

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Generally, makeup is seen as a product of women's routine. According to Braden (2013), by the end of 1919, makeup was a popular women's routine and the practice remained until today. However, in recent years, the makeup industry has included men as their muse in promoting makeup. Although the connection between men and makeup is historically not new, there are still pros and cons of the phenomenon of men wearing makeup. Men would be seen as effeminate and lacking masculinity if they engage with makeup. Nevertheless, the idea of men wearing makeup was already established a long time ago. In ancient Egypt, eye makeup was a tool to show social class and considered as a masculine beauty (Dubiel, 2012). The history of men and eye makeup led the author of this study to analyze the masculinity of men who wear eye makeup, especially eyeshadow.

As an item that was first found in the history of men and makeup, the colored pigment was functioning as a sign of power for the ancient men. Correlating the idea of eyeshadow as a sign of masculinity in the ancient era, analyzing the topic of men in eyeshadow and their masculinity would be intriguing. The makeup industry is starting to hire male models in promoting their eyeshadow palette. One of the famous makeup brands and is known for their eyeshadow palettes product is *Urban Decay*. *Urban*

Decay also hired some male models to be the face of their promotional content of eyeshadow palettes. Thus, this study would scrutinize the portrayal of masculinity in *Urban Decay*'s eyeshadow palette promotional content.

The appearance of men as figures in makeup promotion may correlate with the phenomenon of the beauty boy. Wang (2016) stated that beauty boy is a marketing trick to support the movement of "makeup is genderless". He added that beauty boys are also considered as a result of Western movement in producing male-oriented products in the industry of makeup. Today, beauty boys are often displayed by a number of makeup brands. International brands including *Milk Makeup*, *L'Oreal*, *Mac* etc. have beauty boys to promote their products. Brands would usually star beauty boys or makeup artists as their models. Famous beauty gurus like Manny MUA, Jeffree Star, and James Charles were collaborating and starring as models in several famous makeup brands. As the phenomenon increased, many makeup brands hired beauty boys to promote their products.

Although today the perspective toward the phenomenon of men wearing makeup is gradually changing into a more positive way, the traditional value remains. Some makeup brands are still portraying men in the imagery of hegemonic masculinity. The event relates to the appearance of metrosexual. Metrosexual applied to men who have particular activity in grooming or cosmetics use (Harrison, 2008). Simpson (1994, 2002) claimed

that there is a change of men in representing themselves in modern era, which build a new identity that is known as metrosexual.

Despite of having makeup as their part of routine, Wang (2016) stated that metrosexual men refer to men who wear makeup in the minimum amount. He added that metrosexual men do not engage with color when wearing makeup, instead they wear skin-colored makeup to improve their appearance. They would wear products such as foundation, concealer, and bronzer which do not experiment with vibrant elements. Meanwhile, beauty boys wear bolder makeup with color (Wang, 2016). Park and Kwon (2017) did research on men and their makeup preferences. The result of the study found that most of the respondents prefer makeup with basic color like concealer or beauty balm cream to products like eyeshadow. The finding supports the hypothesis that men wearing eyeshadow is still quite taboo for the men.

Masculinity portrayal in makeup promotion related to the image of non-hegemonic masculinity. As male grooming becomes more popular, makeup has also taken a part as a product that men use. In the promotions produced by makeup brands, the portrayal of masculinity is more inclined to the term of metrosexual. The term is close to the phenomenon of New Man. Edwards (2006) in “Culture of Masculinity” defines men who are into grooming as New Man. He stated that New Man is an imagery of men who possess the infamous image. According to Dodd et al. (2005), the 1980s is the era when the New Man image was born. Mort (1988) argues men are

showing their inner sensitivity by engaging with a more feminine side. Since the era becomes modern, masculinity is no longer being firmly attached to the traditional rule. Instead, it is moving into a more genderless portrayal through makeup promotion by the beauty boy.

In promoting makeup, hiring beauty vloggers could affect the brand in a positive way. Hiring beauty boys to promote makeup products is considered as a genius strategy since it is a success for the brand to gain positive reaction from the audience. It could be concluded to the idea that men are commercialized by the media (Beynon, 2002). It could be concluded that the appearance of a beauty boy in makeup promotion is both for marketing purposes and to introduce people to a new notion of masculinity.

Since the study would focus on analyzing men who wear eyeshadow, the author of this study had chosen a global makeup brand to be scrutinized. The brand that is chosen by the author of the current study is a famous makeup line, *Urban Decay*. *Urban Decay* is a brand that originally came from the United States. The brand is famous for its eyeshadow palettes, *Naked* series. Unlike other brands such as *Tom Ford* with *Tom Ford for Men* and *Chanel* with their *Boy de Chanel*, which had their makeup products specialized for men, *Urban Decay* does not adopt that kind of concept. Instead, it considers makeup as something gender neutral rather than gendered. Without using the phrase “for men” or any related words to

indicate gender, *Urban Decay* tries to show that their product is embracing everyone regardless of their gender.

Urban Decay is identical with the purple color. In American context, purple represents the sign of gender neutrality (Timke & O’Barr, 2017). It highlights their tagline “Pretty Different Beauty” in giving the awareness that the brand is proposing the notion of “makeup is genderless” Besides, *Urban Decay* has their own personal Global Makeup Artist. The spot is filled by a male Makeup Artist named Steve Kassajikian. Besides, the male models of the eyeshadow promotional contents appear as Western. The fact gives access to the author of this study in analyzing how *Urban Decay* is portraying masculinity through their eyeshadow promotional contents in the context of Western masculinity. By hiring men as their models and global ambassadors, the brand reinforced the idea of makeup as a product that could be used by anyone regardless of their gender.



Figure 1 The use of purple color in *Urban Decay*'s promotional contents

Other than *Urban Decay*, there are a number of makeup brands that also have men as their models in promoting eyeshadows products. In other brands' eyeshadow promotion, the males are portrayed in minimal or clean makeup. They are also often seen in suits or the portrayal of hegemonic masculinity. Suit is the essence of menswear and works as a sign of hegemonic masculinity (Timke, 2011; Barry & Weiner, 2017). In promoting eye makeup, other brands such as *Boy de Chanel* and *Nature Republic* do not portray their model in such heavy makeup. Instead, they appear clean and wearing basic colors rather than the vibrant one.

The campaigns of the mentioned brands above are still adopting the concept of traditional masculinity through the menswear and clean eye makeup look. The author of this study chose *Urban Decay* as the object of this study since the model of their brand plays with more color in promoting the eyeshadow palettes. Besides, the author presumed that the models are not being portrayed in a particular character by the brand. Thus, the topic is intriguing to be analyzed.



Figure 2 Nature Republic eye makeup model



Figure 3 Boy de Chanel eye makeup model

There are several previous studies conducted in the field of men and makeup. First, a study by Vilma Komulainen and Meri Hjort entitled “Men in Makeup: Performances of gender transgression in male beauty vloggers’ makeup consumption” released in 2017. The study applied netnography method and inductive approach in finding how men's beauty vloggers carry out gendered practices in their makeup consumption. It found that men’s consumption of makeup brought them to a more fluid hybridization of gender concepts. Another study titled “I’m Metro, Not Gay!”: A Discursive Analysis of Men’s Accounts of Makeup Use on YouTube” conducted by Hall *et al.* The study applied ethnomethodology and discursive analysis in analyzing the data. Findings of the previous study stated that when engaging with cosmetics, men are invariably attempting inject against possible accusations of being "gay" The authors of the previous added that masculinity is being reformed and repackaged into a more figure and consumption oriented. “Man Up but Stay Smooth: Hybrid Masculinities in Advertising for Men’s Grooming Products” conducted by Casey Scheibling and Marc Lafrance. Method used in the study is a qualitative method along

with thematic analysis in examining the data. The study found that the image of masculinity in advertising grooming products is hybridized and flexible. A study by Ardiani and Habsari “‘Man in Makeup’: The New Gender Concept in James Charles’ Instagram Posts” By using digital ethnography, the previous study found that James Charles does not fulfill the traditional male role norms. Lastly, Ika Meidyana Rachmania conducted a study titled “Beauty and Masculinity: A Semiotic Study of @endi_feng Instagram Account ” Rachmania’s research applied semiotics and masculinity theory. The result found that Feng performs a derived notion of traditional masculinity.

The aim of this study is to scrutinize how *Urban Decay* portrayed masculinity through its eyeshadow palettes promotional contents. As stated before, generally, makeup is used to be seen as something effeminate. Craig (1992) claimed that men were considerably more likely to be seen in ads for alcohol, autos, or business products. Nevertheless, now men could also be the face in promoting eyeshadow palettes. As it is stated by Putra (2014), masculinity is flexible, its corresponding characteristics may change depending on the context. Therefore, the writer of this study would try to find the way of *Urban Decay* in portraying masculinity through its eyeshadow palettes promotional contents in Western context.

In the last two decades, men are starting to improve their appearance and create new identities (Simpson, 1994, 2002). According to Harrison (2008), men in makeup is an extreme phenomenon. By engaging with

makeup, men would usually carry the stereotypes of being gay (Hall, Gough, & Smith 2012), which is seen as a negative phenomenon (Hallett & Cannella, 1994). Although historically the idea of men and makeup has existed since centuries ago, the era has changed. Today, men in makeup would often be associated with being gay and effeminate.

In the correlation between men and eyeshadow, centuries ago eyeshadow was worn to signify men's power and masculinity. Meanwhile, in this era, colored makeup like eyeshadow is considered to possess femininity, yet *Urban Decay* hired male models to promote such items. Masculinity is often portrayed in the promotion of certain products like alcohol or automotive (Craig, 1992). Nonetheless, *Urban Decay* hired men as the models of the brand's eyeshadow palette promotional contents. Moreover, the product that is being promoted is stereotypically far from the notion of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, analyzing the aspect of how *Urban Decay* portrays masculinity in their eyeshadow promotional content would be interesting since it presumably would make different insights.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

How is masculinity portrayed in *Urban Decay* eyeshadow palettes promotional content on official @urbandecaycosmetics?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

To point out how masculinity is portrayed in *Urban Decay*'s eyeshadow palette promotional content.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to give the readers a new insight about how *Urban Decay*, as a famous makeup brand, portrayed the imagery of masculinity through their eyeshadow palettes promotional content. The issue of men's masculinity being reintroduced with makeup items like eyeshadow is interesting to be examined. Unlike products like foundation, concealer or bronzer that do not have vibrant color, eyeshadow plays with more color and is being promoted differently by men. By analyzing the masculinity portrayed through *Urban Decay's* eyeshadow palette promotional contents, this study could give a new insight of how engaging with eyeshadow could have different imagery of men. The author also hopes this research would be useful for further research about masculinity, both inside Universitas Airlangga or outside the institution.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

- **Beauty boy:** Beauty boy is a discursive construction for making sense of modern masculinity (Wang, 2016).
- **Hegemonic Masculinity:** A concept where men practice a masculinity characterized by aggressiveness and power (Connell, 2005).
- **New Man:** This 'new man' is expected to have a broader range of domestic responsibilities, a broader range of emotional responses,

and a greater openness to critique his own behavior (Hearn & Morgan, 2015).

- **Promotional Content:** All of the activities that a firm does to communicate and promote its products to the target market are referred to as promotion (Kotler et al., 2005).