns out to be another man's wife. In this film poster, women are still used as the dominant figure object. The woman's face is still the main attraction. In addition, there's

coupled with the film's title that increasingly stereotypes women, especially widows, as we know that in the midst of a society that still upholds patriarchal values, being a widow is not an easy matter. The film poster reinforces and legitimizes the stigma with illustrations of scantily clad women in seductive poses. To confirm the illustrations, verbal expressions are also used, such as: "*Flirty widow, sexy widow, widow meets widow, nine of them all, widow is not just any widow, young widow is young, her smile is seductive, nine flirtatious widows will definitely shake your city.*"



Figure 5. Newspaper movie advertisement of Secret house (Source: *Analisa*, May 1978)

The fifth picture comes from a foreign movie. It tells the story of a king who gets messed up by his empress and concubines. In accordance with the storyline, the illustration on the film poster also depicts a female figure making out with a male figure. One picture shows the expression of a woman's sensuality with her eyes closed while making out with her male figure. To show that this film is in the adult category, on the poster is placed a sign that means 'for the audience of 17 years old above.'



Figure 6. Newspaper movie advertisement of *The naked wind* (Source: *Waspada*, October 1978)

Figure 6 is a poster advertisement for the film entitled "*Naked Wind*," which is a Swedish film. It tells the story of a boy and a girl's love story in the summer. The film poster depicts an unclothed male figure and a female figure embracing affectionately. To complete the poster illustration, verbal expressions are used, such as: "The Naked Wind: The bombastic movie, we re-show at the request of *HOT* movie fans and it's really satisfying. The original copy is really smooth and full of sex scenes."



Figure 7. Newspaper movie advertisement of *Juventud Desnuda* (Source: *Sinar Indonesia Baru*, October 1975)

The poster comes from the movie originally entitled "*Juventud Desnuda*." This film tells the story of a young man trapped in two women's lives. This Hollywood film poster is illustrated with a female figure and a male figure hugging and kissing. The poster has verbal expressions, such as: "*The intimacy of a love story is expressed with innocent and serene maturity and courage.*"

Figures 1-7 show how women as object figures have their body shape and sexual attraction exploited to attract fans to watch the film. What is shown in the newspaper movie advertisements in the three local daily newspapers in Medan also happened to almost all mass media, both print and electronic? The woman in the poster is nothing but an object. In the context of the illustrations depicted on the film poster, it can be seen how women's faces, bodies, and sexual attractiveness are exploited in such a way as to trigger erotic and biological arousal, even though sometimes the film's storyline and the posters are not in line. The newspaper movie advertisements also show that the exploitation of women's bodies and sexual attractiveness is increasingly legalizing the pornography culture in which women always become the victims in the industry. The

women in the film poster are illustrated in a sexual pose, scantily clad as if trying to provoke the lust of the beholder (Kasiyan, 2008, p.260). The pornography culture that has flourished in society until now is like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, society condemns it on moral and religious grounds. On the other hand, society explicitly supports it through advertisements or other media, and once again, the victims are still women.

5. Conclusion

Advertising is created to invite people to buy the products it offers. Likewise, film posters are made to reflect the film's storyline so that potential audiences are interested in watching it. As a means of mass communication, newspapers have been around and alive in the midst of Indonesian society long before this nation liberated itself. Thus, newspapers have become evidence of the history of this nation's journey in spreading communication from rural to urban areas. Local daily newspapers like *Waspada*, *Sinar Indonesia Baru*, and *Analisa* have witnessed the journey of the people of Medan since this country was free from the colonizers. This is what made these three local daily newspapers loved by the local people. Therefore, many ad producers put their ads in these three newspapers, including film producers, to promote their films. The problem is how the film posters in the 1970s mostly exploited women's bodies and sexual attractiveness so that it further legitimized the injustice and gender bias against women themselves. National film posters and foreign productions in the 1970s showed a negative stigma against women, who were only used to stimulate the audience, either with illustrations or verbal expressions. The woman on the film poster was pictured from the side of her sexuality only, and this is because it used men's point of view in designing it. Most importantly, the three daily newspapers perpetuated the gender bias culture. Advertising has indeed become part of the traditions and culture of this nation. Still, it is time the mass media, in this case, the newspapers, are more sensitive in communicating their messages and not cornering one particular gender. What is shown in the film poster advertisements in these daily newspapers indicates that women have felt gender inequality and bias since ancient times, and even more so than that, it might have still been alive today had the producers of any product advertisements continued to use women as objects; a certain commodity figure and not as a subject figure who could determine their destiny.

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