CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Social media is a platform that opens up many new marketing opportunities in the digital business era. Digital technology has increased the complexity of the customer environment. Marketing through digital and social media helps companies achieve their sales targets (Le & Hancer, 2021). In its realization, companies must be able to think about factors related to development, customer satisfaction, loyalty, and the right influencers in promoting their products. On each social media platform, there are various influencers used by companies as the new front line of online marketing. The role of Influencers as someone who presents a product is one of the digital marketing strategies that are trending today (Aw & Chuah, 2021). Digital marketing using influencers has succeeded in influencing customers to create an opinion in the buying process (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Influencers are internet users who have a large following on their social media platforms (C. Liu et al., 2020). Relying on social media as a promotional platform is considered more effective in promoting a product.

Currently, sponsorship development does not only use celebrity sponsors, but also uses non-celebrity sponsors such as influencers (Jamil et al., 2023). Influencer support is currently growing rapidly and lots of support is appearing on various social media, such as Instagram, YouTube and other social media. One of the sponsors currently used as promotional media is Instagram influencers. Influencer sponsorship via Instagram is seen as providing greater benefits compared to other marketing because influencers are able to

provide information, entertain and influence the thoughts of their followers (Joshi et al., 2023). With the help of parties who participate in promoting a product or service, it is considered that they can provide a guarantee of high quality so that followers will believe in the quality of the product and that it is a recommended service (Chen et al., 2023). Therefore, support via social media is the most recommended type of marketing strategy for now and in the future (Dimitrios et al., 2023).

Some indicators underlie the success of influencers in cyberspace such as social attraction, physical attraction, and task attraction. Social attraction refers to the attractiveness of the audience to influencers (Song et al., 2023) based on the similarities they have including perception, liking, or compatibility. The relationship between the audience and influencers is a positive feeling caused by the similarity of characters (Su et al., 2021). Social attraction is also a picture of the extent to which the audience perceives beliefs and social status similar to his/her. Previous research on social attraction found that gender and race were factors that many audiences considered to measure the level of compatibility. Social appeal in social media characters can attract an audience, so the tendency to imitate actions shared by many people is very likely. The more people who have something in common, the greater the degree of possibility of character formation (Le & Hancer, 2021).

Physical attraction is a key part of the charm that characters have on social media and is related to their physique. Physical attraction is known to have the ability to increase the audience that has similarities with the maleness of influencers including body characteristics and facial appearance (Sakib et al., 2020). Physical attraction can heighten the emotions of the audience and build positive feelings (Su et al., 2021). Influencers who

have physical attraction are usually more widely considered by advertisers to design and conduct promotional campaigns because they are considered to have a greater influence in shaping customer attitudes toward the targeted brand or product (Kurtin et al., 2018). Physical attraction is also considered an attraction for influencers to build customer trust in uploaded content and can accelerate awareness of brands promoted on social media (AlFarraj et al., 2021).

Task attraction refers to the audience's desire to perform and complete tasks shared by influencer (Han & Yang, 2018). Usually this type of attraction the audience tends to have positive feelings towards influencers because they receive a lot of meaningful and useful information to complete an activity. Task attraction is defined as the perception that a person can complete a task well, including tasks that must be done together (Zheng et al., 2020). If an influencer chooses to upload content to social media, it will affect user perceptions of influencers. Task attraction can appear directly to the number of audiences who want to connect with influencers (Clark-Gordon & Goodboy, 2020).

(Su et al., 2021) It has been confirmed that interpersonal attraction is one of the important factors related to para-social relationships. There are three dimensions of interpersonal attraction, task attraction, social attraction, and physical attraction. Para-social relationships are psychological relationships (Lim et al., 2020) of users without face-to-face interaction with influencers on social media. The concept of parasocial relationships is based on social interaction theory which suggests that two-way communication is different from interactions between people and characters on social media (Liebers & Schramm, 2019). Parasocial relationships are best promoted through social media because of the characteristics of frequent, intimate and confessional messages

(Chung & Cho, 2017). So (Horton and Wohl 1998) developed this theory into the concept of para-social, namely a relationship or relationship that is only controlled by audience or one-way interaction. Parasocial relationships can create trust in users who understand the character of the media. Through social media interactions, consumers feel closer and more personal with celebrities because they can hear directly from them (Lacap et al., 2023).

Parasocial Relationships as one of the important components in the success are often underpaid by influencers. They underestimate the existence of parasocial relationships which if ignored will have an impact on their success. In popularity, an who has a good image by highlighting a high level of parasocial will be considered a credible influencer (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2022). The character that appears in an influencer can help customers control their desires and increase curiosity about a product. The positive effects produced by the Parasocial Relationship between the Influencer and the customer will create a good image that makes customers remember to buy the product they want (Luo et al., 2023). Parasocial relationships are best promoted through social media because of the characteristics of frequent, intimate, and confessional (Chung & Cho, 2017). In addition, the positive impact resulting from maintaining a Parasocial Relationship is to create a sense of security for customers regarding quality and quantity.

To strengthen the parasocial relationship variables that produce a decision, there are indicators of informational influence and perceived credibility that mediate between the two. Informational influence is the stage when influencers on social media provide suggestions in the form of information to users or followers which is then followed by users entering information into decision-making (Su et al., 2021). Ventakes & Davish (2000) their theory state that informational influence causes interpersonal influence that reflects the willingness of

the audience to receive information and trust the truth of the information conveyed. Informational influence is considered to have a relationship with parasocial relationships, where when the audience has a positive relationship with influencers or high para-social relationships, the willingness to receive information and influence trust will increase (Su et al., 2021). In the context of social media marketing, informational influence occurs when customers or social media users take information shared by influencers and draw conclusions based on that information (Hu et al., 2017).

The credibility of an influencer is also a consideration made by customers to purchase a product. Perceived credibility refers to things that are perceived by users and have an influence on assessing a product. In the context of para-social relationships, it is known that perceived credibility is a component that has an effective ability to create valuable relationships between users and social media influencers (Su et al., 2021). When associated with social media influencers who can use the platform and influence the attitudes of their followers, credibility is a component that is preferred by followers because it is considered the level of validity of the information provided by influencers (Lin et al., 2021). Regardless of the type of information shared, consumers' perception of perceived credibility is paramount. The effects of perceived credibility perceived by customers include detailed information characteristics including accuracy, consistency, ratings, and timeliness, trusted reviewers such as expertise and reputation, and features of a reputable third platform or channel (Román et al., 2023).

Variables related to perceived credibility and informational influence are online comments. Based on previous research, it is known that comments are one of the components that become audience references to build trust in influencers and reduce negative risks. Online comments are considered to have the ability to minimize uncertainty, this is because online comments are

feedback on influencers who share information and can be used as proof of their credibility (Su et al., 2021). Online comments on social media are usually short tests that have a limit on the number of words that can be inputted, plain text, aca marks, emoticons, or special symbols (Yang, 2020). The language used is not standard because user knowledge and language use are different for each person (Bilal & Almazroi, 2023). Online comments are one of the components of information on social media that companies need to pay attention to for service development (Lin et al., 2021).

The final stage of the relationship of the variables mentioned above is the purchase decision. Purchase decisions are defined as the stages experienced by customers in the process of buying or not a product offered. The decision taken in the process is considered the best choice from several options offered (Arief et al., 2023). The purchase decision taken is also accompanied by an evaluation of actions to determine the attitude for the next purchase (Barbu et al., 2022). Usually in deciding to buy a product, customers will decide based on their last experience using the product or brand. An understanding of the factors that can influence purchase decisions will help the industry to create strong relationships with customers (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). In addition to developing marketing strategies that will be used to achieve goals, customer loyalty will also increase. To make a purchase decision, the benefits and comfort felt by customers must be more significant than the negative risks received (Gong, 2020).

One of the most important antecedents of purchase decisions is the para-social relationship. Para-social relationships are psychological relationships of users without face-to-face interaction with influencers on social media. The concept of Parasocial Relationship is based on the theory of social interaction which suggests that two-way communication has differences

with interactions between people and characters on social media (Teo et al., 2019). So Horton and Wohl developed the theory into a para-social concept of relationship or relationship that is only controlled by the audience or one-way interaction. Parasocial relations can be created with the trust of users who understand the character of media (Joshi et al., 2023). It's not just the synchronization of watching influencers on social media, but rather the consequences of closeness developed through social media (Su et al., 2021).

Instagram is a social network based on sharing photos and videos. Some Instagram users have a lot of followers and can influence their followers called influencers (Smith et al., 2023). Many companies want influencers to market their products by creating content in the form of photos or videos with the influencer's image so that it can create interest among the audience or followers and be interested in buying products from this company (Chen et al., 2023). Some of the interesting content created by the creators is often used every day. Therefore, the actor has his preferences for his audience or followers (Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019). This cooperation is called between companies and activists. Marketing through sponsorship programs, in addition to generating profit for the company, is also a source of income for the entrepreneurs themselves (Kilipiri et al., 2023).

The influence of influencers is the key to increasing sales effectively. By definition, an Influencer is a marketing technique that selects or selects people (public figures) who are considered to have an influence on the public or focus on a segment of customers in certain areas who serve as a supporting target for product models (Koay et al., 2022). Marketing and sales of products is a life cycle in business, where product brands are introduced and distributed and reach customers (Masnita, 2022). Over time, entrepreneurs need to change their style and process, especially when it comes to marketing products so that they can adapt in time and be

able to compete with their competitors (Bushara et al., 2023). Technology continues to improve and pesticides have a significant impact on daily life, including the marketing process (Sisilia & Giri, 2020).

Influencer marketing strategies will also affect the establishment of the company's brand (Zhou et al., 2021). Beliefs, thoughts, and feelings that a person has about something are the image of that thing. To show the uniqueness and value of a product or product so that it can show the difference from other products, it is necessary to carry out marketing activities to achieve a good brand (Narayan, 2020). Therefore, if a brand has created something good from the point of view of consumers, then the image will also be what attracts people to buy the product (Michelle et al., 2023).

Previous research from (Su et al., 2021) showed that Task Attraction, Social Attraction, and Physical Attraction have a positive feeling toward parasocial Relationships. Where the factors above can show whether the influencers can provide valuable and useful information. In addition, the physical attractiveness of the influencers is an opportunity for the audience to find a similarity such as in terms of language style, appearance, preferences, and overall (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The image that is built will later generate positive comments from consumers on the complete information provided by the influencers and the credibility of the influencers to the customer (S. Yuan & Lou, 2020). These things can build a better parasocial relationship as an influencer on the Instagram platform (de Bérail et al., 2019). Parasocial that occurs based on a good attractive attitude will foster the desire to buy in customers. However, currently, there are no journals that combine these variables with purchase decisions (Khan & Fatma, 2023). Based on this description, this study intends to investigate the relationship

between variables that support the occurrence of parasocial to, informational and perceived credibility-mediated online customers and produce purchase decisions.
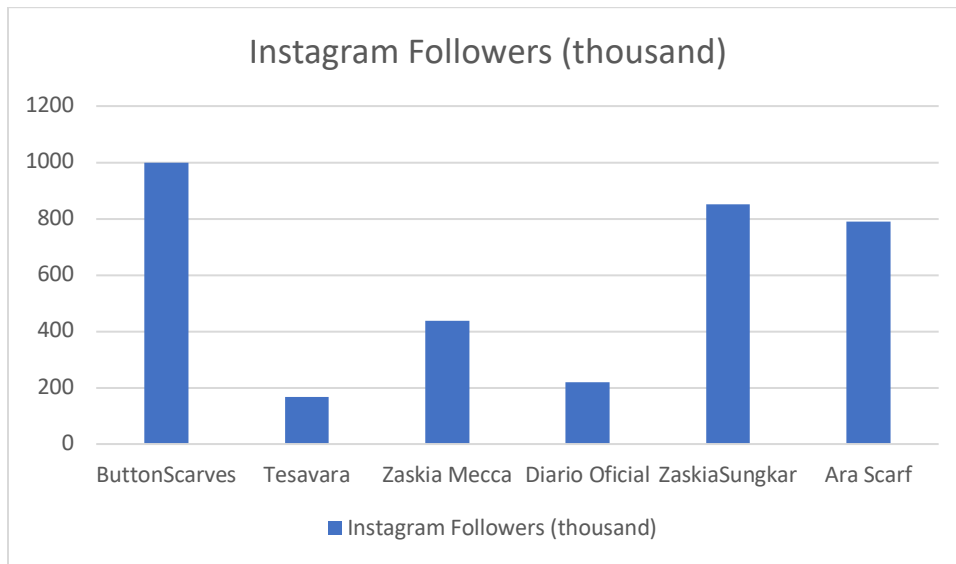

Figure 1. 1 Instagram follower of Clothing Brand

Buttonscarves is a local product that has several mainstay products such as hijab scarves, bags, shoes, accessories, and others. The materials used in the products produced are premium materials for the middle to upper market target and cooperate with Dian Pelangi as their brand ambassador. Buttonscarves is one of the products that implements social media marketing using influencers. Based on its Instagram followers, Buttonscarves has the highest number of Instagram followers among other clothing brands.

One of the Instagram influencers who is currently the most successful fashion designer is Dian Pelangi. The @dianpelangi Instagram account has successfully become a Brand Ambassador of @buttonscarvesbeauty products with followers reaching 5,1M and has succeeded consistently in creating content that gets a significant level of engagement. Customer enthusiasm can be felt when customers comment about the satisfaction of purchasing Buttonscarves products and comment on posts on the @dianpelangi Instagram account stating

that they have bought and received satisfaction. This can happen not only because of the quality of the product but also because of the influence of communication skills, socialization skills, and creativity possessed by Dian Pelangi. By analyzing the dynamics of this popular Instagram account, this study aims to gain insight into the impact of parasocial relationship involvement on purchase decisions in versatile scale buying Buttonscarves products. The range of substance and interaction that @dianpelangi accounts with makes it an ideal person to explore the relationship between consumer engagement and brand success in the digital age.
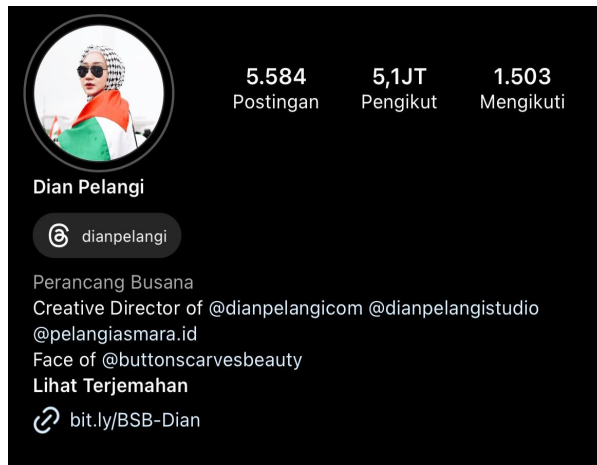

Figure 1. 2

Figure from: Instagram @dianpelangi

This research is a modified replication study (Su et al., 2021) to ensure that previous studies are consistent. The purpose of this study will focus on investigating the relationship between parasocial relationships, informational influence, perceived credibility, and purchase decisions moderated by online comments. Therefore, further study is needed to understand that Parasocial Relationships are very important and cannot be underestimated, especially by social media influencers (Ashraf et al., 2023).

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background that has been described, the formulation of the problem studied is as follows:

1. Does Task Attraaction affect on Parasocial Relationships?

2. Does Social Attraction have affect on Parasocial Relationships?

3. Does Physical Attraction affect on Parasocial Relationships?

4. Does Parasocial Relationship affect on informational influence?

5. Does Parasocial Relationship affect on perceived credibility?

6. Do Online comments moderate the affect of Parasocial Relationships on informational influence?

7. Do Online comments moderate the affect of Parasocial Relationships on perceived credibility?

8. Does Informational Influence affect on Purchase Decisions?

9. Does perceived credibility affect on purchase Decisions?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the background that has been described and the problems raised, this study aims to:

1. To Analyze the effect of Task Attraction on Parasocial Relationship

2. To Analyze the effect of Social Attraction on Parasocial Relationship

3. To Analyze the effect of Physical Attraction on Parasocial Relationship

4. To Analyze the effect of Parasocial Relationships on Informational Influence

5. To Analyze the effect of Parasocial Relationships on Perceived Credibility

6. To Measure the effect of Online comments' moderate Parasocial Relationship on Informational Influence

7. To Measure the effect of Online Comment moderate Parasocial Relationship on Perceived Credibility

8. To Analyze the effect of Information Influence on Purchase Decision

9. To Analyze the effect of Perceived Credibility on Purchase Decision

1.4 Research Benefit

The benefits of this research are:

1. Benefits for Researchers

   The benefit of this research for researchers is to identify the influence that occurs on consumers and provide experiences to improve the ability of writers.

2. Benefits for the object of research

   The benefits of this research for the object of research are as a form of community service and individual experience to participate in supporting the development of knowledge.

3. Share Next Research

   The benefit of this research for the next study is to evaluate all shortcomings that may occur and become an overview and reference for readers.