CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Globalization in every aspect has significantly impacted people's social activities both domestically and internationally contexts. Interaction arises because of understanding in interpreting a particular symbol. The development of technology and the rapid demand for clothing, food, and shelter have created distractions in the social order. Fashion is currently an essential thing for all levels of society moreover right now fashion can be a picture of certain cultures, values, beliefs, and norms in a particular group and interaction will be determined based on how these groups perceive the signs. This chapter discusses what is behind the problem of this research, problem formulation, theoretical framework, hypotheses to be directed towards temporary analysis in this research, research methods as a technique to collect and process the data, and systematic writing including rules for the elements contained in the study.

1.1.   Background

Fashion is a lifestyle that is very attached to society, especially human lifestyles, which are influenced by the progress of the times caused by globalization. As time goes by, it has various types of styles not only a human lifestyle but also a verbal or non-verbal symbol used by communicants in carrying out a communication process. In carrying out the communication process, the communicator needs to be able to interpret the signs presented by fashion to obtain the desired impression (Fakhrunisa, 2016). In non-verbal communication, a message or symbol conveyed through clothing style, such as formal or non-formal clothing (Pramiswara,2020, p.12), can be identified as someone's intention to show a severe or relaxed state.

Brands are essential to become market leaders because business competition conditions are increasingly tight. Brand equity can increase or decrease production value for consumers. With substantial brand equity, marketers' goals of constantly developing and capturing the market will be easier to achieve (Adventus Christ Tayuyung, 2021). According to this statement, marketing activities also influence brand equity. The attraction of being famous and even liked by the public is one of the goals of a product, whether in the form of services or goods. Moreover, with so many competitors, it is undoubtedly a challenge that must be resolved. A good reputation is certainly a consideration for people before choosing something, so the impression of branding is needed to

become a separate identity that will have a remarkable impact in the eyes of the public, which will not be found in competitors.

Fashion can be a symbol of a particular culture where the diversity of fashion indicates different ideological models, so everything represented through fashion has a broader meaning than mere clothing style but is more of a representation of ideology (Suneki, 2012). Globalization and technological advances support the very rapid development of world fashion. Rapid technological advances have made it easy for the industry to market products quickly in various parts of the world.

The rapid and significant development of internet network technology and the expansion of the use of social media in the world has entered all aspects of human life, from social, cultural, economic, and even political. It allows for change or convergence to occur. Media convergence combines various media and technologies, including information, images, audio, video, and so on, so different media platforms can consume multiple types of content. Fashion trends are one of the trends that fill social media networks worldwide. Different kinds of fashion trends are top searches on social media. Social media users tend to buy things on social media based on existing trends. For fashion itself, the fashion trend that often appears on social media is the luxury brand fashion trend or luxury products.

In economics, *luxury brands* are defined as products whose demand increases because incomes are higher in short, luxury brands are not needed but desired. To be more in-depth, let's take a look at the meaning of luxury goods, namely something that adds pleasure or comfort but is not strictly necessary. The luxury brand category in this aspect has received particular attention because it involves a strong identity, high awareness, emotional ties, exclusivity, and premium prices (Okonkwo, 2009). Therefore, brands that have the luxury brand label quickly gain public attention and social media trends. The influence of luxury brands on global fashion marketing dominates all aspects. Fashion products that have the luxury brand label originate from Europe. European countries are still the center of the world fashion, so it is not surprising that all luxury fashion brands come from there; one of the brands with a luxury brand label fashion is Balenciaga.

Currently, the fashion circuit is heavily influenced by Western culture and changes in society's style identity, which is the result of globalization. One of the leading world brand products originating from Western culture is Balenciaga, a French luxury fashion house founded in 1919

by Spanish couturier Cristóbal Balenciaga in San Sebastian, Spain, and based in Paris, France. Focuses on producing ready-to-wear footwear, handbags, and accessories and licenses its name and brand to Coty for fragrances (Sari Mayang 2022. P. 04). The development of its business is not only in Europe but almost all over the world, proven by numerous market stores, which fill almost all shopping centers worldwide.

Balenciaga is a brand that is part of the Kering group, a French multinational company, which is why it is known as a famous luxury brand from France. The founder is a Spaniard, namely Cristóbal Balenciaga resulted in an undoubted reputation also has even received appreciation from other high-end brand designers, such as Coco Chanel and Christian Dior. It has a distinctive style in creating its fashion collections as a brand that tends to create clothes with cuts that can give a silhouette effect, for example, by wearing clothes made by Balenciaga, they will look thinner or have broader shoulders.

As a luxury brand with a reputation spread across various parts of the world and having a marketplace that fills almost all shopping centers in every country in the world, Balenciaga is the brand with the most significant influence. Brands with great influence, of course, really maintain the image of the brand because the brand's image greatly influences marketing and consumer interest in purchasing the products offered. Balenciaga, as a world brand, has not escaped various kinds of scandals that have harmed the brand's image and international fashion. One of the most horrendous scandals was the scandal regarding the use of photos of small children carrying bear bags in very revealing clothing so that the photos were labeled as pornography. It has invited criticism from various parties and children's organizations, including UNICEF. Usually, companies with an extensive brand image avoid scandals because harmful scandals will damage the product's image, resulting in a product cancel culture impact, which is currently a trend on social media. The impact of the cancel culture trend is continuous with cultural theory, which states how cancel culture reflects changes in norms, values, and identities in society and how these conceptual factors can influence international behavior and interactions.

In the context of International Relations, Cancel Culture can be defined as a non-institutionalized form of social control that is implemented through mass mobilization in social media. After informal pressure, formal punishment could be imposed on people who violate norms or behavior standards. Cancel culture, as a form of social control, could help to bridge the gap

between manipulated beliefs and social practices, sustaining social order, and combating elitism and inequality. At the same time, cancel culture may be used as a vehicle of unfair competition, political strife, and opinion repression (L. V. Deriglazova, 2023, pp. 7-33)

Unethical behavior is established internationally through a common consensus at the United Nations (UN) or unilaterally by a particular country. Ethics in International Relations are examples such as democracy, human rights (HR), and respect for human values in general. States or groups that discriminate, use physical/armed violence, carry out military coups, practice radicalism, and so on are considered contrary to international ethics. (Quarter 2020, p. 05).

The release of two new campaigns by this brand, owned by Kering, the French luxury conglomerate that also owns brands such as Gucci and Saint Laurent, has taken public condemnation to a new level. One campaign featured a photo of children holding handbags that looked like teddy bears in bondage gear. Another campaign featured photos that included documents about child pornography laws. Together, they set off a storm that spread from the internet to Fox News, fueled by allegations that Balenciaga condones child exploitation. The controversy has been one of the most explicit clashes between internet culture, politics, fashion, and conspiracy theories to date.

The scandal has caused a lot of stigma among consumers around the world. This of course led to a brand boycott from society, international non-governmental organizations, and customers around the world which had an impact on international relations of world fashion trade. Brands that are boycotted or canceled usually face a variety of unexpected repercussions for example include no international recognition, diminished/lost public trust, and the country or group being ostracized, humiliated, and looked down upon by the world public. Based on the description above, the author sets the following title "**The effect of Cancel Culture Towards Balenciaga In International Relation Perspectives**".

1.2. Research Question

Based on the information and explanation written in the background section, the author hereby formulates the question, "**How does the Cancel Culture affect Balenciaga's reputation as a worldwide fashion brand**".

1.3.   Theoretical Framework

1.3.1.   Concept of Cancel Culture

Cancel Culture a phrase that notably grew in 2016 and 2017 in social media refers to an action to withdraw or cancel support for someone whose actions have offended the community's feelings collectively (Trio Kurniawan, 2022). Harvard University Professor P. Norris describes 'cancel culture' as 'attempts to ostracize someone for violating social norms' in practice Cancel Culture can happen to anyone and at any time (P, 2021). For example, the 'cancellation' of a brand or corporation due to unethical employee or environmental policies can lead to a campaign of public condemnation of their activities, which invariably leads to a drop in sales (Leyli R. Rustamova, 2023). What happened to the Western fashion brand, Balenciaga was the cancellation of the fashion brand due to an unethical fashion campaign that this brand created and shared on social media like the official Instagram of the brand, Magazines, and its website. The campaign has led to public condemnation because the elements used in the fashion campaign violate the norms and values that exist in the international community.

In other context, Cancel Culture is also experienced by figures with power, artists, or even technological companies. Taufik Hidayat, a former famous Indonesian badminton player, was once an easy target of this social phenomenon. This case started with a podcast broadcast on the YouTube channel namely Jebreeet Media TV whose owner is Valentino Simajuntak, one of the well-known sports presenters and football commentators in Indonesia. On the podcast broadcast Taufik Hidayat responded to a question from Bung Valentino regarding awards Hall of Fame awarded to Lin Dan a Chinese badminton legend and Lee Chong Wei a Malaysian former badminton player. This award is an individual award for influential badminton players in their respective eras, first held in 1996. The Badminton World Federation (BWF) routinely gives appreciation to outstanding athletes who have retired. The implications of the podcast broadcast made several Malaysian media such as Berita Harian and Metro report Taufik Hidayat's objections regarding Lee Chong Wei entering the BWF Hall of Fame. In the report, Taufik offered an internal criticism podcast discussion. The protest filed by Taufik Hidayat was regarding LCW's achievements. This is because the legend from the neighboring country has never won a championship title or medal gold at major events, such as the Olympics, World Championships, and ASEAN Games (Latief, 2023).

In many cases, Cancel Culture has proven its power to provide direct action against violators of rights, norms, and values rooted in society. Of course, as a mass mobilization that occurs on social media, cancel culture is an exciting concept to deepen into this movement. Anthony Giddens explains that social movement is a collective effort to realize a common interest or goal through collective action outside the scope of established institutions (Maxin Sydney Waani, 2021). Social movements are classified into two forms, namely old social movements and new social movements, referring to Pichardo and Singh in Suhoarko (2006) explaining that the difference between the two lies in the two, namely 1) Ideology and Goals, 2) Tactics and Organization, 3) Participants and Actors, 4) Terrain and Area.

As a social movement, there are definite stages in carrying out the movement. According to Blumer, Mauss, and Tilly in Macionis (2017, p.639), there are four stages of social movement: 1. Emergence stage. Social movement occurs because it is driven by the perception that everything is not going properly. 2. Coalescence stage. A social movement must define itself and develop a strategy for "going public" where at this stage, the movement may engage in collective action. 3. Bureaucratization stage. A social movement must become an established, bureaucratic organization. The movement relies more on a capable staff. 4. Decline stage. Social movements begin to decline but can also be accepted as a part of the system.

1.3.2. Concept of Social Media

Social media is a collaboration of the basic concepts of Web 2.0 and Users Generated Content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). During its development, the function of social media also changed following the era when its origin, social media was interpreted as a platform used to contact family (Dolarhide, 2023). As information technology develops, the function of social media is no longer just a communication platform but social media has become a land of unlimited interaction. The presence of social media in the global community answers the need for information. Apart from that, social media has a robust social influence in influencing public opinion (Yogyakarta, 2022).

1.3.3. Cultural Theory

Cultural theory is a theory that was first sketched out by social anthropologist Mary Douglas and has been further elaborated into the general account of political and social life by Michael Thompson, Aaron Wildavsky, and Richard Ellis within the field of political sciences (Cultural Theory and the study of International Relations, 1995). In the field of International

Relations, Cultural Theory is defined as an approach that tries to explain the various systems of perceptions, values, and preferences that groups of people have and tries to analyze the impact of these systems of thought on both domestic and international political life (Cultural Theory and the study of International Relations, 1995). However, as a theory, it tries to be distinguished from most other theories in two ways. First, the sets of beliefs, preferences, and perceptions that are outlined by Cultural Theory have been derived in a more deductive manner than the system of thought that is set out by many other reflectivist models. Second, Cultural Theorists try to analyze the formation of ideas and perceptions that people have specifically arguing that certain systems of ideas and perceptions have an affinity with different social structures for example various ways of thinking and perceiving tend to be developed within specific social settings. By linking sets of preferences and perceptions to social structures, Cultural Theory can provide insight into some aspects of social change.

The concepts above help the author understand the picture of cancel culture that occurs to Balenciaga in their social media

Picture 1. Research Conceptual Framework Chart
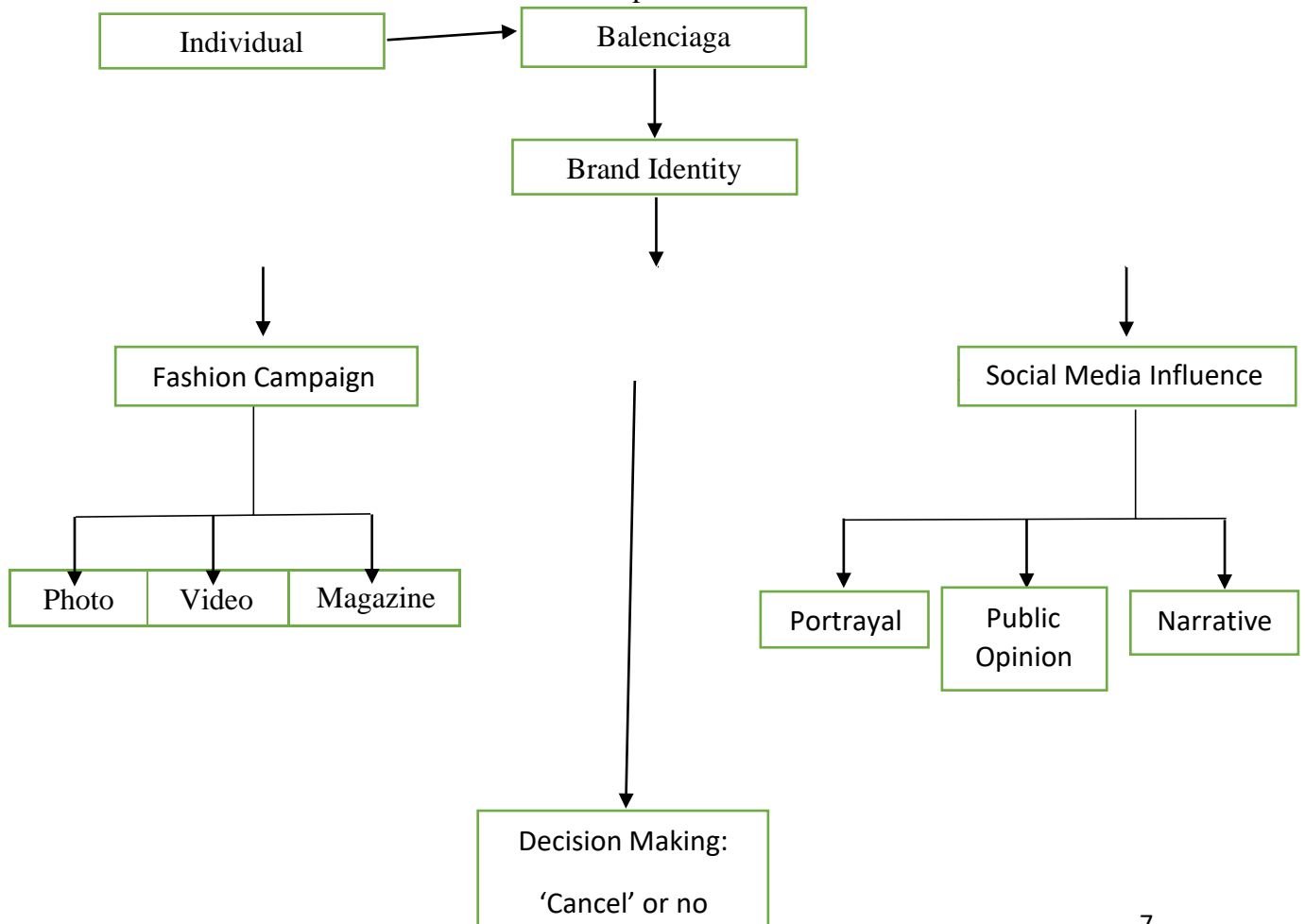
1.4. Hypothesis

Through an explanation in the background, the author has made the following hypothesis: Cancel Culture has damaged Balenciaga's reputation as a world fashion brand, which can be seen in the company's declining revenues, store closures in several countries, and a decline in followers on Instagram during the period of controversy.

1.5. Research Methods

This research was made by the qualitative descriptive method using secondary data in the form of articles, journals, and the internet that had been completed research by the other authors. To obtain the data needed in making this study, the authors look for reading sources that are in accordance to discuss this article. Search data ranging from Cancel Culture of Balenciaga in International Relations Perspectives.

A. Literature Review

In this writing, the author has previously conducted a study on several pieces of literature that are relevant to the topic that the author determined. From the studies conducted, there has been no research that discusses Cancel Culture towards Balenciaga from an international relations perspective.

A previous study conducted by Erika Butler and Lauren Sagadore entitled "Global Circuits Of Fashion And Beauty Symposium Review" explained that the Global Circuits of Fashion and Beauty symposium took place in New York City on Friday, February 20, 2015. Co-hosted by The New School and New York University (NYU), the symposium features scholars from different disciplines, each of whom is researching fashion and beauty topics, highlighting international perspectives around race and modernity. On the morning of the symposium, a closed session was held at The New School for panelists to work on their papers. The afternoon session opened the dialogue to the public, with a two-panel roundtable discussion taking place at NYU (Erika Butler and Lauren Sagadore 2022).

A research paper written by Synne Skjulstad under the title "My favorite meme page': Balenciaga's Instagram account and audience fashion labor online" also explains how the audience works and how the work becomes an integral part of mediational aesthetics by using the Instagram account of Paris-based fashion brand

Balenciaga as a heuristic device. In connecting perspectives from fashion and media studies, this article explores how fashion mediation gets entangled in a process that harnesses audience power on Instagram. Balenciaga uses a communication strategy that lays out the aesthetics of user engagement. On Instagram, the brand showcases fashion photography in the digital age as part of its visual identity on the platform. In addition, in feeding the comment section, users participate in 'boundary maintenance', separating Balenciaga insiders from outsiders who do not know the ever-changing aesthetic code of fashion imagery. Online audiences thus find themselves at the intersection of consumption, and production (Synne Skjulstad 2022).

1.6. Writing Systematics

To guide and ensure the answer to the problem formulation in this study, the author divided the discussion into four different chapters. Each chapter will have its discussion, but all of them are interconnected and constructive so that they can answer the questions contained in the problem formulation of this research. The chapters are:

Chapter I: this chapter explains how the general description and background of this writing, in which there are research and writing mechanisms applied to this research. Chapter I itself contains several sub-chapters, including:

1. Background
2. Research Question
3. Theoretical Framework
4. Hypothesis
5. Research Methods
6. Systematics of Writing

Chapter II: chapter two, will be an elaboration of the background research explaining in detail about company profile, social norms, and social media.

Chapter III: this third chapter is chapter which is an analysis of the Cancel Culture to prove the hypothesis through a Theoretical Framework.

Chapter IV: will be the last chapter where the conclusion is contained**.**