

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

In more than two decades, the internet has undoubtedly turned into the definitive technology of people around the world (Athique, 2013). It provides more opportunities for the internet users to access information without limitations of distance and time. To this day, people become more reliant on this technology and engage in various forms of digital communications such as virtual meetings, classes, and social networking in local and global scope daily. In the perspective of social sciences, the presence of the internet is seen as something different from the earlier “mass media” technologies as they rely on the individualized interface and decentred structure (Cavanagh, 2007; Fuchs, 2008 as cited in Athique, 2013).

Features in this new media were not available in the ‘old’ media, thus making the internet receive global enthusiasm from people around the world. It is proven by the ever-increasing number of internet users in many countries, including Indonesia. According to the data collected by *interworldstats* in Kusnandar’s (2021), Indonesia is enlisted among the top three Asian countries with the most number of internet users. In the first position is China with its 989.08 millions of users by 2021. India places the second position with 755.82 million of internet users or more than thrice the number of which in Indonesia, with 212.35 million people in March 2021 (Kusnandar, 2021).

The internet today is different from the previous versions; it is more updated and interactive. It can be seen through the presence of social media with its ever-increasing number of users. It “allows for more free and varied interaction between users” (Olsson, 2013). Social media is often associated with people’s liberation and power (Bolter as cited in Bouvier, 2015) because unlike the traditional mass media, in this “online public sphere” every individual is a potential producer, instead of merely consumers of the given information. Every user has the same chance to express his thoughts and be seen by the audience on the platform. This new phenomenon makes more people enthusiastic to use social media. By January 2021, *databoks.katadata.co.id* reported that approximately 4.2 billions of the world’s

population is engaging with social media and this accounts for 13.2% significant growth of the number in the previous year (Bayu, 2021).

As social media has been much developing, interest in this field of study has also grown and studies regarding the relation between social media and consumerism are currently developing. Previous research has been conducted on consumerism, women, and social media. Krzyżanowska (2020)'s study highlights the normalization of consumption practices as performed by the celebrity-mothers in Sweden and Poland in the social media platform. The study reveals that they use their power to commodify the discourse of motherhood and link it with material-goods consumption, excluding women who are incapable of following the celebrity-mother lifestyle and leading people further into the adoption of a consumption-related mindset.

There are several types of social media, which can be categorized into three main groups. They are social networking sites, microblogs, and media sharing sites (McCay-Peet & Quan-Haase, 2017). Facebook and LinkedIn are examples of the social networking sites, while Twitter and Tumblr are regarded as microblogs. Lastly, media sharing sites are involving Pinterest and YouTube. According to Burges and Green (2009), YouTube is already a crucial component of the digital media revolution that is disrupting traditional media. As a developing new medium, Youtube places a high priority on its connection to the outside world. As in many other instances, Youtube was used as a political weapon to spread a message that would resonate with many users.

As of July 2021, YouTube has become the most popular platform, surpassing the other competitor, Facebook. It has the highest penetration rate and gains major success with 2.6 billion active users worldwide and 170 million active social media users in Indonesia (Wolff, 2021). YouTube allows people of different kinds of backgrounds to be increasingly visible and become a major part of media content (Murthy, 2012, as cited in Bouvier, 2015). This new media enhances the emergence and an ever-increasing number of microcelebrities or influencers, simply called the YouTubers.

However, as YouTube grows into a Google dominated platform (Dijk, 2013), competition among YouTubers is inevitable. With the collaboration between the platform and advertisers for the video contents displayed in the platform, people have to follow the flow of capitalism. Number of viewers and advertisers become the most important points in the video

production as people try to chase fame and profit. YouTubers with a high number of viewers and subscribers are usually perceived as admirable and reliable, thus having power in modifying people's behavior in areas like fashion, lifestyle, beauty, and many more. They give insight into the goods they use or give practical advice or suggestions about things they should or should not do on certain occasions (Hassan et al, 2021).

One of the most prominent individual YouTubers in Indonesia with millions of followers is Muhammad Attamimi Halilintar, or popularly called as Atta. He was born in Dumai in 1994 as the eldest son in the family. Atta has been part of the creator community since 2012 when he established his first channel called *Mattasuq*. He created this channel to express his interest in editing and uploading some videos about soccer. Unfortunately, the channel did not gain much popularity as it had only 700 subscribers (Kumampung, 2019). Few years later, he registered a new channel on YouTube in January 2014 and named it "AH" to represent Atta Halilintar himself as the channel's owner and creator. In his preliminary appearance, Atta is highly recognized for his trademark headband and ever-changing hair color (Thee, 2020). In terms of content, he mostly published prank-videos and luxurious lifestyle; displaying a good amount of luxuries, from sports cars, homes, to branded products. Recently, with the adjustment YouTube made, this channel also makes some changes by showing a different image of Atta and exploring the theme about Atta's family.

Most of the published videos in AH channel take the vlog genre. Vlogging or video blogging is a type of blog in video format which allows its viewers to get insight into the influencer's daily lives. It usually applies simple shooting techniques, procedures and editing. A YouTuber who is doing vlogging is called a vlogger. There are lots of things that can be discussed as a vlogger, such as politics, beauty, culinary, sports, lifestyle, and many more (Burgess & Green, 2009, as cited in Mahameruaji, et al 2018). Recent content of AH vlog is mostly about Atta's daily life. Through the diverse topics of everyday life, the channel brings Atta to be the first creator in Southeast Asia whose channel is to surpass 10 million subscribers in 2019, therefore earning him a Diamond Play Button (Matapublik, 2019). Subscriptions and view-count are the most important elements of YouTube engagement metric. Practically, content creators with a high number of viewers will be listed as the top of the platform's recommendation list on YouTube searches (Barti, 2018).

In this research, I am interested in using AH YouTube channel as the source of data for my study. The reasons why I specifically choose AH channel is that the channel is influential among Indonesian people as shown by the number of its subscribers. As of July 2021, nearly 30 million subscribers engaged in his channel (*Capai 27 juta subscriber, intip gaji Atta Halilintar dari YouTube, 2021*). Additionally, AH channel has established itself as a dynamic channel in the sense that it shows high productivity and diverse topics. It has been recorded that AH YouTube channel has shared 1326 videos by July 2021, some of which are curated as viral videos on the “Trending” page (*Capai 27 juta subscriber, intip gaji Atta Halilintar dari YouTube, 2021*).

One of the significant aspects of AH channel’s videos is their prominent celebration of the consumer culture as shown by the influencer who is also the main role in the video narrative. Due to his popularity and economic power, he is able to devote all of his resources, including money, to celebrating consumer culture. He performs some actions directed to other persons, mostly female, in the family, and simultaneously participates in the lifestyle characterized by the contemporary consumer culture, such as purchasing, giving, promoting, and talking about some luxurious branded products. Moreover, it is identified that the supporting female actors are always involved in the lifestyle as they desire for the products, receive and wear them. The whole contents display many popular brands including *Apple, Hermès, and Rolex*.

Among many videos in AH channel, this research seeks to study three videos which share similar content within the context of Atta’s family. Two of the video contents explicitly reveal the image of the gifts on the thumbnail. The producer even dramatized it by mentioning the price value of the products. The first video being analyzed is published under the title of *“Bunda Ashanty Nangis. Surprise dari Atta Aurel”* (Mom Ashanty sobbing incessantly, getting a surprise from Atta Aurel). This video was posted in November 2021 and has gained 442K views in 2022.



Figure 1.1 The first video thumbnail

Source: AH. (2021, November 4). *Bunda Ashanty nangis. Surprise dari Atta Aurel*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQWKvFgusiM>

The video begins with Atta and his wife, namely Aurel, in an elevator of an apartment building. They are on their way to surprise Atta's mother-in-law, namely Ashanty. Ashanty looks surprised to see them. The couple hands in an orange paper bag with *Hermès* logo to Ashanty. After reading the greeting card, Ashanty opens the box and finds a small-sized orange *Hermès* handbag inside. To her surprise, a moment later, her husband, namely Anang, came up from another side of the room bringing a similar gift in different colors.

The second video is "*Atta Aurel Kasih Kado Mama Papa Jam Ratusan Juta*" (*Atta Aurel Give Mom and Dad Hundred-Million-Rupiah Watches as Gifts*) which was published in the same month as the first video and reached 450K views. Similar to the first video, this video is about gift-giving but presented in the form of a fun birthday game for parents. Atta creates this fun game to celebrate his parents' birthday. Each of them is asked to eliminate one at a time until there is only one box left. In the end, Atta's parents find out that the remaining box contains a *Rolex* watch inside.



Figure 1.2. The second video thumbnail

Source: AH. (2021, October 31). *Atta Aurel kasih kado mama papa jam ratusan juta*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPTt691YyOQ>

In this game, both parents get a pair of *Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust* watches. He thanks the couple and prays for them in return for their generosity. Atta explains to his mother, whom he called *ummi*, that this watch is bigger than the other *Rolex* she got the previous year. The current *Rolex* watches are a couple watches and the latest edition with luxurious design.

The third video is published under the title of "*Susu Ameena Langsung Lancar. Atta Kasih Tas Impian Aurel 1M Lebih*" (Smooth breastfeeding for Ameena. Atta gives Aurel her dream bag, worth more than 1 billion). It appeared in AH channel in March 2022 and got the most audience, with approximately 2.7 million views.



Figure 1.3. The third video thumbnail

Source: AH. (2022, March 3). *Susu Ameena langsung lancar. Atta kasih tas impian Aurel 1M lebih*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q10tA-cnnDk>

This video begins with Atta's narrative about a *Croco Hermès* bag his wife has always wanted to have before giving birth to Ameena. In this content, the producer adds a pre-recorded scene showing the moment of him selecting the branded bags. Atta frequently mentions that this bag is a reward for Aurel for bravely delivering and taking care of her baby.

The three videos under study share the narratives about gift-giving in the family. With the recurring narrative in AH channel, viewers are accustomed to the world of consumption and women as the participants in the consumption practices. They watch and consume the content without much thought without much realizing that this video content conveys many ideological social practices that have power to shape their mind and influence their perspective in seeing the world.

The objective of this research is to analyze the construction of consumerism in the social media as well as the image of women as closely related to the consumption of branded products. Aiming to reach the objective of the study, I use a critical discourse analysis (CDA) as it is able to see how social power and power abuse are produced in a text within the social context. It also sees how discourse conveys certain ideology and is able to shape the society.

CDA is defined as an attempt of 'denaturalizing' the ideologies in the orderliness of interaction (Fairclough, 1941). Thus, it is possible to use CDA to see the social media construction of consumerism and image of women in AH channel. The analysis in this study will be using the verbal expressions of the participants in each video as the data because language is a form of social practice. It is a powerful means through which particular ideologies become dominant in the society (Rahimi & Riasati, 2011). Briefly, CDA appears to be an adequate investigation tool to analyze the selected three videos as it enables me to reveal the relationship between language, power, and ideologies embedded in the videos.

As a popular YouTuber, Atta Halilintar has the power to construct his text in such a way to influence people into accepting a particular ideology. However, it is inevitable that people may reject the dominant ideology offered in the text. To prevent this, Atta as the text producer needs to construct the ideology in a subtle way through some practices that make people voluntarily participate in some cultural practices and unconsciously consume the ideology. Some of these practices are influenced by the social reality surrounding the YouTuber.

Among many of his videos that display bits and pieces of the YouTuber's everyday experience, gift-giving is still the most recurring activity in Atta's videos. The three videos under study contain the recurring appearance of luxurious branded products and women to play the role as the gift recipient. The notions of gifts in the form of branded items and female recipients in the video trigger an in-depth study of the construction of consumerism and image of women closely related to the consumption of branded products.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

This research seeks to study consumerism as a lifestyle enacted by the women on the videos created by Atta as the content creator. The recurring theme and portrayal of consumerism on the selected videos provide data to answer the following research questions:

1. How is consumerism constructed in the selected video contents under study?
2. How does the image of women as constructed in the videos promote the ideology of consumerism?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Through this research, I conduct a qualitative content analysis of three videos published to the social media users by AH YouTube channel. The purpose of the presented study is to find out the way AH Channel constructs the ideology of consumerism and the image of women closely related to the consumption of branded products.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The recurring portrayal of luxurious lifestyles has become a common practice in social media recently. This study looks into the construction of consumerism as well as the image of women in three videos of AH channel. Through this research, I hope to establish a critical understanding on social media contents and raise people's awareness that they are not neutral. They attempt to normalize a certain attitude and influence the audience to agree to a particular ideology (cf. Fairclough, 1989).

1.5. Scope and Limitation

The scope of the study is in the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) study. The object of this research is limited to the three selected videos which are published in AH YouTube channel under the titles of *"Bunda Ashanty Nangis. Surprise dari Atta Aurel"* (Mom Ashanty sobbing incessantly, getting a surprise from Atta Aurel), *"Atta Aurel Kasih Kado Mama Papa Jam Ratusan Juta"* (Atta Aurel give Mom and Dad hundred-million-rupiah watches as gifts), and *"Susu Ameena Langsung Lancar. Atta Kasih Tas Impian Aurel 1M Lebih"* (Smooth breastfeeding for Ameena. Atta gives Aurel her dream bag, worth more than 1 billion)." Due to the limited research material, the result of the research does not fully represent the subject and therefore cannot be generalized to other material.

The selection of suitable data for the research is limited to the visual and verbal data that are deemed able to reflect the consumerism and image of women in the three videos of AH channel. All the data can be found in the three videos as mentioned above. The selected data is analyzed in its textual level, discursive practice and socio-cultural practice. At the textual level, I focus on the textual structure depicted in the visual image and verbal utterances of the video participants (Atta, Aurel, and Ashanty). The interpretation and explanation stage

will be elaborated after the textual structures have been analysed. The discussion will explain how the text is influenced by and simultaneously, influences the social reality.

This research focuses on the discussion of consumerism and image of women as depicted in the video from the perspective of an Indonesian viewer. The choice to focus on AH channel means that the conclusion resulting from the analysis is specific to the context of AH video production and might not be applicable to other social media channels. Moreover, even though the research deals with several luxurious fashion brands as shown by the participants in the videos, it restricts not to focus on other luxurious brands just on a passing thought in the content.

1.6. Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter covers the introduction comprising the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and organization of the study. The second chapter describes the review of related literature which discusses the theory of critical discourse analysis (CDA), ideology of consumerism, and previous studies in the related fields. The third chapter presents the research methodology consisting of the approach of the study, data collection, data analysis, and presentation of analysis result. The fourth chapter discusses the findings and discussions. The conclusion of the analysis is discussed in the fifth chapter.