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Role of Parasocial Interaction and Credibility in Beauty Influencer to Improve Purchase Intention

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Abstract
Beauty brand owners are trying to increase the sales growth rate, which has been unstable due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study explores the intention to purchase beauty products through the role of beauty influencers by examining parasocial interaction and credibility factors. Eight hypotheses were tested and analyzed using a structural equation model. The study showed that parasocial interaction and credibility positively impact purchase intention. Meanwhile, only social attractiveness influences parasocial interaction, while physical and social attractiveness affects credibility.

Keywords: Attractiveness; Parasocial Interaction; Credibility; Purchase Intention;

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1.0 Introduction
The cosmetics industry in Indonesia has a potential market to flourish. Data from Statista predict that the growth is around 4,59 percent per year from 2023-2028 (Nababan, 2023). This growth strengthened many local and international brands to penetrate Indonesia's beauty product market and encouraged competition between brands. Therefore, beauty product brands strive to promote the values to attract women in Indonesia. Recently, beauty brand owners have utilized various platforms to communicate their value; one of the most popular platforms is YouTube. The advantage of using YouTube as a platform is that the media can simultaneously incorporate audio and video, making it more attractive. Statistica data (2019) state that there are 88 million videos that review beauty products on YouTube, which encourages the emergence of beauty influencers in Indonesia. Beauty influencer is a term that refers to a famous figure, celebrity, or someone entirely unknown as an expert in the beauty industry (Merdeka, 2021; Prabandari, 2021). By creating content related to beauty tips, they can attract much attention from social media users, who will become their followers. Hence, many brands then use numerous beauty influencers as a medium to promote their beauty products. Data from ZAP (2020) also state that 64.7% of women in Indonesia considered review before purchasing a beauty product, and 42.2% utilize beauty influencers as a reference when seeking information about beauty products. If the content uploaded by beauty influencers is interesting, it will increase the number of followers on social media and open opportunities for collaborations with various beauty brands.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a decrease in the usage of cosmetics in Indonesia, reaching 10% - 30% (Nasuha, 2021) due to changes in women's behavior in using beauty products during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many women then reduced the use of beauty products due to limited activities outside the home during the pandemic. It was because of government regulations that social restrictions

were implemented. This condition had an impact until the pandemic recovered. Beauty brand owners are trying to survive to increase the sales growth rate, which has been unstable due to the pandemic (Datanesia, 2023). Therefore, beauty product brand owners were working hard to regenerate the intention of women in Indonesia to continue to use beauty products in their daily activities.

For this reason, beauty influences have a role in persuading women in Indonesia to increase their intention to purchase beauty products. It is strengthened by De Veirman et al. (2017), who states that content creators with a certain number of subscribers can increase consumer confidence in a brand compared to advertisement created by companies. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) state that an influencer can enhance the intention to purchase by considering the parasocial interaction and credibility factors. The study's results by Ohanian (1990) also state that credibility will affect customers in evaluating a brand. Horton & Wohl (1956) reinforce that parasocial interaction is an imaginative relationship built by the audience with idolized celebrities in traditional media such as television. The relationship between them can increase the desire of the audience to believe in the information conveyed. Hence, this relationship can also encourage the desire to buy products reviewed by the persona of celebrities (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

In addition, several studies have been conducted to review the role of influencers, especially celebrities, in traditional media such as television (Khatri, (2006); Silvera & Austad (2004); Hung et al. (2011); Spry et al. (2011). However, only a few research has been conducted related to influencer reviews in digital media, especially YouTube. Owners of beauty product brands need to pay attention to the emergence of beauty influencers in terms of increasing sales due to the recovery period after COVID-19. Eventually, they can collaborate with the appropriate beauty influencers to generate more revenue. Therefore, this study examines the role of beauty influencers in increasing purchase intention through credibility and parasocial interaction approaches.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Hypotheses
The attractiveness of an influencer in social media can encourage motivation from the audience to build imaginative relationships in digital media (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). Audiences feel like they have friends in digital media. According to Horton & Wohl (1956), the imaginative relationship that occurs between the persona and the audience is known as parasocial interaction. The attractiveness of an influencer, such as a beautiful face, encourages the audience to pay more attention to all the information conveyed to form parasocial interactions (Todorov & Uleman, 2002). In addition, an attractive personality is also a factor that influences the relationship between them (Zheng et al., 2020).

H1: Physical attractiveness positively impacts parasocial interaction
H2: Social attractiveness positively impacts parasocial interaction

Similar values, desires, and hobbies between influencers and audiences are part of homophily (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). Two parties can interact because they have the same interests and hobbies. A beauty influencer can interact well with the audience when they have the same interest in maintaining their physical appearance. The audience's attention to the usage of beauty products encourages them to look for information sources that align with their current interests. When the audience finds a beauty influencer appropriate to their need, they have a close relationship with the influencer. This interaction encourages the development of a parasocial relationship between the influencer and the audience (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991), namely an imaginative one-sided relationship.

H3: Attitude Homophily positively affects parasocial interaction

Credibility occurs when someone is considered an expert in a particular field and is trusted as a source of information (Wang et al., 2008). Influencers with high credibility in the audience's perspective make them believe all the information conveyed. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) mentioned that influencers' attractiveness affects credibility. This finding is also supported by Wang and Scheinbaum (2018). Meanwhile, McCroskey et al. (1974) claimed that attractiveness can be seen from a physical, social, and task perspective. However, the most appropriate attractiveness for the beauty industry is physical and social.

H4: Physical attractiveness positively affects the credibility
H5: Social attractiveness positively affects the credibility

Previous research from Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) stated that homophily attitudes affect credibility. An influencer's credibility is visible when the influencer has expertise in the beauty sector. Similarities between the influencer and the audience, such as hobbies and interests in paying attention to physical appearance by using various beauty products, can influence trust in all the information conveyed. It can shape the audience's perception that the influencer has credibility because of their ability to explain beauty products' usage effectively.

H6: Attitude homophily positively affects the credibility

An influencer's expertise affects how the influencer conveys information well, interestingly, and reliably. When the audience sees that information about beauty products can be conveyed well and a beauty influencer seems to understand beauty products truly, this will encourage the audience's desire to purchase the product recommended by the influencer. Research from Pornpitakpan (2004) strengthens that an influencer's credibility affects purchase intentions.

H7: Credibility positively impacts purchase intention

Purnamaningsih et al. (2022) state that the relationship between influencers and their audience encourages them to increase purchase intention. Their relationship makes the audience believe influencers will recommend products that benefit them. Thus, this can foster a desire to purchase. It is also supported by research from Kim et al. (2015), which states that parasocial interaction influences purchase intention.

H8: Parasocial interaction positively impacts purchase intention

3.0 Methodology

This study used descriptive research that describes the influence among variables using a survey method. This study was conducted in Indonesia, with females over 17 years old who always pay attention to their appearance by taking care of their bodies and using make-up in daily activities, as well as subscribers of beauty influencers as respondents. Females are being used as samples rather than males because the largest market for the cosmetics industry in Indonesia is female. The sampling technique used was nonprobability sampling with a judgmental sampling method for 164 respondents. It was in line with the theory of Hair et al. (2010), which states that the minimum number of samples is five times the number of question indicators. There were 21 indicators, and the minimum number of respondents required was 105. The question indicators in this study, as illustrated in Table 1.1, were developed from several previous studies. Each indicator on the questionnaire was measured with a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), distributed online and using Bahasa as the local language.

Table 1.1 Indicators

Variable	Indicators	Sources
Physical attractiveness	4	Sokolova & Kefi (2020)
Attitude Homophily	4	Sokolova & Kefi (2020)
Social Attractiveness	4	Sokolova & Kefi (2020)
Credibility	4	Sokolova & Kefi (2020)
Parasocial Interaction	5	Sokolova & Kefi (2020)

(Source: Created by the authors)

The data were analyzed using a structural equation model (SEM) by examining the measurement and structural models (Hair et al., 2010). The measurement model examines validity through confirmatory factor analysis. In addition, construct reliability and variance extracted conduct for measuring reliability. Meanwhile, the structural model examines the impact between variables.

4.0 Findings

The result of this study indicates that the majority of respondents are female who always pay attention to their appearance by taking care of their bodies and using make-up in daily activities, as well as subscribers of beauty influencers aged 17-23 years (60%), live in Jakarta and its surroundings, and have a monthly budget to purchase beauty products of IDR 150.000 – 250.000 (27%). Most are subscribers of beauty influencer Tasya Farasya (20%) and like beauty product reviews in the form of skin care (32%), as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Demographic Profile

Description		Percentage (%)
Age	17-23 years	60%
	24-30 years	34%
	31-37 years	5%
	More than 37 years	1%
Domicile	Jakarta	20%
	Bogor	22%
	Depok	19%
	Tangerang	20%
	Bekasi	20%
Budget for beauty products per month	IDR.50.000 – 150.000	13%
	IDR.150.001 – 250.000	27%
	IDR.250.001 – 350.000	25%
	IDR.350.001 – 450.000	13%
	above IDR 450.000	22%
Review of the most popular beauty products	Face Beauty Product	30%
	Eye Beauty Product	8%
	Lip Beauty Product	30%
	Skin Care	32%
Subscriber of beauty influencer	Tasya Farasya	20%
	Suhay Salim	13%
	Rachel Goddard	13%
	Cindercella	12%
	Vinna Gracia	9%
	Others	33%

(Source: Created by the authors)

The results of this measurement model test, as seen in Table 2.2, showed that all indicators are valid because they have a t-value above 1.96 with a standardized loading factor above 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). The reliability results show that all construct reliability indicators and variance extract indicators are reliable above 0.7 and 0.5, respectively (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 2.2 Measurement Model

Variable	Indicator	T-Value	Standardized Loading Factor	Construct Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extract (AVE)
Purchase Intention	PI1	10,63	0,75	0.860	0.607
	PI2	11,75	0,80		
	PI3	12,24	0,83		
	PI4	10,31	0,73		
Parasocial Interaction	PSI1	0.84	0.63	0.836	0.5111
	PS2	9.75	0.70		
	PS3	9.48	0.69		
	PS4	9.75	0.70		
	PS5	12.03	0.82		
Credibility	CR1	10,63	0,74	0.807	0.507
	CR2	9,77	0,72		
	CR3	9,50	0,70		
	CR4	9,43	0,70		
Physical attractiveness	PA1	11,19	0,77	0.810	0.517
	PA2	9,81	0,72		
	PA3	9,46	0,70		
	PA4	9,30	0,68		
Social attractiveness	SA1	9,91	0,71	0.858	0.603
	SA2	10,22	0,73		
	SA3	8,55	0,64		
	SA4	10,57	0,75		
Attitude Homophily	AH1	10,32	0,73	0.806	0.509
	AH2	11,38	0,79		
	AH3	11,94	0,81		
	AH4	10,40	0,74		

(Source: Created by the authors)

Table. 2.3 Goodness of Fit (GOF)

Index	Value	Cutoff Value for GOF Index
RMSEA	0.078	RMSEA < 0.08
CFI	0.96	CFI ≥ 0.95
PNFI	0.82	0 ≤ NFI ≤ 1

(Source: Created by the authors)

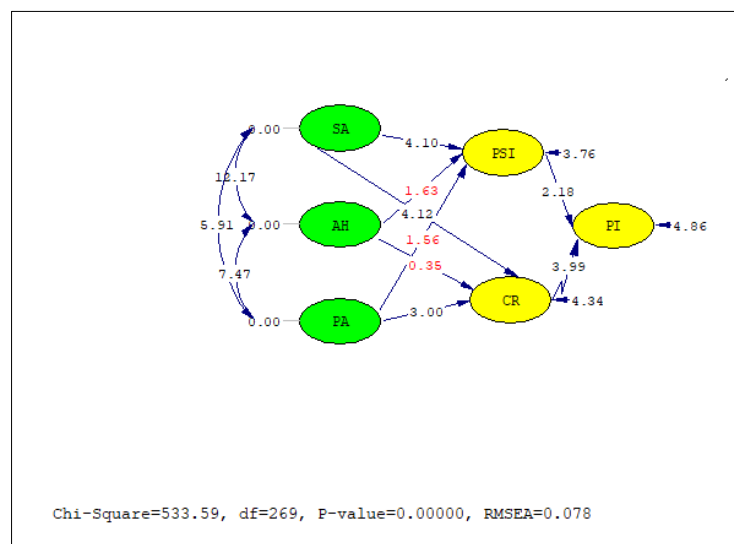Chi-Square=533.59, df=269, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.078

Figure 2.1 Output structural model
(Source: Created by the authors)

The result of Goodness of fit (GOF) is in Table. 2.3 illustrates that overall, the model was fit because it meets the criteria with an RMSEA (0.078) below 0.8, CFI (0.96) greater than 0.95 and PNFI (0.82) between 0 and 1 (Hair et al., 2010). The results of the one-tail test on the structural model as shown in Figure 2.1 and Table 2.4, show that H2 (4.1) has a t-value above 1.65, which indicate that social attractiveness influences parasocial interaction. Meanwhile, this study showed that physical attractiveness and attitude homophily did not affect parasocial interaction with a t-value for H1 (1.56) and H3 (1.63) below 1.65. This study also explained that physical attractiveness and social attractiveness influences credibility with t-values H4 (3) and H5 (4.12), which have a value above 1.65. Meanwhile, the homophily attitude does not supported credibility since H6 (0.35) has a t-value below 1.65. This study also explained that parasocial interaction and credibility positively impact purchase intention with H7 (3.99) and H8 (2.18) with t-value above 1.65.

Table 2.4. Structural model

Hypotheses		Estimate	T-value	Result
H1	Physical attractiveness → Parasocial interaction	0.14	1.56	Rejected
H2	Social attractiveness → Parasocial interaction	0.52	4.1	Accepted
H3	Attitude homophily → Parasocial interaction	0.2	1.63	Rejected
H4	Physical attractiveness → Credibility	0.3	3	Accepted
H5	Social attractiveness → Credibility	0.53	4.12	Accepted
H6	Attitude Homophily → Credibility	0.04	0.35	Rejected
H7	Credibility → Purchase Intention	0.45	3.99	Accepted
H8	Parasocial Interaction → Purchase Intention	0.23	2.18	Accepted

(Source: Created by the authors)

5.0 Discussion

This study indicates that parasocial interaction and credibility influence purchase intention on beauty products. It aligns with previous studies stating that parasocial interaction (Kim et al., 2015) and credibility (Pornpitakpan, 2004) affect purchase intention. It shows that the relationship between beauty influencers and subscribers encourages them to keep abreast of all the information uploaded on YouTube. It can encourage them to be interested in trying the beauty products reviewed. In addition, beauty influencers mastering various beauty products can provide positive recommendations to subscribers to encourage their intention to purchase them.

From the attractiveness factor, only social attractiveness influences parasocial interaction, supported by a previous study by Zheng et al. (2020). Thus, when doing reviews, a beauty influencer can also show an exciting and fun personality with which subscribers can feel intimate and establish a relationship. However, physical attractiveness and attitude homophily did not impact parasocial interaction. This result is similar to Zheng (2020), who showed that physical attractiveness has no positive effect on parasocial interaction. For beauty influencers, physical attractiveness does not affect establishing a relationship because subscribers see more of whether beauty influencers can provide honest reviews of beauty products. In some cases, there are beauty influencers who are physically less beautiful but are preferred by subscribers because they can provide detailed reviews on beauty products' positive and negative sides.

A study by Sakib et al. (2020) was similar to this research finding, proving that homophily attitudes did not affect parasocial interaction. Similar interest in beauty did not necessarily encourage subscribers to be willing to establish strong relationships with beauty influencers. It is likely due to a relationship that can only be engaged if the beauty influencer can provide benefits for subscribers, such as providing the latest information about beauty product trends and considering that some beauty influencers did not regularly upload content reviewing beauty products trending in society. Physical attractiveness and social attractiveness influence credibility. This study's results are supported by Sokolova and Kefi (2020) and Wang and Scheinbaum (2018).

For this reason, a beauty influencer should pay attention to social and physical attractiveness. When reviewing a beauty product, a beauty influencer must maintain the appearance to remain attractive to subscribers. Having a face that looks attractive will make subscribers believe that the beauty influencer has skills in the field of beauty. In addition, the personality of a beauty influencer also needs to be considered. On the other side, from the subscribers' perspective, something related to beauty is usually related to an attractive personality.

A beauty influencer with a good and attractive personality will create comfort and trust that the influencer can convey reviews about beauty products. However, the homophily attitude in this study proved not to affect credibility, which aligns with previous research from Castellano and Dutot (2017). Similar interests in the beauty sector do not make subscribers believe that beauty influencers have credibility in the beauty sector.

Subscribers will assess the extent to which beauty influencers are capable when reviewing a beauty product not only because they have the same interest in the beauty sector but also because of the knowledge and their explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of beauty products.

6.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

This study showed that parasocial interaction and credibility influence purchase intention. However, only social attractiveness affected parasocial interaction, while physical attractiveness and attitude homophily proved to have no effect. In addition, physical and social attractiveness in this study proved to affect credibility, while homophily attitudes were not proven to affect credibility. By examining the impacts of influencers' parasocial interaction and credibility on the purchase intention of beauty enthusiasts, this study contributes to marketing studies in particular social platforms. Only a few studies utilized parasocial interaction with beauty influencers as a marketing approach to leverage consumers' intention to buy. Therefore, this study enriches the literature on a parasocial framework for the Indonesian market. The findings of this study are ultimately valuable for the beauty sector's marketing in establishing affiliate partnerships with beauty influencers based on their abilities in persuasion and parasocial interaction. Understanding people's behaviour through influencers improves company performance, especially in

generating revenue, as beauty influencers' credibility and parasocial interaction positively impact purchase intention. Marketers can coordinate their preferred beauty influencer using the research's findings to ensure that consumers receive the best outcomes. It is advised that while choosing the beauty influencers and platform for branding, marketers prioritize those that significantly affect how consumers react to their brands. Suppose marketing considers several factors before launching their beauty branding through beauty influencers. In that case, the brands they work with may have a competitive advantage in digital marketing.

The limitation of this study is that it needs to consider a minimum number of subscribers for each beauty vlogger, and it is specific to a particular category of beauty product reviews. Thus, we recommend further studies to obtain better analysis. This study also has limitations related to the specific platform as a medium to review beauty products. Thus, future studies should consider various channels to seek the effectiveness of digital media that could be relevant to persuade the public. It can be related to the generation's preferences in using social media to access information. Besides, this study only applied the quantitative study, while a qualitative approach is needed to seek comprehensive insight into the Indonesian market from their perspective as potential consumers. By conducting an in-depth interview, the future study may have holistic findings in consumers' decision-making through their preferred beauty influencers. Moreover, the generated comments and forums from beauty enthusiasts can be interesting to investigate for upcoming studies since reactions can be considered relevant variable. Hence, having additional variables or methods will shed light on the beauty phenomenon, particularly for potential markets in Indonesia.

Acknowledgment

Paper Contribution to Related Study
This research can add to the comprehensive understanding of the digital marketing strategy, especially the role of influencers in digital platforms and how they persuade customers with attractive reviews to increase purchase intention.

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