CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Sexual genesis began the day man and woman were created. They were, unfortunately, not given a manual of conduct to carry through life. If that were the case, humankind would have saved reams of papyrus used as it is, to pen various stances and theories on sex differences put forward by academicians and other professionals. Instead a free-for-all has reigned, with each culture upholding its own sex-differentiated standard against which masculinity and femininity are benchmarked. For example, among the Mbuti pygmies, the women specialise in hunting, which is usually thought to be a preserve of males. Among the African Amazons in the ancient kingdom of Dahomey, almost half of the fighting military were women (Smelser, 1995:229).

Interestingly, there exists cultures that do not even make a strict distinction between the sexes. Distinguished scholar Margaret Mead in her study on communities in New Guinea brought to light the Arapesh tribe and their practice of gender equality where men and women equally shared their tasks like gardening, hunting, and even child rearing (Lindsey and Beach, 2000:313). Among the Hua people of the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, individuals are classified according to external anatomical features and the amount of certain male and female substances which they have in their bodies. These substances are thought to be transferable between individuals.
through eating, heterosexual sex and everyday casual conduct. Hence they believe that the gender of a person metamorphoses according to the transfer of substances and fluids by the other sex (Moore, cited in Petersen, 1998:33).

These cultures which do not practise gender delineation, however, are the exceptions to the norm. Most societies do recognise and make gender distinctions, which are universally accepted. Problems arise when there exists no global consensus on what the specifics are.

In most cultures, womanhood is accorded upon a female on arrival of menstruation. This signals her body’s preparedness for motherhood. In most cultures, this event heralds the bestowing of official womanhood. A girl is now ready to embrace womanhood and all the roles that come with it. These roles are usually determined by the society she lives in. In a hunter-gatherer culture, the now-woman plays a subsidiary role to the man, preparing the meat he had so bravely fought for. In a high-technological culture, she works alongside the man.

The sequence is not so clear-cut, however, for the male. There is no natural physical declaration nor rites of masculinity to mark the onset of manhood. The awarding of the badge of manhood becomes arbitrary and a state of flux emerges. What people did, and still do, as they are wont to when there is no writ of law, is fall back on the seemingly most obvious and reasonable options at hand, which are using biological and social theories to fill the void needed to delineate the boundaries of masculinity. Once filled, the gender scales were irrevocably tipped. Masculinity became synonymous with all
characteristics viewed in a positive light – strong, virile, powerful and brave. The premises appeared legitimate, especially at the time of formulation. What more, when expounded so convincingly by leading figures like Darwin. It is these non-binding, non-prescriptive frameworks, which draw the gender lines that have been adhered to since time immemorial and will be looked at in the next segment.

2.1 Gender models

The following are three stances put forth along the centuries which suggest strong reasons for the domination of men in most spheres in all four corners of the world.

2.1.1 The one-sex model

The pre-Enlightenment one-sex model, before the eighteenth century, was one of the earliest postulations on sexual distinction. Women were seen to have the same sex organs as men, but on the inside of their bodies rather than on the outside. The vagina was viewed as an inverted penis and the uterus, an inverted scrotum. Hence men became the “yardstick of perfection against which the female sex is measured.” (Petersen, 1998:31 )

2.1.2 Male sex drive

Charles Darwin, the English naturalist, was one of the primary figures who developed the ‘male sex-drive’ discourse where men’s sexuality was seen to be ‘directly produced by a biological drive which functions in the
reproduction of the species' (The Encyclopedia Americana International Edition, 1993:510). The writer Havelock Ellis in 1900, took this idea one step further by suggesting that men might have a natural weekly ‘menstrual sexual rhythm’ not unlike the female menstrual cycle, characterised by a heightened sexual desire (cited in Petersen, 1998:57).

Yves Christen (cited in Petersen, 1998:64) corroborates the above arguments with a further view that “gender identity is genetically programmed but reinforced through cultural practices.” This is explained by pointing out the fact that the female has a limited number of eggs (400 in the course of a woman’s life) whereas the male expels around 100 million sperm cells in each ejaculation. For the male then, copulation is a conquest, a dissemination of seed, linked to quantity. With a limited number of eggs, women opt for quality. This explanation is seen to strengthen the assumption of a stronger, more virile male sex drive and weaker female libido, tying it to an innate physiological function.

These seminal propositions helped lay the groundwork for the acceptance of a stronger male libido, which is still widely perpetuated till today. Masculinity is irrevocably entwined to virility. In fact the Cambridge International Dictionary of English defines ‘virile’ as “full of sexual strength and energy in a way that is manly and attractive” (1995:1625). There is no female equivalence to this term.
2.1.3 The male physique

Apart from sex and sexuality, the male physique was viewed to provide men an edge in the gender stakes. Again Darwin fronts the picture. His ‘survival of the fittest’ view and theory of natural selection steered the spotlight to the male body which was held in high esteem for its strength and robustness which could withstand any test of power and endurance (*The Encyclopedia Americana International Edition*, 1993:510).

Foucault (1984:158) contends that the physical endowment of the male body is part of nature’s plan. Since it is men who have been bestowed with physical strength, it must be they who have to venture out into the open frontier. Women, built physically weaker by nature, have to work indoors. This view of the superiority of the male body echoes the ancient Greek perception of the muscular body as the emblem or metaphor of perfection, power and pleasure. This stand was further shaped by the work ethic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The display of control, competitiveness, assertiveness and above all, strength, was the order of the day. Work came to symbolise the arena to showcase these virtues. Male identity became entwined with work or paid labour, further engraving the idea of men as breadwinners of the family. Gerson observes:

Men now had to earn [their birthright] through economic success ... In exchange for assuming economic responsibilities, men “earned” the right ... to head the household and to control the family purse strings.

(1993: 20)
Saddled with the sole responsibility of providing support for their dependents, men had to exercise great strength and resilience under strenuous and sometimes hazardous conditions. There was no place for emotional sentiments and sensitivity that would have compromised on their ability to do what they had to do. So, sentimentality and emotions were seen as Achilles heels while exhibitions of brawn, tenacity, power and grit were considered highly valued and became eventually equated with masculine norms. These valued masculine traits also spilled over to physical activity like sport. In fact sport became, to an extent, a metaphor for life. This point is propounded by Foucault (1984) and Malossi (2000). The former contends that sport was seen to instil qualities like diligence, power and self-mastery, which were needed in life because they were important stakes in the honour game. The latter notes that sporting activity not only provided the license to display the male body, but also disciplined the body, emphasising musculature, which is the prime visual sign of strength and virility, long recognised as prerequisites for survival. Levant (1995:175) further acknowledges the bearing sport has on masculinity when he states that “men’s natural mode is not to try to connect but to compete.” He adds that it is these powerful early life influences of gender-role socialisation [that] reinforced men’s adherence to this [manhood] code.

2.1.4 The Functionalist theory

The functionalist approach takes the view that men and women should be assigned different tasks as separate gender roles are beneficial. In hunting and gathering societies men were hunters and expected to bring food to their families and protect them from harm. It was functional for women, more
limited in mobility by pregnancy and nursing, to be assigned tasks related to household maintenance. This way “disruption is minimised and harmony is maximised when spouses assume complementary and specialised roles such as breadwinner and homemaker” (Schaefer and Lamm, 1995:311).

2.2 Result of theories

As is characteristic of human nature, what begins as a seemingly logical filling to one gap, becomes so firmly entrenched that it becomes universally customary. Wadding in the form of ideas and learned viewpoints were offered centuries ago to fill in the hollow spaces where there were no clear guidelines on what exactly masculinity entailed. These arguable standpoints, with biological and social underpinning, attributed the virtues of strength, grit and resilience among others, to masculinity and have become so deep-set to the extent that they have contributed to masculinity being “essentialised” (Petersen, 2000:3). That is, the assumption that there exists a relatively stable masculine ‘essence’ which defines men and distinguishes them from a feminine ‘essence’ that defines women. In simpler terms, males are attributed with characteristics of power, strength, virility, bravery, aggression, sexual dominance, competitiveness partly through the theories and ideas that have been circulating around for centuries. These theories have given rise to a patriarchal system where male control prevails. In contrast, females are ‘endowed’ with physical weakness (sometimes even physical anomalies as suggested by the one-sex model), a lack of sex drive, a need to be protected, and passivity - in other words, all things not masculine. It is these notions of gender that
have been fossilised and passed down from one generation to another which we, today, have inherited.

2.3 Definition of terms

Having looked at historical and social perspectives of gender, there arises the need to define certain key concepts and terms to gain a better understanding of the issues involved.

A general misconception is that sex identity and gender identity are synonymous but that is hardly the case.

2.3.1 Sex identity (male/female)

According to the *Collins Concise Dictionary Plus* (1990:1189), sex is “the sum of the characteristics that distinguishes organisms on the basis of their reproductive functions assigned at birth according to physical characteristics, particularly the external genitals.” In other words, one’s sex identity is what one is born with. The first question always asked at birth is, ‘Is it a boy or a girl?’ What is being asked is the sex identity of the child, not the gender, and the answer given is based on the child’s genitalia.

2.3.2 Gender identity (masculine/feminine)

Gender, though closely related to one’s sex identity, is “something that is socially constructed and not naturally ordained ... It is not determined by sex” (MacInnes, 1998:64). N’ Dri Assie – Lumba, Professor of Women’s and
African Studies at Cornell University, in a presentation (Achieving Gender Equality in Families: The Roles of Males 1995:11) at a UNICEF sponsored seminar, defines gender as "something that emerges from the space between men and women in which they interact and negotiate for resources and power." This is an interesting definition because it suggests that gender is not a condition that can be compartmentalised as generally believed. Masculinity does not have to equal strength, bravery and being the protector and femininity, weakness, docility and being protected. There is no higher power that dictates these terms and conditions. Instead it is men and women operating in their own social milieu who negotiate their own gender agenda. As Connell concurs, gender identity is "made by men and women that can therefore be remade and reformed by them" (cited in Maclnnes, 1998:64). This definition arrives at a time when gender issues are at a turning point.

To recapitulate the above definitions, a sex identity is what one is born with (male or female) whilst gender identity is culturally and socially assigned (masculine or feminine). Since there is a variation from one culture to another vis-à-vis the constructs of the culture concerned, one's gender identity is malleable. As a result each culture produces the masculinities that it needs creating a spectrum of masculine roles and attitudes. This understanding is crucial because it underpins the current gender issues.
2.3.3 Patriarchy

According to the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995:1036), patriarchy is a "society in which the oldest male is the leader of the family or, more generally, society controlled by men in which men use their power to their own advantage." Or as MacInnes defines it more clearly: "Historically existing societies ... had been characterised by a sexual division of labour [which] had systematically privileged men who characteristically enjoyed superior power, resources and status to women" (1998:7).

Bearing in mind the earlier discussions on how the early criteria of masculinity came to be, patriarchy definitely had its historical place in society. However, what appeared legitimate once, becomes obsolete and has to move with the times. This is attested to by Pease (1994:13) when he says that patriarchy, as "institutionalised male power," has a "historical structure with changing dynamics", reinforcing the idea that the time-worn patriarchal system is incongruous in today's world.

2.3.4 Masculinity

While the origins of the word 'masculine' (derived from the French, *masculin*, and the Latin, *masculinus*), meaning simply 'male,' can be traced back to the fourteenth century. The word 'masculinity,' according to Simpson and Weiner, first appeared only in the mid-eighteenth century (cited in Petersen, 1998:42). It appeared at the very moment in history when efforts were beginning to be made to define manhood and womanhood in terms of distinct bodily criteria. So, masculinity could be seen to describe "the way males socially construct
their identity in a particular historical form of society" (Maclnnes, 1998:70). Since historical vestiges are rarely doubted or questioned, masculinity gradually became an “unconscious part of social, political and psychological identity and power” to the extent that it has been taken for granted throughout the history of patriarchal society as a kind of “force of nature” (Morgan cited in Horrocks, 1994:5). This “force of nature” can be attributed to the early theories and postulations which appended virtues of strength and dominance to masculinity.

2.3.5 Masculinities

Masculinity is not a monolithic identity isolated from the influence of race, class and culture (Jewitt, 1997:3). Connell (cited in Maclnnes, 1998:70) concurs when he notes that gender appears as a reified variable to be examined in interaction with other equally reified variables such as race and class. What this means is that there is no one form of masculinity that transcends racial and cultural barriers. Masculinity is multi-dimensional, very much like a prism that diffracts different degrees of light and colour, depending on the angle viewed from. The prism or masculinity is just a microcosm. The greater picture should be viewed from the diffusion that appears from the diffraction. For after all, “discourse about masculinity is constructed out of five per cent of the world’s population of men, in one region of the world, at one moment in history” (Connell, cited in Pease, 2000:7). This is the modicum of masculinity that has predominated. With the awareness of larger forces at play in the gender stakes, the coinage of the plural term ‘masculinities’ is now widely accepted. Harry Brod (cited in
Hooper 2000:61) likens masculinities to family resemblances where “...just as members of a family may be said to resemble each other without necessarily all having any single feature in common, so masculinities may form common patterns without sharing any single characteristic.” Different ‘masculinities’ are seen to emerge from the interplay between these different variables, with some masculinities remaining dominant [known as hegemonic masculinity] and others ‘subordinated’. While there are many masculinities operating in society, it is hegemonic masculinity that is equated with the masculinity as we know generically. This differentiation is important especially in today’s world where there is a blurring of lines with the breakdown of gender barriers. This also reiterates the earlier point made about gender not being fixed. Masculinity is a fluid state of being.

Having viewed the historical perspectives and definitions of gender, in particular masculinity, it is apt to turn to the current motions in society today. Bearing in mind that change takes place over time in different time spans, the concept of masculinity too has not stood the test of time. Petersen comments that the

contemporary period marks a decisive point in terms of thinking about established cultural understandings of the masculine and about the possibilities for reshaping male identities on the basis of radically new conceptions of the person.

(2000:19)

He adds that [these] ideations of masculinity are enmeshed in the history of institutions and of economic structures.
There have been, without doubt, major changes taking place in the world today and they are all irrevocably linked to one phenomenon, ‘Modernity.’ Modernity “is a set of assumptions, values and patterns of action that was the product of the European Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, which has assumed global dominance in the socio-economic, cultural and political spheres of life” (Ng, 2001:29). Within Modernity, MacInnes (1998:3) recognises a crucial development which is the rise of the market and exchange, commonly known as capitalism.

2.4 The rise of capitalism

Anthropologist David Gilmore (cited in Horrocks, 1994:56) believes that “manhood ideologies are adaptations to social environments.” He concludes that it is “the harshness of the environment, the scarcity of food and other resources that forces the male to take a masculine and dominating role.” While this premise was made based on a different environment and time, his observation still holds water. On the face, capitalism may seem to contradict this thesis, as one would not consider the conditions we live in as harsh as described in Gilmore’s study. We are not exposed to cold winds and severe weather conditions without protection. However, if one were to examine Gilmore’s statement more closely, it still merits close attention. Capitalism breeds a ferocious, competitive environment where fear of unemployment and poverty which threatens to bring about scarcity of basic needs like food and housing, hangs in the air. The irregular swings of the bullish and bearish markets, which are integral features of capitalism, too, can take an emotional and mental toll on an employee. The coinage of the term 'law of the jungle'
to describe the erstwhile conditions of the world we live in, speaks for itself, resounding the Darwinian principle of 'the survival of the fittest.' So, while the variables change, the basic ideas of Gilmore's thesis stay. The environment determines concepts of masculinity where many aspects of 'masculinity' are entwined with the personal elements necessary to succeed within capitalism (Sharpe, 1976:63). In a capitalist culture where nothing is stable as new discoveries are made everyday, concepts of masculinity are just as volatile.

Modern capitalism has given rise to business enterprises and bureaucracies. People discharge their job functions in line with the system of rules governing the particular organisation. It is this bureaucracy that dominates its workers. The individual worker becomes but a cog in the machine, under the power of a supreme officialdom. The employed worker is the one who toes the line and plays by the bureaucratic rules. Rationalisation determines that the holder of such office is the person who has the capacities necessary to perform the expected functions of the office effectively. And the sexual identity of the employee does not come into play. As Weber (cited in MacInnes, 1998:4) comments, "the development of bureaucracy greatly favours the levelling of status." This prevalent market scenario creates a climate for gender equality, leading to the breaking down of the traditional conventions. "Men who provide the sole or major economic support for their families have not disappeared, but as a group they no longer predominate and are unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future" (Gerson, 1993:5). Thus hegemonic masculinity, becoming passé, has to make way for a new masculinity, and it is within this milieu, that the modern man and woman operate.
Men now have to un-learn and dismantle previously learnt gender models to become part of society in the present circumstances. “Men have been trained to measure their masculine worth by their ability to compete and excel, and to a large extent, they still do” (Levant, 1995:11). What happens then when the playing field becomes level? When the previously dominated person becomes a peer? It leads to what Levant calls a “collapse of the traditional masculine code” which he illustrates as follows:

Raised to believe that “real men” don’t feel fear, sadness, ... we’re now told we should not only feel these emotions but also express them. Trained to be cool-headed, action-oriented protectors ..., we’re now told that ... our success... now hinge on our ability to develop the more traditionally feminine skill ... Taught early on that a man’s primary role is that of a breadwinner and that his primary role must be to his work, we now find ourselves having to share that role with our female partners ... It’s been a real shock.

(Levant, 1995:2)

Brecht in *Life of Galileo*, has a more positive observation to offer:

For two thousand years people have believed that the sun and all the stars of heaven rotate around mankind. ... The universe has lost its centre overnight and woken up to find it has countless centres. So that each one can now be seen as the centre, or none at all. Suddenly there is a lot of room.

(cited in MacInnes, 1998:5)

Yes, suddenly there is more room for gender manoeuvring and that is what seems to be happening in the world today. Traditional gender roles are being torn down as the sexes begin to tread on new grounds. Men now are having to adopt traits like sensitivity, patience and placidity which were previously
associated with femininity, in order to succeed. This is acknowledged by an eminent scholar in men’s studies, Seidler:

As we learn to explore the contradictions of our everyday experience within a capitalist society, we learn to acknowledge our feelings, rather than discounting them because they do not fit the way we have learnt to think things should be. This is to recognise a relationship between masculinity and the spirit of capitalism.

(1991:xiv)

With capitalism “the world’s wealthier, industrialised societies are now gradually shifting away from the traditional masculine ethic of win-lose contests and life-or-death confrontations towards the more traditionally feminine ethic of mutual understanding, compromise and peaceful coexistence” (Levant, 1995:149). This comment hits the nail on the head of the matter at hand for if female qualities become more highly valued, then they could easily be incorporated into men’s power base (Pease, 2000:15). So, men now have to incorporate parts of the female repertoire into their own acts, out of sheer necessity.

How then, have men, accomplished at shutting out whole areas of existence and feeling, reacted to this maelstrom? In a positive way, many researchers have found out. Among them are Roger Horrocks (1994:1) who believes that the traditional masculine gender acted as a “mask” or a “false self” and that being male does not sit too comfortably with some men. The current capitalist climate has resulted in men and manhood being released from a deep unconsciousness. His argument is that the exaltation of commodities and the prevalence of heavy reliance on machines, have led to a fetishism of material
existence to the point that money has become the one true god. As a result, society today is powered by the inexorable and inane need to manufacture more and more consumer goods to meet the insatiable desires of the modern day consumer. The vicious cycle of materialistic desires and surfeit production has ripped out the heart and soul of men (Horrocks, 1994:65). This has resulted in the devaluation of the human being who is reduced to being but a 'unit of production.' Once the dominant force, the male species is now but a cog in the machine. With power slowly slipping away and not having traditional gender ethos to fall back on, men have to seek other avenues to legitimise their positions in society. Rationalisation, being the cornerstone of traditional masculinity, has fallen short under the pressures of modern day stratum. Powerful external positions such as the ones held by men, are deficient when held up against real life especially so when much of life goes on in the private and inner realms of human beings (Horrocks, 1994:47). And it is this inner momentum that men are retreating to. Emotional virility has long been recognised as the forte of womanhood. Though rendered physically weaker, women have been empowered emotionally. Now men are seeking a similar empowerment for a more fulfilling life.

However this proposition is not as clear-cut as it appears. Again, as in the past, there are no drawn parameters to outline what the new manhood encompasses. As a result in today's world, manhood does not trudge on a singular, clear-cut path. Instead, "men have entered a no man's land, a territory of undefined and shifting allegiances, in which they must negotiate difficult choices..." (Gerson, 1993:ix).
Having inherited a long tradition of supremacy, men are not willing to relinquish that power so easily. Though men know that the traditional masculine code needs to be reconstructed, they also know it does not need to be completely replaced. Though they are ready to negotiate certain parts of it, they have no intention of relinquishing the still-valuable masculine traits (Levant, 1995:13). Therein lies the paradox of the male identity today:

it is contradictory, ambivalent. It constantly wrestles with the feminine, absorbs it and then expels it; it purports to be tough and then reveals its fragility; it seeks to hide neediness and intense feeling - and privately clings to others.

(Horrocks, 1994:48)

The characteristics of masculinity must change as humankind moves from living in a tight society to a loose society. These two terms were introduced at a UNICEF seminar by Patrice Engle (Achieving Gender Equality in Families: The Roles of Males, 1995:18). Tight societies are those built on well-defined patriarchal systems where the role of the man is to provide for the family and community. As the structure of rural communities disintegrates under the influence of modern cities, societal transition takes place. Tight societies gradually become loose societies when societal pressures allow for every member of society, male and female, to make equal financial contributions. This leads to the disintegration of the sole authority of the male. His role as economic provider is diminished. This situation is evident in statistics revealed by Engel at the UNICEF seminar. In Thailand and Nepal, women contribute fifty per cent of the family income and in the Philippines, women's share of income exceeds that of men by ten per cent (Achieving
Gender Equality in Families: The Roles of Males, 1995:18). The point here is that men cannot rest on the old laurels of masculinity as we move towards new societal structures. Men have to incorporate new traits into the masculine repertoire.

2.5 Malaysia within a capitalist system

Where does the scion of Malaysia stand in relation to the discussion so far? Having noted the forces of capitalism on gender structures, it would be apt to examine the economic agenda of the nation first.

Starting off from an agricultural base, Malaysia has launched itself into the information and technological orbit to thrust itself into the competitive global marketplace. In 1991, ‘Vision 2020’ was initiated. It is this policy, with the aim of propelling Malaysia into the league of developed nations by 2020, that underpins the present-day Malaysian economy with information and computer technology (ICT) spearheading the development. The National IT Agenda (NITA) serves as the base for the utilisation of ICT. With the theme ‘Turning Ripples into Tidal Waves,’ NITA focuses on the development of the people, infrastructure and applications to create value, to provide equity and access to all Malaysians and transform [the] society into a values-based knowledge society. The ‘ripples’ are to “create the necessary environment and empower the people, so that they will bring about the tidal wave of change required to achieve the NITA vision” (Blueprint for the ICT Age, 2001:20).
What arises is the adoption of a new work ethic, creating a “psychologically liberated” Malaysian society. “Psychological states of mind and changes in individual behaviour are deemed crucial for change to come about for Malaysian society ... to move forward, to progress to becoming a developed society” (Zaharom, 2000:140). It is within this framework that Malaysians are encouraged to operate.

The future of Malaysian citizens has then been charted. The pervasiveness of technology is felt directly or indirectly by the public especially in the workplace. All signs point to the fact that men can no longer cling to their traditional roles and extend the seat of dominion. This point is accentuated when looking at the current statistics in local tertiary institutions. Currently, the ratio of female to male student enrolment at institutions of higher learning stands at about 65:35. The University Kebangsaan Malaysia, which now sees a female to male enrolment rate of 70:30, even envisages a situation whereby male students there would be extinct by 2010 (Martin, 2001:1). This trend indicates that men will have to yield their power to women in the near future. Ergo, male identity in Malaysia will have to be remodelled to keep up with the times.

2.6 The magazine as an instrument

What better way to keep the pulse on gender trends in motion than to study a written medium with a successful track record dating back a few centuries. That is the magazine. Magazines have been regarded as “a reflection of a
nation's political, social and cultural life. [Magazines] tell us about ourselves” (Daly et al, 2000:28).

What is a magazine? It comes from the Arabic word *makhazin*, meaning a place where goods and supplies (especially ammunition) were stored. This can be taken to mean that magazines hold and dispense information. They target a select audience usually defined by their age and interests.

With this in mind, this research will now zero in on a niche sector in the magazine industry, men's lifestyle magazines. Previously the term men's magazines referred to publications designed to interest men such as cars, fishing and Do-It-Yourself (DIY) magazines. The new breed of magazines are aimed directly and overtly at a male readership, using masculinity as a marketing tool (Brown, 2002:1). This emergence is viewed as a response to a change in masculinity in society. The following four reasons reflect why the current day men's lifestyle magazine captures the essence of masculinity, making the magazine a credible instrument of study.

Firstly, as seen earlier in Section 2.3.5, masculinity cannot be viewed as a monolithic entity. It is fluid, adopts various stances and forms depending on the culture it resides in. This is exactly the state of affairs of contemporary men's lifestyle magazines that are currently caught between an attempt to maintain the construction of masculinity in its original bedrock, while simultaneously responding to a world where changes in gender relations are becoming the norm (Stevenson et al, 2000:374). Richard Collier concurs by commenting that
the masculinism of the new men's magazines involves two simultaneous and contradictory developments [which are] a rewriting of an old, familiar and traditional masculinity and alongside this ... the development of a masculinity which ... rejects out-and-out sexism and seeks instead progressive, non-oppressive relations with women, children and other men.

(1992:2)

Malossi (2000) views these concurrent developments as a sign that there is an awareness that change has to take place, yet there is still some resistance to those changes. He elaborates this point of view metaphorically. “It’s as if, knowing that some kind of radical curfew is just around the corner, [men’s magazines] are indulging in one last binge of political incorrectness, one last orgy of drunken behaviour” (2000:172).

All these observations underlie the fact that modern day men’s lifestyle magazines do reflect the gender mechanisms in motion in society.

Secondly, they reflect the blurring of lines between the public and private worlds. Previously, men’s magazines would concentrate either on ‘entertainment’ (girly/soft porn magazines) or ‘information’ (cars, fishing, DIY). However in the new men’s magazines, as Collier (1992:3) observes, “the two spheres of leisure and work have become blurred.” This echoes the earlier discussion on outer power versus inner power where the external façade is inadequate and has to be complemented by inner strength to provide a more complete being. And this is precisely what is seen in men’s lifestyle magazines.
The third reason is seen in relation to the capitalist world today. Having argued that gender identity is tied to the economic structure of a society, its ramifications are clearly visible amongst the pages of men's lifestyle magazines where the attainment of material success and economic power remain fundamental to the dominant form of masculinity on offer by the magazines (Collier, 1992:3). One does not have to look further than the prevailing images of men in magazine advertisements. They entice, exhort, persuade and manipulate the reader into buying certain images and products. Edwards asserts that the primary role of men's style magazines is to encourage and perpetuate spending amongst its readers leading to the construction of masculinity in terms of commodities (cited in Brown, 2002:6).

The fourth reflection of masculinity is seen in the fashion pages. Previously, modelling was a domain held by females. Not anymore. The fashion pages and advertisements in men's lifestyle magazines show up a bevy of male models, decked in the latest rage of the season. This indicates a 'sharing' of occupations, with men taking over as objects of scrutiny, to be ogled at. Sean Nixon believes that it is within fashion photography that the new codings of masculinity are most extensively elaborated (cited in Brown, 2002:6).

These four reasons, whilst reflecting a general observation of masculinity as noted by scholars in gender studies, serve to justify the importance of the magazine as an instrument of study.
2.7 Background to FHM Malaysia

FHM is an archetype of a men’s lifestyle magazine. The local edition hit the Malaysian shores in December 1998. In an interview with the marketing manager of FHM Malaysia, it was revealed that the magazine, with the tagline or brand value (in marketing terms) ‘funny, sexy and useful,’ reaches out to 18-39 year old executives and men aspiring to be successful (Atkinson, 2001). To date it has a circulation figure of 25,000 in Malaysia. The real numerals are much higher when borrowings, rental and second-hand sales are taken into account. What further consolidates its position is its international backbone. Its lineage can be traced back to the United Kingdom. In the past five years, “a whole empire of FHM has been spawned, with editions appearing all over the planet” (FHM August, 2001:61). To date, fourteen countries can boast about having their own local version of FHM. The fourteen nations are the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Hungary, the United States of America, Romania, South Africa, Australia, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, Turkey, Holland and the Philippines.

The Malaysian edition of FHM is made up of an amalgam of articles that appear in the foreign editions plus locally-written articles. The local editors scour the other international editions for articles and features that Malaysians are interested in and can relate to. So what is printed in the magazine is a collection of the best the world has to offer. It is this eclectic mix that gives FHM Malaysia the cutting edge in the local niche market. Malaysians are not immune to the global currents. In fact the tentacles of globalisation have pervaded almost every facet of Malaysian life. It is almost unimaginable not
being a part of the global village. Technology, economics, marketing, education, music, politics and values will never be the same again. It is in line with this spirit of globalisation that FHM Malaysia stands.

Masculinity in Malaysia like all else is not invulnerable to global mechanisms. It carries with it manifestations of global experiences. This intermingling of local and international experiences help constitute what masculinity is in Malaysia. FHM Malaysia captures this true essence of masculinity. Hence it is an effective mirror to view masculinity in Malaysia.

In the next chapter, the study will elaborate on the content of FHM Malaysia and the methodologies employed to analyse the magazine.