CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter the reasons for the selection of the corpus will be mooted. Next the methodology employed to answer the research questions will be explained and justified.

3.1 Selection of Corpus

The raison d'etre of this study is to examine the features of masculinity in a modern day Malaysian context deeply imbued with the spirit of globalisation that has assailed the world over. While globalisation rears its ugly head in many forms, this researcher feels that the most potent channel that captures all of its spirit, without a doubt, is the mass media. In this age and time, one is spoilt for choice when it comes to making media selections. From the perennial favourite, the newspaper to the electronic webpages, there seems to be no end to the array of media at one's disposal. This presented an interesting problem to this researcher when it came to selecting the form of media that would lead to the answering of the research questions.

The telecommunication media (television, radio, the Internet) were quickly ruled out as they generally cater to a very diverse group of people. Furthermore programmes from the West seem to dominate airtime space. Hence Malaysian masculinity would not be evident. Local television and radio programmes too fall short as they are seen to be created for the consumption
of the general Malaysian public. So any evidence of masculinity in Malaysia would be minimal.

This helped narrow the search to the print media. This option appeared very promising especially when considering the literacy rate of 89.3% (Bottomline, 1995:60) in Malaysia. It signifies the strong influence of the print media on Malaysian society. The newspaper was rejected as a tool of study as, again, the local dailies and weeklies are printed for the general Malaysian public, leaving little manifestations of masculinity to study.

This presented the researcher with the final choice of media - the magazine which has proven to be a reputable source for the study of contemporary society. This is because of the highly-segmented nature of the magazine market. The magazine chosen as corpus for the present study had to be segmented along the lines of gender with a gender-specific audience in mind.

A quick survey at two of the leading book retail chains in Malaysia, Kinokuniya and MPH, revealed that magazines catering especially to men's general interest, though not as many as women's interest magazines, still abound. Men's lifestyle magazines were of interest to this researcher compared to magazines like Motoring and Torque which excluded males who had little interest in these areas. Men's lifestyle magazines like FHM, Men's Review and Gentlemen's Quarterly (GQ) reach out to all men regardless of their interests.
A browse through GQ eliminated it as a possible study option for two reasons. Firstly, its relatively higher pricing of more than RM20 alienates it from the average middle class earner. Secondly, its content would appeal to a more Eurocentric audience. For example, there were advertisements on products like Armand Basi and Griffin which are unavailable here, and, mention of stockists that provided the fashion merchandise in the magazines, who were all foreign-based.

Men's Review was also ruled out upon checking with the stores about the sales figures. A check with the book stores indicated that FHM Malaysia outsold Men's Review. Unfortunately the managers at the stores were not at liberty to disclose the sales figures save for the fact that more copies of FHM Malaysia left the shelves than Men's Review. Thus it was finally settled that FHM Malaysia, at an affordable rate of RM10, was going to be the final and best arbiter of masculinity in Malaysia today.

This view was further enhanced upon closer scrutiny of the background of the magazine and the magazine itself. The Malaysian edition of FHM is not cut off from its international roots. It scours the other international editions for articles and features that Malaysians are interested in and can relate to and include them with the local articles, thus encapsulating the essence of masculinity within its pages.

A skim of the magazine revealed it to be targeted at the educated, middle class members of the Malaysian community of males who fall between the 20-40 year age bracket. This conclusion was reached by noting the following:
1. Article topics range from corporate dressing to Ecstasy abuse.

2. Visuals include pictures of men in corporate attire.

3. The advertisements include designer fragrance from Chanel, Armani, Hugo Boss, fashion accessories (watches, eyewear) from Guess, DKNY, mobile phones from Nokia, Motorola, alcohol from the exclusive Martell cognac to regular Heineken beer, haute couture from Calvin Klein, Armani, Versace to trendy fashion apparels from Seed and Padini Authentics, which are all available locally.

All these prove that *FHM Malaysia* would serve to be the best barometer for this study on masculinity in Malaysia today.

### 3.2 Method

As it is not feasible to analyse every section and every article of the twelve magazines, this researcher had to categorise specific sections so as to obtain a more focused research approach that covered a wider ground. The methodologies employed for the analysis of the selected sections of the magazines were specifically to answer the research questions that have been outlined in Section 1.2. The researcher will also justify her choice of methodologies.

The first analysis involved the study of the cover page and table of content over the twelve-month period to identify a common pattern in the arrangement of the magazine. From this study, it was clear that the editors followed a set pattern. This enabled the researcher to outline her research approach, according to the make-up of the magazine which is as follows:
a. Cover page
b. Regular segments
c. Feature articles
d. Interview pages
e. Advertisements

The decision to divide the analysis of the magazine into the above segments was based on the following figures. The average number of pages per issue is 152 (including the cover page and the back page). Of that average, 49 pages or 32% of the total content make up the regular segments. The feature articles comprise 26 pages or 17% of the content per issue. Interviews with various personalities cover an average 24 pages or 16% and finally the advertisements alone take up a relatively large number of 46 pages or 30% of the magazine. These percentages give a total of 95%. When the cover page is included, the figure goes up to about 96%. What all these figures mean is, by dividing the analysis of the magazine into categories as enumerated above, this researcher is able to cover about 96% of the content of the magazine per issue for analysis. The other 4% comes from the two table of content pages, editorial page, subscription page and the page on the preview of the following month. This researcher will not be taking these pages into consideration as she believes they do not make much contribution to the study of masculinity in Malaysia to warrant an analysis. Hence this researcher is of the opinion that the division of the five areas of *FHM Malaysia* magazine to be analysed is justified. The table below enumerates the above figures more clearly:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>NO. OF PAGES</th>
<th>REGULAR COLUMNS</th>
<th>FEATURE ARTICLES</th>
<th>INTERVIEWS</th>
<th>ADVERTISEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OCTOBER</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVEMBER</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECEMBER</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JANUARY</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEBRUARY</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARCH</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APRIL</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAY</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUNE</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUGUST</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEPTEMBER</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1820</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE PAGE</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% CONTENT</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These five areas had to be further subdivided for easier and more comprehensive analysis as they constitute too large a corpus to be studied as a whole. The following is a description of the five segments, the subdivisions within these segments and how they will be analysed.
3.2.1 The cover page

The cover page is without a doubt the most overt drawcard that baits the reader. This researcher assumes that the publishers and editors would go all out to make this page more desirable to the reader. In the case of *FHM*, the reader, especially of the targeted male audience, is visually arrested every month by a famous female celebrity who poses in either a dainty, winsome or sexually appealing way. This researcher will study the cover pages looking at four areas in particular.

The first is the length of the model’s body that appears on the front page, whether it is full-length, three quarter-length or half-length. A full-length shot would take away the concentration on any one part of the anatomy and focus instead on the body shape. A half-length shot of the upper torso would bring the cleavage and breasts to more prominence. This researcher feels that the predominant form of the female body is a telling point for gender relations. Hence the focus on this area.

Since the cover page is one dimensional, the models do not have the luxury of kinetics and sound to entice the male reader. So it is left to their body language or pose to make up the deficit. This researcher will be scrutinising three aspects of body language which are eye contact, body position and gestures as she believes they carry with them a deeper insight into gender which will be elaborated on in Section 4.1.
3.2.2 Regular segments

From the table of content and further readings of the magazines, the researcher was able to identify 13 segments that appeared regularly every month in the duration of the 12-month period of study. Two of the segments, *Jantan Test* and *Eats*, appear under the *Reporter* section. They have been taken out of the *Reporter* section to be analysed separately (see Section 4.2) as this researcher feels that they contain a wealth of information which would make a significant contribution to this study. The other important segments will be looked at in the order they appear in the table of content. The 13 regular segments are described briefly as follows:

a. *Letters to the Editor*

Readers write in with their comments, criticism, praise and suggestions about the magazine. The editors make it a two-way interaction by responding, often in a tongue-in-cheek manner, to these letters (see Section 4.2.1).

b. *Reporter*

This segment makes up an average of five pages. It comprises an amalgamation of fascinating snippets that border on the bizarre (see Section 4.2.2).
c. *Jantian Test*

It takes up only half a page of the *Reporter* section. As mentioned earlier, it was singled out because the researcher feels that it provides invaluable insight into the study being undertaken. Basically, *Jantian Test* pits two male celebrities against each other, not unlike the mid afternoon showdown in the old Westerns. Instead of brandishing guns, the two celebrities answer ten questions posed to them and scores are given based on how 'masculine' the response is perceived to be. The scores are tallied at the end with the winner being the male with the highest points. The researcher pigeonholed the questions under eight categories and will seek to find unifying characteristics of these categories (see Section 4.2.3).

d. *Eats*

A male chef at a trendy local establishment shares a recipe for a main dish. A step-by-step guide accompanied by pictures is given. Also included in this one-page segment is 'Quick Snack,' which as its' name suggests, furnishes a recipe for an easy-to-prepare dish. This research will look to the language used, the visuals garnishing the page and choice of dishes featured to create a portraiture of masculinity (see Section 4.2.4).
e. Reviews

This segment surprisingly does not appear in the table of content. Yet an average four pages are devoted to reviews of music, film, web, games and books every month (see Section 4.2.5).

f. Bar room jokes

This page contains 6-7 jokes per issue, submitted by readers. The writer will study these jokes by analysing the graphics that appear on the page, the content of the joke especially the sex of the person on the receiving end of the joke (see Section 4.2.6).

g. Fashion

The fashion pages consist of an assemblage of the latest in sartorial attires and accessories. This researcher will look at the regular set pattern of the fashion pages, a selection of articles, the male models and the language used within these pages (see Section 4.2.7).

h. Gold

Similar to the Agony Aunt columns that appear in most other newspapers and magazines, Gold highlights problems and queries written in by readers. Between 3 - 5 problems and queries are addressed per issue. This researcher has classified them into four
subcategories and analysed each closely. Attention was also given to the headings of the letters, the punctuation accompanying these headings and the visuals on the pages. These details will be discussed in greater detail in Section 4.2.8 as the researcher believes they raise certain moot points vis-à-vis the issue of masculinity at hand.

i. *Hardware*

A commonplace feature in any men's magazine, *Hardware* is a display gallery of the latest gadgetry ranging from cameras to toasters. This segment, while dealing with technicalities of the contraptions on show like USB-compatible cables, PocketZip disks, takes a functional approach. Each device is evaluated according to its features and utility. The meaning behind these gadgets and their technicalities will be dwelled upon in Section 4.2.9.

j. *Hospital*

This is where readers with medical problems and queries write in. Their difficulties and inquiries are addressed by a relevant expert. This study will look at the common problem areas afflicting the male reader and the implications of these maladies (see Section 4.2.10).
k. *Wheels*

Another perennial fixture in most men's magazines, 3 - 4 pages of *Wheels* provides an insight into the automotive industry. This study will look at the technical jargon and cost of the vehicles displayed to provide a context within the discussion of masculinity (see Section 4.2.11).

l. *Endzone*

Each issue, 3 - 4 pages long, presents the reader with an unusual and sometimes innovative adventure. Examples include swimming in shark-infested waters, diving with crocodiles, motocrossing (not to be confused with motorcrossing), dIRTbiking in the savage Down Under outback, ultralight flying, wakeboarding amongst others. This study will look at the underlying criteria across-the-board that embrace all the activities in *Endzone*. The language used in this segment will also be paid attention to (see Section 4.2.12).

m. *True Stories*

This segment always appears on the last page. Readers are invited to submit their encounters of funny or embarrassing situations. Four stories are printed in each issue with the 'True story of the month' sender receiving a prize. The 'True story of the month' is always accompanied by a humorous drawing or sketch of the incident. The
researcher will look for a common thread that binds the stories and like the Bar room joke page, the unwitting recipient at the end of the tale (see Section 4.2.13).

3.2.3 Feature articles

Different articles on various issues of interest to males are published monthly in FHM Malaysia. These articles do not fall within the purview of regular segments and interviews. These feature articles number 55 in the 12 issues analysed, giving an average of 4.5 articles per issue. As mentioned earlier, they take up 26 pages or 17% of the total content per issue. This researcher listed down the titles of all the 55 feature articles and put them into five categories. The categories are related to firstly, staying ahead in today’s world, secondly, male – female relationships, thirdly, crime, violence and death, fourthly, interesting individuals and finally, exhibitions of bravery.

3.2.4 Interviews

The interview pages in FHM Malaysia proved to be quite eclectic as the choice of interviewees range from celebrities, personalities holding jobs not often considered run – of – the – mill to lesser – known female subjects. In order to compartmentalise these interviews into manageable chunks for easier analysis, the researcher used the following procedure. An initial quantitative analysis was done whereby the number of female and number of male interviewees in all the 12 FHM Malaysia issues studied were totalled and divided to indicate the number of female and male subjects who were
interviewed. From there the numbers were divided by 12 to give the average number of female and male interviewees who appeared per issue. This was done to indicate preferred gender of interviewees among readers.

The researcher went on to find out the average number of pages allotted to a female interviewee and a male interviewee. This was done by dividing the number of female subjects with the total number of pages they appeared in. The following formula was used:

\[ \frac{1}{f} \times y = z \]

\( f \) - the number of female interviewees
\( y \) - total number of pages they appeared in
\( z \) - the average number of pages each female interviewee appears per issue

The same formula was used to determine the average number of pages for each male interviewee per issue. This was done to determine if the readers preferred insights into male or female subjects.

To determine the length of each interview, an average word count was done. The first 3 lines of each interview (not including the questions) were counted and an average was determined. The number of lines in the interview (not including the questions) was then multiplied by this average using the following formula:
\[
\frac{A + B + C}{3} = D
\]

A - first line
B - second line
C - third line
D - average number of words per line

Thus \( D \times (\text{total number of lines per interview}) = \text{approximate number of words per interview} \).

This information was used to compare the length of interview with a male subject. This researcher believes that the information obtained will shed light on who has a 'stronger voice' in men's lifestyle magazines. The approximate number of words per interview was then divided with the number of interview pages to illustrate how much space is taken up by the pictures of the celebrities.

This researcher also studied the general themes or areas covered in these interviews to determine if there is a set pattern of questions for female celebrities. This information was later used to compare the questions put forward to female interviewees and male interviewees. The visuals accompanying the interviews was also not overlooked as they carry with them a goldmine of information about masculinity (see Section 4.4).
3.2.5 Advertisements

The researcher went through every page of the 12 issues counting the number of pages containing advertisements in each issue. This total number was divided to give an average number of pages of advertisements per issue. This was also put against the average number of pages per issue to give the average percentage of pages of advertisements in relation to the total content of the magazine per issue.

Since some of the advertisements ran onto a few pages, the researcher counted the number of advertisements in each issue. An average number of advertisements per issue was also calculated.

Having noted these figures, the researcher went through the advertisements again. This time each advertisement was numbered at the top right hand corner. The researcher also kept a separate record, briefly describing each numbered advertisement. This was done to avoid numbering advertisements duplicated in several issues. When the researcher came across such advertisements, she checked the notes to confirm if these advertisements did indeed appear before. This information was also double checked by referring back to the earlier issue for corroboration. The researcher then added an 'R' on the right hand corner of the advertisement and a mark in the record next to the brief description each time a certain advertisement was repeated. The reason for this was to identify the number of advertisements that were repeated and exclude them from the final total number of advertisements to be analysed (see Section 4.5).
A coding record adapted from Brimm (1983:83) was created to make the analysis more systematic. In order to complete this record (refer to Tables 3.2 and 3.3), the researcher had to first, categorise the products advertised. After skimming through the advertisements numerous times, the following categories (and their codes) of advertisements were decided on:

C - clothing (c) and shoes (s)

G - mobile phones (m) and other technical gadgets

A - watch (w) and eyewear (e)

F - fragrance

L - alcohol

P - personal grooming items like skin care and hair treatment products

O - others that do not fall in any of the above categories like condoms, women’s lingerie and restaurants

Boulding (cited in Brimm, 1983:3) maintains that images play a powerful role in our lives. These images include “the relational image ... the picture of the universe around [us] ... the personal image, the picture of the individual in the midst of the universe of persons, roles and organisation.” Bearing this steadfastly in mind, coupled with Goffman’s contention that individuals in social situations “engage in social portraiture” (1976:6), this researcher decided to catalogue these images to aid an analysis of them. The groupings are as follows:
Level 1 - Men only in the advertisement
Level 2 - Women only in the advertisement
Level 3 - One man and one woman in the advertisement
Level 4 - Mixed—sexes in the advertisement
Level 5 - No humans portrayed at all in the advertisement

Umiker-Sebeok (2001:4), like Goffman, believes that images seen in advertisements reflect society. He did a study on the structuration of gender or the construction of gendered spaces which he viewed as a “process of interaction; the interaction of those containers we call our bodies.”

Using a framework similar to Goffman’s and Umiker-Sebeok’s depictions of masculine and feminine displays, this researcher decided to take notes on the visual gender displays in the advertisements. The areas addressed included:

~ eye contact (is the subject psychologically withdrawn from the scene?)

(see Section 4.5.1)

~ touch (what are the hands doing?) (see Section 4.5.2)

~ body position (back to camera? facing camera, lying down) (see Section 4.5.3)

~ location (indoor, outdoor or not evident?) (see Section 4.5.4)

~ relative size (who or what dominates the scene?) (see Section 4.5.5)

The above information was used for Level 1 and 2 advertisements.
However, discussion on Level 2 advertisements would only be made when deemed necessary as the main thrust of the dissertation is masculinity. Only when the figures from Level 2 advertisements are seen to give a lift to the research on masculinity, would they be elaborated on.

Level 3 advertisements had a separate coding sheet that incorporated the following information:

- size (who is the dominating subject in the advertisement?)
- body control (Is there physical contact? Or is one person seen exerting control over the other?)
- eye contact

A discussion on these three areas will be looked at in Section 4.5.6.

No separate analysis was done for Level 4 and 5 advertisements as information about these types of magazines could be gleaned from Coding Record 1 and Coding Record 2.

The coding records that incorporated all the above information for Levels 1 and 2 are seen on the next page:
Table 3.2 Coding Record 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding Record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Size</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 Coding Record 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding Record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye contact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following chapter will expand on the skeletal form of the methodology enumerated above and flesh out a discussion that would shed light on the subject of masculinity in Malaysia.