

Representation of Japanese Women in Oggi Magazine's Instagram

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Abstract: This study discusses the representation of Japanese women in the Instagram account of Oggi magazine, namely @oggi_mag. This study aims to describe Japanese women represented through the fashion used. The method used in this study is a qualitative method with data in the form of image objects posted in the data source. By using Stuart Hall's representation theory and Roland Barthes' Semiotics, it can be seen that the clothing used by women in the data source is a social signal that represents successful, modern, flexible, practical and elegant Japanese women.

Keywords: *representation; semiotics; Stuart Hall; Roland Barthes*

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Clothing has evolved from its primary function as body armour to a social marker. Clothing influences the way people perceive who we are and our social status. Clothing is about showing someone's identity. It is the first thing people look at to interpret who they are. It shows what choices people make and the type of person and shows the world what they stand for. It gives a glimpse into someone's personality. Thus, clothing is a sign language that nonverbally conveys meaning about the wearer. As a sign, clothes have a message to convey. As Desmon Morris said, "It is impossible to wear clothes without transmitting a social signal." (Parker, 2013).

Innovation in clothing takes various forms in every technological advancement. The forms of clothing from each country are undoubtedly different. This can show the identity and characteristics of the country itself. It is undeniable that cultural acculturation can build unique modification elements, including clothing. In general, the concept of clothing is often referred to as the concept of fashion which includes several things such as the concept of clothing design, costumes, body types, cosmetics on make-up, and others. Fashion is the direction in which styles, colours, types of fabrics, and designs collaborate to form or change the desired fashion concept. The form of fashion can be influenced by political activities, costumes in films, dramas, social events, sports, and personal characteristics. The influence of these elements can be seen in the fashion trends that are currently emerging on social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and others by showing the diversity of unique and exciting fashion styles.

Today's social media facilities make it easier for us to access the information we need, for example, through Instagram. Instagram contains much exciting information uploaded from within and outside the country. Images from Instagram can also be a means of visual communication and can be described through meaning and symbols, including in the fashion

field. Fashion displayed through Instagram is very diverse, presented through image and video content that the wider community can access. Information about fashion trends from abroad, for example, in Japan, is in Oggi magazine, which has an official Instagram account called @oggi_mag. There are pictures of Japanese female models displaying various attractive fashion styles.

This paper analyzes the form of representation of Japanese women in the @oggi_mag Instagram image post with Stuart Hall's representation theory and semiotics from Roland Barthes. Representation is a product to produce meaning in objects through language (Hall, 1997), including representations in images. In this case, there are forms of representation of Japanese women today in a dress conveyed in visual language through signs.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Representation

According to Stuart Hall (1997, p. 15), representation is a production of the concept of meaning in the mind through language. The relationship between concepts and language describes natural objects, people, or even events into fictional objects, people, or events. Representation means using language to say something meaningful or to describe the world meaningfully to someone else. Language operates as a representational system. According to Stuart Hall, representation is how members of a culture use language (broadly defined as any signifying system deploying signs) to produce meaning (1997, p. 61). According to this view, meaning is thought to be constructed. Thus, this is a matter of invention/creation: there is no meaning that we simply can 'find' somewhere. We have to construct it, to produce it.

Hall also states that there are three approaches to representation: reflective, intentional, and constructionist. The reflective theory of representation claims that language reflects true meaning, the same as it exists in the world. Languages simply reflect the meaning that already exists out there in objects, peoples, and events (1997, p. 15). The intentional theory of representation pretends that words mean what the author intends them to mean. Language expresses only what the speaker, writer, or painter wants to say, his/her personally intended meaning (1997, p. 15). As we can see, the intentional theory is the opposite of the reflective approach. According to the constructive theory of representation, neither things in themselves nor the individual language users can fix the meaning of the language. Instead, meanings are contextual: the particular symbolic fixes a meaning at a particular time (1997, p. 15). In other words, meaning is constructed in and through language.

In this study, Hall's representation theory is used to construct meaning, namely the meaning or message of the fashion used by Japanese women. We use a constructionist representational approach because this approach can reveal more contextually meaning. Moreover, the constructionist approach has also significantly influenced cultural studies in recent years. As Hall argued, the constructionist approach assumes neither things themselves nor the individual users of language can fix the meaning of the language (1997, p. 25). Things do not mean. We are those to construct meaning using representational systems: concepts and (1997, p. 15). He argued that it is not the material world that conveys meaning; it is the language system or whatever system we use to represent our concepts. Social actors employing conceptual, linguistic, and other representational systems construct meaning to make the world meaningful and communicate meaning to others in that world (1997, p. 15).

Barthes's Semiotics Theory

The construction of meaning cannot be separated from semiotics because semiotics examines signs' meaning (Noviana & Saifudin, 2020; Saifudin et al., 2017). Barthes' semiotic theory of connotation and denotation is used in this research to construct the meaning of signs in this study. Barthes stated that semiotics or semiology 'aims to take in any system of signs whatever their substances and limits like; images, gestures, musical sounds, and objects.' (Barthes, 1968). These are as a system of significance. Roland Barthes said that semiology is the part of linguistics; to be precise; it is the part covering the great signifying unities of discourse (Barthes, 1968). Barthes uses the denotative and connotative 'levels of meanings' to analyze the signs in a visual object. Denotation is what all people see without relating it to their society, culture, or ideology (Bouzida, 2014). In other words, denotation is the basic meaning of visual signs. Denotation 'tends to be described as the definitional, 'literal,' 'obvious' or 'commonsense' meaning of a sign. The other one, connotation, describes the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emotions of its users and the values of their culture (Fiske, 2010). Thus, the term connotation refers to the sign's cultural, historical, and personal association, allowing us to expand the application of signs creatively. Barthes stated that 'connotation being itself as a system that comprises signifier, signified and as the process which unites the former to the latter (Barthes, 1972). Semiotika Barthes dipilih dalam penelitian ini karena tidak hanya memberikan interpretasi atas suatu tanda ke dalam bahasa, namun juga melihat tanda dari sisi ideologi yang terdapat dalam suatu budaya (Sobur, 2016). Dapat dikatakan bahwa semiotika Barthes ini lebih fleksibel karena dapat diaplikasikan pada karya visual seperti iklan, film, ataupun foto seperti dalam penelitian ini (Noviana, 2020). Lagi pula, Barthes was one of the first academics to write about fashion (Tindle, 2018). He places fashion photography within a semiological framework, applying semiotic structure and rationale to the genre as a communication system for symbols and signs present within any given image (Barthes, 1983).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with data in the form of images posted on the Instagram account @oggi_mag. The image data is a photo of a Japanese woman wearing clothes. The data were then analyzed using Barthes' semiotics theory to reveal the meaning of visual signs from the point of view of denotative and connotative meanings and Hall's representation theory to construct representations of the meaning conveyed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study takes three data from images uploaded to the Instagram account @oggi_mag from November 2021 to January 2022. From the three data, it is known that the clothes worn by Japanese women represent contemporary Japanese women who are fashionable, flexible, practical, and modern. The clothes worn also represent the season, which is winter because Japan is in winter during these months.

Data 1



Figure 1


Based on Barthes' semiotic theory, data 1 in the form of a photo of a Japanese woman model wearing winter clothing with a dominant colour of brown can be identified as follows.

Denotation:

Signifier: Image of Japanese woman wearing winter clothes

Signified: Japanese women who wear winter clothes wearing black long-sleeved black shirts, dark brown thick coats, light brown floral print long skirts, boots, and light brown bags.

Connotation: The image of modern Japanese women who are elegant and fashionable, practical and flexible, bold, stable and reliable. The elegance of Japanese women can be seen in the long clothes with matching colours, dominated by brown, and the use of long skirts with floral motifs that show a feminine nature. Brown is associated with the earth, wood, and stone. It is a completely natural colour and a warm neutral. Brown is known as a colour symbol of reliability and stability (Olesen, 2013). Practical nature can be seen in combining clothes that use a long coat. This combination of clothing can be used for formal and non-formal events. When in non-formal events, the coat can be removed to look more relaxed. The bag worn can also be used for formal and informal situations. Boots worn can show the courage and dynamics of the wearer. From identifying the meaning of denotation and connotation, it can be seen that photo data 1 is a sign of a successful, dynamic, and courageous Japanese career woman without leaving her feminine nature.

Sign (2): Modern Japanese women who are successful in career and social life		} Connotation
Image of Japanese woman wearing winter clothes	Graceful, fashionable, modern, dynamic, and bold	
Sign (1) → Signifier (2)		} Denotation
	A Japanese woman wears a thick brown coat with a black long-sleeved blouse, a long brown floral print skirt, and wears light brown boots, and a bag.	
Signifier (1)	Signified (1)	

Then based on Hall's representation theory, data 1 is a photo uploaded on Instagram social media with the @oggi_mag account. Instagram is a communication medium that serves to convey messages. This message is a construction of meaning made by the uploader. Because the message is made in the form of an image, the reader of the message must interpret it based on his knowledge and experience. A message in the form of a sign, in this case in the form of a photo, cannot only convey a message according to a mere image. There is something hidden that wants to be conveyed behind the uploaded image. This message is actually a representation of the image conveyed. Barthes's semiotic analysis has been carried out to parse the picture's message, which results in the finding that the picture in data 1 represents the ideal Japanese woman who is successful in her career and relationships. The picture shown in data 1 conveys a social message that the clothes worn by women in the picture represent modern Japanese women who are successful, both in their careers and relationships.

Data 2



Figure 2


Denotation:

Signifier: Image of Japanese woman wearing winter clothes sitting on the floor.

Signified: Japanese woman in a sitting pose wearing a knitted shirt, pastel green sweater, light brown wide trousers, and a black and brown combination handbag.

Connotation: Fashionable, practical, flexible, gentle, and elegant

Connotation: The image of modern Japanese women who are fashionable, practical, flexible, and elegant. Pastel green colours dominate the clothes worn by women in data 2. Pastel colours have a soft meaning, a natural impression, and a positive aura. Green is the colour of harmony and health. Green is a warm, relaxing colour that revitalizes our body and mind. It balances our emotions and leaves us feeling safe and secure. It also gives us hope, with promises of growth and prosperity, and it provides a little bit of luck to help us along the way (Olesen, 2013). The sitting pose shows that the clothes worn are practical and flexible. Additional accessories in the form of bags and jewellery show a luxurious and elegant impression on women.

Sign (2): Modern successful, and a fashionable Japanese woman		} Connotation
Image of Japanese women wearing semi-formal clothes that can be used for both formal and informal situations	Fashionable, practical, flexible, gentle, and elegant	
Sign (1) → Signifier (2)		} Denotation
	Japanese woman sitting in a sitting pose wearing a knitted shirt and pastel green sweater, and wearing light brown wide trousers and a black and brown combination.	
Signifier (1)	Signified (1)	

There are two main points that need to be highlighted in data 2, the first is the colour harmony which is dominated by soft pastel green, and the second is the pose of the model sitting on the floor. Lisjak (2019) stated that Green is the colour of balance and harmony. The colour of growth, spring, renewal, and rebirth. It renews and restores energy. It works as a shelter from the daily pressures of modern life, and it returns our sense of well being. Emotionally green is a positive colour, which gives us the ability to love and nurture ourselves and others unconditionally. All of these symbolize a person's success in life. Then the sitting position on the floor can be interpreted as a symbol that such clothes make the wearer free to move, practical, and flexible. He can freely place himself anywhere without reducing his social status. Thus, data figure 2 represents Japanese women who are successful, fashionable, and can position themselves wherever they are.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the analysis of the two data, it can be concluded that the representation of Japanese women who wear clothes as in data 1 and 2 are successful Japanese women, both in their careers and relationships. The message that the sender wants to convey in the @oggy_mag Instagram account is that if you want success, then wear clothes like that. The symbol of success is a conclusion from the symbols of the elements contained in clothing, such as colours that symbolize stability, calm, harmony, as well as other elements such as the shape of clothes, patterns, shoes, and others.

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