

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

According to Merriam Webster dictionary, “masculinities” comes from the basic word “masculine” which means “ordinarily includes most of the words referring to males” (Merriam-Webster n.d.). In the similar dictionary, “masculinities” means “the set of qualities considered appropriate for or characteristic of men” (*Ibid*). Based on the definitions above, the writer assumes that masculinity has a strong relationship with males’ characteristics in society, based on each social conditions. Society will possibly have characteristics of masculinity because they interpret them differently from one region to another.

It is commonly known that if we are talking about masculinity, it has a strong relationship with so-called ‘maleness’. When people are talking about males, features which differentiate them from females will be the primary topic. However, it should be noted that although those two terms (“masculinity” and “maleness”) seem identical, each is interpreted differently. If “maleness” is biological, then “masculinity” is cultural (Beynon). It means that a man is considered as male since he was born, while masculinity is not with him because it is product of culture (*Ibid*). In other word, it is society who judge a man whether he is masculine or not.

The discussions about masculinity have been an interesting topic lately, because various cultures in the world have their own traditional beliefs about

masculinity. For example, to be considered an adult male in Nias, North Sumatra, a young man should jump through a two-meter solid rock in a tradition named *Fahombo* or *Ombo Batu* (detikTravel). In Brazilian Mawe tribe, there is also an extreme tradition in which every man should be bitten by *Paraponera clavata*, a species of the most dangerous ants in Amazon Rainforest which can cause hours of pain, to get acknowledgement as an adult man (Cultures and Customs). Those examples prove how traditional culture influences people's view about masculinity.

In modern society, to get acknowledgement as a masculine man, there are some special features which should differentiate males from females. For example, a true masculine man should be dominating, violent, interested in sexual conquest, and so on (Itulua-Abumere). If a man does not have features like that, he cannot be considered as masculine man. Masculinity also consists of behaviors, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine (*Ibid*). Shortly, a man should have those features which are not commonly owned by a woman.

Masculinity and femininity are inseparable binary oppositions, just like male and female. However, the binary opposition is not always perceived by society because it depends on each type of society. Beynon defined the relationship between masculinity and femininity as "a range of culturally defined characteristics assignable to both men and women" (Beynon). However, in Western countries like Europe and America, a culture which does not treat women and men as bearers of polarized

character types, at least in principle, does not have a sense of masculinity (Connell). Both Beynon and Connell agreed that in Western countries, people understand masculinity and femininity as binary oppositions. It means masculinity and femininity should be understood differently each other. A man should be treated differently from a woman by people, and vice versa.

Masculinity and femininity have commonly known to have strong relationship with male and female. One feature that differs male and female is sex. In defining this, Connell made a link between the concepts of traditional gender role with biological sex. He stated that the first sight of sex differences in both men and women is in bodies, attitude, and genetic coding (*Ibid*).

In discussing men's and women's differences in bodies, Connell in her book noted that the main difference between male and female is in constructing "gendered bodies", in which men focus more on sport exercises and women like to do facial treatment and use cosmetics more than men (*Ibid*).

When it is going to attitudes, Ng and Chan stated that men are the breadwinners and women are the nurturers (Ng and Chan). Both terms are related with how men and women behave differently in contemporary society. Men are supposed to freely work outside home, while women are supposed to take care of their husbands and children (*Ibid*).

In discussing gender, some other terms like sex could not be ignored because they seem inseparable. In her book, Connell discussed that the main focus is on genetic coding. It is about sexual attitudes and experiences (Connell 49-55). It is an

attribute which connects gender with sexual experiences. Both male and female have experienced sexual event at least once in their life. The first experience happens, for example, when pubic hair grows and then remembered as a memory of one's life (*Ibid*). It happens to both male and female when they are in puberty stages.

People in Indonesia tend to view men and women in traditional point-of-view. They view masculinity and femininity in binary oppositions. The terms like *kodrat pria* and *kodrat wanita* were popular during the New Order era (Nilan). *Kodrat pria* means every man should behave like common men do, like dominating, being violent, interested in sexual conquest, and so on. While *kodrat wanita* is the opposite of men's features in *kodrat pria* with features like being weak and dominated. One feature that is related closely with *kodrat pria* is the existence of the term "bapakism", which is also related with how an adult man should be a good leader for his environment (*Ibid*). A man can be called as "bapak" if he has some qualities like wisdom and good emotion control so that he becomes the ruler of his environment (*Ibid*). For example, President Soeharto was popular as "Bapak Pembangunan", and was also addressed "Pak Harto" by people which signifies his position as the father of Indonesian people. However, since the end of the New Order, those two terms are not popular anymore and the issues of gender become more complicated (*Ibid*). By then, a new type of masculinity named contemporary masculinity arises in Indonesian society so that the traditional beliefs of masculinity and femininity becomes not very clear. Ling (in Nilan) mentioned that contemporary masculinity in Indonesia is influenced by global media hypermasculinity.

Nilan described hypermasculinity as the persuasive forms of masculinity which operates in the global popular media where male characters, either heroes or villains, have special features such as physical strength, cunning, bravery, sex behavior, and aggression (Nilan). Hypermasculinity then influences Indonesian people to perform masculinity with some different criteria from previous era. This division of men's category is affected mostly by mass media, especially by television (*Ibid*). In her study, Nilan categorized Indonesian young men into three. The first one is *santri*, a young Muslim man wearing Islamic attributes such as *baju koko*, *sarung*, etc (*Ibid*). The example of the image *santri* can be seen in popular *sinetron* such as "*Pesantren & Rock n' Roll*". In the television series, there is a character named Najib played by Ramzi who illustrated the image of *santri* well by dressing up like devoted Islamic. The second is the secular image of "cool" yet sensitive young man whom is recognized as *cowok trendi*. This image is also popular in television shows, for example Imam Darto and Dimas Danang, the hosts of "*The Comment*" television show. Both of them are famous with their hairstyles known as "*klimis*" or dandy. Their hairstyles are the effects of using pomade (Wolipop). Another Indonesian celebrity who is also well known for promoting pomade is I Gede Ari Astina (Jerinx), the drummer of *Superman Is Dead*. He produces his own pomade named *Slickboy Deluxe* which gained popularity in society (Tempo). There are also many Indonesian celebrities wear pomade so they become famous (Wolipop). This is probably why recently many young male people in Indonesia are wearing pomade to follow the trend. The last is a *preman* (thug), who is identic with attributes such as alcoholic,

gambler, fighter, and so on (*Ibid*). Usually, the image of *preman* is represented in action movies and series, for example Yayan Ruhian who played as Mad Dog in “*The Raid: Redemption*” movie. In this movie, Mad Dog is illustrated as a dangerous member of a narcotics cartel who always likes to kill and fight the cops. Those examples prove how masculinity in Indonesian media is influenced by media that a man should have different features from a woman, like written above, such as physical strength, cunning, bravery, sex behavior, and aggression (*Ibid*).

Concepts of various masculinities are performed in television commercials as well as other television programs. A good example of masculinity in advertisements can be seen in *Extra Joss* commercial, a well-known energy drink product in Indonesia. In one of its commercials, a male worker is illustrated to work very hard and shows his power by knocking a concrete (Image 1). It shows that masculinity is symbolized with physical power. Masculinity in this commercial also represents the working class because the man works as a labor in construction.



Image 1



Image 2

The illustration of masculinity is then challenged by another Indonesian commercial, *Ponds' men* (Image 2). In one of its commercials, a male model named

Rio Dewanto demonstrates how men should also pay attention to their appearances. In the commercial, Rio acts as a worker who tries to impress his boss before giving his presentation. Then he washed his face with *Pond's men* before coming to the meeting room by riding a motorcycle. When he is riding his motorcycle, he is trying to show his power as a man who can ride a big vehicle (Image 3 and 4). However, when he is washing his face with *Pond's men*, he is trying to give impression that it is important for men to pay attention to their appearances while doing their activities. In this commercial, although Rio also acts as a worker, he represents the different masculinities from the one from *Extra Joss*. The differences lay on the way he dresses up, like wearing classy clothes, and riding an expensive motorcycle. By wearing classy suites and riding expensive motorcycle, Rio represents masculinity in the middle class.



Image 3

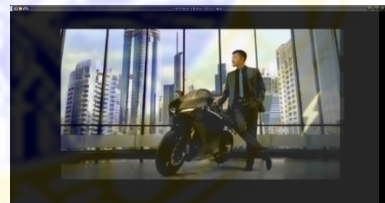


Image 4

The different illustrations between those two commercials may cause different perceptions of masculinity among audiences. In the first commercial (*Extra Joss*), the ideal concept of masculinity is presented by illustrating what men should do and it has nothing to do with appearances. Meanwhile, the second commercial presents

challenge to ideal masculinity in which men should also pay attention to their appearances, just like what most women do.

Another popular commercial in Indonesia that best illustrates masculinities is “L-Men Gain Mass”. The commercial has presented many models, and one of them is Albern Sultan. The writer decides to take one of its most recently commercials where Albern Sultan is playing basketball and demonstrates his skills to one of the players who is thinner than him. During the commercial, Sultan is portrayed to be more powerful than his smaller and thinner team-mate; it is proved when his team-mate was easily defeated when playing basketball by another taller player (Image 6). In the end of the game, he reveals the secret of his muscular body to him and promotes the significance of drinking L-Men. So, masculinity in this commercial is represented as being athletic, muscular, dan dominant in sports like basketball.



Image 5



Image 6

Albern Sultan was the winner of “L-Men of The Year 2013” and was the first runner-up on “Mister International 2013” (L-Men). L-Men Gain Mass is also the leading of men’s health drink product in Indonesia (Riau 2014). L-Men Gain Mass itself is a product of Nutrifood, a company that has produced many health food and

beverages. Nutrifood itself was founded in 1979, and became the first Indonesian food company to get ISO Certificate in 1994 (Nutrifood). The writer thinks L-Men Gain Mass product gives illustration about how a man should look like, because it consistently demonstrates the importance of being muscular for men. Besides, the elements of masculinity are represented well in this commercial in which Albern Sultan's muscular body is portrayed clearly and his activity when playing basketball is considered as manly. Moreover, the choosing of the playing basket activity in the commercial is not without any reason. Basketball is included in "Top 10 Most Popular Sports In The World in 2015" according to *Top10Zen*, with the approximate number of fans 400 million people (Top10Zen). It proves that basketball is one of the most popular sports in the world, including Indonesia.



Image 7



Image 8

The appearance of Albern Sultan, who shows his ability in playing basketball, can be considered as part of masculine domination toward thinner men. Sultan is dominating the player who is thinner and shorter than him because he would like to demonstrate how a man should be. He dominates the thinner man by telling him to have exercises regularly and drink "L-Men Gain Mass". In the commercial, the

domination is symbolized by being strong or powerful. In the commercial, the idea of being strong means a man should have a muscular body like what Sultan shows. This part of the commercial shows the domination and hegemony from stronger character to another weaker character. It is also stated by Connell that one of the concepts of hegemonic masculinity is about the competitions between two males, which results the winner and the loser (R.W. Connell 2007). Here, the winner is Albern Sultan because he wins the basketball game, and the thinner player loses. He is beaten by Sultan because he is not as strong as Albern Sultan since his body is not muscular like Sultan's. The illustration of masculinity in the commercial could possibly influence audiences to perform like what they see in the commercial. Audiences may follow what they saw in the television, including the idea of masculinity in the commercial. However, they may only take some characteristics of masculinity presented by media. According to Stuart Hall, there are three positions of audiences. They are hegemonic reading, negotiated reading, and oppositional reading. If the writer uses Stuart Hall's positions of audiences, the writer calls this as "Hegemonic reading" by audiences in which they share the assumptions and interpretations of the author and read the message in the way it was intended (The media and their audiences). The audiences interpret the ideas presented in the media and apply them in their daily life for their own necessities or because they want to. The concepts of hegemonic masculinity shown by Albern Sultan in the commercial should give audiences idea about how to be a masculine man that they should follow his way to gain muscular body. In this study, masculinity in the commercial is expected to trigger the reactions from male

students in Universitas Airlangga about the idea of being masculine in this commercial. The writer expects their reactions to be various because masculinity is relative according to social group, nonetheless in university students. The consideration is, not all male students of Universitas Airlangga may be influenced by the concepts of masculinity in the commercial. This study would like to examine whether male students in Universitas Airlangga are influenced by the masculinity in the commercial or not.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

How do male students of Universitas Airlangga perceive masculinity in “L-Men Gain Mass” (Albern Sultan version) television commercial?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study is conducted to find out responses from male students in Universitas Airlangga about the construction of masculinity in “L-Men Gain Mass” (Albern Sultan version) commercial.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is divided into three. First, for the writer, this study is useful to give more understanding about hegemonic masculinity in mass media and society. Second, this study hopefully also gives understanding to people that masculinity can be influenced by media. The writer also expects that the study

will give more knowledge about the reality in society that being masculine is interpreted differently in various societies. The study and its result will hopefully give additional information and knowledge about masculinity, which has been an interesting study lately. Finally, the writer expects this study to be a good citation for the next study by undergraduate students who are interested in masculinity, especially in Universitas Airlangga.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

- Masculinity** : a term that is shaped and interpreted differently at different times in different circumstances and different places by individuals and groups (Beynon).
- Representation** : a process of secondary importance, which enters into the field only after things have been fully formed and their meanings constituted (Hall).
- Perceptions** : the interpretation of mass media by different social groups (Hall).
- L-Men Gain Mass** : the leading of men's health drink product in Indonesia (Riau 2014).