CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The Social norms in our society have constructed certain criteria of women's physical appearance to be called beautiful. The definition of beauty has been limited for women to be feminine and young, having thin body, symmetrical face, and clean appearance (Jessica, 2020). This standard of beauty that has been internalized by women is found to cause women's cronic disatisfaction towards their body appearance. As mentioned in a study by Heinberg and Thompson (1995), women who are exposed to thin-ideal images on media are more likely to be depressed and experience disatisfaction with their bodies (Strahan, et al., 2006).

This unrealistic standard of beauty has been made over the years by the media (Oakes, 2019). The mainstream media platforms such as magazines and television present the portrayal of ideal women that leads to the internalization of the beauty ideals in our society (Martinez, et al., 2016). That certain portrayal then has been considered as the standard to be fulfilled by women to be called beautiful. Furthermore, this statement is supported by a survey of 227 female students which found that women tend to negatively compare the idealized image on the media with their own appearance (Oakes, 2016)

The comparison then further leads to body dissatisfaction to women that is reportedly increasing mental health problems especially among teens and young adults. Several serious problems such as eating disorder and depression have emerged as a result of the unhealthy diet undergo by women in order to fin in society's beauty standard (Martinez, et al., 2016). Body dissatisfaction also lowers one's self-esteem causing them to lose confidence with their body appearance. This situation then triggered the emergence of a body positivity movement that aims to challenge the society's beauty standard which has been a serious problem in our society.

According to Marie Denee, the founding editor of The Curvy Fashionista and Plus-size Style, body positivity means accepting our body including the flaws as worthy of love, existing and receiving the same value as others (Cwynar-horta, 2016). The movement aims to achieve some goals that include addressing society's body standards, promoting the acceptance of all bodies regardless of size, shape, and type, also challenge the way people see their body in order to build up their confidence and self-love (Dejesus, 2020). Having similar goal, the body positivity movement rooted from the fat liberation or also known as the fat acceptance movement which was initiated during the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s (Cwynar-horta, 2016).

The term Body positivity emerged in 1996 from a website named *thebodypositive.org* which was founded by psychotherapists, Connie Sobczak and Elizabeth Scott. This website provide treatment for teens and

young adults with eating disorders to encourage them in gaining confidence, experiencing self-love, and embracing their unique beauty (Chrisler, 2014). Sobczak said that body positivity is for everyone with all body sizes, its for all genders and ethnicities. Courses and training that are provided on this website enable people to embody the body-positive movement and further become the facilitator to spread the movement to a wider community.

The Body positivity movement has continued to thrive over the years and expand to many different shapes and forms. However, the body positivity movement still preserves the same goal that is to encourage people in appreciating bodies of all types, sizes, and appearances (Cwynar-horta, 2016). As of today, this movement is getting bigger with the help of social media that has become the platform to spread out the movement. The features on social media have made it easier for the users to get exposed to more diverse content compare the traditional media such as television and magazines.

Among the social media platforms, Instagram has the most prominent role in spreading the movement since it is now ranked as the most popular photo and video-based social media platform (Statista, 2020). As result, millions of posts containing body-positive content are found on Instagram with some specific hashtags. The hashtags are for instance #bodypositive that surpassed over 16 million posts (Instagram, August 2021), #bodypositivity that elicited 8 million posts (Instagram, August 2021), and many more body positive-related hashtags that gain massive attention from Instagram users.

These hashtags are accompanied by photos of them showing their imperfection that aims to challenge the mainstream standard of beauty in our society. By uploading this kind of picture on Instagram, they are expressing their confidence despite their body appearance that does not fit in society's standards.

The popularity of this movement on Instagram cannot be separated from the role of the influencers who join this movement and make it a trend to become more known to the broader audience. Among the influencers is Clara Sutantio or Clara Tan who is known to be a professional fashion model. Clara Tan is an Indonesian fashion model who has successfully achieved the top 4 titles on Asia's Next Top Model Cycle 5. As a professional fashion model, she is stereotyped to have an ideal body appearance as constructed by society. Surprisingly, what she posts on Instagram is not merely about her perfect body as a model but also her flaws and imperfections.

It is found that Clara has been shared these body-positive-related contents since 2018. However, her post in October 2020 has become the starting point for her to be more active in spreading the body positivity message. The post contains 10 photos of Clara showing drastic changes in her appearance after gained weight. Clara shared a story through the caption telling her followers about her weight gain and her feelings about the drastic change in her appearance. Ever since this post, Clara becomes more frequently posting body-positive content to share and celebrate her imperfections.

Several studies related to Instagram and body image especially body positivity were conducted. The first study is entitled *#bodypositivity: A content Analysis of Body Positive Accounts on Instagram* by Rachel Cohen, Lauren Irwin, Toby Newton-John, and Amy Slater. This study is a content analysis that aimed to investigate prominent body-positive Instagram accounts related to how their contents align with the theoretical core elements of positive body image. This study included 32 popular body-positive Instagram accounts that are selected with purposive sampling. Twenty posts from each account were analyzed to investigate how closely those posts are aligned with the theoretical concept of body positivity. As the result, this study found that the contents on body positive accounts show a broad range of body size and appearance. Moreover, the majority of their posts conveyed messages that aligned with theoretical definitions of positive body image.

The other study is conducted by Solvita Belinska which focused on woman's body representation on Instagram. Belinska conducted a content analysis on a fitness influencer, Michelle Lewin. A total of 31 images posted by Michelle Lewin from January 1st until April 30th 2018 were analyzed related to the elements of objectification. The components that were analyzed are the engagement of the posts that included likes and comments. This study was identifying the activities involved in the selected images posted by Michelle Lewin. Images that contain a photograph of Michelle Lewin were coded using a coding scheme adapted from Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2016) and Smith and Sanderson (2015). This study found that three-quarters of the

images posted by Michelle Lewin were not related to fitness. It is also found that the majority of the images posted were focusing on particular body parts instead of the whole body. She was found to use her legs and breasts as the focal point in more than half of the images. These types of images were those that received the highest engagement. It is seen by the number of likes and comments that the posts had. This study concludes that Michelle Lewin depicts the 21st century's women's body ideal with her slender, curvy, and fit body.

Jasmine Fardouly, Brydie K. Willburger, and Lenny R. Vartanian conducted a study entitled Instagram Use and Young Women's Body Image Concerns and Self-Objectification: Testing Mediational Pathways" (2017). This study investigated the relationship between Instagram use, (especially related to fitspiration images) and body image concerns and self-objectification among women between the ages of 18 and 25 from the United States and Australia. Moreover, this study also examined the correlation between Instagram use and the appearance-related variables such as the internalization of the idea of beauty ideal and the tendency to compare appearance to a specific group of users on Instagram. This study involved 276 young women aged 18 to 25 who had an Instagram account as the participants. Participants filled out online surveys related to Instagram usage. The results of this study imply that Instagram usage may give a negative influence on women's appearance-related concerns. Women had internalized the idea of beauty ideal presented on Instagram and tend to compare their own

appearance to a certain group of users. Based on the results, this study also suggests that Instagram users should follow more nonappearance-related accounts to reduce appearance focus on their Instagram feeds.

Related with the three previous studies mentioned above, the present study also focuses on the representation of women's body on Instagram. However, the corpus of the studies is different since none of the studies mentioned above has covered the analysis of body positivity on an Indonesian fashion model, Clara Tan. This study uses Clara Tan's Instagram posts as the corpus that will be analyzed using two differen theories.

The present study is using descriptive analytical method and will focus on body positivity depicted on Clara Tan's Instagram posts by including both photos and captions. The data are five photos from Clara Tan's Instagram post that will be analyzed using theory of Social Semiotics by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen based on representational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction and compositional metafunction. Meanwhile, the captions will be analyzed using Systemic Functional Linguistics theory by M.A.K Halliday by focusing on the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunction.

It is interesting to study how body positivity is represented on Instagram posts because people nowadays are very active on social media especially Instagram that has become one of the most popular social media platforms. Body positivity also gradually becomes a popular topic on

Instagram in which people started to gain confidence to upload pictures that show their flaws. Clara Tan's Instagram posts as a source of data for this study could broaden the range of body-positive movement on Instagram because it is rare to find a body-positive influencer who works as a fashion model and still active in the industry. Despite her background and stereotype for being 'perfect' and fit in the mainstream standard of beauty ideals, she is brave to challenge those stereotype and encourage people to feel the same way about their body.

1.2 Research Question

How does Clara Tan represent body positivity through her Instagram posts?

1.3 Purpose of The Study

This study aims to uncover the representation of body positivity in Clara Tan Instagram posts.

1.4 Scope of The Study

This study focuses on the representation of body positivity on Clara Tan Instagram posts. The coverage of this study comes from five posts on Clara Tan's instagram account (@clarasutantio) that are chosen by purpossive sampling. This study analyses both visual and verbal aspects of the chosen instagram posts.

1.5 Significance of The study

This study intends to broaden reader's horizon in understanding representation of body positivity on instagram posts through Social Semiotics theory by Kress and Van Leeuwen also Systemic Functional Linguistics theory by M.A.K Halliday. The writer also hopes that this study will be useful as a source to the future study related to women's body positivity.