

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Everyone pursues the happiness in life through various aspects. Tsabary (2010, p.23) states that people can be happy when they fulfilled their own needs and felt satisfied from within. Lyubomirskyin (2007, p.55) adds that happiness is the experience of joy, pleasure, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one's life was good, meaningful, and worthwhile. In alignment with Lyubomirskyin, Roosevelt (1999, p.34) also adds that happiness was a feeling when you have to be honest to yourself and those around you; a feeling that you have done the best you could both in your personal life and in your work; and the ability to love others. In this sense, happiness can be seen as related to life satisfaction, appreciation of life, moments of pleasure, and the positive experience of emotions.

Happiness from cultural viewpoint is in line with the psychological perspective. It sees happiness as good luck and positive external conditions (Oishi, 2012, p.24). Kesebir & Diener (2008, p. 88) argues that happiness is a goal that people controlled and pursued. Shweder (2003, p.27) adds that culture shapes people's view of life toward desirable, moral and right value. In alignment with this, happiness is the emotional experience that shaped by culture as it responses were socially expressed. In this sense, it can be argued that happiness is a cultural

construction. Happiness as a cultural construction in this case can be perceived for instance on Batakese wedding. It is such happiness when the bride married the groom with the same ethnic group which also Batakese. In marriage, both of the couple are tied in cultural, religious, and socio-psychological value.

The gate to enter a marriage life is a wedding. Wedding is an important life event that binds the love of two people to enter a new journey in their life phase. Back to the concept of happiness in wedding above, wedding is considered as cultural practices as it involves some values, behaviors, and social interactions. These values that the bride and groom share are influenced by their culture of origin. Davis (2000, p.8) perceives wedding as the celebration of a once in a lifetime event, whether it was held as a grand reception for hundreds or an intimate gathering of family and close friends.

A wedding day is the day that has been awaited and prepared. Lauren Metz (2007, p. 3) argues that people have been in doctrines through fairytales and myths since a very young age to find a perfect partner. It sets the expectation for women to find her “prince charming” and vice versa for men to find his “princess”. That affair is celebrated in the form of dream wedding. Dream wedding came from the lavish white wedding of the nineteenth century and was most popular in the Anglo-American Protestant upper and middle class (Shrout, 2010, p. 168). This lavish white wedding then commodified and became a trend by the wedding industry. This trend was shifted in the twentieth century and no longer dominated by Anglo-American Protestant, but it belonged to everyone due to mass production. Dream wedding

also bring about the essence of happily-ever-after concept. This concept also no longer an individual concept, but it belonged to everyone. The happily-ever-after concept was reinforced by Cinderella myth (Olson, 1999, p. 15).

Cinderella myth is a parable that teaches self-reliance, struggle in the face of suffering, and the human's search for love and enlightenment. Cinderella is one of the fairy tales that end in a sacred marriage of a prince and princess. The Cinderella dream is a pivotal metaphor for the wedding industry; *doesn't every girl dream of being Cinderella for a night?* (Kingston, 2004, p.27). This Cinderella dream become commodified by wedding industry. The industry makes new trend every year. There are several trends in wedding every year regarding colors and styles which are changing very quickly, for instance the Emerald color of 2013 that declared by Pantone; the company that known for its Pantone Matching System. Another example of wedding trend was the vintage style that came up with the movie "The Great Gatsby", which was released in May 2013. Other than that, the theme in wedding also changes as well as trend. According to Krishnan (2008, p.12) there was a theme in a wedding to enhance the mood of the event. The theme in a wedding is a component to make the event more memorable, it does not aim to replace the cultural and sacred value of the wedding because the bride and groom still achieve the purpose of the event (Kehrs, 2013, p.21).

Trend and theme are notable things in a wedding industry. It has become a liability for a wedding planner to provide a lot of options and ideas for the concept of wedding. Due to it is an industry then comes a market with the existence of producer

and consumer. The wedding market has take advantage of it. The growth of technology has made the wedding inspiration available in the various forms of media. If we look into several years behind, many people take advantage on printed media, now in digital era wedding industry use the growth of electronic media, in this case is a blog.

Blogs quickly grew powerful and catching the attention of not only readers or consumers, but also advertisers. Website and blog are the examples of the wedding industry's most powerful tool for convincing the engaged couple the things that they might need (Bare, 2007, p. 11). The power of media and advertising shapes the attitudes, behaviors and values of how people view the concept of happiness. Happiness has been a highly sought after commodity since the beginning of time because people want to be happy and we want our happiness to last for a long period of time. In alignment with this, blog can be perceived as an advertisement which contain the commodity or product that they want to sell.

Marriage in Disneyland such as Sandra Dewi's wedding on November 2016 exemplifies this type of commodification. Disney world itself is a vision of a model future city. Disney positioned its amusement park as the happiest place on earth where they try to eliminate all the negative elements and create all the positive elements. In order to visit the happiest place on earth, the visitors have to spend much money from entrance to the park grounds, food and drinks, the rides, all the booths, and the merchandises. This also applied in Sandra Dewi's wedding. According to her wedding planner, Sandra Dewi's wedding reception in Disneyland has spent immense

amounts of money. Back to the concept of Disney World, visitors for a few hours at least consciously or not buy a commodified and temporary moment of artificial happiness (Scherrer, 2014, p. 6). Some part of the amusement park to illustrate how Disney World creates an artificial utopia; the system of control the company uses to influence the behavior of visitors, the post-attraction merchandising areas, the Carousel of Progress, an attraction that Walt Disney designed personally, and the “Fantasmic!” nighttime show. Walt Disney’s vision was to create the most enjoyable, memorable, emotional experience for the audience so that everyone would become customers for life. That is how Disney business works in making money. Therefore every part inside the Disney land is all about dream and imagination.

The similar commodification can also be seen in *Bridestory*. *Bridestory* is an online wedding site which provides various wedding-related information, ranging from vendors of wedding dresses, catering, photography, venues, up to the honeymoon package. *Bridestory* provides a platform that bridges the engaged couples and wedding vendors to meet. It is the case that the writer tried to investigate in this writing; the celebration in a wedding day that fabricated. Besides *Bridestory*, *Weddingku* and *The Bride Dept* also play in this wedding market. Compared to these two sites, *Bridestory* has around five hundred thousand visitors every month. This number of visitor probably influenced from the detail, creative and attractive design of the website, and the updated post. Due to that consideration, this study will analyses the happiness concept that fabricated by *Bridestory*.

This study investigates four (*Sandra Dewi and Harvey Moeis' Dreamy Wedding in Jakarta*, *The Traditionally Edgy Wedding of Kirana Larasati and Tama Gandjar*, *The Romantic and Rustic Wedding of Vania Larissa and Wilson Pesik*, and *Samuel Zylgwyn and Franda's Romantic Pre-wedding Shoot*) out of twenty nine articles that were written in the notable weddings categories. This is chosen due to the most visited article in the notable weddings category. The writer chooses the notable weddings category because this category is the most visited to find inspirations than other category in *Bridestory's* blog. There are four repeated theme in the notable weddings which are dreamy wedding, traditional wedding, rustic wedding, and pre-wedding shoot. Those four chosen articles are the articles with most number of visitors compared to other in the same theme.

Harold Dawson in 2007 examines how the contemporary film such as *Titanic*, *United 93*, and *We are Marshall* depicts real events of human tragedy and imposed on human society. He found that the role of mass media institutions for instances the entertainment industry in the depiction of these tragedies has been to present the tragic spectacle of death as fantastic entertainment. My research also examines how the mass media institutions used the concept of happiness as a product that fabricated. The differences are lie on the topic and data source.

To find out about the development of wedding industry in Indonesia, then the study of strategic analysis of a company in wedding industry by Martin Salim in 2013 is used as the addition reference. He found that *PrincessWedding4U* needs to utilize

its competitive advantage in brand building to position itself in this crowded market. The company has successfully built brand reputation and financial capital throughout its first year of operation. He used the business analysis tools and techniques to generate and evaluate strategic options, while my research is used textual analysis with different data sources compared to him.

To find out about the wedding planners and wedding trend, then the study of future trends in wedding planning is used as the addition reference. *An Assessment of Future Trends in Wedding Planning* that was conducted by Avery Ruonala in 2013 analyses the future trends in wedding planning among selected California wedding planners. She found that all regions in California had similar future wedding trend responses related to “glamorous”, “1920s”, or “vintage” themes. The responses from the wedding planners also showed only a small difference in future wedding trends compared to current trends. She used questionnaire method to fifty wedding planner, while my research is used textual analysis and in-depth interview with both producers and consumers.

This research analyzes the *Bridestory*'s articles blog uses Roland Barthes' semiotics to examine myth represented in the concept of happiness in *Bridestory*'s blog articles. Semiotics is deployed as media texts in this case *Bridestory*'s blog can be perceived as signifying practices that goes beyond the text. I assume that textually *Bridestory* commodifies the happiness in the form of an opulent wedding reception and depicting the prince and princess for a night. *Bridestory* also displayed the utopian world in their blog's articles. The encoding and decoding model of

communication postulated by Stuart Hall is also deployed to examine how the text is produced as well as consumed. This in Donnelly's lens (2001, p.14) is seen as bringing a considerable effect that is media influence the attitude and shape the society's understanding. Due to this, an analysis related to producer and consumer in media consumption is required, particularly the effect of texts towards the readers. I assume that *Bridestory* sells the wedding concept that wrapped in the successful story of the notable wedding celebration and the love story of the couple. The consumer of *Bridestory* defined their concept of happiness on a wedding reception. They are trapped in a dream wedding offered by *Bridestory* in the website.

1.2 Research Question of the Study

Based on the background of the study and the reason for choosing the topic, the study tries to answer these following questions:

1. How the four articles are textually commodified the concept of happiness in marriage in *Bridestory's* blog?
2. How the four articles are encoded the concept of happiness in marriage in *Bridestory's* blog?
3. How the four articles are decoded the concept of happiness in marriage in *Bridestory's* blog?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate:

1. The concept of happiness in marriage is textually commodified in *Bridestory's* blog.
2. The encoding process in the commodification of happiness in *Bridestory's* blog.
3. The decoding process in the commodification of happiness in *Bridestory's* blog.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on four articles blog –*Sandra Dewi and Harvey Moeis' Dreamy Wedding in Jakarta, The Traditionally Edgy Wedding of Kirana Larasati and Tama Gandjar, The Romantic and Rustic Wedding of Vania Larissa and Wilson Pesik, and Samuel Zylgwyn and Franda's Romantic Pre-wedding Shoot.*-- produced by *Bridestory*. These four articles are organized in notable weddings categories on *Bridestory's* website. Those four chosen articles are the representatives from each of wedding theme and the most visited articles in notable weddings category. Besides the chosen articles, this study also focuses on the Editor in Chief as the institution element which has a big role in text production, and fifteen readers of *Bridestory's* blog. They have a role in text consumption.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The researcher hopes this study would be useful for reference study related to happiness in the cultural studies perspective, the development of wedding culture as a trend, and commodification, especially in Jakarta. The result of this research is aimed to give an academic input in media discourse and cultural studies field through a construction of a culture product. This study is also expected to be useful for the readers who are interested in Cultural Studies or Social Science and its aspects.