

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Communication is what humans do in their daily life. The main purpose of communication is to convey or share information. “Communication is an act to transfer a message from a sender to a recipient” (“What Is Communication?,” 2011). Communication plays an important role in business; when a new product is launched, the producer will want to share the information to the target market. There are different ways to communicate information or messages. One of them is through an advertisement. Nowadays, businesses use advertisements to share or promote their product in visual or auditory forms. Pahwa (2019) states that “advertisement shares an idea to the public in terms of visual or audio.”

In terms of visual, an advertisement is able to draw people’s attention easily through images, colors, and the like. Picard and Wildman in their book entitled *Handbook on the Economics of the Media* (2015) state that people presently are in the habit of looking at visual advertisements such as printed

advertisements in newspapers or magazines because of the attractive pictures and colors that please the public's eyes. One of the examples of a visual advertisement is the one shared by Yves Saint Laurent.

Yves Saint Laurent is a French luxury fashion house for men and women supplying the needs from head to toe ("History," 2020). One of Yves Saint Laurent's products are luxury perfumes. In total, there are 223 perfumes that Yves Saint Laurent has made since 1964 ("Yves Saint Laurent Perfumes and Colognes," n.d.). One of Yves Saint Laurent's male perfumes that was launched in March 2009 is called *La Nuit de L'Homme*.

One of the promotional media of the perfume is a printed advertisement that people can find on websites and magazines. In its printed advertisement, there are pictures of a man and two women in a seductive pose along with the picture of the perfume and the logo of the product. I find those depictions interesting to analyse for my thesis because there is a concept of masculinity within.

Masculinity in advertisements is concerned with the depiction of men as powerful, superior, dominant, independent, and the like. As for women, they are pictured as a weaker sex who are submissive, seductive, and dependent. Masculinity in advertisements portrays "men as virile, muscular, and powerful. For women, they are always presented as not just thin and sexy, but also weak and vulnerable" ("Masculinity and Advertising," n.d.)

To analyse Yves Saint Laurent's *La Nuit de L'Homme* perfume advertisement, I am going to apply the theory of semiotics. Nordquist (2019) states that semiotics is the study of signs or symbols in order to deliver the message whether it is spoken or not. Semiotics focuses on how signs or symbols

communicate meanings (“What Is Semiotics,” 2019). In other words, semiotics is a study of signs and how they communicate meaning.

The specific theory of semiotics I am going to apply in my data analysis is Ferdinand de Saussure’s theory. Saussure’s semiotics discusses the existence of a signifier and a signified. A signifier deals with a sound image, while a signified has something to do with a concept or meaning of the object itself. For instance, a signifier of a black cloud can bring about signifieds of darkness, fear, calamity, and so on. All of the associations are dependent on the context or someone’s point of view. In other words, the concept of the signifiers is not always the same compared to other’s perception.

Yves Saint Laurent’s *La Nuit de L’Homme* printed advertisement is suitable to be analysed using Saussure’s theory because all signifiers in the advertisement are structured to convey a particular concept. The presence of a masculine man being seduced by two women because of using the perfume, along with the other complementary signifiers, makes the advertisement worth analysing in terms of semiotics. It is challenging as well to find out the signifieds of each of the signifiers within the printed advertisement.

Thus, the significance of my study is to make people aware that a printed advertisement is not supposed to only be seen as a pure picture. Often, there are certain concepts that the printed advertisement would like to bring out to the readers. It is therefore hoped that people will be able to interpret messages using semiotics. Last, it is also expected that this thesis may bring people to take more interest in the subject of linguistics, particularly in the area of semiotics.

(Total words: 735)

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Based on the background of the study, there are three research questions I would like to answer in this study:

1. What are the signifiers found in Yves Saint Laurent's *La Nuit de L'Homme* perfume advertisement?
2. What do the signifiers signify?
3. How do the signifieds portray the concept of masculinity?

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Based on the statement of the problems above, the purposes of this study are:

1. to find out what the signifiers in Yves Saint Laurent's *La Nuit de L'Homme* perfume advertisement are;
2. to find out what the signifiers signify;
3. to find out how the signifieds portray the concept of masculinity.

## **1.4 Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is Literature Review, which contains the explanation of Saussure's theory and the concept of masculinity in the advertisement along with the previous study. Chapter Three is Methods of Research, which consists of Research Design, Data Collection Technique, Framework for Analysis, and Data Analysis. Chapter Four presents the

Saussurean analysis on Yves Saint Laurent's *La Nuit de L'Homme* advertisement.  
Chapter Five is the conclusion of what has been discussed in previous chapters. At the end of the thesis, References and Appendices are presented.

