

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Media has been recognized for shaping beliefs, attitudes, and expectations among people in the world and also has played an important role in identity development. Moreover, the media also portrays gender issues and body image, predominantly focusing on women. In this context, women's representation in the media is primarily directed towards emphasizing objectification and sexualization (Santoniccolo, Trombetta, Paradiso, & Rollè, 2023:1). The media often portrays women through sexual objectification based on their appearance, rather than showing their intellect and abilities (Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian, & Halliwell, 2015:1).

This documentary highlights the ways in which mainstream media perpetuates harmful stereotypes and objectifies women, focusing on their physical appearance rather than their intellect, achievements, or leadership qualities. Besides that, it also shows the potential of damaging perception of women's roles in society. *Miss Representation* advocates for a more diverse and powerful portrayal of women in all spheres of public life by critically reevaluating the media's role in forming societal attitudes about women through interviews with activists, scholars, and women in leadership positions.

Although *Miss Representation* positions itself as a feminist critique of the media, it is important to examine how the film itself constructs the image of women. By analyzing the visual and verbal signs within the film, this study aims to reveal how women in *Miss Representation* are being represented.

Only a limited number of scholarly works have provided a comprehensive analysis of *Miss Representation* (2011), particularly through the theoretical framework of Roland Barthes' semiotics. The documentary itself has received relatively a few academic attention, despite its significant contribution to discourses on the representation of women in the media.

1.2 Research Questions

After carefully watching and analyzing the documentary film *Miss Representation*, there are several issues that can be outlined as follows:

1. What are the intrinsic aspects in *Miss Representation* (2011)?
2. How are women represented in the documentary *Miss Representation* (2011)?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the intrinsic aspects in *Miss Representation* (2011).
2. To identify how women are represented in *Miss Representation* (2011).

1.4 Scope of the Study

The primary object of analysis is the documentary *Miss Representation* (2011), which exposes how the media perpetuates stereotypes about women. Employing Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, this study focuses on the analysis of visual signs and the deconstruction of ideology through the framework of cultural codes and power.

Ultimately, this research aims to identify how women are represented in *Miss Representation* and to examine how the American media portray women in early 2000s. Through a semiotic approach based on the framework of Roland Barthes, this study analyzes visual elements in the documentary by focusing on the levels of signifier, signified, and myth in order to understand the meanings constructed through these representations.

1.5 Previous Studies

In order to support the discussion of the research, it is important to review several previous studies that share a similar focus. Reviewing these studies is essential to provide a clear understanding of how the present research is connected to the existing body of knowledge. Several previous studies have applied Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to analyse various cultural texts and media products. Most of these works focus on how signs operate at the levels of signifier, signified, and how they further construct myths.

For instance, a study conducted by Yustiana & Junaedi (2019) analysed *Marlina Si Pembunuh dalam Empat Babak*. This study's findings correlate with feminism by exploring signs such as distance, colour, action, and so on. They found that the main character, Marlina, is stronger than she had previously been perceived.

There is also a study analysing a movie entitled *Aladdin* in the article *A Semiotic Analysis of Aladdin Movie by Using Roland Barthes Theory* conducted by Putri, Inayah, & Wageyono (2022). This study explored the denotation, connotation, and myths to analyse the meaning of several words in the movie. They analysed 19 words of denotation, 13 words of connotation, and 4 phrases in myths.

The next study analysed *Turning Red*, conducted by Tanzil & Andriano (2023) in their article *Roland Barthes Semiotic Analysis in Turning Red Movie*. This study explored the denotation, connotation, and myths in several scenes and found myths related to Asian parents. The whole analysis mostly discussed family and Mei, the main character, herself.

The last study is from Trisulo & Andriano (2024) who analysed *Fight Club* in their article entitled *Sigma Male Portrayal in Fight Club Movie: Roland Barthes Semiotic Analysis*. They found the representation of sigma male portrayal by exploring denotation, connotation, and myths.

From the previous studies above, it can be seen that Roland Barthes' semiotic theory has been widely applied to analyse various films and cultural products, each focusing on different issues such as feminism, family, trauma, cultural identity, and masculinity. These findings highlight Barthes' framework in uncovering deeper meanings beyond what is visible.

1.6 Method of the Study

1.6.1 Data and Source of Data

The data for this research are primary and secondary data. The primary data is the documentary film *Miss Representation* (2011). The secondary data are from various sources, including academic articles, journals, books, and other relevant and accessible materials.

1.6.2 Method of Data Collection

This research uses a library research method consisting of several steps. The first step is watching the primary data, *Miss Representation* (2011), and trying to understand the messages in the documentary. Secondly, the film's transcript is being printed, revised, and checked its accuracy against the original film. Additionally, this research have supported by the articles, journals, and books or e-books that are accessible

1.6.3 Method of Approach

This study uses a semiological approach, specifically Roland Barthes' theory of mythological semiotics. The application of this theoretical framework remains relatively uncommon in the analysis of documentary films.

The main purpose of using this theory is to uncover the patriarchal values within a film that is widely recognized as feminist-centered. This approach serves as a critical reflection on how feminist-oriented films proven how American media represents women.

1.7 Organization of the Writing

This research thesis will be segmented into subsequent chapters, which are:

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

There are several subchapters in this page, which are background of the study, research questions, scope of the study, previous studies, method of the study, and organization of the writing.

CHAPTER II: INTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This chapter provides an overview of related research and theoretical frameworks that are applied to complete the narrative elements, such as visuals and types of the narratives.

CHAPTER III: EXTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This chapter provides an overview of related research and theoretical frameworks that are applied to complete the extrinsic elements, such as The Representation of Women in American Media during the Early 2000s, The Effects of Media to the Women's Self-Reflection, Media's Influences on American Adolescents' Body Image and Beauty Standards, Objectification and Sexualization of Women in Media, and Theoretical Perspectives on the Semiology by Roland Barthes.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussions of the study. The analysis of the data is based on the theoretical frameworks discussed in the previous chapters.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an overview of the entire study from the discussion of the previous chapter.