



A HYBRID MASCULINITY CONCEPT IN MEN'S GROOMING PRODUCT ADVERTISEMENT

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Abstract: *The study aimed at constructing the identity of Indonesian men in grooming product advertisements based on hybrid masculinity theory by Bridges and Pascoe and Bridges and Barber. This study was conducted by qualitative method. The source of the data was taken from all the texts including embedded texts in the visual ads. The ads were from 8 different brands of grooming products, such as Pond's Men, Nivea Men, Garnier Men, Men's Biore, Rexona Men, Axe, Gillette, and Head & Shoulders. The technique for analyzing the data is thematic analysis. The results of this research showed that there are four thematic categories of the ads which showed the phenomenon of hybrid masculinity, they are bodywork, caring, heterosexuality, and family. From the analysis, the researcher found that the theme of bodywork is often used in advertising the grooming product. The researcher concluded that the identity of Indonesian men built on advertisements for grooming products is a man who prioritizes cleanliness and beauty in appearance with physically macho, as well as tough and sensitive to their surroundings.*

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INTRODUCTION

The dynamic of advertisements in human life has given an impact on the way people think about an ideal lifestyle. A product or service in an advertisement depicts the identity or characteristic of the user. In advertising, this identity is formed by several processes, such as the process of production, marketing process, and process of consuming the product or service (Dash, et al., 2016). The way the models get dressed, behave, makeup, and socialize are arranged properly by the advertisers, so that, people are interested in something that is advertised. These make people have mindset if they use or wear the product or service, then they will become like in the advertisement. This situation will create an identity or stereotype of gender or society in a certain period.

The development of advertising is in line with the increasingly diverse human needs. A product which in the first place is intended for females, now it is also intended for males but with a specific label that this is for male-only (e.g., face wash product). This condition that lately called a gendered product. A gendered product is a product that has certain identities such as masculine or feminine, this identity will show its market share

whether for men or women (Avery, 2012). Therefore, in some conditions, some products are aimed specifically for male-only, or specifically for females only, and the rest are for both. They depend on the function of the product.

Between the increasing of gendered product and the alteration of male stereotype is related to each other in constructing male identity. Starting from the traditional masculinity term, which describes a man as someone who is “strong, active, powerful, authoritative, hard, aggressive, violent, competitive and rational, and lacking sensitivity and emotions” (Milestone & Meyer, 2012). Then evolved to the term of “new man” or “metrosexual” lifestyle, a term meant for men who want to be free from the characteristics of traditional masculinity, because this term refers to the development of appearance through clothing, grooming, and dieting (Hall, 2015; Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019). After that, the existence of hybrid masculinity, “Hybrid masculinities refer to the selective incorporation of elements of identity typically associated with various marginalized and subordinated masculinities and – at times – femininities into privileged men’s gender performances and identities” (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014). These changes cause men to believe that masculinity will continue to change uniquely.

The adaptation of hybrid masculinities takes place through three interrelated processes (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014; Bridges and Barber, 2017): 1) Discursive distancing. “Hybrid masculine practices often work in ways that create some discursive distance between young, White, straight men and hegemonic masculinity” (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014); 2) Strategic borrowing. Hybrid masculinities obscure the boundaries of social inequalities by placing the position of hegemonic masculinity such as “young, White, heterosexual masculinity as less meaningful than other (more marginalized or subordinated) forms of masculinity” (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014); 3) Fortifying boundaries. Hybrid masculinities obscure inequality between groups by fortifying boundaries.

The present study addressed masculinity further within the scope of Indonesian advertisements. It empirically explored the impact of advertisements on the idealized portrayal of male identity in the men’s grooming products advertisement. This study attempted to bridge the gap between the stereotype of a man from existing research and the stereotype which was delivered by Indonesian men’s grooming product advertisements. This study implemented a concept of “hybrid masculinities” in the analysis of male identity representations in advertised men’s grooming products. Some selected video advertisements broadcasted in Indonesia were qualitatively analyzed. In analyzing the data, thematic analysis was chosen as the appropriate method because it was ever used in the previous research about masculinity (e.g., Bennett & Gough, 2012; Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019).

RESEARCH METHOD

The study involved qualitative media analysis in analyzing data taken from TV advertising of men’s grooming products which used Indonesian men as the model. Qualitative media analysis involved a description of the information or message implied in the advertisement. This analysis aimed to find out how text or document constructed meaning, document was one of the media formats. The document was something that could be captured or recorded for analyzing purposes (Altheide & Scheininger, 2013). Thematic analysis was selected as the method to elaborate the data to answer the research problems. Thematic analysis was a method to identify qualitative data by giving codes which then would be interpreted and explained in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The

source of data in this study was a TV commercial that broadcast in Indonesia. The advertisements for male products that were selected included ads for deodorant, face wash, face mask, hair oil, perfume, body foam, body spray, razor, and shampoo products. From 2019 to 2021, there were 31 male product ads re-uploaded on YouTube. The ads from 8 different brands, such as *Pond's Men*, *Nivea Men*, *Garnier Men*, *Men's Biore*, *Rexona Men*, *Axe*, *Gillette*, and *Head & Shoulders*. The data were all the texts including embedded texts in the visual ads. The texts included the sentences, phrases, words, and the texts which were shown in the ads (e.g., product tagline). The supporting data was the visual or image of the male main model in the ads. The image included the appearance and the personality of male actors with their surroundings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Dealing with the meaning represented in the ads, it can be concluded there are four thematic categories. Each ad is coded based on its context meaning supported by its text and visuals. After all the samples were calculated and compared, four thematic categories were developed to make the data more organized. Even though this data is organized by different themes, it is still possible that some ads represent several themes at once. Therefore, these thematic categories can be understood as overlapping the data rather than separating them. The four thematic categories contained in the data are bodywork, caring, heterosexuality, and family.

Bodywork

“The body is a vehicle of pleasure and self-expression.” The bodywork practices are offered to consumers as vehicles for bodily maintenance and the manifestation of specific forms of identity (Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019). Physical activity is a type of bodywork practice that people engage in daily and that significantly adds to their sense of self-identity (Gimlin, 2007).

The bodywork theme is the most common in male grooming product advertisements in Indonesia. Advertisements in this category show that the ideal male characteristics, especially in terms of appearance, can be achieved by using certain male care products that have been mentioned in the ad. Advertising campaigns are delivered in simple sentences and sometimes seem exaggerated but convincing, as in the Nivea Men facial wash product ad campaign, “*Wajah extra cerah, muka keren. (Extra bright skin makes you handsome)*” (Nivea Men, 2019). The sentence narrated in this ad claims that men should prioritize a very bright face in order to feel better when doing an activity. This ad is about a man who was repeatedly reminded of the black spots on his face when he was walking in a crowd. He also washed his face so that the black stains disappeared. After his face was brighter than before, he smiled happily while watching a football match with his friends at a cafe. Here, this man is described as an ideal figure when his face is clean without black spots. When he reaches that ideal figure, his self-confidence also increases. Visually, the ideal man in the advertisement is described as having characteristics such as a clean face without black spots and pimples, white and smooth.

In short, this ad claims that “real men” are men who put the importance of appearance first. This statement is in line with the characteristics of women who prioritize appearance (Made, 2013), and this advertisement uses this value but is accompanied by the ideology of being a real man. Thus, gender conflict also occurs because of the hybridization process between the value of looking attractive with a bright face and the ideal men to be handsome. This advertisement generates the view that using grooming

products is necessary to meet the social standards of a man. When a man does not take care of his appearance, then he will be far from social standards – failing to take care of himself then he fails as a real man (Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019).

Caring

Caring is one of the communal traits that traditionally does not exist in male gender norms, other communal traits such as sensitive, warm and obedient should also not be male characteristics (Meeussen et al., 2016). Advertisements for men's care products also show the side of caring for fellow men. These advertisements communicate men also have a desire to help other men to achieve a successful masculine identity. The male identity as competitive is not seen in the advertisements that fall into the caring theme. On the other hand, men are also indirectly depicted as easily influenced. Easily influenced is the traditional identity of the feminine figure (Made, 2013). In the Garnier Men's face wash ad from 2019, a man washed his face with bar soap, then another man approached and says, “*Cuci muka kok pakai sabun batang? (Why do you wash your face with bar soap?)*” (Garnier Men, 2019). Then this man also gave a facial wash product to the first man. The purpose of this man is to provide a face wash product so that the first man's face is protected from the acne-causing bacteria found in dirty soap bars. Here, the figure of a man who helps other men has the appearance of a special soldier. This advertisement constructs a masculine identity that men who are macho like soldiers also have the nature of caring for other men, especially about body care. However, this ad still uses textual and visual gender markers to avoid being feminine. The ideal appearance of a man in this face wash ad is a young white man. A clean face in the sense that it is not dull and does not have a mustache and beard. Has a muscular body but not too big.

Heterosexuality

The advertisements for men's grooming products often display images related to heterosexuality. Heterosexuality is the way for a man to demonstrate their masculinity and avoid feminine behaviors by separating themselves from gay men and expressing negative sentiments toward homosexuality (Falomir-Pichastor, Berent, Anderson, 2019). Thus, heterosexual men are straight men who are sexually oriented to the opposite sex, not to the same sex.

Like the *Axe* perfume ad, where there is a man who does not dare to return a concert ticket that fell from a woman. Until finally his friend gave him perfume, and the man was immediately brave and confident to approach the woman. Thanks to his courage, he was able to establish a closer relationship with the woman. Like the slogan of the ad, “*Wanginya tahan lama bikin lo siap deket (A long-lasting fragrance makes you ready to approach)*” (Axe, 2019). The absence of male guts here is associated with body odor matters, he is afraid that his scent will make women dislike being close to him. And when he used perfume, that's where his guts returned and his confidence increased. Here the behavior of doing the treatment is considered as a way for women to feel comfortable close to men. This advertisement creates an identity that a man's natural body scent is considered a thing that can reduce self-confidence and must be covered by using perfume. Also, this ad removes the feminine side of a man when he uses grooming products while eliminating the homosexual side because the position of men is here to attract the hearts of the opposite sex. Advertising treatment products with heterosexual reasons will cultivate the identity that a real man is a straight person while maintaining his body and appearance.

Family

Concerning work and family identities, normative beliefs persevere that male identities are more suitable with work identities, implying that men should be -or are- better at providing; and female identities are more suitable with family identities, implying that women should be -or are- better at caregiving (Hodges & Park, 2013; Meeussen et al., 2016).

This thematic category relates the position of men to the family. An ad related to men and their families on Indonesian television is a shampoo advertisement from the *Head & Shoulders* brand. A father who had just come home from work did not dare to hug his children because his head was itchy and smelly. But after he washed his hair with the product, he was confident to hug his family. As the ad narration says, “*Kamu jadi pd berdekatan sepanjang hari. (You become confident to be close with everyone all day)*” (*Head & Shoulders, 2021*). A man's self-confidence is associated with the cleanliness of his scalp, when his head itches and smells, he does not have the courage to be close to anyone.

Here the father figure has an athletic body with muscles, white skin, has a mustache and a thin beard. A man with family-loving nature and attention to appearance, especially scalp hygiene. Visually, this ad shows that the figure of a hard-working man who usually appears macho can also be a person who loves his family.

The advertisements for men's grooming products in Indonesia show men as macho and caring for their appearance, as well as tough and sensitive to their surroundings. Men are encouraged to take care of their bodies not only for personal satisfaction but also for the sake of their relationships with the surrounding environment, such as friendship, romance, family, and social status.

The men featured in these men's grooming product advertisements embody hybrid masculinity by changing the image of the use of make-up products from their feminine associations as something that is essentially masculine. To promote that maintaining the appearance as masculine, the creator of this ad combines the values of femininity with the prevailing values of masculinity. The men who use these grooming products construct hybrid masculinity by changing the traditional masculine characteristics, but for some advertisements, it does not change it fundamentally. The changes that occur in masculinity can be explained using the concept of hybrid masculinity by Bridges and Pascoe (2014). This concept describes the selective merging of male identities with marginalized and subordinated elements of masculinity and femininity.

However, borrowing male identities from subordinate masculinity elements cannot be found in Indonesian advertisements. This is because the Indonesian broadcasting law prohibits things that violate social and religious norms. The identity of subordinate masculinity such as effeminate men and gay men is a taboo subject in Indonesia and has not been accepted in society. Thus, the theory of hybrid masculinity has not been fully identified in male models in Indonesian advertisements. Only the combined identity of marginalized masculinity or femininity can be found in these advertisements.

The advertisements for men's grooming products in Indonesia present four themes, which sometimes for some data can be categorized into two themes at once. The themes are bodywork, caring, heterosexuality, and also family. These themes are in line with previous research where masculinity is built in a hybrid way through a combination of symbols and narratives related to bodywork, heterosexuality, and family (Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019). But in the ads for Indonesian men occurs a different theme, namely caring, and there are no themes related to work and nostalgia were found as in previous

research in the ad for North American men's grooming products (see Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019).

Television advertisements that promote bodywork incite the audience to take responsibility for maintaining or processing their bodies as shown by the advertisements to become ideal men. Men are required to take care of themselves to conform to the style standards that exist in society, which is this style created by the advertisers. Many advertisements for men's care products that fall into the bodywork category cultivate identity in order to have a healthy and well-groomed body. So, ideally, the identity of a man lies in his responsibility in carrying out treatment. The body that is left as it is without treatment is included in the non-ideal masculinity group. The hybrid characters built on these advertisements can be vaguely and unambiguously found, either inserted using a traditional masculine figure or with a different gender marker.

The caring theme shows the soft sides of a man behind his appearance that doesn't seem to care. Here the hybrid masculine identity is formed uniquely and clearly, coupled with the activities of those who use grooming products. The way to avoid the feminine side is by displaying a traditional masculine figure and a textual gender marker on the product.

Advertisements for men's grooming products that show their relationship with a woman - heterosexual, are a way to reconstruct the identity that cosmetics are masculine products and distance men from the feminine and homosexual side (Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019). In this way, doing treatments with various products is considered as a way to make men more confident, look physically attractive, and can relate more closely to women.

Advertisements in the theme of family combine elements of hegemonic and non-hegemonic male identities, which is a hybridization (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). The balance created between the hegemonic male figure and his gentleness in the family aspect is displayed effectively and forms a hybrid masculinity concept. In addition, they are also required to take care of their bodies, which is the traditional identity of a woman.

CONCLUSION

Indonesian men's grooming product advertisements construct a hybrid masculine identity by combining textual and visual aspects related to bodywork, caring, heterosexuality and family. Thus, the identity of Indonesian men built on these ads is a man who prioritizes cleanliness and beauty in appearance with physically macho, as well as tough and sensitive to their surroundings. The male body image that is considered ideal by the advertiser is a man who is white, young, proportionate, and macho, a clean face without mustache and beard. In these advertisements, having a body image like that does not make men dominate, but rather makes them strive for equality by helping other men to achieve the ideal body image.

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