

## VISUAL PHOTOGRAPHY HEGEMONY IN JUNK FOOD MEDIA PROMOTION

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### ABSTRACT

Basically, the visual elements of photography in the media promotion of junk food functioned as a representation that represents the identity of a brand. The effectiveness in providing information in seeing the real visual is more chosen as one of the messengers who are able to bring the human mind into the interpretation of truth as a factor in the emergence of a sense of trust. In the visual world, hegemony involves the packaging of art in such a way that it produces forms that distort and escape reality. The problem faced is when visual photography in promotional media is not really a representation of the actual product. Media promotion (advertising) on Junk Food as a product of modern culture that unconsciously has made the hegemony of society into a culture of consumerism. This research will focus on forms of aesthetic photographic hegemony construction and their implications. This research approaches postmodern, consumerism, and photography aesthetics. The data analysis will use qualitative data that is primary data both from interviews and observations and secondary data in the form of documents, articles, and examples of reference ads in various media. There are three representations of the aesthetic hegemony of photography in promotional media that are, 1) Whereas in the present embodiment of promotional media the exchange value is no longer prioritized to the use value or meaning contained in it but has shifted by prioritizing the image value. 2) The high culture of consumerism causes the community without realizing it has become hegemony through the art of photography which is manipulative connotation. 3) Signs on the object of consumption in fact tend to be used to mark social relations, determine the prestige, status and certain social symbols that cannot be rejected as markers of modern society.

Keywords: Hegemony, Postmodern, Photography

### BACKGROUND

In general, people see the role of the art of photography still considers that the element of reality is very strong through the visualization offered. Since the creation of the first camera (*obscura*) in 1558 to the present, the art of photography offers a variety of facilities that can facilitate or meet the needs of everyday human activities. Commercial photos as art products are an important part of a promotional media. Unwittingly, people will trust the media for promotion more by the use of photographic illustrations. Illustration of photography in promotional media has the power to attract more consumers' attention, because the essence of photography is believed to have a high or "real" truth in the delivery of information, but one needs to realize that the modernity era in the digitalization of photography at the moment there is nothing really "real" but is formed from the ideas and concepts of the creator, both a gravis designer and photographer.

In every photography work especially for advertising purposes it is always through the editing process to make the visuals more attractive as part of the marketing strategy. The problem faced is when visual photography in promotional media does not match the actual product. Seduction ads from famous brands, both

in the upper and lower line media presents the best visual photography as part of the representation of identity that represents their products, then the visual presented is the best visual photography results. But the visuals presented do not only have an impact positive but negative, it is not surprising that some promotional media received criticism in the community, one example is the media promotion in junk food advertising. Media promotion (advertising) on junk food as a product of modern culture that has unwittingly hegemony the public into a culture of consumerism. Behind the culture of consumerism, there are controversial matters when viewed from an ideological and aesthetic perspective.

This research will focus on forms of photography aesthetic hegemony and its implications. The approach of this research is postmodern, consumerism, and photography aesthetics. The data analysis will use qualitative data, namely primary data both from interviews and observations and secondary data in the form of documents, articles, and examples of advertising references in various media.

## DISCUSSION

Effectiveness in providing information in seeing the real visual is chosen as one of the messengers who are able to bring the human mind into the interpretation of truth as a factor in the emergence of a sense of trust. Basically the visual elements of photography in junk food advertising media functioned as a representation that represents the identity of a brand or other object. Earlier in its history, advertising served as a medium to communicate relatively natural messages related to use values (Featherstone, 1991: 171), but over time the sophistication of the photographic world today is able to bring diverse impressions through the visual aesthetic of photography. A photo can produce the desired impression as one of the needs of the industrial world. Impressions that are able to carry consumers' emotions carry over and are confident of the products they will buy as Saidi said in his book *Homo Artem* that, art is not an autonomous institution, independent, and free from social responsibility but rather is a scientific hegemony over art in particular and the human sciences in general (2020: 138). It is undeniable that in the industrial world, especially food, it is important to have collaboration between promotional media and the products offered so that they are able to provide seductions that are able to attract interest and interest in buying these products at all costs.



Figure 1. Media promotion of junk food  
(www.google.com)

When I ask someone about junk food promotion (McD) they will say that visualization in promotion media is good and make them hungry. In his mind indirectly influencing his perspective on the object he sees, so that when they buy the product they will still carry over with interesting products in the promotional media they saw. As Sherly Read said in a book called *Photographers and Research*, said that:

“Photography make you are so completely focused on what you are doing that you trust yourself to make the aesthetic judgment but also to make decisions based on what your brain is telling you is interesting.”

Before discussing why visual photography is interesting, we must know that, in the art of photography there are several aspects that need to be understood. The first is the technique of photography itself. Photography techniques involve composition, lighting, and digital creative processing or editing processes. The important thing that must be considered in the process of shooting knows with certainty the character of the object to be photographed. When the object concerns food products, the photographer needs to understand the character of the object itself, the first is styling process. The purpose of the styling process is to make the food composition that will be captured look attractive, neat and tantalizing, and therefore it is not surprising that several things need to be done, such as involving a cool model of eating food, giving dramatic effects such as the amount of cheese eaten until it melts, giving the effect of smoke (warm food), or even add the contents of the product even if it's not the actual amount. The second is the composition of the photo, as a promotional media needs a photographer needs to know the appropriate composition when going into the realm of design and supporting media promotion later and pay attention to the placement of text elements and other elements in the design of a design. The third is lighting, taking into account the character of light affecting the overall color of the product. Warm lighting colors or effects are perfect for making food products look tempting. The last process is the editing process; this process is the final process that determines the overall appearance can provide a representation of the industry or brand. Editing, saturation, laying and how to serve food are highly prepared, far different from photographs of local fast food products.

Based on the results of the questionnaire of 25 consumers who love to consume junk food, they know the product they are buying is not really the same or in a different quantity from the promotional media offered. Their response regarding junk food promotion media and what keeps them interested in consuming them includes: 1) 25 people say junk food promotion media (KFC, MCD, and similar brands) are very suitable and good even with relatively expensive prices, 2) Not only promotional media in the form of conventional or print media but junk food promotion media currently has been spread through technological means in social media with photography visualization that dominates, 3) The junk food industry has a menu selection strategy that has been adjusted to the tastes of the people followed by the selection of photo objects in accordance with that matter. Access, facilities, time efficiency are the main things needed by the community rather than seeing logically whether the product is suitable as what they see in its promotional media. If concluded from the results of the questionnaire above is the first thing they see is the visualization of photography before they read the text in the design of promotional media. The use of high technology is one of how the aesthetic visualizations of promotional media photography are disseminated to the public. The junk food industry has a high mobility to adapt not only to heterogeneous people's tastes, but to see opportunities in social needs. In broad outline, the above is a characteristic of modern society.

It is undeniable that the dominance of the junk food industry in Indonesia is very large, it has resulted in the conquering of tastes (fast food) which is reinforced

by the character of the consumerism community. In addition, in the postmodern era, the concept of the presence of products from the food industry has developed in accordance with social needs. One example of the concept in the creation of a restaurant or restaurant, food as the main product offered is no longer a major priority but becomes number two and the main thing in making a business place to eat is to be *instagramable* or interesting to be documented and distributed through the Instagram application. Logic as a food product and should prioritize taste has shifted meaning, where meaning dominates a form, not vice versa. In the visual world hegemony certifies art in such a way that it produces forms that distort and escape reality. The fact is the visual world especially the art of photography as an art product in any promotional media the visual form presented is the most important thing like the meaning that controls a sign.

The era of globalization is a time of uniformity, in other words everything will be the same (homogenization). The concept of globalization refers to the increasing multi-directional relations in the economic, social, cultural, and political realms that shape our world and our awareness about it. Globalization concerns the "process of global conquest". Time space disarmament (networking), taste disarmament (famous brand consumerism), and equalization of needs in technological aspects. Without doubt a variety of promotional media as part of the advertisement of a product causes a higher culture of consumerism (Brewer & Porter, 1994: 19). The same opinion was conveyed by Kasiyan (2012) in his journal that advertising in a promotional media not only has a positive impact but has a negative impact. The impact occurs because human reasoning is affected due to the tendency of human attitudes and behavior guided by instrumentalist reason (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2003: 48). Consuming junk food such as McD, KFC, and other western brands is one of the people's lifestyles that emphasize modern sign values. It is not surprising to follow the current trend that people no longer see a product as an exchange value but rather as a form of signs or symbolization in marking their social relations. The art of photography as part of a design creates how someone strives to live his life (lifestyle), how someone thinks, behaves, and so on.

Consumer society is a market-dependent society. Society is now confined by capitalist products such as malls, department stores, restaurants (junk food) and so on, which stimulates consumption or the desire to shop. The desire of humans who always want to do pleasure is one indication as a consumer society. The discourse of communication is no longer supported by a system of meanings and messages but rather a communication system that upholds falsehood, illusion, appearance, rather than meanings. The same opinion was explained by Nurist in his journal (2010), modern society is a consumptive society. Signs of consumption in fact tend to be used to mark social relations that determine the prestige, status, and certain social symbols. That is why people are now easily hegemony of a promotional advertisement even though the object displayed does not match the original object. Aesthetics in photography and high consumerism culture are utilized by capitalists or certain elements in the form of advertising seduction (price discounts, promos and souvenirs). Aesthetic value is not determined by itself but is created from the ideas and concepts of intellectuals in it both photographers, business owners and graphic designers. Not surprisingly, some of the advertisements presented received a lot of criticism in the community. As was the case in 2016 in New York, a grandmother demanded KFC 20 million dollars because she did not get the right amount of chickens as advertisements in the promotional media she saw.



Figure 2. Articles of lawsuit against KFC  
([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com))

The case finally stopped when the company apologized and gave the grandmother a gift even though not as much as the demands requested. This illustrates that the visualization of photography (one of the elements) in the media of promotion must really be able to provide a reality or fact in accordance with the products offered. It is seen that the visualization of photography in junk food promotion media illustrates certain meanings when the object is manipulated for commercial purposes. As said by Golmand, mentioning advertising as one of the frightening discoveries in the history of the civilization of Western capitalism because it has a lot of colonizing social awareness that erodes the values that exist in society (1992: 8).

## CONCLUSION

Consumerism in junk food such as McD, KFC, and other Western brands is a lifestyle that emphasizes modern sign values. It is not surprising to follow the current trend that people no longer see a product as an exchange value but rather as a form of signs or symbolization in marking their social relations. The era of globalization is a time of uniformity. The dominance of the junk food industry results in the descent of tastes and uniform lifestyles. Globalization concerns the "process of world cone". Time space (network), taste (consumerism). Technological aspects as part of the visual formation of a product that can be realized with a variety of manifestations that is manipulative in supporting the promotion media.

There are three representations of the aesthetic hegemony of photography in promotional media, namely; 1) That in the present embodiment of promotional media related to the postmodern world. The exchange rate is no longer prioritized to the use value or meaning that is in it but has shifted by prioritizing the value of the image (image value). 2) High consumerism culture causes people to be unconsciously hegemony through the aesthetics of photographic art that is manipulative connotation. 3) Signs on the object of consumption in fact tend to be used to mark social relations, determine the prestige, status and certain social symbols for the wearer that cannot be rejected as markers of modern society.

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