



THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE IDEAL MALE BODY MASCULINITY IN THE MISTER INTERNATIONAL PAGEANT

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Abstract

As Michael Foucault had said that the human body is not really free; the concept of the body as well as the concept of the human sexuality in fact are ruled by and obey the great power behind them. A great narrative about the body and also the sexuality that has been agreed by societies, consciously or unconsciously has successfully dictated societies' point of view in placing their body and sexuality. The concept of a male body that has been characterized by its perfunctory appearance, in the sense of not necessary to primp, actually is a great narrative that is considered as a true necessity. This topic is unique and interesting to study because Mister International pageant as the representation of world's male masculinity offers the different great narrative masculinity concept that has been shackling the traditional masculinity concept of Indonesian society. This study will analyze the signs of masculinity shown in Mister International pageant as the ideal men's quest in the world. The result of this study indicates that the ideal male masculinity constructed in Mister International pageant if viewed from the concept of traditional sexuality is a combination between the concept of femininity and the concept of masculinity that then brought out to a new terminology about the concept of masculinity called as metrosexual. The concept of masculinity constructed by this ideal men's quest in the world, if examined by Herbert Marcuse's point of view, actually is a concept uniformity of the world's ideal male body in one dimension. Furthermore, the great narrative behind this uniformed ideal male construction is a world's major capitalists' project to expand their market share, especially male cosmetics and clothes products.

Keywords : *Construction; Masculinity; Ideal Male Body; One-Dimensional Man.*



INTRODUCTION

Unlike the gender attributes associated with femininity, the concept of masculinity is still often regarded as a phenomenon that does not need to get attention. The idea of masculinity is still often regarded as a socially unconfined concept [17]. This means that things that had been perceived as inseparable from men, such as courage, strength, and rational thought, are not seen as the limiting characters. On the contrary, such characters are considered as positive characters that must be widely adopted by the society. This is different from the concept of femininity. Attributes related to the women such as the applying of facial cosmetics and clothes, which accentuate the femininity, are still often seen as things that restrict women's movement space [23].

The perception of masculinity, which relatively free from the hegemony of an ideal value, leads to an assumption that it is also free from restrictive social norms [32]. Later on, that assumption must be necessarily questioned. The concept of masculinity as a gender construction certainly is never free from social norms that can inhibit the emergence of an equal gender relation. The assumption that the concept of masculinity is freer than the concept of femininity is one of the reasons why academic discourses in the field of gender are still very unbalanced. Gender discourses remain much centered on women and the issues surrounding them.

Along with the lack of attention to the issues related to the concept of masculinity, adolescent in boys as an important phase in the construction process of masculinity is also the study subject that is still marginalized. In academic discourses, the study that had been conducted concerned on the masculinity construction in Indonesia is still very limited in the number and the scope of its study. The studies conducted by Boellstorff (2005) and Oetomo (2000), for example, show that the

concept of masculinity also relates to sexual orientation and it attempts to negotiate the normative sexual orientation that many Indonesian people practice. Those studies also show that the formation of homosexual identity in Indonesia is closely related to social class, age, and unequal power distribution [4] [18]. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Nilan, et al. (2007) shows that the assumption on the concept of ideal masculinity of Indonesian people who live in Australia indicates a similarity to the concept of Javanese masculinity [16]. This concept of local masculinity may be similar to the concept of wen masculinity in China that does not promote the physical strength [11].

These findings of Nilan's team [16] turned out to be different from the finding in a study conducted by Clark (2008). Clark observed the construction of masculinity in several contemporary Indonesian films and showed that the concept of advanced masculinity is associated with the violence and the physical strength. In the reference to the concept of masculinity that emphasizes the physical strength found in several Indonesian film samples, Clark called it "a hegemonic masculinity". Nevertheless, the so-called the concept of hegemonic Indonesian ideal masculinity seems to need to be explored further through further research. Apparently, what might be called "hegemonic Indonesian masculinity" is closer to the concept of masculinity associated with emotional maturity that is usually owned by older men. The concept of masculinity based on the prototype of these older men is a reflection of a patriarchal gender ideology that promotes male superiority as central figures in the social and the cultural life of the society [5].

This masculinity norm inclined toward the older men generally is associated with non-confrontational behavior, not too brave to take a risk because they prioritize the stability. It would not be excessive if this kind of male prototype could be regarded as a hegemonic Indonesian



masculinity concept. This is based on the thought of Donaldson (1993) that stated hegemonic masculinity is a pattern of masculinity norms that is culturally favored. Hence, a hegemonic masculinity can usually be found in central figures considered as role models by the society [6].

The construction concerned on masculinity is one of the cultural components adopted by the society. Changes in the construction of masculinity also mean changes to lifestyles and cultures adopted by the society. If borrowing the point of view of Anthony Giddens, changes in the construction of masculinity in fact is related to the hegemony launched by the capitalists to Indonesian society to expand their industrial market share [8]. In the past, body care products were only consumed by women [23], so the market share that could be targeted is only limited toward the women. Whereas the number of men is also vast, so it will be very profitable if men can be targeted as the market share. Seeing this fact, eventually the capitalists with the various ways try to change the society's perception of masculinity in order to expand their market share. The capitalists realize with the influence through media, their goal will be achieved more easily. Thus, ultimately they perform hegemony by displaying various male pageants to construct the new meaning of masculinity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The word masculine or masculinity is derived from French, *masculine*, an adjective that means "manliness" or shows the nature of men. Masculinity is also regarded as the virility of men that is associated with his sexual quality. In the past, men were considered as masculine when the man had a sturdy body, a muscular body, a tough job, and other things considered as a symbol of "the manliness". The researchers also concluded

some features of body shape and face included in masculine type such as a square jaw bone, a broad chest, broad shoulders, a muscular body and much hair. Masculinity means strength and having much testosterone [23].

In fact, the assumption of that ideal masculinity raises a problem for men. As stated by Pascarina (2014), patriarchal masculinity that demands men to fulfill the ideal male image also causes some men to be in an endless anxiety. Some men are covered with the anxiety because they cannot fulfill that ideal male image. This situation makes the quality of their happiness worse because men are in a conflict between the ideal male image and their actual image [20]. Such condition makes men redefine the concept of being men (masculine men). The assumption of being masculine is also shifted from the assumption that ever existed before; the concept of masculinity that gives space to men to be themselves and become more humane. Nowadays the concept of masculinity is no longer the masculinity that upholds muscular strength or body shape. Attractive and handsome men are no longer men who have a big body, brown skin or much sweat. Men who are considered as handsome and interesting currently are constructed as men with a tall body, white skin, neat clothes and fragrant smell. Their face also tends to be 'pretty'.

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Capitalism has spread in various aspects of life, including the matter of masculinity [26]. The view of masculine men has been constructed globally in one dimension and has been agreed upon by the world's society. Masculinity has experienced a shift in meaning, following the development of market demands. Media have a big role in that case and because of media, the construction of masculinity becomes diffused. Male masculinity becomes a commodity and it is directed toward a homogeneous concept.

The concept of handsome men is equated globally and oriented to the western world. Men pursue masculinity in various ways to achieve the concept of masculinity expected by the society in general. Pascarina (2014) stated that handsome men are men claimed to be handsome by the most people in the society [20]. Thus it makes the market share of cosmetic product sales for men increases in accordance with the market demands. As two sides of a coin that cannot be separated, the need for masculinity products is also in line with the producers who take advantages of this condition to seek the profit. Various media appearances then appear to bring out a hegemony directed to the consumers as an endless persuasion [30].

Media have a major role in globalizing the new concept of masculinity. Male masculinity that has become homogeneous is depicted in advertisements, magazines, films, mannequins, and through the global pageants regarding on masculinity. Those various things make a homogeneous handsomeness,

for example six-pack abdominals, a tall body, bright skin, wet-look hair, and so forth. The world's masculinity pageant (Mister International) becomes a pageant to prove the homogeneous handsomeness that is to determine a man considered as "the most" handsome. Brain, beauty and behavior become elements that must be met to be able to participate in this masculinity pageant. However, it seems worth to be seen further whether it is true that not all men can access this masculinity pageant.

Globalization had expanded the western influence on masculinity to the whole world. The world's masculinity pageant has become a global product capable to attract many countries to participate in it. The issues raised are not only a matter of looking for talent but also a matter of seeking the profit. This globalized concept of masculinity is proven by the requirements to enroll this pageant that consist of a minimum height, an ideal body shape, and a considered-handsome face. Then, how about capitalism? It seems that it is working in market expansion.

A. Sexuality Theory (Michael Foucault)

Foucault considered that sexuality is not really free. The concept of sexuality is actually influenced by the great power that lies behind the mindset of the society. The construction of sexuality that has been believed, followed and regarded as a truth is actually the great narrative that was deliberately created to rule the society for a particular purpose. The view on women who should be primped and men who should appear as who are them, is an example of the great narrative that has been believed by the traditional culture of Indonesian society as a truth [24].

As time goes by, the construction of sexuality, especially on the male body turned out to have gone through a shift. The meaning of masculinity that attaches to the sexuality of men, in this post-modern era seems to have gone through many



shifts. The great narrative on the belief that men should appear as what they are (not necessarily to primp), now is seen to have gone through a shift. This shift is of course a new form of the great narrative that now dominates the concept of masculinity of a male body. This great narrative is deliberately created by a particular party with a specific purpose.

B. One-Dimensional Man Theory (Herbert Marcuse)

The society basically has diversities in every aspect. These diversities become a unique characteristic and a special marker of the world's society. In this post-modern era, the diversities or the uniquenesses of the society that has been existed are being tried to be united by the great power with a certain purpose [7]. This unification or uniformity is reflected in the concept of beauty and masculinity. The meaning of beauty and masculinity that were once very different from one society to another, now have been successfully uniformed according to a certain pattern. The uniformity on the concept of masculinity is of course not without a purpose, there is a big goal that want to be achieved by unifying the concept of masculinity that currently seems to have been followed by the entire world's society.

The world's capitalists are the party responsible for the uniformity of the world's concept of male masculinity which is now constructed and acknowledged in the whole world's society as a truth. The uniformity of the concept of masculinity is of course aimed at expanding the market share of the world's capitalists to add the profit accumulation that they will gain [8]. Mister International pageant is a form of a pageant used to construct the meaning of ideal male masculinity to be uniformed throughout the world. This kind of condition is a real example of an effort to uniform the world's society into one dimension.

ANALYSIS

Nowadays, the globalized world has entered many aspects of life. Media as the agent of globalization had succeeded in giving narrow and folded knowledge about life to the world [31]. A truly diverse case of masculinity has been framed in a homogeneous concept. In addition, the ideology raised by globalization has made the idea of masculinity is created into a pageant to seek the profit through the lure of this prestigious male pageant. Over a hundred countries have been affected and followed this pageant with the consequences of following the pattern and providing the profit to the major host country. Media in Indonesia are still tempted by this condition, where they entered in two opposite conditions; in one side they lost of independence and one side they can gain profit when they promote or broadcast Mister International pageant.

▼ Masculine According to the Construction of Mister International

The world-renowned male masculinity pageant, Mister International, is a masculinity pageant originating from Singapore. This is the third largest male masculinity pageant in the world and was started in 2006 under the auspice of Mister Singapore Corp. After this pageant developed into a global business that gets many responses by many countries, today, at least there are 50 countries that participate in this world's masculinity pageant. (<https://www.misterinternational.net>). As a corporation, the purpose of this pageant is of course to seek the advantages, both for the profit of the major host country and the indirect profit for the capitalists behind as the sponsor of this pageant [30]. In addition to Mister International, the recent selection of regional tourism ambassador in Indonesia is actually a pageant at the local level that has a similar pattern to Mister International pageant and



it is covertly a pageant to seek the profit for global capitalists.

The writers assume there is a difference between the concept of masculinity presented through the appearance of the finalists of Mister International and the concept of traditional masculinity of Indonesian men. The finalists of Mister International apply makeup that deals with feminine scope as a mean to support their masculine appearance. The style of the finalists by which the traditional concept of masculinity in Indonesia is regarded as a 'femininity' style actually gives an influence and a view on how men dress up. Through this phenomenon, the writers want to explore the concept of masculinity shown in Mister International pageant.

The appearance of the finalists of Mister International pageant become very interesting to be studied with the consideration that the concept of masculinity displayed by this ideal men's quest in the world has a difference with the view of masculinity that have been embedded through the figure of strong masculine men who have power, do not primp and appear as what they are.



As information disseminator, media are able to describe and construct the concept of gender [28]. One the media that seeks to give an idea of the concept of masculinity is social media. One of the popular social media nowadays is *youtube*. According to Ahira (2011), the existence of *youtube* social media is assumed to be more capable to

reach the audience because it can be accessed very easily and it is not bound by time. The meaning is it can be accessed anytime and anywhere as long as there is internet connection and computer/laptop/smartphone that are almost owned by all social classes in the world [1].

According to Prasetyo (2008) the concept of male masculinity has made changes in centuries to pursue the ideal image through the male body. This can be demonstrated by some cultural results in the form of sculptures of gods and also flamboyant costumes ever worn by royal or noble families. It should be masculine just enough to avoid matters that are considered as feminine [22]. However, because of this fast-moving era that directs toward the modernization at once caused by nowadays society who tends to be permissive to the emergence of a new phenomenon, also because of the feminist movement (feminism) that runs rapidly and affects the frame of the society's mind, the concept of masculinity begins to change. The emergence of the shift affects the construction of displayed masculinity, especially the ones displayed through electronic media. It is proven by a wide range of fashion and cosmetic product advertisements on television, which initially have been more exploiting women, now it begins to use men as its objects [33].

1. Sturdy and Muscular Body (Six-Pack Abdominals)

The finalists of Mister International are characterized by an athletic, in the sense of the sturdy and the muscular body with six-pack abdominals. Masculine men in this ideal men's quest in the world construct the ideal men are men who have an athletic body. The construction of masculine men in this first characteristic does not contradict with the ideal male characteristic in Indonesian tradition culture. Thus, this first characteristic of masculine men has already existed in the big narrative of masculine men figure in the traditional culture of Indonesian society.



Picture 2 : The Finalists of Mister International who have an Athletic Body [25]



2. Makeup

Makeup basically is an art to create physical beauty. The history of makeup is started from the time when people started to realize that they wanted to look more attractive, and then other people helped them to improve their appearance. Makeup basically is an art to create physical beauty [3]. Mister International pageant describes and shows masculine men who have a sturdy and a muscular body, but have a beautiful face, have bright skin and apply makeup on their face.

3. Eyeliner

Picture 3 shows the applying of bold eyeliner on the finalist of Mister International. The applying of eyeliner generally deals with women’s makeup as an eye framing [19]. However, in this case eyeliner is also applied by the finalists of Mister International to show the beauty in the men’s eyes. The applying of thick eyeliner aims to make the eyes appear larger or more noticeable. The applying of eyeliner also experienced a shift. At first, it is a cosmetic to beautify the women’s eyes and now it becomes a cosmetic to reinforce the masculinity and enhance the firmness.

Mister International pageant constructs the masculinity as a concept of firm men through the applied eyeliner. Eyeliner is a kind of makeup that has a very close relationship with the concept of femininity. However, Mister International pageant blends the concept of femininity into a man to construct the concept of masculinity inside the finalists of Mister International.

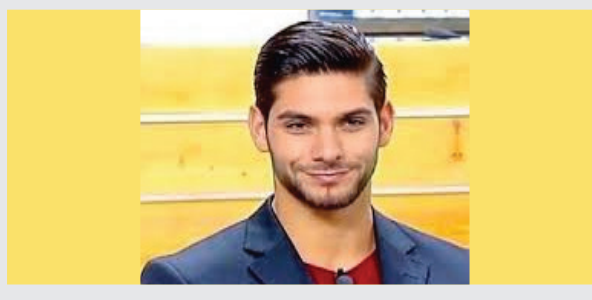
Picture 3 : The Applying of Eyeliner by the Finalist of Mister International [14]



4. Face Powder

Face powder becomes an indispensable part of people’s life in many countries over the centuries. Queen Cleopatra used it as a basic layer of her cosmetics, so the aesthetic function of face powder is more prominent. Unlike the Egyptians, the Far East people (China, Japan, and the surrounding areas) generally used face powder made of rice flour. After that, Tang Dynasty actors and actresses applied pearl powder before they went on stage to protect and beautify their skin. Although the applying of face powder became wide-spread, it was still limited among rich or noble families [13].

Picture 4 : The Applying of Face Powder by the Finalist of Mister International [10]



The applying of face powder also determines the social status. The skin complexion in many cultures becomes the differentiator of the social classes. LUXemag (2010) stated "in Asia, white skin is a sign of nobility and elite classes, also white is a symbol of purity of both self-beauty and nobility" [13].

The finalists of Mister International apply face



powder to cover their blemishes or stains on their face so that their face can look smooth when it is captured by the camera. In fact, face powder is a makeup that is close to the concept of femininity [19]. Face powder is considered as a supporting of women's beauty, while the applying of face powder in men is still considered as strange and inappropriate. The face powder applied in the finalists of this international ideal men's quest is only as a supporting appearance for the face so that it looks smooth, fresh and bright.

The finalists of Mister International show that the construction of masculine handsome men is men who have bright skin. It can be assumed that face powder is considered as a masculinity supporting equipment of masculine men. It shows that Mister International constructs the masculinity through the blend between the concept of femininity and the concept of masculinity as the basic concept of masculinity (masculine men are called handsome, and women are called beautiful).

5. Lipstick

Lipstick began to be popular in the 16th century because the Queen of England, Elizabeth 1 and the women who worked in England court colored their lips with a mixture of wax from bees and red mercury sulphide. Cleopatra, the most famous queen in Egypt, once destroyed a red beetle to give a vivid red color to her lips [21].

Picture 5 : The Applying of Lipstick by the Finalists of Mister International [15]



Lipstick applied by the finalists of Mister International consists of nude color, transparent lip gloss and lip tint. Lip tint is a lips color product from Korea in the form of colored liquid (usually red, orange, or pink) and it is durable when it is blended on the lips. Lip tint will give the color gradations of bright red, pink to the younger color gradations, so it gives a fresh effect without showing an excessive effect usually showed by lipstick [3].

Lipstick applied by the appearance of the finalists of Mister International is to support their appearance to look fresher in front of the camera, but in this case lipstick is a kind of cosmetic considered as the identity of the concept of femininity [19]. Fresh red lips give a natural impression, so the applying of lipstick, lip gloss or lip tint is considered as a supporting appearance to look attractive.

6. Immaculate Hair

Immaculate hair becomes a characteristic of ideal men presented in Mister International pageant. Immaculate hair actually does not contradict with the traditional Indonesian masculinity culture, in the sense that it still come under the concept of masculinity. The applying of hair cosmetic to make it looks neat actually is still in the big narrative of the traditional culture of Indonesian masculine men.

Through the characteristics presented above, it can be seen that the concept of masculinity constructed by Mister International is based on the concept of femininity. The concept of femininity is displayed through the applying of makeup as a supporting device of masculinity and perfection.

The applying of makeup to support men's appearance constructed by media, especially by Mister International pageant, currently is proven to have successfully influenced the mindset of the society about the meaning of masculinity for men. The applying of makeup for men in the popular culture has now been regarded as a natural thing [29]. It is proven from many beauty clinics and



Picture 6 : The Immaculate Hair of The Finalists of Mister International [27]



various cosmetic products currently produced not only for women but also for men. The point of view influenced by the entertainment world becomes one of the influences on the concept of perfect appearance for men. Smooth, tight, and bright skin become an obsession that is constantly pursued and realized by the modern society. Makeup, skin cares, and plastic surgeries become important things to get perfect and adorable appearance.

The applying of makeup is considered as seduction and camouflage [29]. The function of camouflage is useful for covering facial flaws, such as acnes, blemishes or a redness face. In addition, makeup is also used for the face so that it does not look oily at the camera spotlight, and it is a seduction function of makeup. Mister International winner as a public figure constructs that men can apply makeup. It is seen from the eyeliner, the face powder, and the lipstick he applies. With the development of the era, masculinity and femininity codes begin to blend into one. Things considered as femininity scope, now it can also be embedded into masculinity scope.

7. The Point of View of the Masculinity Theory

If it is seen from Herbert Marcuse's view, the formation of the ideal male masculinity construction in Mister International pageant is actually a form of uniformity of the masculinity perception in one dimension. This uniformity is deliberately done by global capitalists to expand their market share.

This market share expansion for further is used to increase the accumulation global companies' profit associated with masculinity supporting products that have been constructed. This statement is supported also by Michael Foucault's that stated the construction of ideal men that is currently well received by the global society as a great narrative is actually the formation of the great power that masters the concept of the body of the modern society. The concept of masculine men characterized by an athletic body, a tall body, white skin, immaculate hair and also fashionable clothes are the formation of the great power that masters the body construction of the modern society nowadays. The construction of ideal men is of course a formation of global companies that want their products to be sold in the market.

Picture 7 : The Appearance of Ideal Men According to the Construction of Mister International Pageant [12]





When it is seen in detail, the entire body of Mister International winner, which is regarded as the most ideal male figure of the world, is wrapped by the touch of the world's capitalists' products. It starts from his immaculate hair, then his athletic body, his bright skin to his primed face. Those are the results of global cosmetic products that currently have been widely produced and circulated in the global society.

The phenomenon of the wide-spread men cosmetic products starting from shampoo, body soap, facial soap, moisturizing cream, hair spray, body spray, body lotion, pomade, lip balm, even to night cream face and day cream face products for men. All of those products are currently sold and well accepted by the global society as popular cultural products that have been successfully constructed by the capitalists.

CONCLUSION

From the above description, it can be concluded that the construction of masculinity displayed in Mister International pageant is a form of uniformity of the global masculinity concept in one dimension. The construction concerned on ideal male masculinity, which is currently well accepted and regarded as a truth by the modern society, in fact is a great narrative created by global capitalists to expand their market share in order to gain the greater profit accumulation. The global capitalists in this case are big companies that produce masculine supporting products that have been successfully spread in the society. The construction made by the capitalists was conveyed along with the entry of popular culture in the flow of globalization that ultimately undermines the pre-existing local culture. The trend of popular culture is supported by online media (internet) that blurs the boundaries

among countries so that all influences delivered by the capitalists can be easily entered and accepted by Indonesian society. Indonesian society, especially men, nowadays have followed the popular culture trend by consuming various kinds of cosmetics and body cares for men. Body cares are considered as products to increase their good looking and masculinity assumed to accelerate their career and attract the attention of the opposite sex. This construction of masculinity is presented by the capitalists through advertisements as well as through various pageants, one of which is the international masculinity pageant (Mister International) and it is supported also by similar pageants at the local level (tourism ambassador's quests), regional and national level.

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