

Metrosexual : It's Concept and Phenomenon

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Abstract

This paper aims to study about the identities and spaces of cosmopolitanism affected by globalization. The metrosexual was selected as a representative. The library research was used as research methodology. The results show that metrosexual is advancement of globalization in terms of redefining the characteristics and lifestyles of urban man in present. The unique concepts of metrosexual are i) usually man or straight guy, ii) prefers homosexual styles, and iii) live in urban as well as the famous role model – David Beckham. Their uniqueness affected society especially in economics and social aspect as well as powerful consumers and the trend setters for new male type. Islamic perspectives were discussed.

Keywords: Metrosexual Perspectives Conventional, Islamic

Introduction

In the globalization or the main stream, there are many invented words to explain the phenomenon that our global society has facing. This phenomenal have been become visible around the world not only western society but also the developing countries.

As well as in terms of cosmopolitanism, there are many groups of them in modern societies and also some of words have invented to explain phenomenon effected to global society such as the neo-conservative, the technocrats, the generation XY, and one of them is 'metrosexual'.

The word 'metrosexual' has been used in the latest an presidential election in the United State. Some people augured that John Kerry, Democratic presidential candidate,

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was a metrosexual appearance (<http://www.mashet.org/news.asp?id=1724>) as well as once Howard Dean, the American politician, declared himself as a metrosexual. Why this word has been get some attentions from the public?

In order to study the groups of cosmopolitanism as social phenomenon, Muslehuddin, (1999) emphasizes that the study of social change is significant especially it relates to 'social dynamics' for analysis and interpretation of society. He goes on to describe that "the basic unit if analysis was conceived to represent structure and a set of functions" (Muslehuddin, 1999 : 31). As well as doing urban research, Andranocich and Riposa (1993) focuses on "the processes and outcomes of urbanization with the aim of understanding for policy-making purposes and providing a better quality of life for those of us living in urban centers" (p.6). Hence, the study of metrosexual is the one means to understand social dynamics knowing as social factors that may affected to built environment and urban planning. Furthermore, the realization of this object can be used to promote the diversity of modern society in addition to increase the social tolerant.

This study aims to explicate about the identities and spaces of cosmopolitanism affected by globalization comparing with conventional and Islamic point of views. The metrosexual was selected as a representative.

Method

The library research was used as research methodology. Both online data in cyberspaces and textbooks were extracted and, then, analyzed by content analysis to reach the conclusion.

Results

Metrosexual: definition and their identities

According to Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, 'Metrosexual' is "a portmanteau combining "metropolitan" and "sexual", was first used in 1994 by British journalist Mark Simpson, who coined metrosexual to refer to an urban male of any sexual orientation who has a strong aesthetic sense and spends a great deal of time and money on his appearance and lifestyle" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metrosexual>).

The word metrosexual just had been published, so no authorized meaning that can be accepted exactly. Therefore, there are many definitions of it depending on different perceptions. The meanings can not be found in standard dictionaries such as the Oxford or Cambridge Dictionary, but in the cyber spaces it can be collected from some online dictionaries and encyclopedias web sites.

"An urban male with a strong aesthetic sense who spends a great deal of time and money on his appearance and lifestyle. – metrosexuality n."

(<http://www.wordspy.com/words/metrosexual.asp>)

"Term "metrosexual" refers to the sense of style or fashion of the individual and not to his sexual orientation"

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metrosexual>)

As the open spaces, some definitions had been given and collected from many persons in Urban Dictionary (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=metrosexual&r=f>) as following:

"A straight man, who embraces the homosexual lifestyle, i.e. refined tastes in clothing, excessive use of designer hygiene products, etc. Usually is on the brink of homosexuality." (Anonymous, Feb 14, 2004)

"Straight male with close ties to urban life and vanity. Also have narcissistic tendencies and slight homosexual overtones." (Dr. Know It ALL, Nov 30, 2003)

“Someone who adheres to homosexual tendencies but declares their sexual orientation to be heterosexual (supposedly).” (watutsi, Jan 27, 2004)

“A stereotypical homosexual male who dresses very "stylish" and is up to speed with anything trendy and sophisticated, but swears he doesn't pound ass with anyone.”
(Sum yun Guy, Nov 29, 2003)

In the article ‘It’s guys’ territory’ in Knight Ridder Tribune Business News, Choi (2005) uses the word “queer eye for the straight guy” explaining the word metrosexual.

As well as Khanna(2004), who wrote ‘The Metrosexual Superpower’ in Foreign Policy, defines as “metrosexual men are muscular but suave, confident yet image-conscious, assertive yet clearly in touch with their feminine sides”.

However, the original definition that well known is from Mark Simpson, the guru of metrosexual, that noted in Meet the metrosexual from Salon.com;

‘The typical metrosexual is a young man with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis – because that’s there 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. Particular professions, such as modeling, waiting tables, media, pop music, and nowadays, sport, seem to attract them but, truth be told, like male vanity products and herpes, they’re pretty much everywhere’
(Simpson, 2002)

Some their uniqueness can be assumed to show that the one is metrosexual or not as Russ (Jan 1, 2004) gives some ideas about metrosexual describing the way that you might be metrosexual if:

1. You just can't walk past a Banana Republic store without making a purchase.
2. You own 20 pairs of shoes, half a dozen pairs of sunglasses, just as many watches and you carry a man-purse.

3. You see a stylist instead of a barber, because barbers don't do highlights.
4. You can make her lamb shanks and risotto for dinner and Eggs Benedict for breakfast all from scratch.
5. You only wear Calvin Klein boxer-briefs.
6. You shave more than just your face. You also exfoliate and moisturize.
7. You would never, ever own a pickup truck.
8. You can't imagine a day without hair styling products.
9. You'd rather drink wine than beer... but you'll find out what estate and vintage first.
10. Despite being flattered (even proud) that gay guys hit on you, you still find the thought of actually getting intimate with another man truly repulsive.”

He concludes the definition of metrosexual as "Some people think he's gay, but he's actually metrosexual." (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=metrosexual&r=f>)

Not only in terms of sociology that takes this word, but also can find in political sciences. For instance, based on the article 'The Metrosexual Superpower' in Foreign Policy, the author Khana (2004) uses this word to explain the taste of the European Union (EU) as "the world first metrosexual super power" in the way to balance of power with the United State (in military) by using the "soft power"(in economic influence and culture appeal). The interesting point is he argues that "Europe is refining old notions of power and influence as metrosexual is redefining masculinity". In this spot, the metrosexual can be used to illuminate the foreign policy in terms of the international relationship.

Furthermore, this word can be used as well as "metrostylists" or "male divas" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metrosexual>).

Based on the definition above, it can be included that the metrosexual is a type of characteristic and lifestyle of some urban/metropolitan guys that has been redefined comparing to the traditional men. It is slightly sharing the feature of 'bourgeoisie' and perhaps it is the progress of 'Yappie' - young urban or upwardly mobile professional- (Kam-inchai,2002, p.185). However, it emphasizes only male person that i) usually men or straight

guys, ii) prefer homosexual styles, and iii) live in urban. As the following results, it can be argued that the metrosexual has developed from western paradigm especially in terms of modernization and individualism. Therefore, it can be said that the metrosexual is the product of urbanism and share characteristic as well as cosmopolitan person that David Byrne explains;

“We might think for a moment about the word ‘cosmopolitan’ which plainly has a root in common with the word ‘metropolitan. The cosmopolitan person is in some sense rootless, belongs everywhere and nowhere, has a highly individual view of the world and of what matter to them as individuals. Cosmopolitan always live in metropolis. The style is inherently urban. Often the cosmopolitan is committed to high art, to culture understood in general and global sense. We shall find that this is not just a matter of personal sensibility but that culture industries with an essentially cosmopolitan form are crucial part of the new economy of signs in postindustrial capitalism”. (Byrne, 2001:17)

So, it has the following to said that metrosexual is the group of metropolitanism that has been broadened in new urban. This issue should be concerned in addition to the social factors relating to urban planning and management. If all stakeholders can use the public sphere to achieve sustainable development, the metrosexual is one of them and the spaces should be provided for them.

Metrosexual: effecting global issues

There are two points showing that how metrosexual effected the urban and the response from society for them.

The powerful consumers

The first roll that metrosexual have been played is the great consumer for male grooming. In the article Metrosexual man has arrived in Indonesia: AC Nielson From Jakarta Post (2004), the metrosexual phenomenon has ‘hit Indonesia’, therefore, from a recent AC Nielson Company surveying found that product global personal care product sales such as

face and body cleaning and moisturizing, hair care and men's adult cologne had extended rapidly because of 'the blossoming of the metrosexual men'. As this result, some departments like SOGO try to take advantages of this trend such as 'rearrange the displays for the convenience of male customers.' As well as the trendy boutiques stores have been devoting more and more space to men's fashion in the Westfield Shoppingtown Fashion Square in Sherman Oaks, the United State. (Choi, 2005)

Some of business sectors takes advantage from their loyalty and trendy consumers as Beatty (2005) wrote 'Style & substance: Going For Cover; Men Don Coats and Other Toppers As Hot, Quick-Chang Garb; Getting the 'Jude Law' Look' in The Wall Street Journal, famous designers as Prada, Perry Ellis, and Kenneth Cole had designed coats exclusively for matrosexual men, because their customers willing to take risk and wear something unusual. In the following article, one of metrosexual man told her that he got a 'plenty of coats that more fashion-driven than a necessity'.

These examples above can show that metrosexual is an influent trend that can quake our society as far as they show us they are a group of great consumers especially for selected and tasted products.

The trend setters

As the roll model of metrosexual person, David Beckham – the famous English soccer player – is a person who becomes a trend setter for metrosexual men. The way he dressing up, grooming, and whatever he does are promoted via media and press around the world. As Mark Simpson has been noted in "Here come the mirror men" in The Independent that

'the promotion of metrosexuality was left to the men's style press, magazines such as The Face, GQ, Esquire, Arena and FHM, the media which took off in the Eighties and is still growing (GQ gains 10,000 new readers every month). They filled their magazines with images of narcissistic young men sporting fashionable clothes and

accessories. And they persuaded other young men to study them with a mixture of envy and desire'. (Simpson, 1994)

According to this result, it can be understood that why 'more Indonesian men go shopping, enjoy spa treatments, wear fragrances and follow the latest fashion trends' (Metrosexual man has arrived in Indonesia, 2004) as well as Choi (2005) notes that "men are flocking toward more fashionable cuts and styles like moths to a light". This example shows the influent of the new main stream hitting the society epically the new culture to developing country. The way they do perhaps we can call them 'the redefined guy'. It can conclude as Jennifer Eisenberg, marketing director for the Westfield Shopping Town Fashion Square in Sherman Oaks had said "men aren't as afraid to show that side of themselves, it's acceptable" (Choi, 2005).

In short, metrosexual becomes the influent trend. What they have been come out can be new trend automatically in world of fashion as well as David Beckham has been done. Their dominant styles will be used as new products to advertise and lastly sell for people who are metrosexual appearances.

Metrosexual and Islamic perspective

In terms of metrosexual, this word emphasizes on 'homosexual lifestyle' as especially dressing up, but not including 'homosexual practice'. It is clear that definitely no homosexual in Islam. As Nadzim (2003) claims that 'Islam clearly considers homosexuality a sin, and a profound mistake, especially that humans are not homosexuals by nature'. However, the issue is what the different in terms of dress up between gay men and straight guy. If the man dresses as woman and also using the not allowed materials such as silk and gold, of course it is prohibited in Islam. If their dresses cover their 'aurat' - forbidden part of Muslim's body - it can be said that it is permitted. On the other hand, if way of dress like homosexual? Perhaps, it is forbidden (haram). On the other hand, if guys paint his fingernails as soccer star David Beckham done, definitely forbid in Islam.

In terms of stylish consumerism, it well known that one of metrosexual trait is they are powerful consumers. The way that some metrosexual men do as well as 'spends a great deal of time and money on his appearance and lifestyle' possibly ignored in Islam if that things 'bazir' – extravagant - that wasteful.

Discussions

The cosmopolitanism is not a new phenomenon, but it emerged in the 18th century as the modern era as well as Mazlish (2005) argues in Response: The moral conundrums of the global age. Metrosexual is one of social dynamics that effected from globalization. No one can deny a new main stream. It spreads rapidly via presses, movies, internet, and etc. as well as social communications in all dimensions. This paper can be supported what Stevenson (2004), who wrote the book 'Cities and Urban Cultures, and Popke and Ballard (2004) that studied 'dislocating modernity: identity space and representations of street trade in Durban, South Africa' that found all part of society as the developing nations of Asia, Africa and South America, are affecting from modernity. The metrosexual is one of the good examples to emphasize the way of progress of human civilization.

As Muslim Ummah, what the role of us for this issue. Some examples show that this trend has been redefined the definition of a man. And also effecting around the world not only western country, but including Muslim country. Mainstream shows that it can change everything especially human mid sets. Therefore, the position of Ummah should know and understand their mechanisms to avoid forbidden things and promote correct way of Islam.

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