

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

The world of fashion seems to increase rapidly nowadays. The style and trends change in almost every season. We can see people like racing to buy the newest clothing items. They might do it because they need it or just simply because they want to follow the trend so that they will not be called 'outdated'. We also can see in our society that people seem to be obsessed with branded things. They do not care about the fabric or the quality of the items; as long as that item has a huge brand, they will buy it. For example, the people do not care about how much they have to pay for a pair of sunglasses. All they care about is the prestige that follows if they wear that branded items in their everyday life. Many people buy shirts, trousers, jackets, coats, sunglasses, and scarf that has the big brand embroidered on the fabric, without even thinking about the price and the need value. Another thing that shares the same phenomenon are shoes. People mostly buy shoes because of their brands nowadays, not because they are comfortable to wear or have good quality.

Shoes are now not merely footwear items which are intended to protect and comfort the human foot while doing various activities. Shoes can also communicate the identity of consumer. Shoes are more than just the apparel covering our bodies; they happen to provide particularly robust examples of how this becomes the identity of the wearer (Petrina 2001). It means that the shoes do

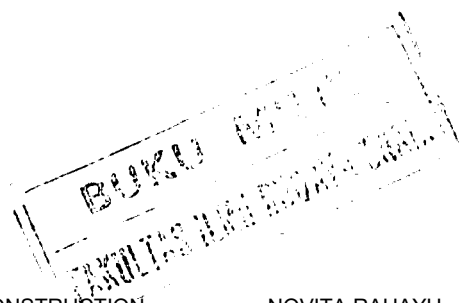
not only cover the feet but also shape the identity of the user. The writer quoted from the *About.com Education of Archaeology* that “the first shoes were for the earliest use of protective coverings for the human foot. The first shoes appears to start during the Middle Paleolithic period of approximately 40,000 years ago.” (www.about.com/educationofArcheology)

The first shoes were like sandals in nowadays life. The first shoes were utensils used by men for climbing rock. In Egypt, the Egyptian used sandals more often than shoes, even Pharaoh as Tutancamon paved footwear as sandals and simple leather shoes. The Egyptian sandals were made of straw, papyrus or of palm fiber. The Middle Ages were heavy on footwear and clothing regulations, the function of which was to enforce class distinctions. In the 14th century, Edward III made laws about which fabrics that could be used by different type of society. By the 15th century, laws and mores about shoe styles and lengths were implemented in England (www.about.com/historyofshoes). Time by time, shoes have been increasingly produced with a more variations of modes and brands, and the function of shoes is not only for protecting the feet from sand, rock, and weather, but also for fashion.

As mentioned before, shoes has become fashion in nowadays' life. They are not only worn simply as footwear, but also as the symbols of identity of the people who wear them. The symbols can be shown from the shape, types, colour and also the brand of the shoes. The brands of the shoes are really important for those who are really into the fashion. The emergence of the famous brands of shoes encourage people to use shoes as the symbol of luxury. Some people use

those branded goods to show their prestige of the display of wealth in their social life, which increases their authority over those further down in the social and economic hierarchy (Paterson 2006, p.21). It means that using a famous brands can increase the reputation of the user. Branded shoes with good materials will show the identity of the user. One type of shoes which are now popular in the market is sneakers. A sneaker shoe is a sport shoe which is usually made of canvas and rubber soles. Since a long time ago, sneakers have changed to become casual shoes.

One of the famous brands which also produce sneakers is Nike. Nike is one of the most famous shoes brand in the world. Nike was founded in 1964. The founder was Bill Bourman and Phill Knight. The company initially operated as a distributor for Japanese shoe maker Onitsuka Tiger (now ASICS), making most sales at track meets out of Knight's automobile. First, Bourman and Knight made a call on the Onitsuka Co. in Kobe, Japan, and persuaded the manufacturer of Tiger Shoes for Knight to be the distributor of Tiger Running shoes in the United States. When the first set of sample shoes arrived, Knight sent several pairs to Bowerman, hoping to make a sale. After that, Knight and Bowerman become a partner. However, in 1970, the relationship between Knight-Bowerman and Onitsuka was falling down, so they thoght a new concept, a new logo and a new design. In the early 1971, came up the name “ Nike” with the “Swoosh” logo, which was created by a graphic design student at Portland State University named Carolyn Davidson. (from : www.Nikeinc.com).



In 1979, Nike released the first running shoes which was named Nike Air. These shoes have successfully made Nike.inc the famous brand until now.



Figure 1.1 Nike Air

Since Nike.inc cooperated with the famous and talented athletes such as basketball player Michael Jordan and the young golfer Eldrick “tiger” Woods, Nike shoes have become the leader of the footwear industry (www. Nike.inc). It was one of the marketing strategies to increase the consuming of Nike sneakers. Today Nike have 20.000 reatilers in the world include fabric of Nike, Nike store, Nike towns, Cool Haan stores and website which selling all Nike product. Nike have contributed 33% holding than the other brands in global market in apparel and shoes industries. In Surabaya, so many various brands of sneakers. The data in the market show that Nike have a high price than the others. The writer comparison with Puma, Adidas, Machbeth, DC, Converse, Globe, and Converse. Those are the reasons why the writer choose Nike as a object to analyze.

After that, Nike sneakers become products with high value and expensive price. Nike grows to become one of the most prestigious brands. The prestige makes Nike sneakers have meaning for the consumers. Douglas and Isherwood

(cited in Nugroho, 2012) stated that the consumption of materials goods is something that cannot be separated from its social meaning of consumption. It means that sneakers are consumed not only from functional side to protect our feet, but also from the meaning of a symbol. In other words, the consumption is not about the value of this sneakers itself but rather the meaning and value of signs. You are what you buy (Paterson 2006, p.10); which means that people will see who we are from what we consume. As Lee (cited in Nugroho 2012) argued, material objects often have a function as an element that contains the dynamics of self. It means that the structure of identity, who we are, what we buy, what we wear, our perception of ourselves, and the views of others is influenced by what we have, what we do and what we wear.

Branded goods such as branded sneakers may show a prestige and luxury of the users. In the branded sneakers may be attached the value of exclusivity which gives sign, symbol, and social status of this product. Consumption then, can be said as the wall which make some differences and distinction in social prestige, status, and symbol. The consumption can be the universal communications for people to show their ability to interpret commercial symbols. It means that consumption is seen as a form of self expression (Nugroho 2012, p.4).

As we know, all shoes generally have the same function which is to protect our feet from sand, rock, and also the weather. Nowadays, the unbranded sneakers and branded sneakers have different prices. Simamora (cited in Nugroho, 2012) stated that image can transform an item that basically has the same function, turning to the different. It means that the image can increase the high

value more than anything, such as Nike sneakers. The original Nike sneakers have a great image for the user and certainly have higher value than the unbranded sneakers. For many people, the branded goods are better than the unbranded goods, and they use them as the image, symbol, and prestige, which eventually increases the value of the object.

Brand is the mark, name, design, and symbol, which aims to identify and distinguish a product (Simamora 2002, p.30). Brand has given sign, symbol, and social status of the product. When people remember certain brands, directly they think about expensiveness, high quality, and luxury. Veblen (in Steele,2005,p.31) stated that “famous label would give prestige more than a specialty of goods”. It means that the social status of the people using a branded goods will increase.

In urban society, consuming famous brands is one way to show the people’s identity. Consuming famous brand, including branded sneakers like Nike, is the way to show off to the others about their status symbol as satisfaction or indicator of their pride. Consuming the brands and do not think about what the real function of the products can be called “conspicuous consumption”. Veblen (cited in Barnard 1996) stated that conspicuous consumption is the consumption that is used by people to form themselves to be different from others. It means that conspicuous consumption is consuming branded goods to show their self-expression and to show to the others that they have their own image in themselves. Consuming the material object is a way to state one form of class mobility (Nugroho 2012, p.5). Like what has been stated above, consuming branded goods is one way to increase their social status in the

society. Indirectly, the society judges the people with “you are what you consume”. According to Veblen, status can be purchased by certain social groups through conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1899, p.51). It means that people can increase their social status by consuming branded goods.

Consuming branded sneakers, is one way to state the class mobility. The consumption of sneakers is no longer based on function, but it has a meaning of identity of social class. When we wear branded sneakers, we might have satisfied our pride. Using a branded sneakers can give us a new identity. According to Barker (cited in Paterson, p.38), the self-identity is a concept where we know about ourselves, and others opinion about us can be called our social identity. Our society system recently has become consumer society (Nugroho 2012, p.6). It means that the consumption of luxury goods and branded goods has become our way to communicate our social identity in this modern era.

Surabaya is one of the urban areas in Indonesia. Surabaya is one of the big cities in Indonesia, and also the metropolis one. The study was focused on this city because it is represent the condition of urban society. According to Chaney, in urban society, certain class members have the ability to consume certain goods which attach to the lifestyle of certain status group. And, the region cultural metropolis simultaneously offers new potential for individual to enhance their subjectivity (Chaney 2011,p.102). The writer chose Surabaya because this city is representing as the modern city. Surabaya has an ability to fulfill the society’ whatever they want. Accoding to Bintaro (cited in <http://sosiologiainsupel.blogspot.com/2011/03/pengertiandanruanglingkupperkot>

aan) the definition of modern city is the show of various social class. Modern city has heterogenous of social class and materialistic society. It makes the wall of culture in the society and makes the society make a competition between them and fulfill not only their need but also their desire. In another word, the city can be called as a modern city is city which has modern society most of whose people consume material object and branded goods. Surabaya becomes the capital city of East Java province. At Surabaya, people can buy the original Nike sneakers in malls, or in the official stores of Nike in Jl. Diponegoro Surabaya.

Male teenagers average 15-19 years old in Surabaya became the respondent of this research. The reason is the fact that sneakers are consumed by many male and female teenagers in their age to compete their identity in the society (www.wolipop.detik.com). The writer chosen male teenagers because according to Soesilowindradini, the adolescence period started aged 15-19. This time is the ended of the childhood period. In the adolescence time, the teenagers very proud of to their self pride. The self pride of female teenagers by their body, beauty and what they wear for example their shape of body, the colour of their skin, and their beautiful hair. But the male teenagers, compete their self pride from their appearance and what they wear such as fashion (Soesilowindradini, p.132). Today, many teenagers choose to wear sneakers to school, to hang around, and for many activities. The writer limited the respondents into male teenager who have at least five Nike sneakers. As we know, the original Nike sneakers are expensive for teenagers. The teenagers who have more than five Nike sneakers can be considered having spent much money buying sneakers, because the

average of original Nike sneakers is almost two millions rupiahs. This cost is too expensive for teenagers. Therefore, it can be included and categorized into conspicuous consumption.

The description of consumption practices nowadays can be shown by the consumption of branded sneakers Nike sneakers consumers may have a reason in consuming this brands. According to Douglas (cited in Paterson, 2006), people indicate their identities through conspicuous consumption of particular luxury goods. From that state, it means that their identity is formed through consumption of Nike Sneakers.

Finally, the writer discussed the meaning of the consumption of Nike sneakers by the male teenagers in Surabaya and how it contributes in showing their identity. The writer used theory of conspicuous consumption by Veblen to analyze all the problems related to the consumption of Nike sneakers by the male teenagers in Surabaya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The study focused on answering these questions:

1. What is the meaning of consuming Nike sneakers to male teenagers in Surabaya ?
2. How does consumption of Nike sneakers construct the identity of male teenagers in Surabaya ?

1.3 Objective of The Study

Based on the statement of the problems that have been stated previously, the objectives of the study are :

1. To find out the meaning of consuming Nike sneakers to the male teenagers in Surabaya
2. To describe how such meaning contributes in constructing their identity.

1.4 Significance of The Study

This study aimed to observe how the consumption of branded sneakers can construct the identity of Surabaya male teenagers. By analyzing it, it is expected that this study can present the reasons why the male teenagers in Surabaya consume Nike sneakers and how the consumption of Nike sneakers construct the identity of the users. In addition, this study is meant to give contribution to the study of culture and consumption, particularly in English Department of Faculty of Humanities of Airlangga University. This study is meant to show how branded sneakers consumption has created conspicuous consumption.

1.5 Organization of The Study

The first chapter talked about the background of the study, statements of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, theoretical background, organization of the study, and definitions of key terms. The second chapter will be the theoretical framework and review of related studies. The third

chapter consists of methods of the study. The next chapter will be the analysis and the latest chapter is the conclusion.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Brand : mark, name, design, symbol, which aims to identify and distinguish a product (Simamora 2002, p.30)

Consumption : According to Hall, consumption is not a passive act because consumption requires the generation of meaning (Davis 62)

Conspicuous Consumption : According to Veblen (cited in Barnard 1996), conspicuous consumption is consuming something by people to differ themselves from others.

Identity : Barker (cited in Paterson 2006) stated that self-identity is the conception about ourselves while our social identity is the expectations and opinions from others about us.

Sneakers : Footwear of flexible material, typically featuring a sole made of rubber. Sneakers were originally sporting apparel, but are today worn much more widely as casual footwear. They are now very popular, especially for young people. The British

English equivalent of "sneaker" is "trainer" in its modern meaning. However, the traditional "sneaker" (pictured) is closer to the British "plimsoll" (www.apperalsearch.footwear.com)

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW