

## CHAPTER 4

### Data Analysis

Although the term “metrosexual” has been borrowed from the West and spread through the influence of the world economy, specific meanings and implications of the term in Thailand have been shaped by local social and cultural factors. The construction of a “metrosexual” identity in the Thai mass media is related to ideology and hegemony. In order to analyze the production and reproduction of ideology and hegemony involved in the term “metrosexual” within a Thai context, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is crucial. In addition, Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework can help to analyze “communicative events” including texts, discursive practices and social practices. The term metrosexual in the Thai mass media has not been constructed only through a specific text or a specific communication, but through various communicative events. As a result, the construction of the “metrosexual” identity is the result of news articles, advertisements and film. The producer of each multimodal text has used verbal and visual elements to convey their intended definitions and implications of “metrosexual”.

When Thai mass media first used the term “metrosexual” in newspapers, it aimed to describe it as a global social phenomenon and a business opportunity for entrepreneurs. Later, it was used to sell products targeting a group of customer including both straight and gay men, mostly through print and TV advertisements. Alongside these marketing practices, social criticism towards the representation of metrosexuals has emerged through news articles and film. The development of meaning of the term “metrosexual” in the Thai mass media can be seen through the construction of verbal and visual texts in the stage of introduction, marketing practices and social criticism. The following section analyzes how verbal and visual texts are used to construct meanings and implications of metrosexual in each stage. The verbal and visual construction of the term “metrosexual” can be categorized as:

- 4.1 The original definition as defined and used in the West;
- 4.2 The implications as used in a Thai context
  - 4.2.1 The introduction of a borrowed term into Thai mass media;
  - 4.2.2 The positive connotation for marketing purposes; and,
  - 4.2.3 The negative connotation as through social criticism.

This data analysis will clarify the term “metrosexual” as constructed on the relation of verbal and visual texts as the term underwent a semantic and semiotic shift from positive connotations (potential consumers/customers) to negative ones reflecting a problematic sexual identity. However, it is crucial to note that chronological stages are not clear-cut. The term “metrosexual” was introduced in the Thai press in 2004 as a global social phenomenon. At the introductory stage, there was an attempt to translate the term into Thai but the translated Thai term and description implied femininity. However, there were emphatic and marked statements about metrosexuals being straight men. In 2004 to 2005, there was only one article implying that metrosexuals were gay men. The turning point was Pankorn Boonyachinda, or Dang’s album “Metrosexual”, released at the end of 2005. In 2006, there was social criticism in the press towards his new appearance and metrosexual style in which the press and social activists condemned him as a closeted gay man who used the term “metrosexual” to hide his real sexual identity. Following social criticism towards Dang’s appearance, the film “Metrosexual”, a story about a group of women trying to find out whether a man who was engaged to their friend was gay or not, was released on 13 July 2006. Since then, the term “metrosexual” has been verbally and visually constructed with varied identity implications including straight men, as a synonym for gay men and also as a synonym for closeted gay men. Therefore, the ambiguous meaning of the term is the result of the battle between marketing, which has attempted to keep the positive connotation of the term for business purposes, and social criticism, which has emphasized that metrosexuals are actually closeted gay men and which included a negative connotation and stigma.

The following section reveals the analysis of meaning making through the relation of verbal and visual texts as used to construct the original implication of the

term “metrosexual”. This section aims to demonstrate the construction of the term in the West in order to compare it when constructed in the Thai context.

#### **4.1 The original implication as defined and used in the West**

“Metrosexual” is an example of a word coinage that defines a changing social phenomenon, and reflects semantic limitation. While the term “heterosexual” contains social expectation towards gender roles of men and women, the term “metrosexual” was first introduced by verbal and visual construction to show men who some have feminine traits. To introduce a new term different than the usual social perception towards gender roles and societal expectations, behavior and concerns, verbal and visual texts were constructed by Simpson who coined the term “metrosexual” to make sense of a new form of masculinity term to the readers.

The term “metrosexual” first appeared in the article “Here Come the Mirror Men: Why the Future is Metrosexual” in the British national newspaper *The Independent*, published on 15 November 1994. However, this study analyzes re-publication of the article on the website *Marksimpson*. In this article, Simpson reported on the first style exhibition for men called “Man’s World”, which was organized by a well known men’s magazine *GQ* in London. He stated that this event was the reflection of a social phenomenon in which the term “metrosexual” was used to describe men whose shopping habits were becoming more similar to women’s. He reported that the exhibition, sponsored by brand-name men’s products, was a means to promote “metrosexuality” which appeared in men’s style magazines and implied a sense of narcissism. In verbal texts, the term “metrosexual” was constructed as a term for a new market segment defined as “the single young man with a high disposable income, living or working in the city (because that’s where all the best shops are)... perhaps the most promising consumer market of the decade” (Simpson, pars. 5). The sexual identity was described as “man who might prefer women or he might prefer men” (pars. 17). Other texts also implied that metrosexuals could be straight men who are similar to gay men or they could be gay. The slang terms used for gay men such as “coming out of the closet” were used to describe the exhibition for heterosexual men, for examples, “This exhibition shows that male vanity’s finally coming out of the closet” (pars. 2) and “The New Lad Bible Loaded magazine, for all its features on sport, babes and sport,

is (closeted) metrosexual” (pars. 20). Although Simpson mentioned a straight man, a participant in the exhibition who agreed with his girlfriend that men had the right to shop and dress up similar to women, he ended this article with the quotation of a gay participant who was concerned that he should not be interviewed because he did not want to frighten straight men who would think that this exhibition was only for gay men. This may imply that metrosexuality, which mimics the lifestyles of gay men, is actually a homosexual identity that cannot be expressed publicly.

As for visual texts in this article, the print advertisements of Calvin Klein and Davidoff, portrayed shirtless and muscular male models revealing their sexual attractiveness. These were used to depict how metrosexuality included “the images of narcissistic young men” in male lifestyle magazines aimed at heterosexuals. In figure 1 and 2, Simpson used the print advertisements of men’s products to portray the pictures of metrosexuals targeted by marketers. Although both figures may be role models of metrosexuals for male heterosexuals, sexually attractive gestures in both figures have left ambiguity to viewers whether the advertisements targeted heterosexuals or gay customers. It is therefore possible that verbal and visual texts used in the article “Here Come the Mirror Men: Why the Future is Metrosexual” were constructed to imply metrosexuals could be straight or gay, as long as they were potentially valuable customers in consumer culture.

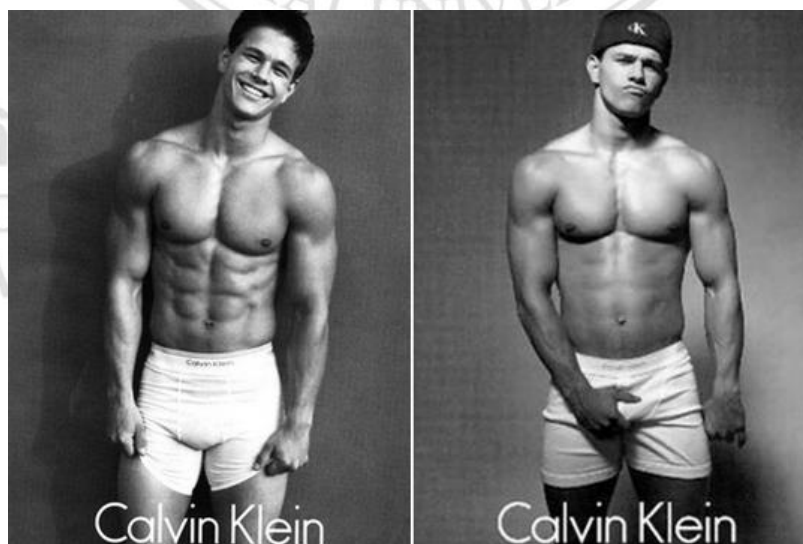


Figure 1 Print advertisements of Calvin Klein

In the article “Meet the Metrosexual” published on the website *Salon* on 23 July 2002, Simpson attempted to draw a clearer picture of metrosexuality by tying the term to a straight role model, a technique which would later become a worldwide practice. David Beckham is a British soccer player who has been verbally and visually



Figure 2 Print advertisement of Davidoff

constructed as the ideal metrosexual, and who is also infamous for his womanizing. Simpson proposed to the readers that the image of Beckham could not be described as a heterosexual man but as a metrosexual one. He claimed that the image and behavior of men had been so dramatically changed in consumer culture that men had recently taken over the role of women who used to shop for them and paid as much attention to their physical appearance. Although the article focused on straight men who adopt lifestyles of gay men as single men living in metropolitan areas and having purchasing power, the definition of the term is still ambiguous. The definition of the term “metrosexual” is verbally and visually constructed on the stereotypical gay men who need “coming out of the closet” and social acceptance. Simpson headed the article with the strap line “He’s well dressed, narcissistic and obsessed with butts. But don’t call him gay” while he defined the term in the body of the article:

The typical metrosexual is a young man with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis — because that’s where all the best shops, clubs,

gyms and hairdressers are. He might be officially gay, straight or bisexual, but this is utterly immaterial because he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference (pars. 8)

It is noticeable that the definition of the term is the combination of lifestyle, social status and sexual identity. Although Simpson attempted to define the term as a lifestyle which can be shared by gay, straight or bisexual men, the verbal texts as “don’t call him gay” and the use of Beckham’s portrait could be implied that the term “metrosexual” interpreted and portrayed as a heterosexual man was more positive in terms of a sexual identity. It is ironic that a gay lifestyle as a prototype of metrosexual was positively portrayed but heterosexual men did not want to be misunderstood as gay men in term of a sexual identity or sexuality.

The only picture used in this article was a portrait of Beckham, portrayed as a fashion icon with a stylish haircut and wearing fashionable sunglasses, an earring and a leather jacket. The picture of Beckham was used to emphasize the implication of the term “metrosexual” that straight men can reflect their femininity through fashion but still maintain their straightness. In figure 3, Simpson made use of social perception towards Beckham as a male heterosexual and soccer player to portray metrosexuals who are straight whereas symbolic elements such as an earring and fashionable accessories implied femininity and a look derived from gay men. Later, Beckham has been verbally and visually used as a representation of metrosexuality worldwide.



Figure 3 David Beckham

Although Simpson defined the term as including gay men, the definition later included assurances that metrosexuals are not gay men. For example, the book “The Metrosexual Guide to Style: a Handbook for the Modern Man” written by Michael Flocker in 2003 defined the term “metrosexual” in the preface of the book as a “twenty-first century male trendsetter”, “straight, urban man with heightened aesthetic sense”, a “man who spends time and money on appearance and shopping” and a “man willing to embrace his feminine side”. The US TV program “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy” which first broadcast in July 2003, is an example of mainstream media which dealt with the concept of metrosexuality. This makeover program showed how gay fashion and lifestyle experts could help straight men to look better (in the sense of metrosexuality) while reassuring them that they could maintain their masculinity and straightness. This assurance that metrosexuals are straight men has been also used in the marketing practices of men’s products worldwide. Although gay men have ultimately been excluded from the definition of the term “metrosexual” in the West, they were acknowledged as having a positive contribution in the construction of the term “metrosexual”, as gays were a group of men who had a lifestyle which straight men wanted to mimic in order to improve their personal taste and physical appearance; thereby amplifying their social status as ideal men.

The following section will reveal how the term “metrosexual” was constructed in the Thai context and influenced by economic, social and cultural factors leading to different implications when compared to the West.

## **4.2 The implications as used in a Thai context**

The construction of the term “metrosexual” in Thai context can be categorized chronologically because the construction of the term in each chronological stage is caused by the different purposes of producers. As a result, techniques used to construct some verbal and visual texts in each stage are different.

### **4.2.1 The introduction of a borrowed term into Thai mass media**

When the term “metrosexual” was first introduced, Thai press attempted to translate it into a Thai word reflecting femininity but assuring straightness. However, it is not clearly as transparent as the original. As Thai was too limited to directly translate from English, a noun phrase “ผู้ชายพันธุ์ใหม่” or “A new breed of man” was juxtaposed

with the term “metrosexual” as a loan word to make it understandable for Thai readers. This was found in the name of article “ผู้ชายพันธุ์ใหม่ เมโทรเซ็กชวล” or “A new breed of men, Metrosexual” published in *Thansetthakij* on 1 April 2004. Sometimes, the term “metrosexual” was used with the word “กลายพันธุ์” which means “mutation”. The noun phrase “a new breed of man” implies that the characteristics of metrosexuals are strange or different from stereotypical men. In the same year, the term “metrosexual” was coined as “ผู้ชายเจ้าสำอาง”, which literally means “a foppish man” or “a man who pay much attention to his appearance.” This translated term was used as the name of article “Metrosexual: ผู้ชายเจ้าสำอาง, Metrosexual: Foppish Man” in *Matichon* on 15 August. Later, the word “สำอาง” was frequently used to translate the term “metrosexual” into Thai such as “หนุ่มเจ้าสำอาง” which literally means “a young man who pays much attention to his appearance” and “กลุ่มผู้ชายสำอางเมืองกรุง” which literally means “a group of urban men who pay much to their appearance”. Actually, the word “สำอาง” in Thai means “pay much attention’s to one’s appearance” and implies femininity. This word is usually used for and related to women such as the word “เครื่องสำอาง” which literally means “cosmetics”.

Another noun phrase used to translate the term metrosexual is “ผู้ชายรักสวยรักงาม”. This also implies feminine traits as it is normally used to describe characteristics of women. The use of the noun phrase “ผู้ชายรักสวยรักงาม” can be found in the article ““Metrosexual “ผู้ชาย สายพันธุ์ใหม่”, Metrosexual, “a new breed of man”” published in *Manager Daily* on 31 Oct 2006 as quoted:

พฤติกรรมของผู้ชายรักสวยรักงามอย่างกลุ่มนี้มีอิทธิพลต่อตลาดสินค้าทั่วโลกทีเดียว...เรียกได้ว่าพฤติกรรมการณ์นี้จะเหมือนผู้หญิง...(34).

The behavior of men who pay attention to their attractiveness has influenced the world market of many products...their purchasing behaviour similar to women’s...(34).

Although the phrase “ผู้ชายรักสวยรักงาม” can be translated as “men who pay attention to their attractiveness”, the sense of femininity cannot be transparent through this translation from Thai into English. The phrase “รักสวยรักงาม” in Thai is usually used to describe women. In addition, the words “สวย” and “งาม” which literally means



“beautiful” are normally used to describe the physical appearance of women. This can be implied that to beautify or to pay much attention to one’s physical appearance has been perceived to be women’s behavior in Thai culture. Men are not socially expected to pay much attention to their appearance or have concerns similar to women. As a result, the word “ผู้ชาย” or “men” with the phrase “รักสวยรักงาม” reflect strangeness and femininity which contrasts to Thai stereotypical men’s characteristics.

It is not only the Thai translated noun phrase of the term “metrosexual” implying femininity but also the way authors attempted to verbally clarify characteristics of metrosexuals by comparing them directly with women. However, the authors also reassured within the same article that metrosexuals were straight. The example can be found in the article “Metrosexual: ผู้ชายเจ้าสำอาง, Metrosexual: Foppish Man” by Akekalak Yimwilai in *Matichon* 15 August 200 as quoted:

เพราะเดี๋ยวนี้เทรนด์หนุ่มเจ้าสำอางที่มาพร้อมกับรสนิยมและวิถีชีวิตเฉกเช่นสตรีกำลังมาแรงจริง ๆ ...เพราะหน้าตา ผิวพรรณเนียน หึงสาววัยกระเตาะยังสู้ไม่ได้เลย หน้าแต่งออกขนาดนี้ ทำให้น้องสาวอิจฉาร้อนไปตาม ๆ กัน... แต่เชื่อมั๊ยครับว่า หนุ่ม ๆ เหล่านี้ไม่ได้เป็นเกย์นะครับ เขากลับชอบผู้หญิง หรือเป็นเลิ่อกผู้หญิงเลยก็ว่าได้ ...นายแบบเนี่ย ต้องมีเค้าโครงหน้าคล้ายผู้หญิง ส่วนสไตล์และอารมณ์ของการโพสต์ท่า ต้องสะท้อนถึงอารมณ์สุนทรีย์และอ่อนโยน (20)

Nowadays, the trend of metrosexuals who have good taste and a lifestyle similar to women is increasingly popular...because of his smooth and fair skin which young women could not compete with and could not avoid being jealous...Believe it or not! They are not gay...Instead, they like women. They are probably womanizers ... male models must have feminine faces. Their styling and posing must reflect beauty and gentleness (20).

It is clear in the above excerpt that Thai clarification and description of metrosexuals’ characteristics were compared to women whereas the original one was constructed on the lifestyle of gay men which was desired by heterosexual men. This reflects how the construction of metrosexuality in Thai context has been localized to meet Thai social values and expectation by avoiding associating the term “metrosexual” to gay male-sexual identity which has not been widely accepted in Thai society.

Although verbal texts such as “they like women” or “they are probably womanizers” were used to assure straightness, the phrase “similar lifestyle to women” contrasts with men’s gender role and societal expectation.

At the introductory stage, some visual texts also created ambiguity because of the contradiction between the pictures and words. Although the verbal texts implied that metrosexuals were straight men, the pictures sent a contradictory message. For example, in Figure 4, the most important thing is the symbolic element in this image which creates the sense of femininity and contradicts male stereotypes. The mascara, which a man is using, can be seen as a salient symbolic element in this image. Images of men using an eyebrow pencil, mascara, masking and powder puff, can be found in several articles to illustrate pictures of metrosexuals as men who pay as much attention to their appearance as women do. Usually, the above symbolic elements, cosmetics, are placed with female models. These images imitate traditional cosmetic advertisements modeled by women. In the Thai people’s perception, a man who mimics women’s behavior or would like to be like a woman has been perceived as *kathoey* which is a sexual identity opposed to expectations of men. In Figure 4, using a male model creates strangeness and otherness although the verbal text discusses a group of potential customers called “metrosexuals” and the role model of metrosexuals is David Beckham who is heterosexual. As a result, visual texts have left the sexual ambiguity of metrosexuality as implicit to the reader. This contradiction is an underlying cause of social criticism towards metrosexual as a threat which will be discussed in the later section.

Apart from feminine characteristics, the economic and social status of metrosexuals were also emphasized in the early descriptions of metrosexual. The positive portrayal of metrosexuals as potentially valuable customers or consumers was constructed to highlight the positive connotation of metrosexuals and to overlook their sexual ambiguity. The verbal texts of this point can be found in the article ““เมโทรเซ็กชวล” ชายแท้ใส่ใจสุขภาพ เทรนด์ฮิตปี 49, “Metrosexual”, straight men who pay attention to their health, is the trend of 2006” as quoted:

โดยกำหนดกลุ่มคนเมืองในกรุงเทพฯ ที่เป็นชายแท้ อายุ 25-55 ปี มีรายได้ตั้งแต่ 40,000 บาทขึ้นไป ...รวมทั้งเป็นกลุ่มที่มีกำลังซื้อสูง...ที่สำคัญเป็นกลุ่มผู้มีอาชีพการงานมั่นคงและรายได้สูง (B1)

The subject population was a group of metropolitan straight men aged 25-55 years old who earned more than 40,000 baht a month... They also have high purchasing power...The most important thing is that they have a stable career with high income (B1).

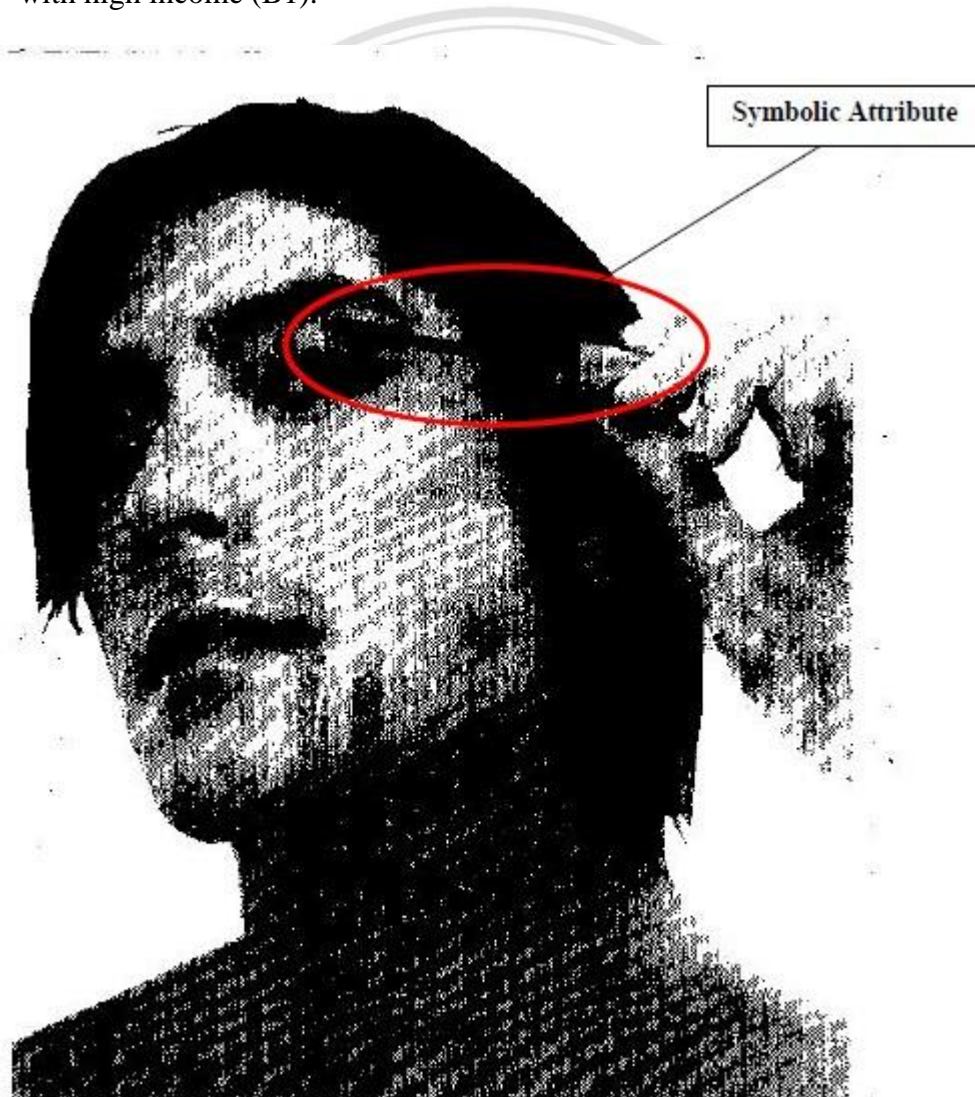


Figure 4 A man using mascara (*Krungthep Thurakij*, 7 Nov 2005)

The phrases “high purchasing power” and “have stable career with high income” show that the economic and social status of metrosexuals makes them valuable as a niche market for business sections. The prefix “metro” also describes characteristics of metrosexual as “metropolitan straight men”. This also reflects social and economic

change, especially in Thailand where an agricultural society has changed to an industrial society, causing expanding of the metropolitan areas. People tend to move, live and seek their opportunities in the big cities.

The description of the social and financial status of metrosexuals adopted from Simpson's definition was translated into Thai. The translation of "metrosexual" in the term of a sexual identity or sexuality is ambiguous due to Thai linguistic limitation, in which the words used to translate the term "metrosexual" or to describe metrosexual's behaviour imply girlishness or femininity. In addition, the Thai term is usually compared to women instead of the gay men claimed in Simpson's article to be the prototypes of metrosexuals. This reflects the negative connotation of gay men in Thai culture. However, comparing men to women challenges societal expectations of men's gender role.

From the stage of introduction into Thai mass media, the term "metrosexual" has been used in marketing fields in order to promote and sell products for men. Consequently, the construction of the term "metrosexual" has been accrued the positive connotation of ideal men and valuably potential consumers.

#### **4.2.2 The positive connotation for marketing purposes**

The notion of metrosexuals as potential customers or consumers has been constructed for marketing purposes to target a group of men including only straight men, only gay men or a group including both straight and gay men. As mentioned, the word "metrosexual" was first constructed in Thailand to emphasize and reassure that the term included only straight men. Marketers were influenced by the release of Dang's album in 2005, the social criticism towards his new look, and the release of the film "Metrosexual" in 2006. They started to interpret the term "metrosexual" as a euphemism for "gay" and later extended the term to cover both straight and gay men as a group of potential customers in the same market segment. However, the implication that metrosexuals are straight men has been dominant in the majority of marketing practices. The verbal and visual texts which construct metrosexuals as straight men are based on the stereotypical straight man and the use of offensive slang terms calling gay men as the "other" in order to establish positive connotations towards the term, whereas euphemisms are used to mention gay men when constructing the positive connotation of

gay men as potential customers. The use of slang and euphemisms to refer to gay men also reflects lack of acceptance of homosexuality in Thai society.

### 1) The visual and verbal construction of metrosexuals as straight men

Although the term “metrosexual” as first introduced in Thailand referred to straight men, verbal and visual texts emphasizing straightness, reassuring people and changing negative perception and attitudes of people towards the term have continued producing femininity and ambiguity in the definition of the term; and social criticisms claiming Metrosexuals are closeted gay men. The first techniques used in this construction are emphasis and reassurance that metrosexuals are not gay. This is accomplished through verbal texts including selected words, noun phrases, phrases and sentences and by creating straight role models of metrosexuals based on stereotypical masculinity.

As for the first technique, verbal texts used in news articles to emphasize “metrosexuals” as straight men are constructed with a binary opposition between heterosexuals and homosexuals by assuring that they are not gay men. Stating that metrosexuals are not gay implies a negative connotation of the word “เกย์” or “gay”, and exclusion or othering. In addition, the offensive slang terms such as “ตุ๊ด” or “แอบ” were used to reassure the reader that metrosexuality is definitely not involved in any kinds of homosexuality. In Thai gay subculture, the term “เกย์” is used to identify “masculine identified gay men” whereas “ตุ๊ด” or “แตัว” are used to identify “feminine identified gay men”. The slang term “แอบ” is a shortened form of the term “แอบจิต”, which literally means “closeted mind”. Among gay men, the term is used to discriminate against closeted gay men. Although the term “เกย์” as an English loan word “gay” is now used as in the formal way, the word “ตุ๊ด” or “แตัว” are rarely used in the formal way and considered offensive among gay men when used by outsiders who are not close friends. The word “ตุ๊ด” or “แตัว” has the same level of offensiveness as the English word “faggot”. An example of slang term usage can be found in the article “รู้จักเมโทรเซ็กซวล...ผู้ชายพันธุ์ใหม่ แมนทั้งแท่ง...(ไม่) ‘แอบปริตุ๊ด’” or “Get to know Metrosexuals...A new breed of men: They are straight men and (not) ‘closeted gay men’” in *Matichon Weekly* on 13 Jan 2006 as quoted:

แต่พรรณียบอกว่า หนุ่มเมโทรคือผู้ชายที่ให้ความสำคัญกับรูปลักษณ์ภายนอกไม่ใช่คู่ดี ไม่ใช่เกย์

However, Pannee claimed that metrosexuals are men who pay much attention to their physical appearance. *They are not faggots or gay men* (30).

The article ““ແລກວາມລັບหนุ่มเมโทรเซ็กชวล” or “Uncover the secret of metrosexual” in *Bangkok Today* on 15 Dec 2005 includes another example of a reassurance that metrosexuals were straight and not gay men:

ตีแผ่หนุ่มเมโทรเซ็กชวล ที่แท้เป็นผู้ชายทั้งแท่ง แต่เป็นหนุ่มไฟแรงที่กล้าสนใจกระแสใหม่ ๆ ในสังคม จึงกลายเป็นหนุ่มเจ้าสำอาง นิยมของเบรนต์เนมราคาแพง ฟันธงไม่ใช่เกย์ (17)

Metrosexuals have been disclosed that they are actually straight. They are energetic guys who are interested in up-to-date trends in society. That is why they pay attention to their appearance and like expensive stuffs with designer brands. It can be guaranteed that they are not actually gay ... (17).

The use of offensive slang terms and the negative connotation of the term “gay” in Thai shows that being gay is negative and socially unaccepted. This is different from the West where the construction of the term “metrosexual” had some positive connotations and referred to gay men in a positive way distinguishing between gay and straight men in the original definition of the term does not really matter.

As for the second technique, role models of metrosexuals as heterosexuals and stereotypical straight men are constructed in both visual and verbal texts. To reassure readers of the straightness of metrosexuals, verbal texts are selected to depict the representation of metrosexuals based on stereotypical masculinity and heterosexuality. At the word level, the example words are “ชอบผู้หญิง” which literally means “they like women”, “เสื่อผู้หญิง” which literally means they are womanizers or “แฟมิลี่แมน” which is borrowed from the English word “family man”. Some words are also used in verbal texts as symbols or metaphors to depict heterosexuality and masculinity of the term “metrosexual” such as “ภรรยา” which literally means “a wife” or “นักฟุตบอล” which literally means “a soccer player”. Furthermore, well-known soccer players such as David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo are mentioned to depict ideal metrosexuals

who are straight men. In the article ““Metrosexual: ผู้ชายเจ้าสำอาง, Metrosexual: Foppish Man” in *Matichon* on 15 August 2004, it not only reassures the reader that metrosexuals are not gay men but the phrase “they like women” and “womanizer”, are terms that connote stereotypical straight men, and are used to further reassure people about the straightness of metrosexuals :

แต่เชื่อมั้ครับว่า หนุ่ม ๆ เหล่านี้ไม่ได้เป็นเกย์นะครับ เขากลับชอบผู้หญิง หรือเป็นเลิ่ผู้หญิง  
เลยก็ว่าได้

Believe it or not! They are not gay. Instead, they like women. They are probably womanizers (20).

The article “Metrosexual “ผู้ชาย สายพันธุ์ใหม่”, Metrosexual, “a new breed of man”” published in *Manager Daily* on 31 Oct 2006 is an example of news articles using David Beckham as a role model of straight metrosexuals. People’s perception toward Beckham as a soccer player is used to construct stereotypical masculinity in the term. Apart from depicting metrosexuals based on the stereotype of straight men as athletes, Beckham reflects heterosexuality which can be noticed through the use of words such as “marrying”, “a married man with children” and “his relationship with other women” as quoted:

ส่วนใครที่ยังสงสัยอยู่ว่าหนุ่ม Metrosexual ที่นิยามจะหน้าตาเป็นเช่นไรนั้น มาร์ก ได้ยกตัวอย่าง เดวิด เบคแฮม นักฟุตบอลชื่อดังของโลกที่หลังจากแต่งงานกับวิกตอเรีย นักร้องสาวในวงสไปซ์เกิร์ลแล้ว... แน่แน่นอนว่าเบคแฮมไม่ใช่เกย์ เพราะนอกจากเขาจะแต่งงานมีลูกมีเต้าแล้ว เขายังได้ชื่อว่าเป็นนักรักตัวยงที่มีข่าวกับสาว ๆ ไม่เลือกหน้าอีกด้วย (34)

For those who wonder what metrosexuals look like, Mark used *David Beckham, a well-known soccer player*, as the example. After *marrying Victoria, an ex-member of a girl group Spice Girls...* Of course, *Beckham is not gay*. He is not only *a married man with children* but also a lover who is usually involved in gossips about *his relationship with other women* (34).

In the visual texts, the image act, the gaze and the size of the frame, which establish the imaginary relationship between the represented participant and the viewer, are applied in the use of images of David Beckham as the ideal metrosexual who is heterosexual. In figure 5, Beckham is depicted by the medium shot which cuts off the

subject approximately at the knees and gazes at the viewer. The medium shot can be interpreted as “far personal distance” which creates “subjects of personal interest” or involvement. Based on the grammar of visual design, this kind of image, which Beckham is a represented participant who looks at the viewer, is called “demand”. The gaze of the represented participant demands that viewer be engaged in an imaginary relationship or demands something from the viewer. The picture of David Beckham demands the viewer look at him as a fashion icon instead of a soccer player. As for the information value of left and right, the image of Beckham is placed on the left as “Given”, information the viewer already knows, whereas the verbal text on the right side is “New”, describing him as a metrosexual icon awarded by a British press. In addition, the verbal texts described him as “a captain of the British soccer team” and “a husband” of a celebrity. At the first glance, the viewer may already know who he is but the pictures of Beckham in Figure 5 is a demand for the viewer to closely examine his grooming, including perfect stylish suits, hair cut, etc. With the combination of visual and verbal text, Beckham is redefined from a well known soccer player to a metrosexual man. With the previous perception of Beckham, the term “metrosexual” is also visually and verbally constructed to relate to his masculinity and his position as a stereotypical straight man, a soccer player and a husband. This technique has been also applied in other articles when using Beckham or other athlete celebrities as role models of metrosexuals.

In a Thai context, the ideal metrosexual portrayed in news articles is not only David Beckham, athletes or global celebrities but also Thai celebrities such as politicians and actors. The following excerpt from the article “ชายสำอางยุคใหม่ ‘เมโทรเซ็กซวล’ พันธุ์ไทย จ่ายเงินซื้อหล่อ” or “New-generation Thai ‘Metrosexual’ spends for buying attractiveness” in *Prachacharttharakij* on 26 Jan 2012 can reflect this point, in which metrosexuals are straight, constructed on the notions of stereotypical masculinity and heteronormativity:

สำหรับเรื่องที่ชอบอาบน้ำล้างหน้าและเปลี่ยนเสื้อผ้าบ่อย ๆ นั้น เพราะไม่ชอบให้เหงื่อไหล  
ย้อยมาเกาะเกาะผิวหนัง จึงต้องรีบเปลี่ยนเสื้อผ้าอยู่บ่อยครั้ง โดยเฉพาะภารกิจสำคัญอย่างเล่น  
กับลูกชาย... “ภรรยาผมใช้อะไร ผมก็ใช้อันนั้น” (34)



He washes his face, showers and changes clothes frequently. It's because he does not like sweat on his body, *especially when playing with his son...* "I use whatever *my wife* uses" (34).



Figure 5 David Beckham (Bangkok Today, 20 October 2005)

In the above article, visual texts are also used to depict the implication of metrosexuals as straight men. Figure 6 illustrates how visual texts are localized in Thai context to illustrate ideal metrosexuals. In this feature article, metrosexuals are verbally introduced as straight men. It is divided into 2 parts, including the description of metrosexuals and interviews with celebrities about their metrosexual lifestyles. The picture is used to depict metrosexuals in different occupations such as Thai politicians

or an actor as straight. In addition, public figures like politicians refer to the stereotype that politicians are definitely straight men who possess power. As for visual analysis, the diagram in Figure 6 is added to describe the classificational process in which the Superordinate of represented participants is the ideal metrosexual who is heterosexual, whereas the subordinates are male celebrities as in the picture those who are called metrosexuals. As a result, this reassurance that metrosexuals are heterosexual is crucial.

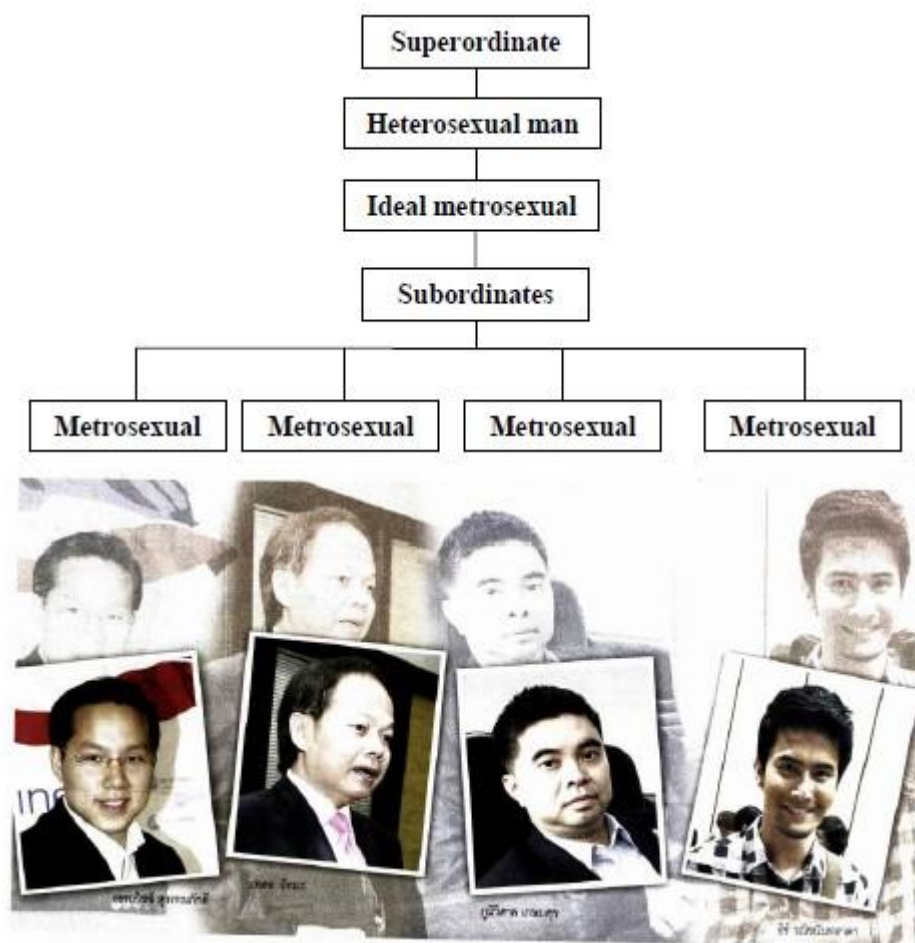


Figure 6 Politicians and an actor as metrosexuals

(Prachachartthurakij, 26 January 2012)

In advertisements dominated by visual texts, both print and TV ads apply the same technique. In these ads, the use of symbolic elements ensures the masculinity of male presenters who use men's products, although they fit the concept of metrosexuals who pay a lot of attention to their physical appearance. Based on stereotypical masculinity and heteronormativity, marketers apply symbolic elements. For example, a woman, a football, beards and boxing gloves are shown in Figures 7, 8 and 9 to

emphasize that the represented participants are straight, and their products are for metrosexuals who are straight men. The symbolic elements are constructed on the stereotype of straight men relating to women and extreme sports. Verbal texts in business news usually specify that the products target metrosexuals, whereas verbal texts in print advertisements are constructed by words or phrases visually used to describe the characteristics or appearance of metrosexuals who pay attention to their appearance. For example, phrases such as “ผิวดูดี” which literally means good looking skin, “หน้าไม่มัน” which literally means “removed oily face”, “ดูกระจ่างใส” which literally means bright fair skin and “หน้าใสห่างไกลสิว” which literally means “a fair skin face without acne” are used, as shown in figure 7. The products displayed in the advertisements also use black and the word “MEN” to symbolize the manliness of the products. Products not only provide the promise of a better appearance but also allow users to maintain their masculinity. In TV advertisements, skills such as martial arts are also used to depict the masculinity of the presenter even though he pays as much attention to his face as women do. For examples, fighting skill was shown in Figure 8 whereas heteronormativity is portrayed by male participants in both Figures 8 and 9. Although the promise of the product to men is that they will have a better physical appearance and maintain their masculinity, the way the represented participants use the products such as a facial foam or deodorant in TV ads as shown in Figure 8 and 9 is similar to women depicted in the same genre of TV advertisement.

The construction of the term “metrosexual” as straight men reproduces hegemonic masculinity in Thai society. Based on Trujillo, the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity are physical force and control, occupational achievement, familial patriarchy, frontiersmanship, and heterosexuality. In Thai society, the Thai word *Chai chatri* is normally used to define a real man or a hyper-masculine heterosexual who possesses bravery, womanizing and weapon skills. Therefore, homosexual identities in mass media are identified as negative “other”, while the reassuring straightness of the term “metrosexual” is verbally and visually constructed on characteristics of hegemonic masculinity.



Figure 7 Garnier Men print advertisement (*Garnierthailand, 2010*)



Figure 8 “Fighting” Garnier Men TV advertisement (*Adintrend, 2011*)



Figure 9 “Bluff” Nevia Men TV advertisement (*Adintrend*, 10 May 2013)

The identity construction of “metrosexual” as a straight man in Thai mass media can be viewed through five distinguishing characteristics of hegemonic masculinity and the notion of *Chai chatri* (ชายชาติวีร). The verbal and visual texts are constructed through sports to reflect the first characteristic of hegemonic masculinity, physical force and control. Words or visual artifacts about sports and competition are used to depict physical strength of real men. In print media, the identity construction of “metrosexual” is represented through soccer stars such as David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo. The verbal texts reassure that they are straight men by mentioning heterosexual code words around heterosexual norms such as “wife” and “family man”. In the visual texts, the soccer stars are not represented as players in sport news, but presented as fashionable male models with looks similar to those in fashion magazines. The viewer is presupposed to have background knowledge of their careers as soccer players, and take for granted their physical strength, competitiveness and manhood. In broadcast media, especially in TV advertisements of men’s products, extreme sports are used to reassure masculinity and straightness. For example, the TV ad of Garnier Men portrays the presenter as a skilled boxer who impresses a young woman in the final scene of the advertisement.

Occupations can also reflect masculine power. The social status of recognized occupations and the financial status of metrosexuals are verbally and visually presented in Thai media. According to the identity construction of metrosexual as straight, straight celebrities including Thai politicians and an actor are used as the presentation of ideal metrosexuals who are straight and successful men. Politicians especially symbolize men who both have and exercise their social, political and financial power. In the press, the international recognition of soccer players depicted as metrosexuals reflect their career

achievements. In addition, the ability to afford a metrosexual lifestyle can also reflect the level of occupational achievement of represented participants. Politician celebrities in pseudo interviews explain how they maintain their look as metrosexuals promoting expensive facial cream, tailor-made suits and brand name shoes.

The third characteristic of hegemonic masculinity is “having patriarchal control over one’s family”. Ideal Thai men are expected to be breadwinners or leaders of their families as seen in the phrase ‘*chang tao nah*’, literally meaning the front feet of an elephant. Although the original description of the term “metrosexual”, as defined by Mark Simpsons, specifies a group of urban single young men, the portrayal of a breadwinner, leader of family and husband, is used in the identity construction of the term in a Thai context in order to reassure straightness. David Beckham, or mentioned politicians, are not only presented as persons who pay a lot of attention to their personal appearance but also as paternal figures. Verbal texts are used to construct this identity, using phrases such as for example, “a family man” and “playing soccer with my son”.

The fourth characteristic of hegemonic masculinity is frontiersmanship, in which a man can do everything by himself without any assistance or any women. This characteristic is visually and verbally constructed through homosociety. Straightness and the real men ideal are constructed within the men-only territory. Both verbal and visual texts of the identity construction of metrosexual as a straight man are related to political and sport arenas which are kept for men only. Homosociety in the political and sport arenas reflects frontiersmanship and the ideas that men can be independent from women and be successful without women. Instead, women are portrayed as helpless objects which need protection from real men who have physical, financial and social power. Consequently, the ideal metrosexuals as straight men are portrayed through sport players and recognized politicians.

The last characteristic of hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality which is confirmed by sexual interest only directed towards women. Through the construction of metrosexuals as straight men, heterosexuality reassures masculinity and straightness. Words or phrases used to relate “metrosexuals” to heterosexuals include เลื้อยผู้หญิง, literally womanizer, and แฟมิลี่แมน, borrowed from the English word “family man”. In

TV advertisements, women are used as objects or as props in a short length shot. This signifies the existence of women is dependent upon men.

Although the construction of the term “metrosexual” as straight is based on the notion of hegemonic masculinity, being metrosexual does include an element of feminization. When the implication and definition of the term is related to fashion as a means to improve appearance and personality, it is undeniable that the term “metrosexual” is related to femininity and the stereotype of gay men. Although verbal texts are used to anchor and reassure straightness, symbolic elements appearing in visual texts provide a strong sense of femininity. Ironically, men’s products are advertised as tools to make them sexually attractive and reassure their masculinity but they have to lose some physical elements of masculinity through the process of feminization. For example in Figure 9, a represented participant has to lose his armpit hair in order to make it hairless, fair and as smooth a women’s. The shot of a man washing his face or using a deodorant with his hairless armpit is related to the same genre of TV ad of women’s products. It shows that the ideal metrosexual has to be feminized.

The verbal and visual construction of the term “metrosexual” as an identity of straight men has been constructed on the discourse of hegemonic masculinity and the discourse of negative representations of homosexuals in Thai society. Throughout the construction of this term as referring to straight men, it can be implied that the terms involved homosexuality and homosexual identities contain negative connotations, whereas straightness and heterosexuality contain positive connotations. As a result, the implication of metrosexuals as straight has been repeated by marketers to change or eliminate any negative perception of the term.

In marketing practices, the term “metrosexual” has not been only constructed as straight men but also gay men as potentially valuable customers. However, meaning making through the relation of verbal and visual texts is different from the construction of the term as stereotypical straight men.

## 2) The visual and verbal construction of metrosexuals as gay men

The positive connotation of metrosexuals as gay men has been constructed in an implicit or indirect way by referring to Simpson's original definition, using the term "metrosexual" as a synonym calling "gay market" and by using euphemisms or metaphors to imply that metrosexuals are gay potential customers categorized in the same market segment as straight men.

In 2005, the article "Metrosexual กับมุมมองผู้ชายยุคใหม่", which literally means "Metrosexual and the view towards new-generation men" published in *Manager Weekly* on 10 Jan 2005, described the term "metrosexual" as the combination of the word "metro" and "homosexual". This reveals that Thai people are connect the term "sexual" with the term "homosexual" because Thai academics and gay people also adopt the word "homosexual" as a loan word to use in their field. Furthermore, the author of this article connected the term with Simpson's statement that "metrosexuals may be gay". Texts are also constructed by introducing the term "metrosexual", and relating it to lifestyle of gay men. Both verbal texts and visual texts describe the biological and social conditions causing someone to be homosexual and showing the survey results about the acceptance of gay men in Thai society including group identity, the acceptance within family and workplace, public expression, social values and same-sex marriage. Actually, the visual and verbal texts resulting from the survey are different from those describing what a metrosexual is. Showing the result of the poll on whether Thai society accepts homosexuals implies that metrosexuals are actually gay men. The verbal and visual texts are quoted as the follows:

ความหมาย 2 คำ คือ metro และ sexual คำ metro ในความหมายของ เมืองหรือคนที่ใช้ชีวิตในเมือง ส่วน sexual ในที่นี้มักมีความหมายแสดงไปพัวพันกับลักษณะของกลุ่มเกย์ ความหมายของกลุ่มของ metrosexual "มักเป็นผู้ที่ตระหนักถึงการรักษารูปร่างหน้าตา การแต่งกายละเอียดอ่อน และ โรแมนติก" ซึ่งในลักษณะที่หลายคนคงมองภาพในเชิงเกย์ (B8)

As for the meaning of "metro" and "sexual", metro means metropolitan or people who live in a big city whereas "sexual" has the meaning which relates to gay men. Thus, the meaning of metrosexual is "a man who pays attention to



taking care of their physical appearance, grooming and romance.” *Most people see this as gay men* (B8).

The verbal texts implying that the term “metrosexual” is a synonym for the “gay market” can be found in the news article “เกย์-เมโทรเซ็กชวล มาแรง” or “Gay-Metrosexual is popular” in *Thansettakij* on 14 Sep 2006. The title of the article itself shows the relation between metrosexuals and gay men. At the word level, the term “metrosexual” is juxtaposed with terms related to gay men in order to imply that metrosexuals and gay men can be put in the same category or the same market segment. In addition, the news article explicitly states that gay men are included in the group of metrosexuals as the following shows:

ปัจจุบันผู้บริโภคกลุ่มเมโทรเซ็กชวลจัดเป็นตลาดใหญ่ ซึ่งมีกำลังซื้อสูง เพราะเป็นกลุ่มที่รวมเอาผู้ชายรักเพศเดียวกันไม่ว่า เกย์ ตุ๊ด กะเทย เข้ารวมอยู่ในกลุ่มเดียวกับผู้ชายที่ให้ความสำคัญกับการปรุงแต่งบุคลิกให้ดูดีด้วยการแต่งหน้า แต่งตัว (24)

a group of metrosexual consumers is a big market with high purchasing power including chai-rak-chai (literally men who love men) consisting of gay men and kathoey in the same group of straight men who pay special attention to improving their personality by wearing makeup and being conscious on good grooming (24)

Furthermore, the above mentioned article relates the term “metrosexual” and the changing acceptance of homosexuals among business sectors. This can imply that metrosexuals are gay customers as quoted:

...เนื่องจากผู้ชายที่ไลฟ์สไตล์เมโทรเซ็กชวลจะเป็นกลุ่มที่มีกำลังซื้อสูงด้วยรายได้ที่สูงกว่าคนปกติถึงสองเท่า ทำให้ช่วงหลังมีสินค้าหลายรายออกสินค้ามาจับลูกค้ากลุ่มดังกล่าว แม้แต่ประกันชีวิตสมัยหนึ่งไม่เปิดรับ แต่วันนี้บริษัท ฟินันซ่าประกันชีวิตฯ ก็จัดบริการประกันชีวิตมาเพื่อลูกค้าคนรักเพศเดียวกัน โดยเฉพาะ (24)

...Due to the high purchasing power of *metrosexuals*, which is 2 times higher than ordinary people, many products have been recently launched to target this group of customers. *Even insurance companies, which did not welcome gay*

clients in the past, are providing a specific service for *kon rak phet diew kan* (literally men who love the same sex) such as *Finansa Life Assurance Co., Ltd.* (24).



Figure 10 A man powdering his face and pie charts (*Manager Weekly*, 10 Jan 2005)

In the same article, the conjunction “หรือ-or” is used to imply that the term “metrosexual” can be used as a synonym of “gay market.” At a sentence level, news articles describe “metrosexual” as gay men in a positive way, stating that they can enhance the sales growth of men’s products and services. The business opportunity resulting from the fact that they pay much attention to their physical appearance is usually emphasized:

แนวโน้มตลาดเกย์ หรือเมโทรเซ็กชวล เป็นตลาดที่มีขนาดใหญ่และน่าสนใจทั้งนี้ได้มีการสำรวจพบว่าชายไทย 1 ใน 3 เป็นเกย์ นั่นหมายถึงมีชายไทยเกือบ 10 ล้านคนที่เป็นเกย์มีทั้งที่

แสดงออกและไม่แสดงออก บวกกับสังคมให้การยอมรับเพศที่สามมากขึ้น ทำให้ผู้บริโภคกลุ่มนี้กลายเป็นตลาดที่สินค้าหรือบริการต่างให้ความสนใจกันมาก (24)

*The market potential for products and services catering to gay men or metrosexuals is big and interesting. A study shows that 1/3 of Thai men are gay, meaning more than 10 million Thai men are either openly gay or closeted. More acceptance of phet-thi-sam (literally third sex) in Thai society has made this group of consumers a prime target of products and services (24).*

In addition to using “metrosexual” as a synonym for the “gay market”, the word “violet”, a euphemism and metaphoric word symbolizing gay people in Thai, is used to relate “metrosexuals” with gay customers instead of directly using the term “gay customers”. Normally, the slang term “violet people” or “ชาวสีม่วง” is a euphemism for gay people in Thailand. It is believed that violet or purple colors symbolize an unsuccessful life or the combination of 2 gender colors, blue and red. This is different from the West, where rainbow colors symbolize gay men. An example of using the term “violet” to symbolize gay customers can be found in the news article “‘ท็อปส์’ ไอเดียเร็ด ส่งกระเช้าสีม่วง-ชมพู จับลูกค้าเมโทรเซ็กชวล” or “‘Tops’, describing a creative idea to send Violet-pink baskets to target metrosexual customers.” by *Thansetthakij* on 20 Nov 2008 as quoted:

“เซ็นทรัล ฟู้ด รีเทล” เปิดศึกชิงตลาดกระเช้าปีใหม่ ชูแนวคิด Customer Centric ส่งกระเช้าสีม่วง-ชมพู จับกลุ่ม เมโทรเซ็กชวล กระเช้าวิญูส สำหรับคนรักสิ่งแวดล้อม ในแค็ตตาล็อก รวมกว่า 100 แบบ พร้อมโปร โมชันพิเศษทั้งผ่อน 0% และให้ส่วนลดสูงสุด 25% (28)

“Central Food Retail” has jumped into the fight of the new year’s basket market with their customer-centric strategy. *Violet-pink baskets aim to target metrosexuals* while reusable baskets target customers who are environment-conscious. In the catalogue, there are more than 100 styles with various promotions such as 0% interest and 25% discount (28).

Although the article did not explicitly mention that they targeted gay customers, other press described using violet and pink baskets as a marketing practice to target gay customers or “violet people.” In the article “‘สีม่วง’ สวานกระแส ธุรกิจรวมเจาะตลาด” or

“‘Violet’ market is growing against economic recession. Many business sections are trying to break in.” by *Thai Post* on 22 Feb 2009 is quoted:

หลังจากนั้น ห้างค้าปลีกอย่างบริษัท เซ็นทรัล ฟู๊ด รีเทล จำกัด ผู้ดำเนินธุรกิจซูเปอร์มาร์เก็ต ภายใต้แบรนด์เซ็นทรัล ฟู๊ดฮอลล์, ท็อปส์ มาร์เก็ต, ท็อปส์ ซูเปอร์ และท็อป เดลี่ ก็ออกมา เขย่าวงการค้าปลีก เปิดตัวกระเช้าของขวัญสีม่วง สีชมพู เพื่อเจาะตลาดชาวสีม่วงโดยเฉพาะ ในช่วงปลายปี 2551 ที่ผ่านมา (7)

After that, Central Food Retail Co., Ltd., a retail business running supermarkets under the brand Central Food Hall, Tops Market, Tops Super and Top Daily, surprised the retail sector by launching violet-pink baskets to especially target violet people at the end of 2008 (7).

In addition, the conjunction “and-และ” is used to imply a similarity between metrosexuals and gay men in terms of lifestyles, social and financial status which are valuable for the business sector. According to the above mentioned news article, the example can be quoted as:

ปัจจัยสำคัญก็คือ กลุ่มเมโทรเซ็กชวลและเกย์ถือเป็นกลุ่มที่มีศักยภาพทั้งเรื่องรายได้ไลฟ์สไตล์ การใช้ชีวิต และพฤติกรรมด้านการเงิน ซึ่งอยู่ในระดับที่น่าสนใจ ส่งผลให้บรรดานักการตลาดต่างปรับแผนธุรกิจเพื่อแย่งชิงกลุ่มเป้าหมายโดยเฉพาะ ด้วยการสร้าง gimmick ของสินค้าให้โดนใจ หลังจากเห็นความสำเร็จของผู้ประกอบการบางรายที่กล้ากระโดดออกมาเปิดตัวสินค้าเพื่อเจาะกลุ่มชาวสีม่วง...(7)

*The important and interesting factors for the group of metrosexuals and gay men are the potential in terms of purchasing power, lifestyles and financial behavior. This has caused marketers to adjust their business strategy to seize the targeted group by creating gimmicks to catch their attention after seeing the success of many entrepreneurs who dared to publically launch products for a group of violet people (metaphorically homosexuals) (7).*

The metrosexual identity in consumer culture provides the opportunity for gay men to blend into the mainstream market. Because the term “gay market” or “gay customer” has not been widely used in mass media, the verbal and visual construction

of them as potential male consumers is implied by the euphemisms used to describe the “gay market”. The identity construction of the term “metrosexual” can reflect a Thai gay niche market influenced by consumerism and capitalism, which can facilitate individual needs and construct individual identities. Verbal texts used to describe the qualifications and characteristics of metrosexual are similar to the stereotype of gay men as marketer’s dream consumers. The words and phrases, for example, are “ชนชั้นกลาง” literally ‘middle-class persons’, “มีฐานะ” literally ‘above standard financial status’, “มีการศึกษาดี” literally ‘well-educated’, “การงานมั่นคงรายได้สูง” literally ‘stable occupation with high incomes’, “คนเมือง” literally ‘urban men’, and “ผู้บริโภคที่มีกำลังซื้อสูง” literally ‘consumers with high purchasing power’. The refered texts suggest that wage labor and professional work are crucial for metrosexuals to construct their identity in consumer culture through their purchasing power. Consumerism promises the liberty of individuals who can pursue a better financial and social status through wage labor and high education. As a result, metrosexual is an identity which individuals can project and express through their commodity consumption. However, commodity consumption does not actually guarantee the visibility or positive representation of gay men in Thai consumer culture or in Thai society. Because of the financial and social status of metrosexuals as middle class urban men who have purchasing power, this identity cannot be claimed by every gay man. Gay men with lower income, especially working class, are totally left behind and unrecognized in this implication.

When the term “metrosexual” can be implied or related to a sexual identity, social norms, values and expectations are used to construct the implications of the term which leads to negative connotation of the term. The following section will reveal the influence of social and cultural factors toward the construction of the term apart from the economic factor constructing gay men as potentially valuable customers.

#### **4.2.3 A negative connotation as through social criticism**

While metrosexuals may be perceived as potentially valuable customers, a negative connotation is constructed through the implication that metrosexuals are closeted gay men, who are portrayed as a threat to heterosexuals. Social criticism

towards closeted gay men who use the term “metrosexual” to hide their real sexual identity can be found in news articles, a film and an advertisement. Verbal and visual texts have been constructed on this negative stereotype of gay men. Social criticism towards gay men who claimed themselves to be “metrosexuals” has subsequently caused a negative perception of people towards the term.

The release of Pankorn Boonyachinda’s album “Metro-Sexual” in 2006 began the negative connotation of the term “metrosexual”. This album is usually mentioned in the press as the failure to introduce the term “metrosexual” into mass media. The image of a pop rock singer, Pankorn Boonyachinda or Dang, from a set of his promotional pictures of his album titled “Metro-Sexual” as shown in figure 11, the represented participant functions as “Carrier” whereas his blond hair, sunglasses, black corset and stylish white shirt function as “Possessive Attributes” which create the visual concept of fashion. In addition, the straight lines of straps against the white color of his shirt lead the viewer’s eyes down to the black corset, which creates a sense of a highly eroticised, indeed fetishised, piece of clothing sexualised femininity. Dang gazes at the viewer as if he demands the viewer to look at his new image as metrosexual or challenges the viewer to criticize it. The same picture was later used in the news article “Blame on *Metrosexual*: Pankorn lead a breed of gay men” published in *Thai Post* on 11 January 2006, as shown in figure 12 and 13, in which the journalist played with the singer’s name “Pankorn” and *Pan-gay* which literally means a breed of gay men in order to make fun of his name and his new look similar to gay men. The composition of text and picture can be viewed as the information value, “Given” and “New”. The picture is placed as the left element in a polarized composition in which the singer is the negative “Given” while the verbal text is the “New”. The criticism from a group of gay activists that *Metro-Sexual* might make people misunderstand metrosexuals and prevent gay men from daring to come out of the closet. Consequently, they called for the singer to act more responsibly.

Apart from the visual text used as a negative “given”, verbal texts were constructed as social criticism against the singer as a closeted gay man who used the

term to hide his sexual identity, claiming it was a threat to heterosexuals and society as quoted:

หลังจากมีเสียงฮือฮาถึงรูปแบบอัลบั้มใหม่ของ ดั่ง-พันกร บุญญะจินดา ที่ออกมาในรูปแบบเมโทร-เซ็กชวล ชูลักษณะความเปิดกว้างทางความคิดของเพศชาย การแต่งกาย การรักสวยรักงาม คุณแต่ตัวเองมากเกินไป ทำให้สังคมมองภาพของดั่ง-พันกร อยู่ในกลุ่มของบุคคลที่มีความหลากหลายทางเพศ หรือเป็นเพศที่สาม หลายฝ่ายจึงวิพากษ์วิจารณ์ถึงความไม่เหมาะสมในการนำเสนอตัวเองและผลงานออกทางสื่อต่างๆ โดยล่าสุดในมิวสิกวิดีโอเพลงเจ็บ (มาก... มาก) ซึ่งออกอากาศมาตั้งแต่เดือนธันวาคม 2548 ได้นำเสนอภาพที่สื่อว่าเป็นกลุ่มชายรักชายนอนอยู่ด้วยกันบนเตียง (3)

After receiving much criticism about the new representation of Pankorn Boonyachinda or Dang in his album in which he is presented as a metrosexual who has independent thinking and pays too much attention to his appearance, people have judged him, based on his looks as a person in a sexually diverse group or a third sex. Many social organizations have criticized how he inappropriately presented himself and his works in media. Especially, his music video “Jeb Mak Mak”, which has been on air since December 2005, can be interpreted as a group of chai-rak-chai (homosexuals) (3).

นายทธี ธีระโรจนพงษ์ หัวหน้ากลุ่มเกย์การเมือง กล่าวในประเด็นนี้ว่า อยากบอกว่าปัญหานี้มีมานานแล้ว เมื่อก่อนคนมองว่าผู้ชายเรียบร้อยเป็นเกย์ เป็นตุ๊ด สมัยนี้คนก็มักจะมองว่าคนที่ เป็นเมโทรเซ็กชวล เป็นเกย์ เป็นตุ๊ด เช่นเดียวกัน ทั้งนี้เพราะมีพวกเกย์ที่ไม่ยอมรับตัวเองเอา ชื่อกลุ่มมาอ้าง คนก็เข้าใจผิด ๆ หมด (3)

Nathee Theerarochanapong, a leader of political gay group, mentioned, “This problem has existed for a long time. In the past, people understood that gentle, neat and tidy men are queer or gay. Similar to these days, people see metrosexuals as gay men and queers. This is because there is a group of gay men using this word to hide their sexual identity” (3).



Figure 11 Pankorn Boonyachinda (*Men.mthai Weekly*, 30 August 2010)

**สับแม่โทรเช็กชวล**  
**'พินกร' นำพินรุภย์**

Given



กลุ่มเกย์การเมืองไม่พอใจ "ตั้ง-พินกร" ทำเทปโทรเช็กชวล ทำคนเข้าใจผิด ไม่กล้าเปิดเผยความจริง หวั่นสังคมสับสน กลุ่มเฟียร์ระวังย้าสิทธิส่วนบุคคลต้องรับผิดชอบสังคมด้วย

New

อ่านหน้า 3

Figure 12 Criticism of Metrosexual 'Pankorn', a leader of gayness

(*Thai Post*, 11 Jan 2006)



# 'สับเมโทรเซ็ก ชวนำพันธุเกย์

ไทยโพสต์ • ประณาม "ตั้ง-พันกร" ตัวการทำให้คนเข้าใจผิด มองว่าผู้ชายสำอางเข้าข่ายเกย์-ตุ๊ด แทนนำเกย์ลึบมิวสิกเพลง เจ็บ (มาก...มาก) เสนอภาพยนตร์แอนดรอย์กับบนเตียง ปองบอกชัดเจนไม่ควรปิดบังความเป็นจริง จี้ผู้เกี่ยวข้องจับดาหวั่นสังคมสับสน ด้าน ผอ.กลุ่มเฝ้าระวังทางวัฒนธรรม รับดูอยู่ ชี้ถึงเป็นสิทธิ์ส่วนบุคคลก็ต้องรับผิดชอบต่อสังคมด้วย

หลังจากมีเสียงชื้อฮ้างรูปแบบอัลบั้มใหม่ของ ตั้ง-พันกร บุษยะจินดา ที่ออกมาในรูปแบบเมโทร-เซ็กซวล ชูลักษณะความเปิดเผยทางความคิดของเพศชาย การแต่งกาย การรักษาร่างงาม ดูแล้วตัวเองมากจนเกินไป ทำให้สังคมมองภาพของตั้ง-พันกร อยู่ในกลุ่มของบุคคลที่มีความหลากหลายทางเพศ หรือเป็นเพศที่สาม หลายฝ่ายจึง

พากษ์วิจารณ์ถึงความไม่เหมาะสมในการนำเสนอตัวเองและผลงานออกทางสื่อต่างๆ โดยล่าสุดในมิวสิกวิดีโอเพลงเจ็บ (มาก...มาก) ซึ่งออกอากาศมาตั้งแต่เดือนธันวาคม 2548 ได้นำเสนอภาพที่สื่อว่าเป็นกลุ่มชายรักชายนอนอยู่ด้วยกันบนเตียง

นายณที วีระโรจนพงษ์ หัวหน้ากลุ่มเกย์การเมือง กล่าวในประเด็นนี้ว่า อยากบอกว่าปัญหานี้มีมานานแล้ว เมื่อก่อนคนมองว่าผู้ชายเริ่บหรือเป็นเกย์ เป็นตุ๊ด สมัยนี้คนก็มักจะมองว่าคนที่เป็นเมโทรเซ็กซวล เป็นเกย์ เป็นตุ๊ด เช่นเดียวกัน ทั้งนี้ เพราะมีพวกเกย์ที่ไม่ยอมรับตัวเองแล้วตัวเขาที่ออกมามีอย่าง คนที่เข้าใจกันผิดๆ หมด

"อย่างตั้ง-พันกร นำเสนอแนวเมโทรเซ็กซวล แต่กลับแสดงออกให้เห็นกว่าเหตุ คนดูก็รู้ว่าเป็นอะไร ไม่ต้องเอากลุ่มเมโทรฯ มาบังหน้า คนเข้าใจ

ผิดหมด และขึ้นชื่อว่าป็นศิลปิน เป็นคนของสังคม ความเป็นศิลปินต้องรับผิดชอบต่อสังคม ต่อแฟนเพลง เป็นอย่างไรก็ควรนำเสนอในแบบของเรา ไม่ใช่แอบแฝงไปวันๆ กลายเป็นพวกหลอกลวงสังคม คนเข้าใจผิดหมด อย่างในมิวสิกวิดีโอเพลงเจ็บ (มาก...มาก) มีภาพชายรักชายของบนเตียง นอนโกลนกับบนเตียง ภาพมันสื่อออกมาชัด อย่างนี้ต้องการจะบอกอะไร คนเด้ามองก็รู้ ในฐานะที่เราเป็นศิลปินทำอย่างนี้จะส่งผลไปถึงสังคม อย่างแรกคนจะมองว่ากลุ่มเมโทรฯ ก็คือพวกเกย์ กลุ่มผู้ชายเริ่บหรือกลายเป็นเกย์ ที่สำคัญผู้หญิงก็จะไม่ค่อยสนใจในผู้ชายกลุ่มนี้ ระวังว่าจะเกย์ไม่หมด แล้วก็เกิดปัญหา หรือคนที่เป็นเมโทรฯ ก็อาจจะเบี่ยงเบน หรือเข้าใจว่าตัวเองเป็นเกย์ไปแล้วในที่สุด"



ด้าน นางลลิตา ตั้งสุภทัย ผู้อำนวยการกลุ่มระวังทางวัฒนธรรม กล่าวหาว่า ตอนนี้องค์กรเฝ้าระวังก็เฝ้าอยู่ ได้ฟังบทสัมภาษณ์ของคุณตั้งที่ออกมาในลักษณะสุดโต่ง ซึ่งทุกคนมองว่าเป็นสิทธิส่วนบุคคล เป็นเสรีภาพ แต่เท่าที่สังเกตดู มันอาจจะมีลักษณะช่วยสังคม ทำให้สังคมเกิดการยอมรับมากขึ้น และก็ทำให้สังคมว่าอะไรเป็นอะไร จะเป็นอะไรกันแน่ เข้าใจว่าคุณต้องไปอยู่ ไปเรียนเมืองนอกมา เคยชิน แต่ก็กับเรื่องของวัฒนธรรมมันขัดแย้งกัน และถึงแม้จะเป็นสิทธิส่วนบุคคล แต่ที่สำคัญในฐานะที่เป็นคนของสังคม ควรจะต้องกลั่นกรองสิ่งที่จะนำเสนอออกมาด้วย เพราะจะมีผลกระทบต่อสังคม อย่างเรื่องมิวสิกที่นำเสนอก็ไม่ได้ผิดอะไร แต่ถามว่าเหมาะสมหรือไม่ สังคมไทยยอมรับแล้วหรือ ยกบอกว่าคุณจะคิดจะทำอะไรก็ควรจะเซฟๆ หน่อย เราเป็นคนของสังคม ต้องรับผิดชอบต่อสังคม เพราะภาพที่ออกมาจะมีผลต่อเด็ก เขาชอบอยากให้เป็นหนึ่งในผู้ช่วยเหลือเด็กๆ จะดีกว่าอย่าทำให้สังคมรุ่นเยาว์ไม่มากกว่านี้เลย.

Figure 13 Criticism of Metrosexual 'Pankorn', a leader of gayness

(Thai Post, 11 Jan 2006)

Later, the album "Metro-sexual" is usually used as a case study which failed to introduce the term "metrosexual". This caused marketers to change their marketing strategies for products to target metrosexuals. The article "เมโทร เซ็กซวล สูญพันธุ์! , Metrosexual is extinct!" in *Manager Weekly* on 21 January 2008 is an example of this point as quoted:

ผลจากอัลบั้มของคัง ในชุดนั้นมันแรงมากจนทำให้คนเข้าใจว่า เมโทร เซ็กชวล เป็นเกย์ ทำให้จากวันนั้นถึงวันนี้ไม่มีสินค้าไหนกล้าหยิบกระแสนี้มาใช้อีก ส่วนที่บอกว่าสินค้าของตนเป็นของคนกลุ่มนี้ก็ปรับตัวบ้างแล้ว... คอลัมน์หนึ่งของหนังสือพิมพ์สยามรัฐ เมื่อวันที่ 29 พฤศจิกายน 2548 รายงานว่า “คัง” มาในลุคที่แปลกตายิ่ง เขาถูกปรุจโนมออกมาสภาพหนุ่มผมทอง สวมแว่นตา ใส่เชิ้ตสีขาว แล้วสวมทับด้วยเสื้อหนังสีดำ กับกางเกงลายทางสีขาว-ดำ ดูดีมีสไตล์เป็น “เด็กแนว...เมโทร” ที่ขำขำก็คือถ้า “คัง” ถอดเสื้อเชิ้ตตัวในออก ใส่แต่ชุดหนังสีดำ เขาก็จะกลายเป็น “คัง-สายเดี่ยว” (B2)

The feedback against Dang’s album “Metro-Sexual” was so extreme that people think that metrosexuals are gay. From the time that album appeared until now, no products have dared to use the metrosexual trend for marketing...A column of the Siam Rat on 29th November 2005 reported that Dang’s new look is so strange in that he was transformed to a blond haired man wearing eye glasses, white shirt, black leather jacket and black and white striped pants. It was a good metrosexual look. It was funny that he will be Dang in a spaghetti strap if he took off his leather jacket (B2).

As mentioned in news articles, discussion of the social criticism of Pankorn Boonyachinda or Dang’s music video is unavoidable. Figures 14 and 15 are part of the visual texts from his solo album “Metro-Sexual” music video. This is the cause of negative public criticism towards the way he connected the term “metrosexual” with homosexuality. In Figure 14, he is represented as the “Carrier”, a metrosexual while his clothing and grooming are possessive attributes of what a metrosexual should be. This corresponds with his album’s title “Metro-Sexual”. His lyrics are about the feelings of broken-hearted people whereas the visual text is constructed as stories of different broken-hearted couples including the relationships between opposite sex and same sex partners. Although there are not any sexual scenes in which the viewer has to interpret the relation of the represented participants through their gestures or compositions in the frame similar to Figure 14, the activists mentioned above still criticized the singer’s attempt to promote the term “metrosexual” as a way for closeted gay men to disguise their sexual identity.



Figure 14 Chep (Mak..Mak) Music Video (Youtube, 2005)



Figure 15 Chep (Mak..Mak) Music Video (Youtube, 2005)

In the same year that social criticism against Dang appeared, a film “Metrosexual” was released and was another important communicative event which explicitly emphasized that metrosexuals are actually closeted gay men and therefore a threat to heterosexuality. A tendency for too well-groomed men to be gay is not only used as a theme in the film “‘kəŋ 'tɕa 'ni: 'kàp 'ʔi: 'ʔəp, แก๊งชะนีกับอีแอบ” or “Metrosexual” but also used in the advertisements for the movie. In Figure 16, all represented participants in the picture gaze at the viewer as a “demand” to watch or to find out something. Apart from gazing, their facial expressions reflect their different

emotions such as amused, suspicious or disgusted. Furthermore, a represented participant at the bottom right hand side demands with her ‘fingers to lip’ gesture that the viewer be quiet or keep a secret. All equipment they carry and their gestures create vector lines to a represented participant behind the closed door. The pink underwear is meant to be salient as a symbolic attribute. The pink color as a feminine symbol and its shape create an opposition to the wearer who should be masculine. The pink underwear is also used to contrast another symbolic attribute which is a sign on the top of the door. The men sign and pink underwear can be understood by the information value of top and bottom, “Ideal” and “Real”. The sign represents the expectation from society about how men should act in public while the pink underwear symbolizes what the man behind the door would like to be, or the “real” him which is feminine. As for verbal texts, being homosexual or a closeted gay man has to be suspected through words and the phrases used, such as “ภารกิจจับแอบ” which literally means “the mission of arresting a closeted gay man”. The words “ชะนี” and “อ๊อบ” in the title of the film “ก่ญ '๓๕ 'นึ: 'kàp '?: 'εp, แก็งชะนึกับอ๊อบ” are slang terms used among the Thai gay subculture. Both are used to imply that the status of speakers who have already come out of the closet is higher than women and closeted gay men. Using Thai gay slang terms as a title also reflects the authority of heterosexuals as the majority who can pick up the subculture elements to be used in the mainstream. Therefore, slang terms as a tool to be used by a subculture to be secretly understood cannot be under the control of that group. The phrase “เตรียมตัวจับต่อมแตัว”, which literally means “Prepare yourself to detect gay signals”, can imply that closeted gay men have to be inspected to reveal their real sexual identity or that being closeted can be a threat to heterosexuals. In addition, the use of stereotype means his medically suspect according to prevailing medical norms of pathologistng homosexuality.

Another promotional poster of the film is the poster titled “สาว ๓ คู “แอบ”” or “How to investigate “a closeted gay man”” reflecting gender expectations of men and the stereotypes of gay men. The represented participant is similar to other figures of metrosexuals. However, the verbal text anchors the meanings of appearance to that of closeted gay men. Figure 17 plays with the stereotype of gay men through their

physical appearance which is against the usual societal expectation of men. In the analytical process, the participant is represented as the “Carrier” which is a closeted gay man who hides his sexual identity under the term “metrosexual”, while possessive attributes as stereotypical characteristics of gay men through physical appearance are his hair cut, facial skin, trimmed eye brows, glossy lips, look of secretly judging women and adoring men, and the way gay men dress and behave. The list portraying how to investigate whether a man is gay or not describes what is different from a stereotypical male appearance. Moreover, the verbal text implies the femininity of the represented participant.



Figure 16 Metrosexual Poster (Wikipedia, 29 August 2010)



Figure 17 Metrosexual Poster (Online-station, 28 July 2006)

In the film “kəŋ 'təa 'ni: 'kàp '?: 'ʔəp” (แก๊งซันนี่กับอีแอบ) or the English title “Metrosexual”, broadcast media uses more visual elements to convey the implications

instead of just anchoring the meaning with verbal texts. The viewer needs to decode visual artifacts based on their cultural and social background knowledge in order to understand intended messages from the producer. The word “Metro Guys” used with a meaning similar to the term “metrosexual” appears in Figure 18 which is a shot from the beginning of the film. This scene is the male model contest judged by celebrities. Male models can be seen as Subordinates under the term “metro guys” or “metrosexuals” as Superordinate. In Figure 19, represented participants are framed on the left side of the picture. On the right hand side, there is a restroom sign and an arrow as a vector leading the eyes of the viewer to the represented participants. The sign symbolizes heteronormativity in which there are 2 genders; male and female. The framing disconnects the represented participant from the sign. There are two of them in the frame with familiar body language suggesting sexual relationship which is against the sexual norms of society. In the storyline as verbal text, a man in a black suit portrays the celebrity who is a judge of this contest and a married man, while a young man is a contestant. In Figure 20, a represented participant, who is one of the main female characters in the movie shown in the same frame, exhibits a facial expression which can only be interpreted as shock and/or disgust about same sex relationships. The space of framing in Figure 20 can also represent the majority in society and the marginalized group of homosexuals.



Figure 18 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)



Figure 19 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)



Figure 20 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)

This film is about a group of female friends who try to find out the truth about whether a man who is due to marry their close friend is a closeted gay man. The main male character, Kong, is portrayed as a man who pays much attention to his physical appearance and knows beauty and cooking tips. He is a suspicious figure because his sexual orientation is unclear, and the group of women in this film make it their mission to gather evidence to support their belief that he is actually gay. In figure 21 and 22, the mirror is used as a symbolic attribute for the represented participant, Kong. It is used to emphasize the narcissistic characteristic of the metrosexual. Femininity or women-like elements can be found in both pictures. In Figure 21, framing of a couple in the mirror creates sexual ambiguity. The makeup brush, usually a tool for women, is presented as a tool which can be used by a man. The dialogue in this shot includes a man acting like a beauty guru, advising which color is suitable for the main female character. The well



arranged cosmetics in figure 22 are symbolic attributes which represents the femininity of the represented participant.



Figure 21 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)



Figure 22 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)

While the main male character is portrayed as sexually ambiguous, the binary opposition of masculinity vs femininity and straight vs gay is constructed throughout the film. Bee or Brother Bee is a flight attendant and a friend of a woman in the group. He is an openly gay man and women in the group ask for his advice on how to detect a closeted gay man. The stereotype of feminine identified gay men is portrayed in the film through his character. In Figures 23 and 24, the gesture and expression make Bee similar to women in the group. In a classification process, Bee and women are Subordinates of the class of “femininity” in a Convert Taxonomy. This creates the sense of “us”. The binary opposition of straight and gay men can also be found in the visual and verbal elements of the list on how to detect closeted gay men. Figures 25 and 26 are examples of the list, and show how to find out who is gay through their gestures.

In this scene, Bee assumes that there is a gay man in a group of men. While a group of men is passing their table, he shouts to warn that group that there is gum on the floor. Bee tells two main female characters to compare the instinctive responses of straight and gay men. Figure 25 represents how straight men are supposed to act whereas Figure 26 represents how a gay man acts. This stereotype is based on the assumption that gay men are feminine. In Figure 26, a gay man's action is compared with a woman's action. Consequently, they are Subordinates of the class of "femininity".



Figure 23 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)



Figure 24 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)



Figure 25 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)



Figure 26 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)

Gay men or closeted gay men are not only compared with women to reflect femininity but also negatively compared with straight men as the ideal figures. The male characters which are paired up with the female characters of the group are portrayed through different characteristics and different ages as Subordinates of the class of “an ideal straight man”. Different male characters include an artistic man, a leader, a successful business man and a breadwinner as shown in Figure 27. In the analytical process, their clothes as possessive attributes depict the simple and unfashionable look of straight men as the Carrier. This constructed visual text is used to compare with Kong, the main character who has a questionable sexual identity. In the textual and compositional process, Kong claims to be a metrosexual, who pays much attention to his appearance: the use of an oil clear sheet to fix his oily face in Figure 28, is placed as comparison with straight men. Kong is placed on the right hand side as “New” which is problematic whereas Aof, a photographer, is placed on the left as “Given” with the characteristic appearance of a straight man familiar to the viewer. Similar to Figures 25 and 26, Figure 29 is a shot from the scene in which Bee would like to detect whether Kong is gay or not by using the stereotypical gay men’s gesture. He says that health of people can be seen in the nails so he can find out how Kong reacts when trying to see his nails. Aof is again used as the ideal and the standard of straight men to juxtapose the strangeness in Kong. In Figure 30, both represented participants gesturing the same way are Subordinates of the class of “femininity”.

Although the stereotype of gay men as feminine is portrayed by Bee, a flight attendant, a masculine gay man, Pat, is also portrayed in this film. In analytical process,



Figure 27 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)



Figure 28 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)



Figure 29 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)



Figure 30 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)

possessive attributes and symbolic attributes are used with the character Pat for the viewer to foreshadow that he is actually a masculine gay man. Visual elements of a masculine gay man are not easily presented so possessive attributes and symbolic attributes are used to construct this character. Possessive attributes of the Carrier as masculine gay men in Thai gay subculture in Figures 31 and 32 are the muscular figure and tight outfit of Pat. However, the pink color of his polo shirt symbolizes femininity or gayness. Framing is also an important visual element that should be interpreted in Figures 31 and 32. The narrowed framing can be interpreted as detachment of the represented participants from normality or a normal relationship. In addition, their relationship has to be kept private or secret. In this sense, the restroom symbolizes the mentioned interpretation. The represented participants are objects to be examined or investigated as shown through the camera angle as the eyes of someone in these pictures. In contrast to the restroom scene, Figure 33 is from the scene which Kong is going to marry a friend of main female characters. Pat shows up to remind him of their sexual relationship in boarding school and ask him to reconsider what his sexual identity is. According to symbolic attributes, Kong and Pat are surrounded by the bride and her friends who form a circle or globe-like form to symbolize the world of heterosexuality which judges homosexual relationships as strange or the “other”. Culturally, the wedding as circumstance of this scene also makes a couple of men holding each other more salient, strange and humiliating. This scene emphasizes the notion, constructed throughout the film, that a gay man or a closeted gay man can be a threat to heterosexuals and the family institution, since marriage is the beginning point of social reproduction.

The verbal and visual construction of the term “metrosexual” as a closeted gay man which is a threat to heterosexuals is not only found in the press and a film but also in a TV advertisement broadcasted to more audiences as a free medium.

In the genre of TV advertisements as visual texts, a 2007 KTC-I am advertisement is an example of using visual texts in which marketers tend to use the sexual ambiguity of metrosexuals to implicitly target a group of gay men. This turns out



Figure 31 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)



Figure 32 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)



Figure 33 *Metrosexual* (GMM Tai Hub, 13 July 2006)

to be problematic. In the article “ตะอํ 'l'uk 'bàt 'p'hù: 'tɕ'h'a:j 'wǎ:n 'k'h'e: 't'hi: 'si:” (เจาะลึก บัตรผู้ชายหวาน “เคทีซี”), which literally means “Insight of KTC card for Sweet Men”, the management team claimed that the credit card KTC-I am which targeted the lifestyle of metrosexuals did not specify only a gay market. Based on the TV advertisement of the credit card “KTC-I am”, visual elements construct the sexual ambiguity of a represented participant. In Figures 34.1 and 34.2, a woman is used to emphasize the masculinity of

represented participant. The circumstance in Figure 34.1 suggests heteronormativity. The represented participants framed by people as couples in the bar represent the norm of heterosexual couples. Accepted sexuality in society is implied by Figure 34.2. Apart from a female participant, boxing as symbolic attributive of masculinity is presented in Figure 34.3. As for symbolic suggestive process, the color tone of those 3 shots is almost black and white which create the sense of suspiciousness towards the represented participants and low modality which reduces the level of the truth.

The producer of this advertisement not only uses a symbolic attributive process to create masculinity but also femininity based on a metrosexual's characteristics. In Figure 34.4, the actor's satisfied gesture to his reflection in the mirror symbolizes his narcissism which is a characteristic of a metrosexual who pays a lot of attention to his physical appearance. The earrings in Figures 34.5 and 34.6 represent femininity as well as a symbol of gay subculture. In addition, well-arranged shirts behind the represented participant in Figure 34.7 are used in a symbolic suggestive process to relate to the characteristic of a metrosexual passion for fashion.

In Figure 34.8, based on the information value of top and bottom, a pink orchid may symbolize a feminine "metrosexual" as "Ideal" while a snake may symbolize the "Real" which means that men should act straight, or that metrosexuals could be dangerous as a snake. Homosexuality is visually represented in Figures 34.9, 34.10, 34.11 and 34.12 at the ending of this TV advertisement. A sauna scene in Figure 34.9 is a symbol suggestive of a bathhouse for gay men where they can cruise for sexual partners. In Figure 34.10, a muscular naked figure is sexually presented in the sauna scene. The vector created between male represented participants in Figures 34.9, 34.10 and 34.11 by the bending head to talk of a participant in the sauna and the glance of a represented participant to another male participant presents the sexual ambiguity of the main represented participant who may not be straight. The color tone used in the public scene can symbolize the represented participant as a threat. This can be interpreted that the metrosexual is a closeted gay man who can be a threat to all female heterosexuals.

It is not only the gesture of the female represented participant at the end of the ad that reveals her doubt, but the verbal text narrated by a female voice also shows suspiciousness towards the represented participant who can be a threat to her as a heterosexual. The voiceover verbal text can be translated as:

“Who is the real you?/ What we see is probably not what we think./It’s so different./He is not like the same person./If that’s all you, then who is this man?”

Although the aim of the producer may be to target both straight and gay men who have a metrosexual lifestyle, the limitation of visual texts may not convey that purpose as clearly as verbal texts that are similar to some used in news articles. Consequently, the aim to use sexual ambiguity to include both straight and gay customers or to implicitly target gay turned out to be problematic and the criticized by the public.



Figure 34.1 KTC-I am- TV ad



Figure 34.2 KTC-I am TV ad





Figure 34.3 KTC-I am TV ad



Figure 34.4 KTC-I am TV ad



Figure 34.5 KTC-I am TV ad



Figure 34.6 KTC-I am TV ad



Figure 34.7 KTC-I am TV ad



Figure 34.8 KTC-I am TV ad



Figure 34.9 KTC-I am TV ad



Figure 34.10 KTC-I am TV ad



Figure 34.11 KTC-I am TV ad



Figure 34.12 KTC-I am TV ad

Similar to doubt about metrosexual sexuality represented by a female represented participant in a KTC-I am advertisement, some news articles also reflected the concern of heterosexuals's social perception or criticism towards men who claimed to be metrosexuals, although those articles assure readers that metrosexuals are straight men. The article “ใครว่า ‘เมโทรเซ็กชวล’ ไม่ใช่ชาย 100%, Who says ‘Metrosexual’ is not 100% straight?” in *Khom Chad Laeuk* on 15 Nov 2008: 27 is an example of this point as quoted:

เมื่อพูดถึงผู้ชายที่ใส่ใจการดูแลตัวเองเป็นพิเศษ คนทั่วไปมักนึกว่าไม่ใช่ผู้ชายทั้งแท่ง ทำเอาบรรดาสาว ๆ ไม่อยากที่จะฝากชีวิตกับหนุ่มแบบนี้ เหตุนี้ในดอตคอมออนไลน์ สำหรับหนุ่มเมโทรฯ อย่าง [www.groomingnews.com](http://www.groomingnews.com) จัดกิจกรรม “เมโทรเซ็กชวล เมล ออฟ เดอะ เยียร์ (2008)” เพื่อเผยภาพลักษณ์และมุมมองที่ชัดเจนในวิถีชีวิตของหนุ่มเมโทรเซ็กชวล รวมทั้งเปลี่ยนทัศนคติของคนทั่วไปว่าหนุ่มเมโทรเซ็กชวลก็คือผู้ชายทั้งแท่งเหมือนผู้ชายทั่วไป...ระหว่างการคัดเลือกนั้นสร้างความตกใจไม่น้อยเมื่อนั่งในสออบผู้แข่งขันได้ถอนตัวกะทันหันในวันถ่ายภาพประชาสัมพันธ์โครงการ เนื่องจากเกิดความเข้าใจผิดคิดว่ากิจกรรมนี้จัดขึ้นเพื่อชาวสีม่วง (27)

When talking about men who pay much attention to their appearance, *people tend to think that they are not straight. Women do not actually want to rely on them.* With that reason, an online magazine for metrosexual *Groomingnews.com* held the event “Metrosexual Male of the Year 2008” in order to reveal the clear

image and view of metrosexual's lifestyle. It aimed to change people's attitudes toward metrosexuals to understand that they are straight men (27).

It is not only male heterosexuals who thought that metrosexuals are closeted gay men, as mentioned in above article, but female heterosexuals also reflected their concern in the article “Metrosexual “ผู้ชาย สายพันธุ์ใหม่”, Metrosexual, “a new breed of man”” in *Manager Daily* on 31 Oct 2006. It states that “I don't think that he is straight and I can't stand for it. It's too much for me. If he uses cosmetics to conceal his dark circles for party, it is probably ok. If he uses every day, it is frightening” (34).

The article “โจควอน” ผู้ชาย “เมโทรเซ็กซวล”, “Jo Kwan”, a “Metrosexual”” in *Manager Weekly* on 3 Aug 2013 is another example of how the term “metrosexual” is used as a synonym for closeted gay men, who the public needs to investigate in order to disclose their real sexual preference. The headline in Figure 35 starts with the name of a represented participant, who is a member of a Korean boy band, along with the words “metrosexual man”. Literally, the singer is metrosexual. The body of the news article contains the gossip that he is probably gay because it was reported that he went to a party at a well-known gay discotheque in Bangkok. However, his fans insisted that he is straight and just a metrosexual who pays much attention to his appearance. His picture in the top position is used as the “Ideal” of how a metrosexual should be, but images in the bottom position reflect his personal life or the “Real” in which he may be gay. The candid shot is usually used to represent “the truth” or the real situation in the news genre. In this Figure, the term “metrosexual” is related to closeted gay men or to a criticized sexual ambiguity of a represented participant. The verbal construction in Figure 35 implies that a represented participant is a closeted gay man, as shown by the quote below:

เช่นเดียวกับดารารายทั่วไป ไอคอลลูกหมูในวงการบันเทิงเกาหลีหลายคนต้องเผชิญกับข่าวลือเรื่องความ “ไม่แมน” และคงไม่มีใครที่โดนขอกล่าวหาเรื่องพวกนี้เท่ากับหนุ่ม “โจควอน” ดาวเด่นแห่งบอยแบนด์เสียดสี 2AM อีกแล้ว...แต่ถึงแบบนั้นแฟน ๆ ของวงโดยเฉพาะที่เกาหลีได้ก็ยืนยันยืนยันว่าหนุ่มคนนี้ “แมนทั้งแท่ง” แม้ล่าสุดจะมีข่าวว่าเขาแทบใช้เวลาว่างมา

เที่ยวบาร์เกย์ในเมืองไทยก็ตาม ...แต่สำหรับกรณีของโจควอนไม่ว่าเขาจะไปเที่ยวบาร์เกย์หรือไม่ เขาก็ยังคงไม่ใช่ชายแท้ที่ดี (par 1)

Similar to other actors in South Korea, many male idols have been subject to gossip about their “unmanliness”. Among those gossiped about, no one is criticized more than Jo Kwan, an outstanding member of 2 AM, the Korean boy band. His fans, especially in South Korea, have insisted that he is straight although it is reported that he usually spends his leisure time partying at gay bars in Thailand... As for the case of Jo-Kwan, whether he went to gay bars or not, he does not look like a straight man (39).

The identity construction of the term “metrosexual” as an identity of closeted gay men is related to the negative representation of homosexuality in Thai mass media. The expression of femininity is perceived as the stereotype of *kathoey*. Consequently, the identity of “metrosexual” as closeted gay men is visually constructed on the stereotype of *kathoey* or effeminate gay men. Effeminate gay men are usually portrayed as comic characters in mass media, especially in comedy. Therefore, they are perceived as shameful in Thai society. For instance, the character *Bee* in the film “Metrosexual” is another example of how the mass media has reproduced the stereotype of *kathoey* or effeminate gay men. The composition where *Bee* is placed among a group of main female characters visually constructs the similarity of the figure to a woman. He is a guru expert in how masculine the character *Kong* is by comparing him to straight men or to the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. It can be interpreted that this character is used to emphasize that being gay must be feminine and the “other” from heterosexual norms. Metrosexuality in this film is depicted as something mysterious or suspicious. As a result, *Bee* is used as a tool by heterosexual females to investigate whether a man claiming to be a metrosexual is gay or not. Another way to view this point is that the “in-between” space cannot exist. People have to choose either masculinity or femininity to identify their genders. Consequently, coming out of the closet is stereotypically perceived as an acceptance of femininity, and they cannot later reclaim their masculinity. The film conveys the implicit message that the characteristics of metrosexuals are feminine and men who express their femininity can be

# “โจควอน”

## ผู้ชาย “เมโทรเซ็กซวล”



โจควอน  
ขวัญใจสาว  
แห่ง 2AM

Ideal

เช่นเดียวกับดารายาวใจ โจควอนหนุ่มในวงการบันเทิงเกาหลีที่หลายคนต้องเผชิญกับข่าวลือเรื่องความ “ไม่แมน” และคงไม่มีใครที่โดนเชื่อกล่าวหาเรื่องพวกนี้เท่ากันพอ “โจควอน” ดาวเด่นแห่งวงบอยแบนด์ชื่อดัง 2AM อีกแล้ว ...แต่ถึงแม้ว่านั่นจะเป็นข่าว โดยเฉพาะที่เกาหลีใต้ก็ยังยืนยันว่าหนุ่มคนนี้ “เล่นทั้งฝั่ง” และล่าสุดจะมีข่าวว่าแฟนเกย์ในวงการบันเทิงบาร์เกย์ในเมืองไทยก็ตาม

หลังเป็นข่าวในชุมชนออนไลน์ในไทยมาพักใหญ่ จนสุดท้ายสาวใจสาวในเกาหลีได้ฟังได้เคยพบการขอลอดคนคนหนึ่งที่เป็นสมาชิกของวงบอยแบนด์ชื่อดัง “โจควอน” เดินทางมาเรียกที่ประเทศไทย ก็มีการมาเยือนบาร์เกย์ชื่อดังในแหล่งเที่ยวยามค่ำคืนอันมีชื่อเสียงของกรุงเทพฯ จึงมีอะไรก็ได้มีการกระหือรือของคนเกย์ออกไปอย่างชัดเจน แต่ทุกคนก็มองต่างกันไปบ้างจะเป็น โจควอน แห่งวง 2AM นี้เอง

ข่าวรุมถามหาดังกล่าวที่เผยแพร่จากทาง Instagram ภายใต้ชื่อทวิตเตอร์ชาวไทยคนหนึ่ง ก็จดจำไอ้ดองชวาทกาหมีได้รายนี้ได้ ซึ่งจะเป็นข่าวรายสัปดาห์ไปแล้ว สำหรับเรื่องความเป็น “เกย์” ของหนุ่มโจควอน ที่พิวพับกับข่าวลือลักษณะนี้บอกตลอด

ด้วยรูปร่างหน้าตา และการแสดงออกในรายการวาไรตี้โชว์ต่างๆ ทั้งที่เห็นแบบนักร้องไอ้ดองชวาทกาหมี หรือแค่ตัวช่วยเสิร์ฟผู้ฟังแบบไม่เอาสายตาดูไรๆ ทำให้แฟนๆ บางส่วนถึงคำขานก็แยกตลอดว่าตกลงแล้ว โจควอน เมาจริงหรือเปล่า?

อย่างไรก็ตามแฟนๆ ส่วนหนึ่งโดยเฉพาะที่เกาหลีใต้ยังคงเชื่อมั่น และยืนยันว่าไอ้ดองชวาทกาหมีแห่ง 2AM คนนี้เป็นผู้ชาย 100% ทั้งด้วยรูปร่างอ้วน กล้ามโต สมชายชาตรี นอกจากนั้นเขาก็ยังสวมบทบาทเป็นสามีของ “กาอิน” แห่งวง Brown Eyed Girls ในรายการ We Got Married ที่เปิดโอกาสให้ดาราดังได้ลองมาใช้ชีวิตกันคู่กันๆ ได้เป็นอย่างดีเหมือนแสดงความรักแบบสมจริงสมจังซึ่งตีความว่าเป็นสามีภรรยาที่จริงจัง แล้วแบบนี้เขาจะเป็นเกย์ไปได้ยังไง แฟนๆ หลายคนจึงยืนยันว่านักร้องหนุ่มขวัญใจเป็น “เมโทรเซ็กซวล” หรือชายแท้ประจำวงการสายรักงามของโทรทัศน์เมืองไทย

ส่วนการมาเที่ยวเมืองไทย แฟนๆ ก็พยายามอธิบายว่าที่คนเหล่านั้น การเที่ยวบาร์เกย์ไม่ใช่เรื่องผิดปกตินะอะไรของชาย



Real

โจควอนหนุ่มเกย์คนแรกๆ ในเมืองไทย

จริงหญิงแท้ โดยเฉพาะสำหรับนักท่องเที่ยวยุคสาวสาวที่มีก๊วนก๊วนบิงตูกบิงตากับสถานที่ในลักษณะนี้อยู่เป็นประจำ บางทีก็พอจะคนไทยอาจจะหาโจควอน ไม่เสียใจโดนถามว่าด้วยซ้ำที่คืออะไร

เมื่อ 2 ปีก่อน โจควอน เคยออกมาปฏิเสธอย่างเปิดเผยว่าเป็นเรื่องเป็นราว ถึงเรื่องที่เขาคนสงสัยว่าเขาจะเป็นเกย์มาแล้ว โดยตอนนั้นเขาไปไกลถึงขั้นว่าเขาอาจจะมีส่วนเกี่ยวข้องกับ ซูฮยอน แห่งวง U-Kiss ด้วย โดยเขาปฏิเสธแบบสั้นๆ ว่าข่าวที่ว่า “โจควอนทั้งเพศ” แต่ล่าสุดดูเหมือนว่าจะไม่สามารถหยุดเรื่องลือเรื่องนี้ได้เลย

เมื่อไม่นานมานี้ยังมีข่าวว่า โจควอนเคยไปใช้ยาเสพติดมาแล้ว อยู่ที่บ้านเกย์ดังในเกาหลีใต้ ซึ่งแฟนๆ ก็ยังปกป้องเหมือนเดิมว่าไม่ใช่เรื่องผิดปกตินะอะไรของหนุ่มแท้ๆ อย่างเขาจะขอไปเปลี่ยนบรรยากาศที่สถานที่เที่ยวของคนรักร่วมเพศบ้าง ตราบเท่าที่คนดีอย่าง ฮีฮีฮี เองก็เห็นแก่ประจัญบานที่บาร์แห่งนั้นเหมือนกัน

Fig 35 Jo Kwan, a Metrosexual (*Manager Weekly*, 3 August 2013)

stereotypically perceived as effeminate gay men. Therefore, metrosexuality cannot be subordinated under the class of “masculinity” but is under “femininity”. In addition, gayness and homosexuality in mass media is only accepted as feminine comic characters who support heterosexual norms and do not threaten heterosexuals as the character Kong does.

In the construction of the “metrosexual” identity, it is obvious that the media attempt to control homosexuality by depicting the portrayal of metrosexual or a closeted gay man as a negative given or the “Real” which is against the “Ideal”. Gayness or homosexuality is portrayed in mass media as an activity which has to be private or away from the heterosexual arena. For example, the composition of Pankorn Boonyachinda in the feature articles is placed as a negative given because of its sexual ambiguity, and because it uses the term “metrosexual” to cover the real sexual identity. Another example is gossip about a member of Korean boy band in Figure 35 which uses the information value of top and bottom; “Ideal” and “Real”. In the top picture as the “Ideal”, Korean boy bands are perceived as heterosexual men who maintain their masculinity through their strong and muscular figures, although their grooming usually reflects femininity. Pictures at the bottom position reveal his real life or the “Real” which reveals his sexual ambiguity when he is shown in candid photos at a gay discotheque. In broadcast media, gay men or closeted gay men are visually constructed in framing and portrayed as a negative given. With this negative stereotype of gay men portrayed by mass media, it is unsurprising that marketers attempt to verbally and visually claim that metrosexuals are straight and not gay in order to protect the reputation of their promoted products while still including men, gay men and closeted gay men implicitly, under the same class of “masculinity”. In addition, marketers pander to homophobia by insisting metrosexuals are straight while including homosexual references as ambiguity in their ads in order to widen the appeal of their products to the lucrative ‘gay baht’.

In Thai culture as “the culture of face and shame”, expressing a gender identity in public as a gay man is not widely accepted. Metrosexuality as an identity of closeted gay men is the reproduction of the notion that being gay is shameful and a threat to society, so gay men use the term “metrosexual” to hide their sexual identity in order to blend into heteronormativity. The verbal and visual construction of this identity reflects that Thai society still has a negative perception and attitude toward other gendered minorities and attempt to force people in society to follow traditional gender values and norms.



In addition, capitalism and industrialization can provide urban spaces separated from family-based businesses, and metrosexuality as an individuals' choice of a lifestyle or sexual identity can be better exercised in a metropolitan arena. In this sense, the construction of metrosexual identity is similar to that of gay men, developing an individual identity constructed in metropolitan areas where gay bars, bathhouses and discotheques are located. A TV advertisement for *KTC-I am* starts with a bird's eye view shot of a big city filled with skyscrapers and presents a lifestyle which can be only exist in a big city, such as hanging out in bars or going to the gym or sauna in Bangkok. Moreover, this implicitly portrays the growth of gay businesses such as fitness centers influenced by gym culture and gay bathhouses in Bangkok. Furthermore, products such as brand name cosmetics, jewelry, and clothes appearing in the ad can be only purchased in the shopping malls of a big city. Urban spaces provide opportunities for gay men to construct their sexual identities away from the social values and traditions controlled by their family and relatives. In the film *Metrosexual*, Kong, the main male character, is portrayed as an example of a closeted gay man who lives away from his family. Based on Chinese traditional culture, Kong is a Chinese Thai man who is expected to marry a woman who can give birth to his children, especially to sons. In the film, he lives in his private luxurious condominium in the city which also implies his high financial status. When the main female characters search for his family background to support a gay stereotype in which a gay man is usually an only son or the youngest son, the viewer finds out that his parents own a restaurant and they are Chinese Thai. Marrying is a pressure placed upon Thai closeted gay men, especially Chinese Thai men who have their duty to carry on their family's reputation and family name to the next generation.

Metrosexuality as an identity of closeted gay men has been constructed in the mass media as a way for closeted gay men to hide their sexual identity and to express their femininity which is unacceptable based on the stereotypes of straight men. In addition, this identity has been verbally and visually constructed as a threat to heterosexuals who have to detect, investigate and criticize closeted gay men who claim to be metrosexuals. Compared to the identity construction of metrosexual as an identity

of potential male consumers, it is ironic that gay men as metrosexuals are probably accepted in economic territory but they may not be culturally and socially accepted. Verbal and visual construction are used as tools to convey the message that fashion and lifestyles cannot be used to hide a sexual identity deviating from cultural and social values and society can uncover the truth one way or another.

The semantic and semiotic shift of the term “metrosexual” in the Thai mass media has been influenced by economic, cultural and social factors. Both positive and negative connotations of the term “metrosexual” are still reproduced in the Thai mass media, in which the positive one that metrosexuals are straight men has been the dominant key marketing practice for men’s products.



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