

**[Masculinity Construction in Indonesia Mass Media  
Study on Man Magazine in Indonesia**

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**Abstract**

*Indonesia mass media development in reform era (1998-2010) has been experienced quantity improvement significantly. It must be admitted that in 70s until 90s, women magazines was the most exist one. In this era, magazines provided segments for men reader in the orientation of actual news, such as knowledge, politics, automotive. It was not found men's magazines contents with metropolis lifestyle. However there was men's magazine such as "Matra", which concerned more in adult men terms such as sexual orientation. In reform era, the emergence of magazines with male orientation began color the society.*

*In other hand, there are similar phenomena between men's magazines and metro sexual men as the consumers which need fashion and metropolis lifestyle information. Up until now, mass media either electronic or published media remain persisted in gender bias of women. Men have no place in media especially in published media such as magazine. Whereas in this modern era, men also need different information with women which is higher concern in masculine life style. Metro sexual men become new phenomenon and have its own trend which emerged in metropolis cities such Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung and etc. Assumptions which analyzed are the threatening of role, function and the different between normative of man and woman that is vaguer and vaguer. Metro sexual is not only as a trend but also new social identity.*

*Men's life style magazine becomes interested when it was criticized. Some critics expressed that these magazines reflect the increasing of gender features in media due to it focuses into the topics which only become women concern previously. The description of masculinity is the interesting point to be further explored. This research is aimed to explore the ideology built in text structure and the advertisement of Indonesia men's magazines and how the masculine construction has interrelationship with metro sexual men which has become new icon of capitalism in magazine. The research's analysis focused on the articles and advertisements which emerged with four main issues namely masculinity construction, sexuality concept, gender relation, and political economy of mass media where these terms built consumers thought especially men in Indonesia.*

**Key Words: masculinity, men's magazines, metro sexual**

## INTRODUCTION

Phenomenon of men's magazines in Indonesia which emerged in 2000's, has its own color in developing the context study of masculinity construction in Indonesia. As long we have seen and acknowledged that in Indonesia, electronic and print media discourses are dominated by women. Even though there was a magazine with men segment in 80s until 90s era that was magazine which associated to men hobbies like automotive which has highest masculinity taste, or business magazine which was identical with men world and political magazine which also identical with masculine politics in Indonesia.

It is interesting in 2000 by the emergence of vary alternative for men to have their own magazine apart. The interesting point of this is not the men theme, but the dynamic of men's magazine which emerged with men's lifestyle theme. Men's lifestyle in Indonesia goes along with the economy improvement in this country. It has to be realized that economic improvement changes lifestyle either. It is normal if men's lifestyle identical with masculinity of men by idolizing American actor like Rambo, Arnold Swazneger. Those actors with their muscular masculinity and familiar with 'strong' world is also familiar in Indonesia with its idol men in 80s era Advent Bangun, Willy Dozan, in 90s shifted to Ade Ray.

There was a changing phenomenon by the emergence of men's magazine in its lifestyle theme, especially for the middle to upper class lifestyle. The dynamic was appeared in the performance of the upper class men which was not with masculinity men representation but men who were really concern with their performance in fashion, concern about their body treatment. As long the concerning to fashion representation mostly described in women magazine and those become femininity representation

## DISCUSSION

### The Facts of Men's Magazine in Indonesia

The developing of men's magazine in the world emerged as 11 men's magazine like U-magazine, Best Life, Detail, Esquire, For Him Magazine (FHM), Gentleman Quarterly, Maxim, Men's Health, Men Vogue, Playboy and Soap. In Indonesia there are 8 men's magazines like UHM, FHM, Esquire, Cosmopolitan Men, Apply Magazine, BBM (Big Boy Magazine), Male Emporium and Popular. This is really different with the women magazine data in this world that are 22 magazines. (Google, accessed June 2010). Those data show that women magazines have already been in a mature position, either in content side, or in its marketing. In Indonesia, those 8 men's magazines certainly provide a new color and discourse for the developing of men's knowledge.

The interesting point is some of those men's magazines is not only perform information about masculinity hobbies, masculinity work world or discussing about men's knowledge about women, but also discuss trend of fashion which has been women magazine discourse for many years. In other side the emergence of these men's magazine is a new trend men phenomenon in metro city with its new idiom metro sexual men where every man conducts his own characteristic lifestyle by setting out trend of fashion. In Indonesia, this trend is starting to be appeared in metro city such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, and Medan. In order to conduct further exploration about this let's start with discussion about Metro sexual male which is become main topic in lifestyle men's magazines.

## METRO SEXUAL MALE PHENOMENON

Refer to [www.UrbanDictionary.com](http://www.UrbanDictionary.com) Metro sexual male definition as followed:

*A metrosexual is a young, good looking urban male who takes care of his appearance from head to toe by bodybuilding, styling his hair, waxing his brows, using lotions, wearing perfume and has even considered plastic surgery. He has a keen interest in fashion, cooking, brand names, interior decorating, nice cars, especially convertibles. He's sociable, charming and always finds success with women. But he can be vain, ego-centric, emotional, overdramatic, jealous and nit-picky.*

The example of metro sexual male for world class is David Beckham, he is from top sport world class. Beside Beckham, there is cited Australian swimmer who won the Olympiad Medal, Ian Thorpe and Basket ball flamboyant player Dennis Rodman. While of that from the singer and film world there are Robbie Williams, Hugh Jackman - actor in the film The X-men -, Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, Collin Farrell and Mark Wahlberg. (Ucu, Google). In Indonesia itself metro sexual male is represented by the icon of Tantowi Yahya, Darius Sinatra, Ferdi Hasan, Ferry Salim, Ari Wibowo etc.

Sarlito Wirawan ( <http://sarlito.hyperphp.com> ) suggested that in previous era when I was a student a boy who applied perfume is called sissy, effeminate person. Even a deodorant for men is also found rarely, so that they used water of “Kapur Sirih”, so that it was not a wonder thing if at the time most of men have ‘dragon smell’. However that was image of macho guy in the old days. The odor I, still found in the market, in the economic class of bus which have high density of passengers. In Campus, mal, café, executive class of train, and business class of airplane, most of men have fragrant smell due to they not only apply deodorant but also variety of cream, foam, Spray or other fragrance gel (not only for the armpit). Even perhaps there are among your husband, brothers, other male family member or friends who spend million rupiah a month only for their body treatment include manicure, pedicure, facial or cream bath, so that their performance as well as Arie Wibowo, Thomas Jorgi, Adam Jordan or Indra Brugman. However they are not sissy at all, even they are idolized as macho guys in new era.

Metro sexual male be new phenomenon and has its own trend which emerged in metro cities like Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung etc with the strengthen way how to be a modern male. Daily news paper “Suara Merdeka” (January, 3, 2004) as written in Metro Sexual book in Venus by Hermawan Kartajaya, criticized this condition sociologically by arguing that metro sexual just as a part of civilization development. This is only a part of the trend where the world becomes grayer: not white – black. Based on Mark Plus research, emerged thesis that metro sexual male is identified as a male with : life orientation in metropolitan cities, classified as middle to upper class, belong to Alpha consumer who always try new products, like to read new mode of magazine, and challenges the old code of masculinity. These facts are interesting from the male domination side which happened in paternalistic system. Metro sexual male simply has been out of the cultural constraints which differentiated the threatening area of role, function and the differences between male and female normatively become increasingly blurred. Metro sexual is not only as a trend but also has been a new social identity. Men’s magazines like FHM, Esquire, Cosmopolitan Man and U Magazine identified and facilitated this trend which is adopted by those metro sexual male. Those men’s magazines provide advertisement and article about mode trend which promote freedom for men especially metro sexual men to obtain mode and trend inspiration about fashion and life style. In reality men’s magazine in Indonesia like FHM,

Esquire, cosmopolitan man and U magazine which emerge in Indonesia performs masculinity discourse concept which is not imaged men with physically performance as a predominant anymore, like very muscled, out masculinity activities, but has emerged men image who concern with their performance. They begin to enter the world with performance priority which is expressed by body treatment activities in Spa, wearing clothes and put on luxurious accessories, caring their body in spa and also make image as married men who love family and if they are single, the image is as egalitarian men. This phenomenon is realized in new terminology of metro sexual male.

## MEDIA CAPITALISM

In millennium era, media tools such as television, radio, news paper, magazines, is modern cultural products. Cultural products are very different with other products in practice form. These cultural products are loaded by values and ideas which influenced society thought. According to Sardar (2008; 19), explaining that media product is also manufactured and marketed as consumption goods. Tabloid news paper and life style magazine are sold in million copies. Television programs are watched by million people. Film and Video is watched by hundred people. As well as other industrial products, this industry also needs continuously innovation and has to be sold as cheaper as possible.

Sardar (2008; 36) wrote Adorno and Horkheimer develop sociological approach of Marxist about media studies when this Institute for Research in di New York. They viewed media as cultural industry which maintain relation of power and emerge to reduce the aesthetic standards of cultural resistance by popularizing the type - a particular type of culture. Value perpetuated by the media is contrary to the value of the basic traditions of enlightenment. Society is fooled by the banality of media. Their ability to be functional efficiently as citizen of democratic state is replaced by the continuously consumption toward cultural or the product of both. Furthermore Frankfurt approach suggested that capitalism control toward mass media is one of the reason why Capitalism remain exist after world war. Herbert Marcuse (1898 – 1979) suggested that media help to indoctrinate and manipulate as well as encourage the pseudo consciousness which has immunity to the meretriciousness. In 1970s, G Murdock and P. Golding suggested that economy and the concentration of capitalism owner to media indeed determine the role which is benefited by media in society.

Social construction in society is not able to ignore the economic power and the social changes which were happened in a particular society. Vice versa, new day social change is not able to be separated easily from the power of capitalism as one of the forces of change in the economic sector as the advertisements enjoy this development. Advertising is an investment that requires large capital, in connection with that then the advertising only able to survive at the mercy of the capital's owners. (Bungin; 2008; 40)

Yudi Latief (1997:294) explained Stuart Hall argument, mass media is an essential tool of capitalism in 20 century to maintain ideological hegemony, as well as providing a framework for the development of mass culture. Through which dominant groups are constantly trying to maintain, institutionalized, and conserve the power in order to damage, weaken, and eliminate the potential competition of controlled party. Based on this opinion, hegemony by the media was born where the media control the provision of the agenda in community settings that determine what cultural backgrounds will be represented. Furthermore, Kellner (2010: 77-82) describes the culture media is a representation competition that reproduces and helps to arrange the views of people in the world, ideas about gender and personal identity, style performance and lifestyle as well as thought and action of political- social.

Metro sexual male is considered as a part of the media capitalism's sub-system. Media requires icons to

form an image. Perhaps we still remember the Barbie icon in 90s that became an icon of beauty concept for girls and adult women. Metro sexual has potential chance to become a similar icon similar with Barbie in the context of reconstruction of a new masculinity shifted from the masculinity concept of 80-90s in Indonesian particularly.

## ANALISYS

Schiarto Tony and Susan Yell, in their discussions about the lifestyle magazine of men in Australia, confirm that the magazine is the focal point for scientific discourse of men identity. Jackson et al showed that in men's magazine, men and women ( represented as ) are the opposite polar in terms of desire and sexual identity (2001:84), and suggest that magazine models of 'new masculinities' act as a tool to strengthen the boundaries between men and women. However, in the development of men's magazine shows a blurred boundary of masculinity and femininity. Men, especially metro sexual male conduct social activities such as hobbies, personal treatment and enjoy leisure time together with the women. Activities to treat hair, clean the nail (manicure and pedicure), going to club in order to chat with male and female friends are not a strange sight in the big city.

In this case, the existence of men's lifestyle magazine would forward an interesting study. Women's magazines are considered has highly value about gender bias as long, which is concerned with the tastes of men who have an emphasis on the sexuality of women. In this 2000s era we see the existence of masculinity value is starting to be exposed with the description entry point to the femininity side which for a long period become women area. In a society that already inherent in the dichotomy of the values of the feminine and masculine certainly gives controversy. This, we see that the trend value of masculine socialization is spread not only in the print media like men's magazines, but also on television.

Many advertisements are beginning to show that men enter into the feminine world. As an example of the advertisement male (a father is washing clothes), there are contests exemplary father (super dad) from manufacturer of detergent, there are cooking contests for men from a brand sense. Of course this is slowly coloring the concept of masculinity in mass media. The print media like magazines are more exposure with the exploration of the existence concepts of masculine, with a label showing the title for men (for Man or for him) in the title of the magazine. In addition, we know that the men's magazine printed a hard copy, so it can be read at any time although the date has passed. The Influence of concepts shown can be certainly attached more inherently in influencing the reader. If we relate this men's magazine with metro sexual male phenomenon, we can look into the statement (Kartajaya, 2004) which viewed that the metro sexual male is a combination of masculinity and tenderness. This has been a dominant theme of the metro sexual male fashion.

According to Jewitt, C in 'Kurnia' 2004, there are some of continuum type of masculinity, as followed :

- Gladiator Retro man Type who active and hold control sexually*
- Protector Type is guard and protective men*
- Clown of Boffont Type who prioritized equality in establishing relationship and respect women, and also have gentlemen attitude*
- Gay Man that are men who have homosexual orientation*
- Wimp is characterized by passive and weak men*

As long media reveals the representation of men in media with Gladiator Retro man type. In late of 90s this representation shifted to Clown of Boffon as well as advertising in magazine and television, for example formerly, ad of Marlboro cigarette was a kind of masculine advertising, which figure out men image as cowboy, ad of Gudang Garam cigarette showed by conqueror of mountain man and etc. This shifting happened when in the television and magazine appears masculinity advertising which enter femininity world such as washing men ads, looking after children ads and so on.

Throughout men's magazine, now day men obtain some of these points:

- Reading references which is characterized specifically by men aspect and their interest.
- Fashion and metropolis lifestyle references from some of men's magazine which is concerned to metro sexual style.
- Bring out the shifted of masculinity construction which is different with 90-s. Some worries also appears about this condition will make difficulties in differentiating men and women identity.
- Society is more exist and permissive with metro sexual male lifestyle in urban area.

Piliang (1999) regarded the media as a sign of fight like men's magazines are also trying to do construction marks struggle to bring new life into metro sexual trend. This relates also to the marks struggle of a shift in the concept of masculinity is constructed in the previous era. If all this time the construction of masculinity that was built very distinguished between masculine and feminine, but in its development, the world of men began shifting to masculinity. This is not apart from the interests of capitalism, when the women and women's magazines have been experiencing fatigue. It requires a new strategy to accumulate capital to deliver consumptive value in a man's world. In addition, most men are regarded as primary breadwinners. This opinion is logically appropriate with the position of men as decision making. There is a cycle that runs like a fashion trend indicates social status, social status shows the pattern of consumption, adjusted for the picture which was also built.

Hall explanation above hinted the hegemony of the media needs to perform image construction and interpretation of trends that will affect the new masculinity through metro sexual icon. Metro sexual seen as the spearhead for the trend setter of a man similar with Barbie icon haunting beauty of women in the age of 90 - s.

## CONCLUSION

Social fact shows that metro sexual male into separate social classes in metro cities in Indonesia indeed. Increased economic growth and strong buying power in the upper class provides an opportunity for industry to perform a new effect for men. Men's magazine is one of the most effective media to create new icons for different concepts of masculinity construction by muscled men and ready to fight like Rambo (Gladiator Retroman). Images of contemporary masculinity are constructed by clown of Boffon type. Masculinity does not replace Gladiator Retroman masculinity necessarily. But it should be considered that this alternative could be a bit much to change the mindset top-class people in expressing themselves.

There are more alternative to spend their time and built their consumption patterns as consumers. The accusation that metro sexual negligent as Alpha consumer shows they reveals their material success by enjoying a social lifestyle that is starting enter into the social values that have been

considered feminine. This is in line with modern society has honored fashion as a symbol of their existence and capitalism media give insight into the trends of behave. The assumption that the existence of metro sexual gives "gray" conditions for gender differences in society can also be observed. The nature of gender differences is not a problem along the value egalitarianism. The concerning point is when the media through magazines provided the impetus "for the indoctrination and manipulation" and encouraging "false consciousness in which people are middle and upper classes become immune to falsification so they can float in a development that often change according to the agenda desired by the owners of capital.

It is necessary to apply a critical thinking and self-awareness to control ourselves to not get caught up in consumer-image and social status that often trap people and not a little metro sexual male and the other well-established men in urban areas. Being yourself is very important, not to trap a tendency to increase consumerism that weaken the power of critical thought of social life and life under control of the mass media (magazines men) with completely defenselessness and consider that trend as a truth and intrinsic social habit of living. Do not let this trend even lead to bring out of new social disease that is metro sexual which does not have fixed position firmly in pure masculine or mixed of feminine and masculine but remain on the identity of social unrest.

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