Sexual Objectification of Women through the Uses of Humorous Captions in Media Social: @dramaojol.id and @keluhkesahojol.id’s Instagram Accounts

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Abstract
Technology has brought enormous development to human’s life, even broaden the medium of sexual objectification. Although we are living in the post-human era where gender equality is deliberately voiced out, sexual objectification of women can still be easily found, particularly in social media Instagram. The uses of humorous captions are one way to sexually objectify women. Two of the Instagram accounts that using humorous captions as medium to sexually objectify are @dramaojol.id and @keluhkesahojol.id. This study is a qualitative study that focused on the producing of humorous captions and comments that found in these two accounts. The data are analysed by using Sara Mills’ Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The objectives of this study are to find out how women are sexually objectified through the uses of humorous captions, also to examine the position of subject-object, position of readers and the position of women itself in society through the comments produced. The results of this study found that humorous captions are used to invite comments of followers, usually by using famous phrases or by mocking other persons. The discourses analysed by Sara Mills’ CDA found that the position of subject is the owner of accounts, the position of object is the woman in the photo, whereas the position of readers are the followers who left sexual objectification comments. Comments produced are dominated by men, mostly talking about the physical aspect of women; their sexy clothes are an “ask for it” and women’s body is considered as sex instrument and gift for men. Therefore, it can also be concluded that most of men still considered themselves superior to women and women can be subordinated. On the other side, it is also found that women are rarely leave comments under these posts, however some of them are supporting men’s
comments. By that, it seems that women are accepting the objectification concept and scared of being different to break the patriarchy system.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; post-human; sexual objectification; social media; women

Introduction

The emergence of technology has expanded the medium of objectifications regardless the gender. However, women are often sexually objectified by media, including social media as a product of technology. Women objectification has a long history indeed, even in this post-human era - where the equality of gender has been deliberately voiced out by the help of technology - sexual objectification of women can still be found in society.

Indonesia with patriarchal society has imbedded the values that women are weak creatures who need the help of men, live and grow to serve men and merely only worth of domestic works. This practice is applied in daily activities such as social, cultural, political, or economy. By that, women are often being underestimated and victimized, considered as an object to freed sexual desires.

Another reason why objectification happen is because of standardization. For instance, in this country, women are expected to look beautiful and wear full covered clothes, by these standards then they are regarded as “valuable”. Likewise, if they do not follow the rules, it is considered as a sexual invitation or an “ask for it” for men.

Moreover, the fact that men in the media are always portrayed as subject – the one who is powerful, in control and has passion for women. Instead, women have only take a role as a fantasy object whose job is to show off their body until men’s desires are fulfilled. This kind of picture then become common in various of media, including Instagram as a new media.

Similar study has been done by Fardouly, Willburger, and Vartanian (2017) entitled “Instagram use and young women’s body image concerns and self-objectification: Testing mediational pathways”. A quantitative study examined the relationship between the use of Instagram, body image concerns and self-objectification among women in United States and Australia. The result of this study suggests that the Instagram usage may negatively influence women’s appearance-related concerns and beliefs.

However, in this study, the writers found that humorous caption is more likely used by Indonesian Instagram users to sexually objectify women. Several accounts that objectify women through humorous captions are @dramaojol.id and @keluhkesahojol.id. A brief about these accounts, the function is to share information
or stories regarding online ride-hailing in Indonesia, Go-Jek and Grab. However, sexual women objectifications can be found implicitly through the uses of humorous captions.

Moreover, this study entitled “Sexual Objectification of Women Through the Uses of Humorous Captions in Media Social: @dramaojol.id and @keluhkesahojol.id’s Instagram Accounts” is a qualitative study focused on critical discourse analysis (CDA). Thus, the objectives of this study are to find out how women are sexually objectified through the uses of humorous captions, also to examine the position of subject-object, the position of readers, along with the position of women itself in society.

Literature Review

Objectification Theory

Objectification theory proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), suggests that women are sexually objectified and treated as an object to be valued for its use by others. The objectification allows women to internalize the standard of beauty in society and regarding themselves as an observer, see themselves by using others’ point of views to their own body. These “idealistic criteria” thus affect individual in treating and giving meaning to their body.

This concept is similar to the phrase of “looking-glass self” by Cooley, a women’s view of self that “self refers chiefly to opinions, purposes, desires, claims, and the like, concerning matters that involve no thought of body” (1902/1990: 63). Moreover, R. M. Lemer, Orlos, & Knapp (1976) states “for women, positive self-concept hinges on perceived physical attractiveness, whereas for men, it hinges on perceived physical effectiveness”. Fredrickson and Roberts also assume that to some degree, women view themselves as objects or “sights” to be appreciated by others.

Women report experiencing objectification more than men, including experiences with ogling, unwanted sexual advances, sexual harassment and sexual assault (Hill & Fischer, 2008; Kozee, Tylka, Augustus-Horvath, & Denchik, 2007; Moradi, Dirks, & Matteson, 2005; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001 in Davidson & Gervais, 2015). In line with this, objectification theory is used to see how users of Instagram are sexually objectify women based on their perceived of women values.

Instagram

Safko (2010: 20) defined social media as “a new set of tools, new technology that allow us to more efficiently connect and build relationship with our customer and prospect”. There are 6 types of social media, namely: social network sites (i.e. Instagram), wikis (i.e. Wikipedia), podcast, content communities (i.e. YouTube), blogs, and forums (Mayfield, 2008: 6). Social media Instagram, as a social network, sites allows the users to have a direct interaction in real time. Therefore, the conversation and the ideology can be spread immediately.
Moreover, Instagram has a logo of photo. This logo can also be linked to Instagram function that facilitates the users to upload photos/videos they want to post in their account. Besides, “love” feature is facilitated to see how many people likes the uploaded photos, comment section is also provided to communicate with each other. This section is often used as a container for expression, information dissemination, even entertainment, including intimidation or comments that objectify women.

Critical Discourse Analysis: Sara Mills

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) of Sara Mills offers women as the focus of analysis. Her theory is categorized as feminist, inspired by Foucault theory regarding to power and ideology where power is negotiated and distributed through social relations (Mills, 1997). For Mills, language is “a form of information transfer, forms of social network or attachment to social, where the relations of power (power relations) negotiated and enforced, as an exclusive selection strengthening each other in a closed system”.

By examine language using in a text, Sara Mills’ CDA analysed 2 levels of analysis: the position of subject-object (who is positioned as a narrator (subject) and the object of the story) and the position of reader (how the position of reader portrayed in the text). The Sara Mills’ CDA is used to approve the fact that women are often seen as sexual object in media.

Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative study with critical as paradigm. The object of the study is the use of humorous captions in @dramaojol.id and @keluhkesahojol.id’s Instagram. The texts will be analysed by using feminist discourse analysis, Sara Mills’ CDA. The main focused of Sara Mills’ CDA is to examine how women are sexually objectified through 2 level of analysis, namely the position of subject-object and the position of reader. Moreover, on the discussion section, the results will also link to the objectification theory to see how women are objectified and to find out the women’s position is society.
Results

Sexual Objectification of Women in @dramaøjol.id’s Instagram

Through the picture above, we can see a photo of women wearing tight-sexy clothes with leopard patterns using online ride-hailing transportation, Grab. The caption used in this posting is:

(1) “Saha iyeeeee (?)”.

derived from a local language, Sundanese, which roughly translated to “who is this?”.

This sentence refers to horror local television programs, a scene when someone is possessed by ghosts. Usually, “the ghost” will answered “aing macan” or “I am a tiger/leopard”, this synchronized of text thus deliver humor to the followers.

Position of Subject-Object

The subject of this text is the owner of @dramaøjol.id’s account as he/she produces the ideology to his followers. The owner has a right to post the photo/video that he wants, creates content and makes captions. As a subject, he delivers the message that women who wear sexy-tight clothes like in the picture is not in “her right mind”, as through the clothes, she is considered as a person who is in “possessed” condition. The motifs of the clothes also reinforce the messages. On the other hand, the object of the text is the woman in the photo. She does not have any power through the photo uploaded (or act as a submissive).
Position of Reader

The followers of this account left several comments regarding the posting. Some accounts were giving the jokes response,

(2) “Aing macan”.
Roughly translated to “I am a tiger”.

However, several accounts left sexual objectification comment such as:

(3) “Maung (tiger) fucked by grab under the bridge”
(4) “Aing macan di ranjang”.
Roughly translated to “I am a tiger on the bed”

Not only that, the word “macan” or “tiger” is also an abbreviation of “manis dan cantik” or “sweet and beauty”. Therefore, the comments above show that the woman in the picture posted is seen as a satisfactory of sexual desire by the users of Instagram.

Sexual Objectification of Women in @keluhkesahojol.id’s Instagram

The posting above shows a photo of women wearing sexy-open clothes in public while riding Gojek. The caption produced for this posting is:

(5) “Menang banyak nih tai lalat Makibao.
Roughly translated to [You] got a lot of prizes, Makibao’s moles¹.

¹ Makibao is taken from a character of Japanese cartoon entitled “Midori no Makibao” that once air in Indonesia.
The sentence “tai lalat Makibao” or “Makibao’s moles” is a mock to the driver as his skin is dark. This caption then brings laughter for the followers.

**Position of Subject-Object**

The owner of @keluhkesahojol.id is the subject of the text as he/she is the one who has the access to the account. The ideology that delivered by the owner is that the women who wear the sexy-open clothes such as in the photo is a “gift” for the driver, this is portrayed using the sentence “Menang banyak” or “[You] got a lot of prizes)”. The “prizes” is also can be interpreted as the driver is beneficial “to enjoy” the passenger’s body. Moreover, the object of the text is the women in the picture.

**Position of Reader**

The sexual of objectification comments are also found in this posting. The comments left by the followers were:

(6) “Awas reseleting keselekkk”
Roughly translated to “be careful of your pants’ zipper”

(7) “Sering-sering rem mendadak, Pak”.
Roughly translated to “[It’s okay to] often brake [the bike] suddenly”.

There is also a comment about the women’s body:

(8) “Pentilnya item kecil”.
Roughly translated to “her nipple is small and black”.

These comments are clearly objectified the women’s body. The first two comments have meaning that the passenger who wears the sexy clothes is a “gift” that can be “enjoyed” by the driver; as a sexual relief. The last comment focused on the shape of women’s body part. Shows that men has a personal perceived about “ideal” women.

**Discussion**

In line with the objectification theory, the results show that the captions and comments produced in @dramaojol.id and @keluhkesahojol.id’s Instagram accounts seem to agree with the value that women who wear sexy clothes are considered as a sexual invitation or “ask for it”. Women’s body and appearance is regarded as sexual instruments to fulfil men’s desire. To be valued by the men, women had to follow the standards. This can be seen from the comments that mentioning the way women dressed or ideal appearance.
Moreover, it also found that the text is mostly produced and dominated by men. It shows that men in society still regarded themselves as the one who has an authority to subordinate women; they can freely sexual objectify women, even in public through social media. However, the comments left by women is also rarely seen, even some of women are “hiding” by supporting men’s comments. It seems that most of women are still afraid to counterattack the idea of patriarchy; they take the power of men as granted as well as the concept of sexual objectification.

Conclusion

Although today’s era has been regarded as an era where women is able to speak up for equality, but the sexual objectification is still happening in various types of media, including Instagram as a social media in this post-human era. The previous sexual objectification may occur in the form of advertisements, movies, magazines, etc, now it can be found in the form of humorous captions, photos and comments in digital platform.

The results above show that @dramaojol.id and @keluhkesahojol.id are using humorous captions to sexually objectify women. These humorous captions are used to invite comments of followers, usually by using famous phrases or by mocking other persons. They gain lots of comments and likes through this kind of posts which is dominated by men.

Analysing by using Sara Mills’ Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) the position of subject is the owner of the accounts as the owner is the one who can deliver the messages that women who wear sexy clothes are “out of mind”, their body is regarded as a “sex instruments” or “a gift” for men. The position of object is the women in the picture as they are submissive; they do not have any power nor even knowing their photo are posted. Whereas, the position of readers are the followers who left several comments talking about the women’s body. From these data, it is also approved that the captions and the comments found are sexually objectify women’s body.

Moreover, through the comments produced, it is also concluded that men still regarding themselves as superior to the women as the comments are dominated by men. Whereas, the position of women can be seen by the fact that women rarely left comments or some of them are shielding by supporting men’s comments. Therefore, it shows that most of women are seem accepting the objectification concept, scared to be different or to break the patriarchy system that have been entitled to them that has been engraved in the culture.

References

A Book


Journal Article


Instagram