

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

There is an old saying that health is referred as the most precious treasure. In most countries health is one of the issues that has been discussed since long. According to WHO (“promote gender equality and empower women”, 2014), women empowerment in this era can be done by ensuring their health and giving more health informations. Unfortunately, health information that is given to women sometimes is blurred between health-related messages and appearance-related messages (Conlin et al, 2014, p.1).

Mass media however take a part in blurring health and beauty. Conlin (2014, p.1) finds in mass media, health use to be defined, framed or even examined through appearance. Framing that is done by media is able to shape or even change society’s beliefs, attitude or opinions by emphasizing particular attributes. Unfortunately, the content of media that is represented to consumers are the ones that are the closest relevant to their own interpretation and ideology.

According to Hall (1997, p.183) the concept of representation has taken an important part in the study of culture. It means that representation has connection between meaning and language to culture. Generally, Hall says that representation uses language in order to say something meaningful about

and to represent something meaningfully to other people. Representation of women's body image among society is the result of the process which the meaning is produced by media itself and exchanged between society and their culture. This process involves language, signs and images to represent things which oftentimes appear in media such as magazine and television.

Cashmore (2005, p.108) finds visual images that appear in magazine and television are the most powerful compared than any other forms. The way visual images including women's body image are packaged and represented will leave an important effects on people's mind. Foucault (1995, p.136) argues that women's body has become an object in society that is manipulated, shaped and trained to obey the wants of media industry. This condition can be referred to media's discipline procedure to uncsciously force society, especially women to see their body as ideal as the body that is portrayed in media.

In this era, media is one of preferred sources towards nutrition informations and body shaping rules. Women get exposed and bombarded to the ideal body image frequently. This makes media function as machine that lives in the society to transform and control women's mind (Foucault, 1995, p.138). Media create message as if women's purpose is to look attractive with beautiful bodies in order to provide pleasure and enjoyment to others (Lowe, 2007, p.14). This representation of the ideal women's body image slowly becomes stereotype and acceptable by society especially women.

Kilbourne (2012) perceives women's ideal body image and beauty is getting worse throughout advertising and popular culture. On this point the role of celebrities who appear in various kind of media has become the real representation on how women should look. The Hollywood industry indeed help to create new standard of women's apperance and bodily presentation. They afterward spread to mass audience about the importance of looking good. The way how celebrities appear on television and cover magazines denotes the power of media through technology to conquer women's mindset on the ideal body image (Foucault, 1995, p.138).

Media show female celebrities with well-built figure to wide community. Moreover, fitness industry also participate and collaborate with media in vigorously spreading the new campaign "Strong Is The New Sexy" to society (Isaac Hinds, 2011) . Even MTV UK during 2014 also carrying the same campaign as empowerment message for women (Hunter, 2014). All women suddenly compete to have well-built figure year round such as what is heralded by the campaign which is not good to their body and mind. This phenomena makes women obsessed to the ideal body image that is portrayed through the campaign and begin to raise fat-phobia among women into a new pitch.

Fat-phobia occurs among women because they let mass media to define the standards of beauty and body image ("Fat Phobia And Sexuality Media Essay", 2014) . Unfortunately, women whose body is well-built are over promoted as ideals to be imitated and copied while obese women are

oftentimes under-represented (Himes, S & Thomspen, K, 2012, p.712-718). Epidemiol finds visual media successfully makes women see themselves as too fat and cause them do excessive exercises . Whatever their actual measurements and what they see in the mirror always fails to please them (J, Epidemiol, 2006, p.67-69). This condition slowly might damage psychological and trigger body dissatisfaction among women. This is why women's health issues in magazines exploit this situation as their major contents.

Magazines generally closely related on women. *Women's health* magazine publish articles that focus on what women want to know about health and healthy lifestyle. As a developing sector in media industry, this magazine plays an important role in defining and depicting women's health. *Women's Health* magazine which first established in 2004 claim to make their readers into action, providing both motivation and inspiration for them to make positive changes in life instant ("Women's Health Brand", 2014).

Since its first edition, *Women's Health magazine* has committed to discuss the concept of women's healthy lifestyle. By seeing opportunities of the rising health magazine, *Women's Health* magazine has 13 international editions in 25 countries and has their own readers globally. Start from the early 2014 editions until now, *Women's Health* begin to promote women empowerment. The reason this study uses *Women's Health* magazine because compared with any other similar magazines, this magazine is claimed informative to not just learn about fitness but also nearly everything women need to know about staying healthy (Becky Fox, 2011). Meanwhile, the reason why the writer

chooses US edition because American body ideal has spread to cultures outside of the US (Meyer, H, 2010, p.24). The *Women's Health* magazine seem notice the popularity of “Strong Is The New Sexy” campaign since it appears frequently during Women’s Health US edition in July to December 2014 issues.

The previous researches are Women’s exposure to thin-and-beautiful media images: body image effects of media-ideal internalization and impact-reduction interventions by Yuko Yamamiya et al (Yuko Yamamiya et al, 2005, p.74-80), Korean Female Body Image VS American Female Body Image Represented in The Print Media by Haley Meyer (Meyer, H, 2012), Reality television and its impact on women’s body image by Ayarza Manwaring (Manwaring, A, 2011) and Why Don’t I Look Like Her? The Impact of Social Media on Female Body Image by Kendyl Klein (Klein, K, 2013). The result of those researches is media such as magazine and television give bad impact to women. The way magazine and television provide visual images is significantly proven in increasing the rate of body dissatisfaction and sexual attractiveness among women. However, race, age and cultural background of a woman also play a role to decide how great media can influence her.

This study uses social semiotic to analyze how *Women's Health* magazine US edition represent women’s body image in their July to December 2014 issues where the “Strong Is The New Sexy” campaign is happening over media globally.

## **1.2 Research Question**

- How does the image of women's body is represented in the cover of *Women's Health magazine* US edition during July to December 2014 issues?

## **1.3 Purpose of the study**

- To analyze the representation of the image of women's body in *Women's Health* magazine's cover during July to December 2014 US editions

## **1.4 Limitation of The Study**

The study will focus on the analysis of the body image that is represented in *Women's Health* magazine cover during July to December 2014 US editions.

## **1.5 Significance of The Study**

The writer hopes the reader will enhance knowledge about current issue for example women's body image in media. This study also gives knowledge on how media represent women's body image and serves the way *Women's Health* magazine publish the representation of women's body image during "Strong Is The New Sexy" campaign in their July to December 2014 issues. Moreover, this study will be useful to deepen the readers on how to analyze the text using theory of social semiotic analysis by Kress and Van Leeuwen and SFL theory by Halliday.