CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the results of the qualitative analysis as enumerated in the previous chapter.

4.1 The cover page

The cover page can be likened to the garnish on the main course. Its purpose is to entice the consumer by its pleasing-to-the-eye arrangement. Only the misinformed will judge the cover page to be set up with random scantily dressed cover girls in varied poses. A closer analysis reveals this to be far from the truth. Upon scrutiny, a lot of thought and effort have been put to the cover page that reveals subliminal messages.

The first indication was revealed when studying the length of the model’s body that appears on the front page. As explained in Section 3.2.1, a full or three-quarter length angle would outline the body shape and a half-length feature would highlight the cleavage and breasts. Interestingly, only two cover girls (Heidi Wichlinski in December and Patricia Velasquez in May) were photographed waist up. The pictures on the other ten cover pages were shot featuring three-quarter of the models’ bodies. Thus in 83% of the cases, the accentuation on the model is not her cleavage but her body shape. And in the case of the two models photographed waist up, both cannot be described
as being buxom or top heavy. What these seem to indicate is there appears to be a weaning away from a staple diet of breasts as the main attraction in the female form to the accentuation on body shape. This view concurs with Umiker—Sebeok’s (2001:6) proposal that the thin figure of a woman makes her more angular, and hence more masculine, signifying her identification with masculine goals such as power and status. Since being thin also lessens the appearance of body mass and hence masculinity, women are able both, to signal their pursuit of masculine goals, and still appear feminine and hence attractive to the opposite sex. Thus beauty as in the eyes of the male *FHM Malaysia* beholder can be translated as looking feminine with an added cloak of power, pointing to a subtle form of gender egalitarianism.

The cover girls’ body language speak volumes. All of them make direct eye contact with the camera. All but one have their bodies positioned towards the camera. Only two cover girls give the barest hint of a smile (July and August issues). The other models on the covers of the other ten issues just look impassively at the camera without smiles. These aspects of body language suggest little coyness on the part of the girls. They do not appear daunted or intimidated at the task of appearing on the front covers of a men’s magazine. Their eyes and body stance meet the gaze of the male viewer headlong with no sign of awkwardness and inferiority. The only hint of something more comes from the curvy positioning of the models’ hands. Six of the cover girls rest their hands casually on their thighs, two clasp their waist, one crosses her shoulder while another three hook their fingers onto the waistband of their attire. The ‘bending’ of the arms and elbows demonstrates a curvilinear form which Umiker—Sebeok views as being softer and weaker (2001:7). Ergo
the body language of the cover girls relay a contradictory message of being strong and weak at the same time. This observation is not far removed from the argument put forth by Umiker–Sebeok (2001:6) in the preceding paragraph where attractiveness in a female is equated to being feminine and masculine at the same time.

4.2 Regular segments

As mentioned in Chapter 3, 13 parts constitute the regular segments. The 13 are discussed in greater detail below.

4.2.1 Letters to the Editor

This page is the first platform made available to the readers to interact with the editorial team. It is an opportunity to 'hear' the voices of the unseen readers. Unfortunately the voices are limited to a chorus of cries for more pictures of attractive female personalities and comments about previous articles. While the content of the letters does not warrant much discussion, the only nugget of information that can be gleaned is from the tone of the letters and the response from the editors. They are all humourous and lightweight, suggesting the readers appreciate the value of humour. This sets a stage for the segments to come.
4.2.2 Reporter

This segment picks up news from around the world and within five pages serves up snippets of information for the consumption of the readers. Appearing early on in the magazine, the segment can be seen to set the tone of the magazine by its choice of themes which can all be succinctly described as bordering on the bizarre. For example, there is a three sentence paragraph about a lady who can pop her eyeballs out of their sockets on command (August, 2001:22). Also found is a tale about a cake-stealing duck that got sent to jail, another about a man who spent two years trying to get run over by four-wheel-drive vehicles and a profile and modus operandi of gangsters in six different countries (May, 2001:20). Though the briefs are globally wide ranging, they all have the same underlying bizarreness centred around crime and violence. The brevity, offbeat and humourous subjects encapsulate the essence of the magazine within the five pages. Thus this segment can be likened to a sneak preview of the major attraction.

4.2.3 Jantan Test

The Kamus Dwibahasa Fajar Oxford (2001:86) defines ‘jantan’ as being male. As the title suggests, two men are pitted against each other to judge who is the more masculine. In this half-page segment, two well-known male personalities are given ten identical questions and marks are awarded and tallied on how ‘manly’ or ‘jantan’ the response is deemed.
The researcher, having examined the total 120 questions, categorised the questions under the following:

**Table 4.1 Categories and Sample questions in *Jantan Test***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF QUESTIONS</th>
<th>EXAMPLE QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>exhibiting bravery</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1. Can you rescue a woman in distress? (February, 2001:27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. If you were on the Titanic, would you let women and children go first? (March, 2001:27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1. Ever used sports equipment to aid your love-making skills? (July, 2001:27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Ever had a shag at 30,000 feet in the loo of an airplane? (September, 2001:29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>having certain skills</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1. Can you dismantle, clean and reassemble a rifle? (December, 2000:28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Have you ever driven farm machinery? (November, 2000:32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breaking the law</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1. Have you ever shoplifted? (August, 2001:30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Would you lie to the police to help your friend? (January, 2001:30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>showing unkindness</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1. Have you ever made a small child cry? (April, 2001:28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Have you ever been cruel to animals? (August, 2001:30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toilet habits</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1. Have you ever peed in a swimming pool? (May, 2001:33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Do you read while on the toilet? (December, 2000:28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involved in fights</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1. Have you ever grappled with a bouncer in a night club? (June, 2001:33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Have you ever joined in a fight between two strangers? (June, 2001:33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1. Are facials a must? (January, 2001:30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Has a fan ever put you off a game? (July, 2001:27)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The contenders who responded in the affirmative to the queries as above, were awarded marks. So, according to the 'jantam' test, to be considered truly masculine, a man has to have displayed intrepidity, have had carnal pleasures, exhibited some form of survival skill, broken the law occasionally (nothing too serious though), been unkind to others, got into physical scraps and be open about his toilet habits. It appears that masculinity, as seen above, can be summed up in one word - exhibition. It is an exhibition of fearlessness, physical and sexual prowess and aggression. In Pease's words "[a] focus ... on the exercise of outer power" (1997:1). This comment echoes an earlier discussion in Section 2.3.5 about hegemonic masculinity, which is the dominant form of masculinity, and can be seen through displays of bravery, aggression, virility and sexual dominance. Hence the 'Jantam test' column can be viewed as a reinforcement and celebration of hegemonic masculinity.

4.2.4 Eats

A very surprising feature in FHM Malaysia is the monthly segment on preparing a culinary dish, where a professional male chef shares a recipe for an entrée. Also included is a recipe for a simple hors d'oeuvre under the heading 'Quick Snack.' A check with all the other men's lifestyle magazines in the market failed to show up similar columns. So this regular feature in FHM Malaysia can be considered a step in a new direction, even more so when FHM itself admits that the kitchen is "a place that has broken the spirit of countless men" (May, 2001:35). It marks an encroachment into a territory once reigned by women, leading to the blurring of lines between the private
and public, where the kitchen was entrusted to the women and men conquered the outdoors.

The novelty of this column is confirmed when taking note of the language and the underlying implications. The male reader is assumed to be totally inept and clueless about what goes on in the kitchen. He is given such instructions and information as "Go to a supermarket," "Buy salt, pepper and paprika if there's none at home" (June, 2001:35), "Buy the ingredients in any wet market" (September, 2001:32), "Fish smells" (January, 2001:32), subtly implying that such basic knowledge is probably beyond men unless pointed out outrightly. This makes them out to be helpless and needing great assistance, which is a far cry from the traditional acceptance of the man-leading-the-pack ethos.

This adequacy, however, is quickly compensated for by the treatment of the culinary endeavour, which is likened to going into a battle that has to be won. Again the language used lends credence to this point. The ingredients are viewed as the enemy to be vanquished. Example to fortify this point include "When sufficiently hot, crack that egg and scramble the bugger" (September, 2001:32), "Add the sacrificial lamb," "When the buggers are screaming to be removed ... shape the mashed buggers into a ball" (July, 2001:29). The re-creation of the kitchen as a battlefield serves up a notable point. The metaphor is used as a magnet to draw males into the culinary foray, tapping into the traditional consciousness of masculinity, fearlessness, strength, resilience which hark back to the old days when men were the dominant force. This way, when invested in a masculine metaphor, the kitchen
is not confined to a woman’s domain. This justifies the venture into the kitchen.

Further justification is injected when looking at another prevailing idea in the language which is the sexual insinuations repeatedly made. For example one chef is described as being able to send “taste-buds into culinary orgasm” (May, 2001:35). The April issue begins with “Men love breasts.” It is only two lines down that one gets a clearer picture that what is being referred to are “well-marinated avian bosoms.” The reason given for choosing the chef from Planet Hollywood to share the recipe is because that is where “many a tender breast are regularly displayed for the public’s willing consumption” (April, 2001:31). The double entendre, while being witty, alludes to further conquest, from the bedroom to the kitchen. Sexual innuendo, heads the list of top jokes, as will be seen later during the discussion on jokes in Section 4.2.6. Since it is then clear that men favour the topic, the inclusion of sexual undertones in the gastronomic part of the magazine guarantee a favourable attitude towards cooking. Gastronomy being likened to sex is a further lure into the realm of the kitchen.

A touch of class and male professionalism is added to the cooking segment, further removing it from women’s domain. Dishes cooked up are of the haute cuisine fare, elevating the status of cooking. All the chefs who share their recipes with *FHM Malaysia* not only hail from swanky and trendy restaurants and hotels like Finnegans, Genji at Pj Hilton and the Renaissance, but are pictured in their work garb looking every inch the professionals that they are. In addition, they are referred to not just by their names but with the title
‘Chef,’ with the capital C, in front of their names. The only professional not depicted this way is the one featured in the November edition. He cuts chicken for a living in the Taman Tun wet market. While he plies his trade in a less than glamorous place and does not have a fancy title attached to his name, the ‘deficiency’ is re-dressed in another way. He is pictured, with a wide grin, holding up a chicken by its’ legs, like a prized trophy. This sight is no different from a picture of a winning fighter lording over his victim. This gladiatorial image echoes the argument made earlier about the kitchen being made to be seen as a battleground. Professionalism, then, is viewed in a wider scope. Goings-on in the kitchen is not seen as a simple, straightforward process as undertaken by women in the past. Nowadays what is required is a high degree of mastery and skill to handle kitchen manoeuvres, according to the underlying text and images in FHM Malaysia. To a certain extent, this implication undermines the long-standing position of women in the kitchen who, untrained, found themselves there because of prevailing social conditions. Now, if FHM Malaysia is to be followed, cooking goes beyond the amateurish fare of the past but is raised to a professional form of gastronomic proportions with the aid of males who have been enticed into the field, poised to take over.

Another telling point served up in the Eats segment is the choice of dishes featured. 70% of the entrees had meat as their base. Only two vegetarian dishes were found and they were not part of the main course but in the ‘Quick Snack’ section. They were red cabbage salad (December, 2001:30) and an eggplant dish (July, 2001:29). This observation reinforces Adams postulation that there is
... a kind of symmetrical symbolism between meat and vegetables, masculine and feminine. Men are active and consume foods imbued with power (the power of active animals), and women are passive, and consume foods derived from 'inactive,' 'immobile' forms of life (plants).

(cited in Beardsworth and Keil, 1997:213)

Thus the consumption of meat as seen promoted by *FHM Malaysia’s Eats* segment can be seen as a promotion of virility and male strength. However this point is tempered with by the 'Quick Snack' section, where, as the title suggests, the male reader is shown how to prepare a simple snack. The presence of this section can be seen as an antithesis to masculinity especially when considering Bourdieu's postulation that men are seen as larger, needing more food and as eating in gulps and mouthful, and hence foods which require picking and nibbling are seen as unmanly, as essentially feminine and suited to the needs and inclinations of women.

(cited in Beardsworth and Keil, 1997:88)

So, it appears that men have adopted, to an extent, women's eating habits despite their penchant for meat-based meals. This observation suggests that men are being depicted as less than men in a traditional hegemonic sense of masculinity.

4.2.5 Reviews

Within four pages, *FHM Malaysia* gives film, music, website, book and computer game reviews in that order. One page is devoted to film, music and
website reviews while book and game reviews share one page with the
former allocated three-quarter of that page.

Within the one-page allocation, five films are critiqued monthly, six albums
reviewed, four websites judged, four books reviewed and three games
assessed. All these pages come with visuals. What is evident from these
figures is the lack of serious depth in the reviews. For example, the review
of award-winning R&B singer Babyface’s Greatest Hits album consists of
only 48 words (February, 2001:33). The scanty reviews come as a surprise as
these five areas pack high entertainment value. The only conjecture that can
be made is a comprehensive review that would take away the pure
entertainment value. Readers perhaps want to be entertained without having to
be caught up with too much cerebral matters. This suggests a representation
of masculinity as containing a certain degree of passivity.

4.2.6 Bar Room Jokes

Telling jokes is no laughing matter. Studies in this area have taken on serious
academic leanings. For example, the University of Hertfordshire in
collaboration with the British Association for the Advancement of Science has
started a ‘Laugh Laboratory’ to delve into the ‘serious’ side of joke telling
(Kelsey, 2002:10).

The telling of jokes is acceptably one of the most heavily dependent on equal
cooperation between joke teller and audience. Cooperation comes in the form
of an understanding between the two parties. The understanding that bridges
the two minds is the underlying assumptions about certain conventions generally taken for granted. For example, legendary blonde jokes where the general sweeping assumption is all blondes are stupid. The joke teller does not have to mention that point when relating the joke as the audience, through repeated experience, has been exposed to that frame of thought, regardless of the fact that the claim has never been substantiated. In other words, jokes present certain "archetypes" which are "realised as stereotypes [that] trigger the activity of an enormous cognitive apparatus of associating those with certain attributes that, in turn, serve to omit superfluous descriptions" (http://www.stud.uni-hannover.de/~matthper/Perners_Homepage -English.html). This interpretative frame is then shown up by a subsequent frame. The function of this frame is to catch the audience off guard and in the process, create laughter. In most cases in men's magazines and bar room jokes, the two frames play on sexual division. MacInnes (1998:68) observes the same trend when he notes that "lifestyle magazines, defined by a male/female audience, ... are illustration of the increasing strength of this [gender difference and confusion] obsession."

This obsession is reinforced by the title 'Bar Room Jokes' which give rise to visions of men sitting around a bar, drinking, joking and laughing heartily. This alone alludes to the fact that jokes found on this page are almost male exclusive and contain insights into what triggers the male funny bone. Beyond that, MacInnes (1998:68) believes that humour "yields real insights into the vulnerabilities of our gender identities." In other words, what makes us laugh, in reality, is a reflection of our true selves.
Since ‘funny’ appears as part of the magazine’s brand value, a whole page is devoted to jokes only, which appears quite early on in the magazine, around page 40. This is besides the ironic and satirical undertones that pervade a significant portion of the magazine.

The first item that catches one’s eye on this page is the colourful graphics that illustrate the joke of the month. They make up characters in the joke, all drawn in disproportionate figures. The male and older, unappealing women figures are sketched as having large, rectangular and angular faces while the sexy females have pentagon shaped faces and skimpily dressed hourglass bodies. These sketches capture stereotypical depictions of the sexes where, notes Umiiker-Sebeok, “curvilinear forms are usually seen as softer and weaker than rectilinear forms” (2001:7). Hence, the graphics accompanying the joke of the month conform to the stereotype. This could perhaps be read as treading on familiar, comfortable grounds.

A look at the 12 jokes of the month revealed that 50% of them contained sexual overtones. Of that figure only two made mocking insinuations at men while four others sneered at women. The numbers were reversed when looking at the other 50% of the jokes which were ‘non-sexual.’ Four had men as the ‘victims’ in the jokes while only two were aimed at women’s vacuity. These numerals allude to two points. First, men do not view themselves as being above derision. They do accept that they have less than perfect qualities and can be slow-witted. An example would be as seen below:
A beautiful woman is driving back to the city when her sports car breaks down. Desperate, she wanders over the fields and spies a farmhouse, where she knocks on the door. "Oh, thank God," she says, when the farmer answers. "My car's broken down—could I stay the night until someone comes out tomorrow?"

The farmer eyes her suspiciously. "Well, okay," he says, "but don't mess with my two sons, Jed and Jake." Behind him, two strapping young men appear, smiling sheepishly. The woman agrees, but after going to the guest room, she can't stop thinking about the two young bucks in the next room. Throwing caution to the wind, she quietly tip-toes across. "Jake! Jed!" she whispers. "Would you like me to teach you the ways of the world?"

"Huh?" comes the reply.

"The only thing is ," says the woman, "I don't want to get pregnant—so you'll have to wear these condoms." Beaming, the boys agree—and soon embark on a glorious night of three-way passion.

Forty years later, Jed and Jake are sitting on their front porch, fondly remembering their erotic experience. "It was fantastic," says Jed. "But I do have one question."

"Oh?" says Jake.

His brother frowns. "Well, do you really care if that woman gets pregnant?"

"Nope," says Jake, thoughtfully. "I reckon not."

"Me, neither," says Jed. "Let's take these things off."

(April, 2001:38)

This joke highlights the asininity of two half-witted males. The choice as joke of the month proves that men can laugh at their own obtuseness and lack of carnal knowledge. The joke was also cited because it leads to the second point that men, too, are not far removed from being depicted as sexual objects ("two young bucks") to be used by the opposite sex. Though women still fill the space as sexual objects as seen by the 50% of the jokes that set them down sexually, there seems to be an equal acceptance of men being viewed in the same fashion.

The other jokes printed on this page average 6–8 per issue. They can be separated in the following categories:
Table 4.2 Categories of Jokes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AG</th>
<th>FV</th>
<th>MV</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>SImv</th>
<th>SIfv</th>
<th>O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The acronyms used can be explained as jokes with:

AG - Inherent aggressive tone

FV - Female(s) as the object of derision or ‘victim’

MV - Male(s) as the object of derision or ‘victim’

SI - Sexual innuendos

SImv - Sexual innuendos with men as ‘victims’

SIfv - Sexual innuendos with women as ‘victims’

O - Others

The numerals seen above appear to slightly buck the trend propounded by the Laugh Laboratory which revealed that top jokes among men involve aggression, putting women down and sexual innuendo, in that order (Kelsey, 2002:10). The data in this study however, disclose that top jokes for male FHM Malaysian readers involve sex, putting themselves down and aggression. What is most interesting is the large numbers of jokes, sexual or otherwise, that put men down. In these jokes, they accept themselves as ‘victims’ or objects of derision. This acceptance then can be seen as a constituent of masculinity in Malaysia.
The fashion pages stand out from the others because they appear to be a supplement of *FHM Malaysia* rather than just another regular part of the magazine even though they are bound with the rest of the magazine. This is because the fashion segment has its own table of content which none of the other monthly segments can boast of. The number of fashion pages merit its own table of content. Appearing from page 100 onwards, the average number of pages devoted to fashion is 23 or 15% of the total content of the magazine. The number of pages surpasses all the other items that appear monthly. This only proves the recognition of the male as a consumer or an important object within the economy of consumption. The importance of the male consumer is also seen beyond just the number of pages. The actual content of the fashion segment reveals the depth of male involvement in the fashion industry.

A skim of the fashion pages unfold a certain pattern of content. Generally an average fashion issue of *FHM Malaysia* contains five clear parts. The first is two pages on fashion to ‘keep you in the loop’ (as stated in the magazine), second, two pages on fashion ‘gear you won’t regret buying,’ third, a two-page focus on fashion items (belts, cufflinks, vests, among others) displaying different designs, fourth, an average of four advertisements, and finally, about 11-14 pages featuring mainly male models, local and foreign, in exotic locations displaying their attires.
The two pages that provide the readers with the current news are made up of various snippets of information. For example, the launch of the limited edition Openworked Tourbillon watch (July, 2001:102), the latest ergonomically designed Brick Adidas Equipment Badlander shoes (January, 2001:98), the opening of the Louis Vuitton Global Store in Paris (June, 2001:104) and a regular column featuring the ‘Buy of the Month’ which includes the G3 Aluminium Chronograph wristwatch by Guess? (October, 2000:114). The researcher noted two interesting details about the current news pages. First, all the information made available here is centred around the European market. An implication of this is, the Western world serves as the major fashion trend-setter. Second, haute couture fashion is the order of the day. All the information that appears here is about the key players in the fashion industry. For example, the October issue revealed the Fall 2000 menswear designs. Male models were seen catwalking along Europe’s runaways parading in Prada, Dolce and Gabbana, Calvin Klein and Paul Smith collections. In the July 2001 issue, Salvatore Ferragamo’s men’s ready-to-wear autumn winter collection was unveiled. These collections mentioned above are exclusively for the rich, well-heeled. The fact that they appear at the beginning of the fashion spread alludes to the setting of aspiration. The male reader is prepared for his embarkation on a fashion journey by being shown glimpses of the best the industry has to offer, thus raising his level of aspiration before he even begins. This would make him more open, attuned and receptive while on the fashion pilgrimage.

Once the aspiration of the reader is fired up, the next two pages nudge him in the direction of buying. This is done through a ‘soft sell’ method
bordering on 'hard sell.' What is meant here is, the reader is cajoled into considering buying certain items under a heading 'Invest – Gear you won’t regret buying.' In the issues when this heading did not appear, it was replaced by 'Do not leave home without this month’s top items.' The former takes a soft sell approach, more of an advice to the reader while the latter takes a firmer stance, sounding almost authoritative. In the 12 issues analysed, the reader is treated to a combination of both sales techniques. An example is shown below:

**Timber shirt-jacket with snap closure RM719 by ck Calvin Klein at Lot 10 Shopping Centre**

A timeless classic updated for urban use. The zipper blouson Fifties jacket has been replaced by the button-down shirt-jacket that works like a casual over-shirt. Looks great with either a classic shirt or a crew-neck tee. Complete this no-fuss assembly with a pair of faded jeans - it’s a classic, and classy look.

(October, 2000:125)

The zeroing in on the finer details of the design suggests that men have become discriminators of sartorial designs and this column is an appeal to this fashion savviness of the males. The title ‘Do not leave home without this month’s top items’ recalls the tagline of a famous credit card company, which promises easy purchasing facilities. The items on this list go beyond the haberdashery as evident from the list below:
Table 4.3 Sample column in the fashion page

DO NOT LEAVE HOME WITHOUT THIS MONTH’S TOP ITEMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>PRICE (RM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dark brown wallet by Salvatore Ferragamo</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Magnetic photo frame by Gucci</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Maroon smart casual shoes by Ermenegildo Zegna</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Prussian blue handkerchief by Hugo Boss</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Leather toiletries bag by Ermenegildo Zegna</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Money clip holder by Piaget</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Double “C” key ring by Piaget</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Silk tie by Aigner</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Leather travel bag by Ermeegildo Zegna</td>
<td>2850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Leather pen holder by Aigner</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Watch by Hugo Boss</td>
<td>2650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Saucony Grid Web sneaker available at Royal Sporting House</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(September, 2001: 114-6)

Fashion finesse is then seen as not merely clothing but the sum part of every accessory worn, put on, carried and owned. The price tag attached only serves to add to that finesse, as seen above. An exorbitant RM10,758 would have to be forked out before ‘leaving home’ in style. This can be seen as the entwining of fashion and consumerism.

The accentuation on fashion is also noted when looking at the array of designs of one fashion item featured every month. For example, the
September 2001 issue features 22 different cufflinks (price range RM 295 – RM 12,200), August 2001, 22 different belts (price range RM 29.90 – RM385), June 2001, 22 different vests (price range RM 29 – 395), among others. This raises the implication that fashion articles are viewed beyond their functional uses. They are not just items that serve a singular, practical purpose. Rather, they perform a conjoining function of making a statement. For example, a diamond encrusted cufflink, because of its rare value, embodies the genteel personality of the wearer while a floral printed vest screams a fun-loving, colourful personality. Thus they speak a language of their own, reflecting the character of the owner. The wide choices available allows the wearer to select how his own mission statement is to be broadcast, making room for a high dependency on external manifestations to take over the projections of personality. Bearing in mind that the creative fashion items are the contrivances of a designer’s ideation, the modern man’s personality is seen to be shaped by outside human forces that set the trail of possible personality projections, which are manifested in the choice of 22 different designs. The underlying premise here is that man is a passive player limited only to fashion and consumer products to convey a sense of himself.

The researcher will not discuss the advertisements that appear in the fashion pages here as they will be discussed in Section 4.5, which is the advertisement section of this research.

The first reality that strikes when looking at the 11–14 pages featuring male models posing in their panoply of garments is the high visibility of the male body. The male body is seen to be used as a canvas to sell fashion related
products or in marketing terms, a canvas for commodity projection. To take this one step further, these images highlight socio-economic dynamics at play where the male body, traditionally used and identified with hard labour, now labours to market sartorial commodities.

The procession of male bodies, Asian, black, Caucasian, in exotic locations, locally and abroad, widens the scope of fashion. The male FHM reader is assured that the fashion on display which he is exhorted into adopting, transcends all race and national barriers, ensuring a globalisation of fashion which is in line with the economic market trend.

While the globally visible male body can be seen to have broken previous masculine barriers, another pertinent observation noted in these pages appear to thrust masculinity into new frontiers. The vocabulary found here defies previous research. Lakoff (1975:8) makes a conclusion from her research that women make far more precise discriminations in naming colours than men do. She cites colours like beige, ecru, aquamarine, lavender and others as being part of a woman’s vocabulary but noticeably absent from men’s. However, the distinctions made between colours in the fashion pages of FHM Malaysia do not corroborate her findings. For example, this researcher discovered that 24 different shades of blue were referred to in the 12 issues analysed. They were stone blue, cobalt blue, rainforest blue, sea blue, ash blue, denim blue, electric blue, baby blue, sky blue, steel blue, turquoise, navy blue, royal blue, graphic multi-blue, light blue, faded blue, metal blue, grey-blue, melange blue, arctic blue, cloudy blue, sapphire blue, ice blue and coral mud blue.
Further fine distinctions are made when describing a particular outfit worn by the male model. For example, one attire on display is described as:

Double breasted three-quarter length cashmere coat; striped dress shirt; extra fine virgin wool pleated trousers in herringbone checks; All by Louis Vuitton

(December, 2000:122)

The emphasis on the fine-toothed combed distinctions between colour, material, cut and design hits home the idea that male fashion cannot be regarded as a trivial pursuit. Masculinity is imbibed with qualities of high visibility and fine external distinctions.

Not to undermine the importance of fashion, the last page of the fashion segment displays a list of the stockists, stylists and their phone numbers. This makes the sartorial attires within the easy reach of the male reader, thus underlining the gravity of fashion in today's world.

In a nutshell, the fashion pages promulgate the objectification of men in more ways than one. Not only are men targeted as objects to boost the economy of consumption, but their bodies are utilised as marketing tools. Previously, the same bodies were identified with hard labour, but consumerism has dictated that this is no longer the case.

4.2.8 Gold

Gold appears immediately after the fashion spread. The study of this segment proves to be an invaluable endeavour as within these 2-3 pages, readers send
in finance and career related queries which unravel insights into the work system. This area on employment and money market is conspicuously missing in *FHM Malaysia* except for this monthly column. Despite the scarcity of pages, this segment does provide ample fodder for study.

The subtitle 'The pot at the end of the rainbow' promises the reader wealth and richness. It propagates the idea of working towards an end that promises fortune. This subtitle and the popularity of the column judging from the number of letters printed monthly, then indirectly reveal the wish of the readers to gain monetary benefit. It does not come as a surprise when considering the predominant capitalist market that rules.

The researcher, having looked through the 2-3 pages comprising 3-5 questions posed to the expert in all the twelve issues of *FHM Malaysia*, grouped the queries into four categories. The first category are enquiries about taxes and other specialised financial areas like foreign stock market trading (December, 2000:135), reverse mortgage (August, 2001:127) and Islamic banking services (June, 2001:127). This constitutes 36% of the 47 questions that appeared in the eleven issues (this column did not appear in September). What makes the letters stand out are their headlines. Examples include 'Mesdaq, schmesdaq! Someone speak English!' (August, 2001:127), 'How do I read this blasted thing?' (August, 2001:127), 'What the hell are government bonds?' (April, 2001:126-8). These examples convey a sense of despair, that underlies the queries. Emotive words and phrases like 'blasted' and 'what the hell' underscore anger and annoyance, to the point of petulance, suggesting annoyance at being ignorant.
The second category, making up 28%, are queries about investment tips and wanting to get rich, almost to the point of being demanding. For example, ‘I want to be a high-powered banker!’ (November, 2000:127), ‘I want my own company!’ (December, 2000:135). The phrase ‘I want ...’ expresses a forthright, burning desire to reach the ‘pot at the end of the rainbow.’

The third category, which covers 23% of the queries, reflects a completely contradictory attitude. All these queries stem from some form of grievance at being victimised. Again a strong sense of despair is evident from the headlines. ‘God please don’t let me die poor!’ (April, 2001:127), ‘Don’t let me starve!’ (October, 2000:136), ‘No please, I like my head ...’ (June, 2001:126). These headlines make the male reader appear vulnerable, weak and overwhelmed in the face of overriding work and financial pressure, leading to the despondent cries for help.

The fourth category relates to problems with the opposite sex vis-à-vis work and finance. This makes up 13% of the questions that appear in Gold. Headlines spewed forth here include ‘I can’t stand the bitch!’ ‘She never pays me back!’ about female bosses (November, 2000:127) and ‘Not a cent for you woman!’ (July, 2001:126). These reveal disharmony and frustration at the hands of women employers and employees. The word ‘bitch’ appears to be the only consolatory way the male employee can fight back in the face of helplessness.
One other notable feature about the headlines in *Gold* is the punctuation marks that appear at the end of the headlines. While all of them are written in the first person speech form, they end with an exclamation mark in 100% of the cases. Kahn in *The Right Word at the Right Time* (1985: 228), explains that the exclamation mark is used “to express a high degree of emphasis or excitement.” The rampant use of the exclamation mark here injects the strongly felt uncertainties, desires, despondency and frustrations of the writers. In this regard, *Gold* serves as a rostrum, seen nowhere else in the magazine, for the outpouring of these feelings.

These pronouncements, however, are severely mitigated by the pictures that dominate the pages of *Gold*. Each query is accompanied by a picture portraying a similar scenario as the problem. The whole first page of *Gold* is, in fact, taken up by one full picture which dramatises the query. The scene is staged by unknown local models. This is probably to bring the problem a little closer home with a gentle reminder that the actors could easily be any of the readers. For example, the December 2000 issue depicts a male Chinese subject sitting in front of a computer with a scheming grin on his face. This could be a scene from any office in Malaysia. The other pages of *Gold* consist of pictures depicting scenes from various films which correspond in some way to the query. The caption below the picture is exaggerated to create humour. For example, in the October 2000 issue, below the query headlined ‘Don’t let me starve!’ is a picture of the actor Robin Williams in a scene from the film *Jakob the Liar*. In this visual, set during World War II, amidst poverty, he has on a tweed overcoat and he is seen holding a bowl with both hands. The accompanying caption reads: ‘The upwardly mobile
beggar used his cappuccino cup as his begging bowl.' The consistent use of pictures this way, either from films or staged locally, seem to belittle the fears and frustrations expressed in the queries. These visuals through their tongue-in-cheek captions undermine these underlying feelings. On the one hand the questions reveal a depth of emotions, yet at the same time, the accompanying pictures undercut these feelings, giving rise to the allusion that expressions of emotion have to be tempered with humour to attenuate their intensity. This observation resounds with the age old acceptance that men should mask their feelings in public.

4.2.9 Hardware

The nexus between man and tools harks back to the times when men were the hunters and gatherers. The gadgets that appear in the Hardware section are the modern day tools. This conclusion can be gathered from the tagline that appears in every issue, which is ‘Gadgetry Your (Grand)Dad Could Only Dream About.’ This tagline provides a link to the past which suggests that the gadgetry featured in the Hardware section can be likened to tools used by male predecessors, only that these gadgetry are so developed and innovative that they only probably appeared in figments of past imagination. What is seen in these pages are an enduring, albeit innovative, vestige of tradition that bonds man and equipment. This nexus, however, appears to be weakening as the segment appears only towards the end of the magazine. It appears to suggest a shift away from tool-based dependency. This is understandable in today’s world driven by the force of capitalism, ruled by the information age. Unlike tools of the past which required manual effort in
their use, the information age has spawned the use of multi-functioned gadgets operated by the merest touch of the finger.

Every month, one type of gadget is featured in a two-page spread of the magazine. Various models of this gadget are tested, evaluated and given verdicts. Verdicts are given based on various utilitarian factors. For example, the September 2001 issue with the focus on laptops, has categories which include ‘Best for Value,’ ‘Best for Design,’ Best for Ergonomics,’ ‘Best for Travel,’ ‘Best for Durability,’ ‘Best for Minimalists’ and ‘Best for Technology.’ Explanations are provided as to why the particular model fits the bill and the price of the particular model. Table 4.4 on the next page shows the gadgets that appear in the 12 issues plus their price range:
Table 4.4 Gadgets and their Prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>GADGET</th>
<th>PRICE RANGE (in RM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2000</td>
<td>APS Camera</td>
<td>750 - 1450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2000</td>
<td>tents</td>
<td>181 - 455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2000</td>
<td>a variety of the coolest</td>
<td>129 – 459,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gadgets and gizmos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2001</td>
<td>shavers</td>
<td>29 - 689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2001</td>
<td>big screen televisions</td>
<td>7599 – 62,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2001</td>
<td>chairs</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2001</td>
<td>headphones</td>
<td>49 – 378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2001</td>
<td>PDA</td>
<td>719 - 1799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2001</td>
<td>toasters</td>
<td>55 - 169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2001</td>
<td>mobile phones</td>
<td>788 - 2899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2001</td>
<td>MP3 players</td>
<td>890 - 1699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2001</td>
<td>laptops</td>
<td>4999 - 8999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The gadgets listed in Table 4.4 allude to the promotion of a certain lifestyle. In order to live in today’s world, one must know how to stay connected technologically (mobile, phones, PDAs, laptops), how to listen to music in style (MP3 players, headphones), how to holiday in rugged fashion (tents, APS cameras) and how to equip the modern home (big screen televisions, chairs, toasters) among others. So the Hardware section can be viewed as a hotbed that nurtures and instils the desire to be one step ahead of evolution in constructing the ideal lifestyle by using ‘gadgetry that (grand)dad could only dream about,’ as seen in the tagline of this column.
This idea of being one-step ahead is taken further when taking note of the ‘Best for ...’ categories like ‘Best for Looks,’ ‘Best for Ergonomics’ and ‘Best for Usability.’ They hit home the importance of having the cutting edge to survive in today’s world. The accentuation on the finer details of each model further instils the need to own technologically superior products to remain in the hunt. For example, a Sony CMD–J5 mobile phone is described as a built-in MS Mobile Explorer [displaying] HTML and WML pages, and the resident e-mail client lets you access your existing POP3 e-mail account. The screen revolution has four (yes, four) shades of grey letting you set your own mobile phone wallpaper.

(July, 2001:128)

The reliance on these specialised features and gadgets in general to stay ahead in the game bodes a loss of self-sufficiency. A gadget defined by the Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995:579) as a “small device or machine with a particular purpose” gives a connotation of a mechanical object that requires little user intervention. When one becomes used to such creature comforts, the need to use one’s own innate resources gradually diminishes.

The picture painted above depicts modern life with its competitive trappings. It cannot be denied that money is the bedrock of capitalism which governs modern life. Everything in modern day conveniences come with a price. This point is acknowledged in the Hardware page that affixes a price tag to each item (as seen in Table 4.4). The prices clearly indicate that should one wish to own a top-of-the-line range product, one must be prepared to fork out a mini fortune.
What makes this point more interesting is the language used suggests that the reader will indeed fork out a tidy sum to own a gadget. The tone of the language is conversational and occasionally tongue-in-cheek. For example "Use the bundled photo editing tools and send Granny e-mail postcards and pictures of yourself in a drunken state. That way you can save her the trip and save yourself the grief" (December, 2000:143). This casual, friendly tone, while ‘talking’ to the reader using the second person pronoun, psychologically plants a very suggestive and irresistible picture by placing the consumer in the driving seat. This scenario is analogous to test driving an expensive car. Even if one cannot afford it, the seed of desire to own it has already been sowed and could be the driving force of one’s ambition to finally see through the successful ownership of the desired product. This proposition is further strengthened by the inset that appears at the bottom of the page indicating where the products can be obtained. The phrase heading this inset simply says ‘Get it.’ This can be read as a subliminal order. This strive on the part of the magazine editors to imbed and nurture such materialistic wants and desires serve to underlie the recognition of males as invaluable consumers, not dissimilar to the ‘courting’ of female consumers in advertisements found in women’s magazines.

Another telling point of the Hardware segment is the liberal use of technical jargon. For example information about the Dell Latitude L400 laptop reads:

The standard 6GB hard drive is lightweight considering many models now offer a standard 10GB. All other departments more than make up for it though: a 56K v.90 internal modem, 10/100 Ethernet and USB mean that the Latitude 400 is both Internet and network-ready right out of the box. The 12.1” active matrix display does
well in most lighting conditions and the VGA connector lets you output to an external monitor or projector.

(September. 2001:138)

No explanation is provided as to what the numbers and acronyms mean. The text simply assumes that the male reader comprehends or should comprehend the technicalities. This bespeaks the essentiality of being technologically savvy.

4.2.10 Hospital

This is another segment that offers the readers a chance to write in with their health problems. To the editors, health problems are not restricted to only physical ones. They encompass mental, fitness, dental and grooming. This is evident from the panel of professionals at hand to solve these problems. Nine experts are available to offer their professional prognosis. The nine are a physician, a fitness instructor, a grooming expert, a psychiatrist, a trichologist, a dietitian, a dermatologist, a dentist and a skincare professional. From the letters that appear in the 12 months, it is evident that not all the experts needed to be consulted as the medical problems sent in by the readers seem to be easily pigeonholed into four. The four are problems involving the groin area, other body parts, appearance and mental health.

The indispositions involving the nether regions include problems with the male sexual organs and sexual performance. These maladies account for 42%, which are the most. This number can be deemed a watershed as male readers express their anxieties about the core of their manhood. The penis and
testicles have long been equated with masculinity. To publicly declare that there is a problem with these body parts can be seen as sowing the seeds of doubt about one's masculinity. Despite the use of pseudonyms, the admission from so many men about sexual problems hints that there is a sense of insecurity. This marks a slight deviation from the past, as seen in Chapter Two, when men were expected to keep a tight rein on their fears and insecurities.

33% of the letters sent in described ailments afflicting other parts of the body besides the groin area like the eyes (October, 2000:141 and November, 2000:135), the stomach (February, 2001:128 and August, 2001:132), the toes (February, 2001:129), the mind (January, 2001:125 and April, 2001:132), among others. All these suggest deep concern about their well-being and the fact that it is alright to air these private anxieties in the open. This marks the erasing of the private and public delineation where public expressions of inner anxieties are accepted.

Another 25% of the letters expressed deep fear about personal appearance. For example, "My formerly well-defined jaw line is beginning to disappear under a roll of fat..." (July, 2001:132). As a result of losing two front teeth, one reader writes in "...now I look like a hillbilly, with a lisp like Cobra that's bitten its own tongue..." (December, 2000:151). The palpitations these readers undergo because of their appearance insinuate a pressure on them to look good externally. Vanity becomes part and parcel of masculine life.
The tagline that appears at the top of the column 'Relax, and tell the doctor everything...' suggests an underlying fear of seeing a medical practitioner. The readers are exhorted to put their trepidations at ease and lay bare their anxieties. This assurance at the beginning can in fact be seen as the carte blanche to give vent to disquieting medical problems such as seen above.

Visuals dominate this segment. Like in the case of Gold, the tongue-in-cheek pictures, locally staged or taken from film scenes, play down the underlying fears. They temper the declarations of anxiety, neutralising the openness shown. They can be seen as an attempt to recoup the loss of masculinity, suggesting that perhaps open admissions of fear are not totally acceptable as a part of masculinity. Thus there seems to be a contradiction in the picture painted.

4.2.11 Wheels

Considering that numerous magazine titles in the male interest section of the bookstore are dedicated to cars (MPH stocks about 30 different car magazine titles for the male population), it is rather surprising that FHM Malaysia allocates only about three pages to the subject and it appears towards the tail end of the magazine, even after the fashion pages. This suggests a slight shift in interest and even priority.

Nevertheless, the three pages of Wheels do revive an interest in the motor industry. The tagline of this segment is 'One day they'll destroy but today we're in charge!' What exactly gets destroyed in the future is vague. Perhaps
mankind or the minds of mankind. Whatever the case, the phrase ‘Today we’re in charge!’ seals a stamp of authority on the subject. Today man confidently overrides the machine irregardless of whether the tide will turn in the future.

The *Wheels* segment is not confined only to cars. Its scope extends to motorbikes (April, 2001:136-139), go karts (October, 2000:146-148), monster trucks (November, 2000:138-141), and four-wheel-drive models (March, 2001:136-139), all of which can be classified as modes of transport. However, when perusing the segment, the researcher failed to see any mention of this function of taking people or goods from one place to another. Instead the write-ups go to great lengths with the details of the mechanisms or components. For example, when reviewing the performance of the Volvo S40, details mentioned include the two-litre light pressure turbo engine, automatic transmission, climate control system, stability system, the dash, dials and controls of the interior; “10-disc CD changer, cruise control, full leather seats, intelligent-placed cupholders, clever interior lighting, and the always popular stowage pouches” (March, 2001:139). The spotlight on these sum parts, made up of mechanical components, leads to the glorification of these elements, giving the idea that motor vehicles are looked upon as a showcase to make an impression on the onlooker. This unerringly leads to the dependence on these mechanical crutches, and, to a certain extent, a letting go of self reliance.

As mentioned earlier in the preceding paragraph, the emphasis is on the admiration of external contraptions. This discussion on mechanical contraptions
can also be analogous to the previous discussion on fashion accessories owned by men. Whether one opts for the Porsche 911 turbo composite brakes (February, 2001:133) or Volvo’s Electronic Brake Distribution system (September, 2001:148), external manifestations here, too, play an important role in the projection of oneself. Again the credit of one’s personality is bestowed upon the purchase of an external commodity.

The price tag that comes along with the purchase is not one to be scoffed at. To impress the male reader, some of the figures found in the magazines include a RM 1.2 million Porsche 911 (February, 2001:134) and RM 148,000 Harley Davidson FLSTF Fat Boy (April, 2001:136). While the price of the monster truck CAT 797 is not mentioned, a new set of its radials costs around RM 660,000 (November, 2000:138). All the vehicles highlighted are top-of-the-line, imported Continental models, save for the Proton Waja in the December 2000 issue. Even that is a premier model in the Proton range. The extravagant amount is testament that the male reader is led to believe that to attain a rare commodity with an invariably high social value, one must be prepared to hand over a tidy sum of money. Money becomes synonymous with external prestige. Strength and bravery then are no longer the sine qua non of masculine ideals. Instead masculinity is placed on the same scale as material wealth.

4.2.12 Endzone

This segment comes with the tagline ‘Your life ain’t over yet.’ It suggests either that ‘your life ain’t over yet’ but it could be over soon or since ‘your
life ain't over yet' why not try something interesting and challenging before it's over. Either way it invites the reader to partake of adrenaline-pumping activities that severely tests one's bravery.

The basic scenario of Endzone is simple. An FHM correspondent partakes of a dangerous, adrenaline-pumping activity, either fearlessly challenging the reader to do the same or with a great degree of trepidation this writer begins his adventure only to eventually and triumphantly overcome the fear. The activity takes place somewhere far from the city, close to nature with minimal human contact in the process. It invariably always involves the use of some form of contraption like a dirtbike, canoe, rifle, ultralight plane among others.

One sentence from the May issue encapsulates the philosophy of Endzone. It is “that kind of triumphant defiance that we here at FHM actively seek to foster” (May, 2001:149). True to the word, every activity is fraught with a sense of danger and brutality. A dirt-biking expedition in Australia is described as “arse-annihilating” in an “unsportingly savage” and “stoneage hellscape” that “make(s) mincemeat of your rear end.” The map of the trip is seen by the writer as “relating rich tales of woe, hardship, isolation, injury, dehydration and bodily dismemberment in each respective location” (June, 2001:141). In another issue, the reader is informed that undergoing a Turkish bath “guarantees excruciating pain” and it involves the process of exfoliation and “Hitler couldn’t have come up with a more brutal way to remove skin.” One ‘survivor’ is quoted as saying that this “cross cultural experience had ‘shaved years off his life” (December, 2000:161-2)
The reader is reminded that death lurks around the corner when endeavouring the activity. Ultralight flying, for example, has "only recorded one fatality. That was some poor bloke who drowned after he flipped the boat and was caught up in his own seatbelt" (October, 2000:153). Not being careful while motocrossing could "crash your brains out" (August, 2001:141). Or the reader is reminded, morbidly, that "people have vanished from these waters while canoeing in the crocodile-infested waters of Australia's Ord River" (March, 2001:141). If the reader wants to ride a canoe described as a "heavier-than-water coffin" in Perth's shark-infested waters, he is reminded that "paddlers have endured (and succumbed to) hurling attacks by sharks, crocodiles or polar bears and have drowned in endlessly novel ways by whirlpools, surf and mighty tempests" (February, 2001:137).

The reader is mercilessly taunted and challenged to carry out these pursuits despite the dire warnings of danger and death. For example, readers who want to play it safe in Sipadan are called "wusses" (May, 2001:150). Readers who cannot swim are referred to as "pansies." Should they still take to wakeboarding, they are reminded there is a danger of getting their ribs fractured. "But come on now, that's not enough to scare you away, is it?" the reader is taunted. Even the "chicks are really good at this sport" (July, 2001:142-3).

These brazen endeavours to go all out to court danger and defy death almost single-handedly, in places far from urban civilisation, closer to nature, is reminiscent of prehistoric times when men had to brave the elements to venture out into the face of unknown dangers, to fight savage, carnivorous
beasts that crossed their paths, only with a single contraption like a spear. All these to feed their families. Then men were recognised unquestionably as sole providers. Masculine identity was inherently tied to power, bravery and defiance which were exhibited in the course of carrying out this duty. With the passage of time, men have seen this responsibility slowly eluding them as they share this burden, under much safer conditions, with their women partners. In today’s capitalist world the same virtues of courage, self-reliance and fearlessness are not clearly evident. “Most modern day, hand-phone wielding softies would never survive...” an FHM writer confesses (December, 2000:161). However when “maschismo has reared its head once again, satisfy this urge by roughing it out on Perth’s shark infested waters...” (February, 2001:137). This gives the implication that within the modern day man lies, still the primeval spirit of courting danger, which used to be the cornerstone of traditional masculinity. This spirit, though, is submerged by the demands of the capitalist world.

4.2.13 True Stories

This segment marks the last page of the magazine. Here, readers send in any funny and hilarious tales they have encountered. Four stories are printed each month with one being selected as ‘Story of the Month’.

The True Stories segment should be regarded as an important forum as it functions as a platform for readers. Like the letters to the editor and joke pages, this page gives the editors an integral feedback on the kinds of readers
they are reaching out to. This page is like an audio system that picks up on
the voices at large and assembles a harmonious feedback.

Upon synthesis, it appears that all 48 stories share two common criteria: first,
they are all humourous and second, the source of humour is the ineptness and
foolishness of at least one character in the story. So, like the joke page, the
researcher categorised these stories according to the sex of the ‘victim’ in the
story. Of the 48 tales, 91.7% has men on the receiving end and only 8.3%
with women as the ‘victims.’ These figures are not very far off from the
numbers seen in the joke page where men, too, are seen as objects of
derision (see Section 4.2.6). The True Stories segment, then appears to
corroborate the earlier evidence that men can see and accept themselves as
the laughing stock. In fact, the joke and True Stories pages are testament that
making fun of themselves can be the number one source of humour amongst
men.

The True Stories page does also follow a similar vein to the joke page with
regard to its sexual content. 56% of the true stories cited have varying
degrees of sexual content. Again this corroborates the earlier finding of jokes
emanating from a sexual discourse being favoured by males.

4.3 Feature articles

The feature articles stood out from the rest because of the number of pages
they took up. Each article is composed of about 6 pages with an average 26
pages per issue, and an average 4.5 articles per issue. This greatly exceeds
the length of all the other features in the magazine which constituted nugget-like morsels. To successfully capture the attention of the readers, spoilt by the easy digestion of bit-sized portions from the rest of the magazine, the feature articles had to constitute broad-ranging topics that would definitely prove to be sure-fire winners with the male audience. The choice of topics, this researcher believes, is a telling point as these subjects could quite easily be allotted into three categories (staying ahead in today’s world, male-female relationships and violence), adumbrating the idea that male interest themes are limited. These interests, by their restrictions, could be seen as reflections of the gender.

The subject closest to the hearts of the male audience is staying ahead in today’s world which make up 64% of the feature articles. From these articles, it is clear that to survive in the world today, men should adopt three prerequisite criteria which are, to improve one’s personal and social skills, to be one up on fellow men and to be able to earn a lot of money.

The adage ‘no man is an island’ is strictly adhered to in the articles on how to cope with today’s world. It is absolutely essential to make the right impression and engage in interpersonal ties, especially to climb the employment ladder and make money. For example, the January 2001 issue has a five page feature on how to dress for work. The June 2001 issue lists 16 ways to ‘get taken seriously,’ seven of which fall back on taking care of one’s appearance from getting a haircut, losing weight, to plastic surgery. This underscores the importance of external projections of oneself to stay ahead in the modern day environment.
Unfortunately, two of the tips include trickery, by learning to lie convincingly and hiring an attractive pseudo companion to boost one’s personal image. This sends the message that chicanery is acceptable, to a certain extent, to survive. This prevalence of deceit cannot be underestimated. The March 2001 edition makes readers aware of 50 different scams and how to avoid getting swindled. This highlights the permeation of fraudulence in society. Only three of the scams published were carried out by women. 94% were committed by men out to make a fair sum of money. This is not to imply that all men can be accused of resorting to guile to make a living. What is being put forth is rampant use of deceit is practised. However, while men are being advised on how not to fall to tricksters, they are being encouraged to follow suit to a lesser degree. A prime example is the 17 tips in the April 2001 edition on how to get revenge. Options thrown around include “ruin[ing] his reputation at work, screw[ing] up the company’s contacts, mess[ing] up his locks and shred[ding] her clothes.” While this mischief is not on the grand larceny scale, yet the idea being planted here is ‘if you cannot beat them, you join them.’ This notion is further reinforced two months later in the June 2001 issue in the article titled ‘Power to the people’ which starts off with a two page picture of two men, armed with baseball bats, beating up another man. The next five pages give tips on how to retaliate against “irrational losers, nitpicking jobsworths and unpredictable weirdos plaguing your every moment” by using “viable, officially-sanctioned ways.” Should the problem still persist, “there’s a nice explosive ‘nuclear’ option that allows you to explore more extreme measures.” These extreme measures include “using our draconian computer laws to get him sacked, hiring a set of the meanest, knuckle-dragging bodyguards you can find” (June, 2001:52-3). While these suggestions
can be deemed tongue-in-cheek, they subtly underscore the acceptance of
deceit to achieve one’s aims.

The second most common choice of topic encompasses male-female
relationships. 36% of the feature articles delve into this area. A significant
point noted in these articles is, deceit does not stop at work level. It is
extended to the romance frontier as well. The male reader is shown 20 ways
to cheat on his girlfriend in the March issue. These include “picking a
suitable woman to cheat with, finding a long distance lover, buying a reserve
box of condoms and lying.” Three months later he is provided with
‘ammunition’ to escape the clutches of a woman if he finds himself trapped
in a relationship. Devious options a man could turn to include

Run[ning] away. Leave a note explaining that you aren’t who
you pretended to be, and choose an alternative persona - a woman,
a criminal, a Scientologist - that she almost certainly won’t want to
marry.

(June, 2001:62)

Or if the reader wants to get out of a marriage but wants to keep his child,
the advice is,

Given that most courts find in favour of the mother, all you
have to do is prove she’s a drunken slattern, unable to support
anything but her own pill habit, and that she lives in government
housing, brings strange men home to supplement her income. How?
Oh, for God’s sake, man - make something up!

(June, 2001:60)
Though these propositions can be considered light-hearted, humourous and to be taken with a grain of salt, the breezy manner of presentation gives an impression that connivance can be fun, profitable and justifiable.

Despite the wily schemes shadowed forth that men are at ‘war’ with women, a host of other articles suggest otherwise. The reader is given a five-page account of disparate courtship rituals around the world, from ancient Greece to the Turkana tribe of East Africa and Muria tribe of Central India to add to the delectable ways on “wooing that little lady” (February, 2001:68). December 2000 gives a rundown on lesser run-of-the-mill places to snare a woman like a funeral, a lingerie boutique, church and tourist spots. From there a man is taught ‘how to be a little lady.’ Within five pages, he is taught how to polish silver, remove stains, set a table, hem curtains, and iron a shirt, among others. Knowledge of these domestic pursuits is necessary not only to be the “master of the household chore” but to impress the girlfriend (November, 2000:58-64). Months ahead, the male reader is given a guide on various love games to play to ignite his sexual relationship. These include Bacchanalian feasts and side street shuffles as they are called, (July, 2001:50-3) and playing Screwdo, a game with highly erotic forfeits (September, 2001:67-71).

These feature articles on male-female relationships are then seen to run the gamut of relationships from the initial encounter to the breakup. They point to heterogeneous characteristics like vulnerability, lack of knowledge, easy fall into knavery and an eagerness to learn under the tutelage of FHM Malaysia. The ‘how to’ articles serve as advice columns on relationships to the male pupilage. These articles can be read as offering advice to men, in a world
where the negotiation of sexual relations has seemingly becoming increasingly problematic. They suggest that there is a need to be edified on the finer points of male–female relationships and the male audience is not adverse to it.

The third common choice of topic in the feature articles is violence. 11% of the feature articles spotlight mindless violent crimes and mayhem–related themes. They include articles on violence inspired toys like the MKII Illumination grenade, XM117 and SIG 550/551 assault rifles (April, 2001:91) and savage acts like toe amputation, kneecapping and eyeball eating (January, 2001:59-64). These brutal actions can be deemed as deviations from civility. Yet, in the 12 issues, 42 pages cover the subject of violence. Sections 4.2.2 (Reporter segment) and 4.2.3 (Jantan Test), too, did draw on this theme. Thus, there appears to be a deep fascination with this topic. The dominant form of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, incorporating displays of aggression, is perpetuated. This carries on the tradition of the past when masculinity was an embodiment of aggression.

4.4 Interviews

An interview provides a two-way platform for the interviewer and interviewee to communicate and interact. It is a form of reaching out to another human being. It provides an insight into someone else’s life and thoughts. Interviews are almost like direct links between the reader and the interviewee because of the conversational nature of the interview. It is like the interviewee is talking directly to the reader. In the case of FHM readers, it could be the closest
they could get to any of the especially admired female celebrity. So the interview provides the male reader with a vicarious experience. FHM Malaysia has definitely taken note of this point as the interviews alone make up about 16% of the total content per issue. It is because of this the researcher decided that an analysis of these interviews could help answer the research questions.

Despite the inescapable pictures of sexy females that seem to be the dominating feature of the magazine, males have a slight edge over the females when it comes to the numbers interviewed. In the 12 issues, a total of 44 males are interviewed while the female interviewees total 42. While the figures may appear very negligible, the conjecture remains that the male voice seems to be the preferred choice. Male readers are interested in a sneak preview of the lives of their counterparts.

The insinuation ends there when taking a note of the number of pages devoted to the interviews. The interviews with the 44 males take up 90 pages or an average of two pages per interview. On the other hand, the total number of pages that cover the 42 female interviewees take up 191 pages or 4.5 pages per interview. Yet, this, does not mean they are given a bigger platform for verbal expression as upon looking at the average number of words per interview, the male interviewee has more ‘voice.’ The average number of words in an interview with a male is 1280 while it is only 1100 for the opposite sex. This clearly means that the main aim of the interviews with the distaff is not so much an eagerness to know what they have to say...
but rather an excuse to adorn the pages with titillating pictures. So, in the pages of *FHM Malaysia*, women are meant to be seen and the men heard.

Nevertheless, it would be a great folly to ignore an analysis of the interviews with the female subjects as important information await to be gleaned. In fact, an analysis of the interviews with both sexes provides a more well-rounded and comprehensive view. These interviews are wide-ranging, including male and female celebrities, professionals with 'unusual' jobs under the heading 'I could do that,' beautiful but relatively unknown female subjects under the 'Cili Padi' banner. Despite the motley assortment of personalities, the interviews share a common blueprint that provides invaluable information about gender.

The first common thread is the content of the interviews. Interviews with male subjects cover a wide range of topics from career highlight, major influences, leisure activities, momentous occasions among others. There was no one topic that was consistently explored in every interview. However, this was not the case in the interviews with the females. While major areas in their lives are dealt with, there was one area of interest that did not fail to appear in every interview, which is their opinion about the opposite sex. All the 42 interviews broached into the area of what the respective women look for in a man. What can be surmised here is men are curious about what women think of them. They also seem to want to know how to impress the opposite sex. These interviews reveal a sense of insecurity about male–female relationships. In a positive way, it signifies an interest in bridging any communication gap between the sexes.
The second commonality of interviews with females is the overt display of sexuality. All the women interviewees are photographed to enrapture the male audience by their alluring, inviting poses. For example, the July 2001 issue has a two-page centrefold of Spice Girl Emma Bunton, lying on her back, completely naked save for a furry rug covering just her intimate parts. The August 2001 issue photographs the actress Rachel Weisz, seated with her legs wide open to the camera. None of the male interviewees, on the other hand, are pictured near-naked, lying on their backs or with legs wide open. All are fully clothed and either standing or sitting. This again strengthens the idea that in interviews with the distaff, of paramount interest is the enticing pictures which clearly overshadow the interviews. Interviews with males are more focussed on what they have to say without any visuals to take the attention away. All these seem to pare down the status of women, suggesting that they are better seen than heard, whereas men remain the steadfast figure meant to be heard.

Besides the interviews with male and female personalities, *FHM Malaysia* publishes a regular interview column called ‘I could do that.’ This column is a half-page interview with a professional in a field that can be considered avantgarde. These professionals, all males, among others include a juggler (October 2000:27), ninja instructor (May 2001:27), and an underwater film maker (June 2001:26). Questions about their professions are asked, which include day-to-day undertakings, perks and satisfaction that come with the respective jobs. A rosy picture is always painted. For example the underwater film maker is asked:
“Q: Exploring must make you a hit with the babes.
A: Of course, when you’re at sea with some marine biologist chick, it
does get romantic. Diving makes me horny too, so I have to find an
outlet for that!”

(June, 2001:26)

An ear piercer is asked:

“Q: What are the perks of working in the job?
A: I like to see customers satisfied with their piercing and it allows
me a lot of free time at home. Also, I can torture people and get
paid for it.”

(September, 2001:28)

The Technical Director of a brewery is asked:

“Q: Do you taste beer every day?
A: I taste all the beer that has been produced almost every day.”

(February, 2001:26)

This marks a shift from the admiration of traditional professions like
medicine, law and accountancy. The title ‘I could do that’ plants the
suggestion that novel, awe-inspiring jobs for males are available and within
reach. Not only is there a place for the ‘non-conformist,’ there is
glorification attached to it. The options to make money are wider and more
diverse, ensuring a bigger and exciting slice of the financial pie.

*FHM Malaysia* does not confine its interviewees to famous personalities only.
Relatively unknown, attractive, local female subjects are spotlighted too. At
first glance, the interviews appear to be another front to fill the page with
pictures of half-naked women. However, before this judgement can be fully
crystallised, the first paragraph reveals that the subject is more than just a
pretty face. All the women interviewed here are recently qualified professionals. For example the June issue features an optometrist, the April issue an accountancy graduate and a political science graduate in September. These intelligent women, like the female celebrities, are all asked about the qualities they look for in a man. This can be viewed two ways. First, there is a genuine interest in what women, famous or otherwise, look for in men. Second, the opinions of the latter are increasingly valued as the number of academically qualified local women increase. Thus the opinions of these interviewees about winning qualities in a man become almost indispensable to the male reader.

The qualities enumerated by the women interviewees, almost repetitively, can generally be listed as being sincere, beautiful in character, witty, career-minded, sensible, confident and decent. Should the Malaysian man wish to have a successful relationship with a woman, these are traits he should consider adopting or taking on. The expectations are set in place. Hence, these qualities could be seen as highly recommended masculine styles for the Malaysian men as they have been laid down by the opposite sex, who can no longer be considered pushovers.

Nevertheless, the intelligence of these interviewees is eclipsed by the full page picture of the skimpily attired interviewee, striking a sexy pose complete with a come hither look, over which the text appears. The average number of words per one-page interview is only 400. So, while these intelligent, new graduates represent the ever increasing numbers of educated women, they are ‘reduced’ to mere eye candy status. The only opinion sought of them is what
they think a perfect man should be. This is a telling reflection of Malaysian men. Women are viewed for functional purposes – to inform and titillate, despite their rapid academic advancements.

4.5 Advertisements

A total of 534.5 pages of advertisements appear in all the magazines analysed, giving an average of about 44.5 pages of advertisements per issue or 30% of the total content per issue, as seen earlier in Table 3.1. Besides helping to rake in revenue, the advertisements perform a more integral, albeit monetarily less significant task of delivering a message on gender from the products advertised to the body language of the actors in it.

Information gleaned from the code sheets revealed the following image representations in advertisements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT(S)</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single male subject</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object(s) only (No human representation)</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One male and one female subject</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women only</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more men</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not surprisingly, male-only advertisements outnumber all the other types at 32.4%. They provide identifiable figures and serve as models the male
audience can relate to and aspire to be. More than that, they carry a deeper connotation of gender which harks back to the past. The solitary male figure “fits within the traditional patriarchal ideology which assumes a separate and superior sphere from men” (Manca and Manca, 1994:8).

However the most interesting figures thrown up by the analysis is the 32% object-only advertisements that do not contain any human representation, which almost equal male-only advertisements. Using a similar line of argument as put forth in the preceding paragraph, the objects can be viewed as figures that can easily be related to and are items to hanker after like mobile phones, watches and shoes. The fact that the figures are almost on par separated only by a mere fraction, herald an era where objects are invested with a greater significance, to the point of nearly displacing humans in terms of importance. This point smacks of consumerism, a linchpin of the current global trends. Thus the advertisements in FHM Malaysia are seen to propagate the materialistic wave sweeping the world.

Advertisements featuring males and females come in third place at 15.5%, completely eclipsed by objects-only advertisements, relegating male-female relationships to below relationships with objects. This further solidifies the considerable importance placed on material goods, which in this case, supersedes human relationships.

11.2% of the advertisements depict only women, either alone or otherwise. The low numbers could be because the targeted consumers are male and advertisers prefer to use figures men can relate to easily. The implication of
using fewer women in the advertisements, however, goes much deeper. The fact that more men than women are being visibly used to sell merchandise signifies a new role for men. In the past, it was women who appeared in front of the camera, whose bodies were used to shore up sales. As noted by Monteiro, "she was scrutinised, had her intimacy exposed and her body controlled by the camera held by men who themselves were not made visible." The figures now attest to a period of transition where, Monteiro continues, "a process of objectifying the male through the gaze of the camera begins" (2001:7). Men have now become bodies to be manipulated for monetary gain. As the epitome of corporeal existence, they endorse the process of economic modernisation.

The relatively few advertisements depicting men in a social group, 9.4%, stamp another seal of capitalism, which is individualism. The limited appearance of the social man in advertising graphics coupled with the dominant images of the lone man as seen earlier, further promulgates the idea of detachment and an escape from affective ties.

The discussion on advertisements would be incomplete without zeroing in on one of the most crucial components of the current socio-economic processes which is, the merchandise or the products being advertised. These products can be likened to jigsaw pieces, where once pierced together, complete the image of the modern man or so he is enticed into believing with the aid of the fashion pages (Section 4.2.7) which augment the power of the advertisements.
The table below illustrates the categories of products that were advertised in *FHM Malaysia*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing and Shoes</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological accessories</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(mobile phones, computers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches and Eyewear</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragrances</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Grooming</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The products are multifarious as befitting a well-groomed man. 29% of the advertisements were for clothing and shoes, underlining the need to wear fashionable and stylish gear to make a niche in the world.

Close behind its' heels at 22% is accessories of the technological kind. These include mobile phones, audio-visual systems and cameras. Though they are not items to be worn, they compliment the image of the consumer by announcing him as someone who is up-to-date and in touch with the technological pulse, in other words, a man well-equipped to take on the world.

Products that take third place with 19.5% of the advertisements promoting them are watches and eyewear accessories with watch advertisements
outnumbering eyewear advertisements by almost 50%, 13% to 6.5%. A timepiece is absolutely integral in the current economic climate that is rapidly evolving. It signifies that the wearer has time under control and is on top of the currents of change. The numerous eyewear advertisements depicting good-looking models, including actor Bruce Willis, donning a pair of stylish and fashionable sunglasses serve as models to emulate. The two accessories, designed especially for functional reasons, now take on an added purpose of being fashion statements as well. In fact it is this element that is advocated rather than the core purpose it is meant to serve. Phrases that appear in these advertisements include ‘I am good – looking and lucky’ (May, 2001:105) and ‘Allure makes the man’ (July, 2001:17) which make clear that what is being sold is the intrinsic image value and not the functional value.

9% of the advertisements are targeted at the olfactory sense. Designer brands like Hugo Boss and Armani showcase a variety of fragrances in their perfume lines. The creation of an artificial scent masking the natural odours of the body in the name of image building is like an echoing of the arguments put forth so far in this research; external manifestations of the self above all else.

The low percentage of advertisements on alcohol, at 7.6%, could be attributed to the religious status of the country. Nevertheless the 21 advertisements, yet again, emphasise the use of ‘unnatural’ substances by the male personality to boost their personal image.

Despite the preponderance of evidence cataloguing the concern with the external image, only 5% of the advertisements promote personal grooming
items which include shavers, skin care and hair colouring products. This is rather surprising as the use of these items can be regarded as the cornerstone of the projection of an impeccable outer image. The only deduction that can be made is these products, in their use, do not stand out as much, as a “fluorescent green tee worn inside navy wrinkle – resistant shirt with light camel trousers” (September, 2001:117) found in the fashion pages, hence they take a back seat.

There were numerous other advertisements promoting music albums, restaurants and condoms among others. These advertisements, however, do not constitute a large enough number to justify a separate category.

4.5.1 Eye contact

In an advertising shoot, there are two key players; the camera (unseen) and the subject (seen). Both can be regarded as having the same power. Without one or the other, there is no image to be captured. So both share equal stakes in a shoot. However, this is not seen to be the case in the advertisements featuring single male models. In the majority of the advertisements, the male model fails to exert his share of the dominion. His gaze is averted from the camera in 61% of the advertisements while in another 18%, his eyes are concealed behind a pair of sunglasses. So in 79% of the advertisements, he appears impassive and withdrawn from his immediate environment. In advertisements featuring female – only subjects, 55% are depicted in the same way. This finding is in total contrast to Goffman’s (1976) research which concluded that women are seen to be more
psychologically withdrawn in advertisements, indicating their disorientation, leaving them dependent on other forces to protect them. A similar argument can be used in this instance where it is the men who exhibit more passiveness and withdrawal from the situation at hand suggesting an unwillingness to be in control. It is only in 21% of the instances that they meet the gaze of the camera headlong.

4.5.2 Touch

Goffman (1976) believes that the hands play an almost tangible role in conveying power. In his study, he discovered that males tend to be seen manipulating objects signifying their dominion of the material world. The finding in this research, however, do not uphold Goffman’s. In 79% of the advertisements found in FHM Malaysia, the male hands paint a completely different picture. They are inactive, strike a defensive stance (arms folded across chest), open or in half of these instances, completely missing. All these fortify the idea of a lack of male authoritativeness. In fact the 29 advertisements depicting males without hands seen in the frame, signal an amputation of control and power.

4.5.3 Body position

The study of the physical stance of single male models unkennels more numerals that uphold the idea of men coming short of authority. Though 42% of the advertisements depict the male body either in action (leaping in the air, swimming) or facing the camera full-on, the other 58% feature an assemblage
of bodies with backs to the camera, lying supine or in 14% of these cases, the bodies are not seen at all. This is contrary to the traditional ethos of masculinity that placed the male body on a pedestal or in Foucaultian terms, the male body as "an element in relations of power" (Foucault, 1976:107), as previously seen in Chapter Two. The current images in advertising 'rob' the male body of this glory, shaking the very core of traditional masculinity by indicating passivity and submissiveness to the environment.

4.5.4 Location

In the past, as discussed in Section 1.0, men knew their place in society. It was outside the home, working to provide for the family. While this trend appears to continue in the advertisements, where many visuals feature men outdoors, the present day outdoors depicted is not the work environment. Rather it is an environment where men bask in relaxation. Outdoors settings include grassy fields and golf courses. Not a single advertisement feature a male subject at work. While it may be argued that this is a lifestyle magazine that promotes a way of living, this complete sideling of even the merest hint of employment gives rise to dual interpretations. One, men are no longer defined by their jobs. Two, they have struck a conscious wedge to separate work life from leisure.

However, what is even more significant about the setting of the advertisements is, its absence. 60% of the advertisements featuring single male subjects do not have an identifiable environment. All that is evident are colours in the background that do not point to any specific setting. This lack
Advertisements depicting male-female subjects disclose figures that further advance the above arguments by showing women as having a slight edge in the power stakes. In 40% of these advertisements women appear larger or take up more space thus dominating the advertisement, while in 37% of the advertisements both males and females appear to be of the same size. In only 23% of the cases do men appear to be the dominant figure.

The tale is repeated when studying the numerals on body control. Women are seen to be in control in 30% of the cases. They are viewed either in the foreground, blocking the male subject or having the male figure passionately nuzzling them while they look away indifferently, giving the impression of the female possessing the body coveted by the male. He has to ‘work’ hard to obtain the object of his desire who appears to be inattentive to his lovemaking skills.

In 42% of the advertisements, both sexes avert their eyes from the camera. In advertisements where only one party gazes at the lense, women outnumber the men 19% to 7%, indicating that they are more open to taking on the challenge of the camera while the men prefer not to.

To recapitulate, the advertisements depicting male and female subjects replay the pronouncements made about males having abdicated their traditional throne of supremacy, where the historically celebrated workmanlike male bodies now exhibit passivity, disempowerment and subordination.
4.6 Discussion

This section will piece together the various findings from this chapter and attempt to provide a review of these findings.

One of the aims of this research is to gauge how much of the traditional vestiges of masculinity the Malaysian male still dons. In analysing all the segments of *FHM Malaysia*, it was the half page column *Jantan Test* that blatantly flaunted the traditional flag of masculinity where exhibitions of strength, bravery and sexual prowess were overtly applauded. Outright glorification of blood and violence in the feature articles too resounded with the days gone past where men grappled with the harsh elements in primitive abandonment, inextricably tying present day man to his predecessors. This suggests that fascination with aggression and violence still courses through the blood of men down the ages and still constitutes a part of masculinity.

Other segments like *Endzone* and *Eats* briefly hint at and recall traditional masculinity. In *Endzone* the male readers are subtly reminded that flirting with danger and death—defying activities are akin to being transported back in time when men braved severe conditions on a day-to-day basis while the preparation of meat-based dishes in the *Eats* segment can be seen as a propagation of masculine virility and aggression. All in all, these glimpses of traditional masculinity come few and far in between, alluding to a gradual shedding of the longstanding wake of gender superiority, giving way to a re-defined form of masculinity at the hands of external forces.
The influence of the economic and social structures in a predominantly capitalistic market on masculinity in Malaysia has been a recurring point in this dissertation. The media with their intangible yet potent brew have dug their claws in many fibres of Malaysian society. *FHM Malaysia*, as part of a global network of media, is a reflection of a Malaysian state imbued with a sense of the outside world. The ramifications of male gender identity in capitalist society are clearly visible amongst its pages from the advertisements, fashion pages and regular segments.

Numerous advertisements dot *FHM Malaysia*, punctuating the dominant stamp of consumerism on every page they take up. The selling of various consumer products via advertisements and the fashion pages convey the need to take possession of material goods to project a positive image to the world where the male body is used as a vending tool.

In a capitalist market synonymous with wealth, money is king. In the pages of *FHM Malaysia*, capitalism meets consumerism. The reader is exhorted to make purchases on the high end of the scale. Advertisements for brands like Emporio Armani, Gucci, Calvin Klein, Tag Heuer and displays of expensive gadgets and cars are all cloaked with an aura of prestige, sending the message that making a success of oneself in the capitalist and consumerist world comes with a great premium. This appears to be the driving force behind manly pursuits as suggested by the letters sent in by male readers in the Gold segment, all seeking financial know-how and advice to stay ahead. Ergo, capitalism appears to be the mainstay of masculinity where the male is
chiefly viewed as a consumer or an object within the economy of consumption.

Having identified the traditional vestiges of masculinity and present day economic undercurrents beneath masculinity in Malaysia, the findings also provide an insight into what exactly masculinity in Malaysia constitutes. What is most obvious is the categories and expectations of what a ‘man’ is are expanding. Representations in the magazine suggest that men are being depicted as less than men in a traditional hegemonic sense of masculinity.

The constituents of masculinity in Malaysia can be seen from the multiplicity of larger issues that have emerged from the findings. Masculinity is equated with having a highly visible public profile which goes beyond basic dressing. Pressure is mounted on the male via advertisements and the fashion spread on the need to be equipped with the right kind of eyewear, watch, cufflinks, shoes, belt, gadgetry, and car to make an impact and stay ahead of one’s peers. The implication of this is without these external manifestations, a man is not complete. Hence masculinity has become synonymous with maintaining a high, polished, consumer profile.

Should the fashionable public profile fall short in any way, a male can justify resorting to underhanded means to assert himself. Chicanery has crept into the stream of masculinity in Malaysia and an acceptance of a lower ethic code has become part and parcel of masculinity in Malaysia as evident in the feature articles (Section 4.3).
While this pursuit of being ahead heats up, it becomes totally ironic that, concurrently, men are seen to be experiencing a loss of autonomy and power. This is evident on the cover pages and advertisements dominated by more visuals of women in an empowered state of being. It was the men who appear passive and lacking in authority. This inherently gives way to a sense of insecurity as apparent in the letters sent in by the male readers, expressing their fears about being victimised at work, virility problems and numerous feature articles on how to save relationships with the opposite sex. The regular stream of letters and frequency of ‘how to’ articles indicating that they are favourably received by male readers, bear testament to deep-set fears. This masculinity can no longer be brushed off as an exhibition of fearlessness. Instead it is tinged with a sense of insecurity.

Another pertinent point that cannot be omitted is, these doubts and insecurities are not blanketed under a shroud. In the past, as seen in Chapter Two, men were expected to have their innermost fears and apprehensions under wraps to keep up with the expected masculine code. The analyses of *FHM Malaysia* reveal that this is no longer the case. Through the letters and feature articles, men are making their fears transparent and open to scrutiny. This erases the private versus public demarcation lines, where men are now seen to be on a threshold of gender equilibrium, where previously it was the women who had carte blanche to express their fears and weaknesses openly.

On a positive note, the analyses also show up that men can view themselves in a less serious light. They are not afraid of laughing at themselves and seeing themselves as objects of derision, as noted in the *Bar Room Jokes*
column (Section 4.2.6). This letting down of the guard further substantiates the previous point about accessibility to the inner sphere.

Gender equilibrium is further maintained when taking note of the different frontiers ventured into by men. The fashion industry has been culturally linked to the female body (Malossi, 2000:7). The kitchen has long been fronted by the female. Yet, these two spheres can no longer be considered the sole dominion of the female as seen in Section 4.2.4. Another threshold has been crossed by the masculine gender.

All in all, what has been served up by the analyses of *FHM Malaysia* with regards to masculinity is there have been various shifts in the face of masculinity in tandem with the rapid changes occurring worldwide. Masculinity in Malaysia, while still maintaining parts of its traditional shreds has taken on different dimensions, closely bridging the gap between the sexes. Since the global currents are still rapidly in motion, it can safely be assumed that the fluid boundaries of masculinity in Malaysia will continue to evolve.

The following chapter recapitulates the general aims and findings of this study and looks at the significance of these findings.