

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The way of consuming has become increasingly complex and fascinating. According to Paterson, consumption takes on the process to use up things in the consumers' need and want (Paterson 2006). Along with the relentless relationship between humans and various needs, consumers seek a way to fulfill it (Yolanda, Nurismilida and Herwinda 2017). The change moved from the consumption which takes place to shop, to the manner of consuming something from digital marketplaces. Consumers now are provided by the electronic shopping platforms, which work literally at the tip of their thumb (Bürklin 2019). By February 2021, it is reported along with 202.6 million internet users in Indonesia, the act of purchasing a product online on any device takes 87.1% dominance (Hootsuite and We Are Social 2021). In reaction to e-commerce's development, new strategies and innovations developed. One of the strategies applied in e-commerce is to sell with some promotions in multivarious forms such as vouchers, cashback, and flash sales. This notion refers to how producers increase their market by promoting and distributing goods at deeply discounted prices (Joshi and Domb 2017). According to Benson, the increase of production has developed and expanded marketplaces that privilege consumers for such great offers in order to attract consumers' attention (Benson 1994).

Along with the intervention of discounts and promotions, the complexness keeps going. In today's context, promotion becomes one of the variables that might push consumers' intentions (Isabella 2012). As it requires consumers to be smart in consuming the desired product (Yolanda, Nurismilida and Herwinda 2017), they began to seek the way to satisfy their needs. One of the ways shown in the shopping activity is encompassing a variety of digital technology platforms, including social media (Niranjanamurthy, et al. 2013) via (Bürklin 2019). The notion exists as a reaction to how consumers are frequently exposed to information about products, consumption-related activities, and the market issues, ranging from advertisements by brands to social interactions and opinions about recent shopping experiences (Kyriakopoulou and Kitsios 2017) by the consumers themselves. At the same time, social media technologies have transformed people's lives on a daily basis (Tajvidi, et al. 2018), so that people are more willing to share and seek information on these platforms (Lin and Wang 2020) via (Luo, et al. 2021). In the era of social media interactivity, it is insisting individuals consume a certain cultural artifact (Featherstone 2007) via (Destiny 2019) as well as the need to be a part of a social network (Ayuni 2020). An interesting example is the engagement of consumers on social media. Self-proclaimed themselves as discount hunters (DF Group 2021), consumers gathered themselves to virtual network-based entities, specifically social media, and interacted with each other as well as build up their networks (Dessart, Veloutsou and & Morgan-Thomas 2015) (Khan 2017).

The phenomenon is widely found in the interaction by the consumers through various platforms of social media while claiming their identity as discount hunters.

The existence of the social media-based entity to gather consumers as the discount hunters expand the consumption practice through the influence of their interaction on discounted goods information. Through this study, the researcher focuses on the Telegram-based group called DISCOUNTFESS (DF). DISCOUNTFESS is the type of virtual-based community forum that provides a place for its members. DF began in the Twitter platform by 2019, which catered to the needs of the discount hunters who wanted to interact about discounted goods-related information. In April 2021, the Twitter platform got suspended due to unknown reasons. Therefore, through the quick development, it has now occurred in the Telegram-based group which utilized the group, channel, and bot features provided by the application. In the more than 8000 members in the group, the interaction occurred in the real-time two ways communication with similar interests and passion for interacting, socializing (Lin and Li 2017), and building the concept of many-to-many communication regarding discounted goods-related information (Ayuni 2020), including their personal opinion, thoughts, and even questions. There, the Telegram channel and bot are used as the supporting communication tools which helped the discount hunters to communicate their consumption in discounts in the group.

The DF group in the Telegram platform has become the medium for consumers to provide any information related to discounted goods, including the price and the link of the E-Commerce to get the goods for each other (ibid). Moreover, the information included discounted products of make-up, skincare, fashion, food, even hospitality and services (Nagari 2020). Through the information transaction among the discount hunters, there is an epitomized consumer culture that deals with the

identity position of the consumers. It is presented in how people, who gather themselves in the virtual-based entity of discount hunters, begin to develop a way to consume which expands and leads them toward the symbolic acts of consumption. Armstrong and Hagel support this phenomenon as they stated that virtual networks emerge a broad subculture, which results in the creation of virtual-based social entities in order to pursue specific needs for communication, information, and entertainment that connect people (Hagel and Armstrong 1997)

To elaborate, these discount hunters actively engage with each other within their interaction regarding discounted goods in the form of text-based interaction. Later on, others can give a reaction or response to the peers' posts and shopping experiences (Schau, Muñiz and & Arnould 2009) (Habibi, Laroche and & Richard 2016). To be more precise, they are interacting in the form of a real-time conversation in the DF group. Through the help of Telegram BOT assistant throughout the group, the consumers have their dialogues, in which they reply to each other and have their discussion about related stuff (Dwityas and Briandana 2020). Therefore, the cycle is worked continuously. One of the highlights of this study is the interaction regarding discounted goods inside DF stop on the practice of informing. While Hagel and Armstrong suggest that social entity interaction based on a visual-based network primarily facilitates business transactions to each member (Hagel and Armstrong 1997), there is no selling and buying activity that occurs in the interaction inside the DF group. DF merely becomes the place of interaction between consumers to consumers, which keeps its function to inform each other about discounted goods-related. Moreover, collectively, these discount

hunters began to share a belief in which they produce something beyond consuming through their consumption practices.

The study focus rises when the researcher sees unique modifications and variations in the way this type of consumer consumes. Throughout the existence of DF as the discount hunters entity, consumers began to develop themselves in building a practice for their consumption. They have developed themselves from passive consumers to more aware, yet active consumers. Paterson stated consumption emulates a complex dialogue and transaction within a social group (Paterson 2006, 7), which leads the members to share certain positive beliefs for the entity. Indeed, it is supported by the collective belief within the whole entity that they are a benefited consumers with the same interest through the internet (Hsiao and Chiou 2012). Here, the researcher concerns the issue of consumption occurring within consumers who claimed themselves as discount hunters, as mentioned previously. As has been mentioned before, the DF has become interesting since the establishment of the entity allows the consumers to interact, questioning, and discussing in real-time about discounted products they have bought and they are going to buy in an easy and efficient way. DF members are welcomed to share and show off their purchased discounted goods along the way DF works. Along the way, the interaction became their guidance in their consumption. The interaction benefits one to other consumers in order to seek more and more discounted goods. All in all, the process of consuming continuously grows beyond what it means to be. Several factors support these consumers in creating a way of consumption, which features social dialogues within the consumers that later produce personal

pleasure, which expands their consumption even more. Thus, the entity becomes a significant focus of this research.

According to Paterson, consumption emulates both conscious and unconscious processes, which lead to a complex dialogue and transaction to do with identity, status, position, aspiration within a social group (Paterson 2006). Paterson asserts that the consumers are able to be creative in positioning themselves as rational agents who shape their identity within a social group through the use, abuse, and display of certain commodities (Paterson 2006, 142). Thus, the consumers build a bond with others in doing the act of complex consumption. The meaning is dispersed among the entities, thus producing a culture. The notion is strengthened by saying that the consumer culture that works in society refers to subconscious thoughts, feelings, and desires driving the consumers' purchase act (Lindström 2008). In other words, consumers collectively have their desires to consume in their subconsciousness.

The issue of consumerism can not be separated from our social life (Salsabila 2019). Therefore, the interaction and the consumption that occurred by the discount hunters contributed constantly in everyday life. Hence, the existence of this kind of consumers who gathered themselves on a virtual-based entity and the interaction that occurs inside is an interesting existed artifact. Paterson stated that the definition of 'everyday' is indeed a simplistic, common activity that happens with great frequency (Paterson 2006). However, the notion of every day is reflexive. It reveals a series of assumptions, problems, and further questions (ibid). He argues, since it works closely with us, we often trivialize it. The ease of understanding the notion

between 'everyday life' and 'consumption' should not blind us to the complexities behind these acts of consumption (Paterson 2006). Consumption may be related to culture, which has a powerful impact on regulating human behavior (Nayeem 2012). This means that consumption works relate closely with everyday life. The cycle of consumption in everyday life has become a continuous culture that produces something beyond a simplistic consumption act. This gradually led to the tension in questioning consumers' identity; whether consumers are suckers, the blinded consumers or consumers are savvy, the creative individuals that negotiate their consumption.

This phenomenon, then, creates something to do with the identity and their position among consumers that leads to symbolic consumption. The consumption itself emerges as a cultural concern that relates closely with meaning. It becomes an issue that deals with how products are consumed and meaning are attached toward the object through the process of consumption (du Gay et. al. 1997). de Certeau also supported the issue as he stated the idea of consumption, which cultural studies concerned, deals with the 'social' meanings of a text, how the text is appropriated, and used in the context of everyday life consumption (Permata 2012). In light of the notion, the researcher raises the presumption that consumers who gathered themselves in the discount hunters' entity in the Telegram-based network are doing an active process in attaching meaning to a complex consumption act.

Several previous studies related to a virtual-based entity and the users—members—consumption have been conducted from various perspectives. The quantitative studies conducted by Nagari (2020), Ayuni (2020), Triwidisari (2017)

focusing on the relationship between certain social media platforms and the role of consumers in the respect of their consumers' behavior. Nagari (202) is focusing the discussion on complex information transactions between a Twitter-based forum named *@BerburuSale* and its followers. Meanwhile, Ayuni (2020) explored the participatory process of consumers in social media-based virtual communities (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram) and its relationship with social eWOM, image, trust, and purchase intention on a particular brand or product. Triwidisari (2017) discusses the effect of consumers' participation in social media, specifically Instagram, on their behavior of hedonic consumption and its motive through students of *Universitas Negeri Semarang*. On the other hand, a qualitative study conducted by Dwityas and Briandana (2020) and Moll (2017) in the similar viewpoint of consumers and their active role in their consumption. Dwityas and Briandana (2020) focusing on the consumer journey, specifically on the decision-making process, for culinary products among Instagram-based JKTFoodBang community within stages of consumer behavior by Kotler (2016); awareness, appeal, ask, act, and advocate. Furthermore, Moll (2017) conducted a study concerning the consumption pattern of a game-based virtual community, DOTA 2 Trade Center Indonesia (D2TCI), members and the meaning embedded behind resulting in the display of prestige and wealth.

Based on the previous similar studies, it is shown that consumers have taken their role, actively, to redefine their consumption in virtual network areas. Through the studies, it is also shown that motivation, reason, output, and process of consumption are being explored through various perspectives. When it comes to an

academic study of consumption, the relationship between people, their consumption of certain things, and the motivation behind which leads to the process among their social group are being the major benchmark to achieve their objectification in revealing their consumers' behavior. Moreover, this kind of study can be observed in any majors with various methodologies and perspectives.

However, although the similarity of issue and object works relatively same, there is less research in cultural studies viewpoint which seeks the process of uncovering hidden complexity and assumption behind these acts of consumption other than study conducted by Moll (2017) and Dwityas and Briandana (2020). Other than Moll (2017) and Dwityas and Briandana (2020), the rest stopped their focus on answering what motives behind, the reason why, and the superficial consumers' thoughts of the consumption act without seeking the complex process behind. Thus, by focusing the study through an aim to seek how consumers valued their consumption, this study filled the gap by gaining excess results such as motive, feeling, and meaning obtained in the acts of consumption. This study also filled the gap on the related studies conducted before by Dwityas and Briandana (2020) and Moll (2017) by driving its study's object on Indonesian social media users' act of consumption through a similar virtual-based entity following a study by Nagari (2020) with the different perspective and medium.

Hence, the study focuses on how the consumption practice of consumers as discount hunters within their consumption of discounted goods both on the interaction of information or the commodity. One of the approaches to achieve the study's objectification is by an oversight on the consumption practice and their

negotiation process to produce meaning on their consumption. This study is utilizing the way Paterson outlined two competing views of the consumers; sucker and savvy (Paterson 2006, 141). The perspective gained the consumers' pattern and characteristics wrapped in the acts of the consumption process to see the types of consumers. Therefore, in the respect of this setting, we can generate more fine-tuned tactics that characterize consumers throughout the system (Paterson 2006). This study, then, utilizes Paterson's idea.

This study seeks the grand design of the consumers' act, which defines their identity position. The excess finding described how consumers proceed with value in their consumption. This covers motive, feeling, meaning, and the process toward the object. It reveals the consumers' behavior of consumption through their process that might have been built under the system of consumer culture. This study investigates the particular actions, which have some kind of general, a constant character that can be identified with its intellectually coherent feature can be expressed as a single system of beliefs and values (Paterson 2006)

Hence, from the background context of the study that has been elaborated above, this study aims to reveal the issue of shifted consumption among consumers in the DF Telegram group as a discount hunter. To be more precise, this study highlights how consumers are able to develop themselves from the passive role in their consumption, to be the consumers who are more aware and active throughout the consumption process. Here, this study also aims to reveal the act of consumption among the consumers through the transaction of discounted goods information and how the meaning-making process they can obtain influences their consumption

behavior. Since consumption becomes a cultural concern (Permata 2012), the way consumption is practiced, how it is being consumed, and the meaning attached through the processes of consumption is considered important (du Gay et. al. 1997). This study also declaims how Tiurma (2009) stated that society has a materialistic tendency, a great collective desire to have things without regard to the needs, which leads consumers to atypical behavior (Triwidiyasari and Nurkhin 2017). Thus, with the strain of Cultural Studies, this study will emphasize the meaning behind it (Barker 2004). In addition, to pursue the aim of the study, consumers that gathered themselves on the discount hunters' entity within the DISCOUNTFESS Telegram group become the target of this study. Moreover, this study relies on virtual ethnography, by which the social-media-based entity, specifically Telegram, mentioned, becomes the object of the study. The study also utilizes the theory stated by Mark Paterson through *Consumption and Everyday Life* (2006). Furthermore, in-depth interview practice is conducted for each informant selected with the purposive sampling method in order to effectively point out the issue discussed in this study. This approach has a point to gain in-depth data from the culture's performers to understand their point-of-view about the phenomenon linked to their everyday life.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

1. How does the consumption practice in discounted goods occur among discount hunters?
2. How is the meaning-making process obtained by the discount hunters in their consumption practices?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Based on the statement of the problems that have been mentioned above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To reveal how is the consumption practice of consumers as discount hunters through the complex information transaction of discounted goods and promotion among the Indonesian social media users.
2. To reveal the meaning the consumers produce when they participate in the social network entity when it shifts their consumption behavior.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to acknowledge the issue of consumption that occurred in the network-based social entity and the way it shifts their consumption behavior. The relation between people, consumption, and social media nowadays work closely as they are taking an active role in every position in their everyday life. Hence, it creates a point of view about how hidden complexities have worked along with our ordinary life. In addition, the study may encourage the readers to understand what drives and is driven by the consumers in their consumption. Moreover, this study may also give a new perspective to the readers that social media-based community and interaction occur inside does exist and its users do consume things that some people think may not be useful and beneficial but, in fact, it is the part of their everyday life. It is expected for this study to contribute to the development of cultural studies as this issue is close to society happening in today's age, especially in social media. Lastly, this study is also expected to give more

significant involvement and information toward further studies concerning consumption and virtual-based objects.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

Consumption : The act of consuming, spanning conscious, and unconscious levels (Baudrillard 1998)

Consumer Culture : The society that is doing excessive and unbalanced consumption is not only based on what they need but also based on the objects' value and popular lifestyle. (Featherstone 2007)

Discountfess : Discountfess is a group of discount hunters based on Telegram platforms, which facilitates the consumers to build a real-time interaction about discounted goods and promotion consumption from one to other consumers.

Virtual Ethnography : A new form of ethnography as a reaction to the need to study communities in which the use of electronic communication such as provided by computer networks are routine (Hine 2000)

Virtual Community : A social network of individuals who interact through specific social media, potentially crossing geographical and political boundaries in order to pursue mutual interests or goals (Nwokeafor 2015)