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# **The Effect of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention : Parasocial Relationships and Brand Credibility as Mediating Variables and Persuasion Knowledge as a Moderating Variable (Study on Followers of Social Media Influencer Arief Muhammad)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explain the inconsistencies of previous research regarding the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention and gain a deeper understanding of the factors that drive purchase intention behavior, in the context of influencer marketing on social media. Specifically, it aims to explore the impact of influencers' involvement in product marketing on their followers' purchase intention behavior, by considering the role of parasocial relationships and brand credibility as potential mediators in the decision-making process, as well as further exploration of the impact of followers' persuasion knowledge. Objectively, this research conducted a study on the active Instagram social media followers of Indonesia's leading influencer "Arief Muhammad", involving 185 members as respondents, using probability sampling method. The questionnaire used a Likert scale with a range of 1 to 5 with data analysis using SEM AMOS. This study shows several key findings : social media influencers have no positive effect on purchase intention directly, social media influencers have a positive effect on parasocial relationships, social media influencers have a positive effect on brand credibility, parasocial relationships have a positive effect on purchase intention, brand credibility has a positive effect on purchase intention, parasocial relationships mediate the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention, brand credibility mediates the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention, persuasion knowledge moderates the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention, persuasion knowledge moderates the effect of parasocial relationships on purchase intention.

**Keywords :** Social Media Influencer, Parasocial Relationships, Brand Credibility, Persuasion Knowledge, Purchase Intention.

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### **1. Introduction**

Today, social media plays an important role in the development system of a business. Businesses that successfully manage social media can see a huge increase in their marketing results

(Semenda et al., 2024). Businesses can optimize the success and return on investment of their campaigns by effectively tailoring marketing strategies to the needs of their target audience (Roosdhani et al., 2024).

One of the studies on social media marketing trends that is currently being researched is the use of influencers. Social media influencers are individuals who are considered to have social influence with the followers they have (Yec Council, 2018). Social media influencers are third-party actors who can build significant and relevant relationships with organizational stakeholders through interaction, content production, content distribution, and personal appearance on social media (Enke & Borchers, 2019). There is no denying that influencers have changed the way brands interact with their target audience (Hudders et al., 2021).

Several studies on the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention have been reviewed in recent years. For example, several previous studies found that social media influencers have a positive effect with consumer engagement and purchase intention (Ao et al., 2023). This is also supported by research conducted by Mabkhot et al. (2022) which states that social media influencers as measured through the dimensions of expertise, trustworthiness, likability, information quality, and entertainment value have a significant effect on consumer purchase intentions on advertised products. Other findings also identified that social media influencers who have trustworthiness, expertise, and information quality values have positive effect on consumer purchase intentions for brands promoted by influencers (Al-Mu'ani et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, there are other research findings that state social media influencers do not affect purchase intentions for advertised products (Yudha, 2023). Research by Leong et al. (2024) also mentioned that the dimensions of trustworthiness, expertise, and likability do not have a significant effect on consumer purchase intentions. This shows that the results of research on the influence of social media influencers on purchase intention still show mixed results and are not entirely consistent.

Based on the results of X. Liu & Zheng (2024), the parasocial relationship established between followers and influencers can increase the purchase intention behavior of followers. Then Kareem & Venugopal (2023) research proves that the proper use of influencers can affect the credibility value of the promoted brand, which in turn can increase the purchase intention of the influencer's audience. This proves that influencers can indirectly affect purchase intention behavior.

In addition, the results of Hwang & Zhang (2018) study revealed that high persuasive knowledge reduces customers' purchase intention of the advertised product. Meanwhile, X. Liu & Zheng (2024) research results revealed that there was no moderating effect of persuasion knowledge on the relationship between the influence of parasocial relationships on purchase intention, which then became a suggestion for further research on the moderating effect of persuasive knowledge variables.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Purchase Intention*

According to Spears & Singh (2004), purchase intention is an individual's conscious plan to try to buy a brand. Akkaya (2021) also states that purchase intention is a type of planned behavior that will be converted into action by actual purchases in the future. Then according to Erdmann et al. (2023) purchase intention is an attitudinal variable that measures future customer contributions to the brand. According to these several definitions, it can be interpreted that purchase intentions are the attitudes and conscious plans of individuals that reflect the desire and potential to buy a product or brand in the future, which can contribute to actual purchasing behavior.

### *2.2 Social Media Influencer*

Social media influencers are individuals who are considered to have social influence due to the number of followers they have (Yec Council, 2018). Social media influencers are third-party actors who have built significant and relevant relationships with organizational stakeholders through content production, content distribution, interaction, and personal appearance on social media (Enke & Borchers, 2019). Furthermore, Yann & Wang (2023), identified social media influencers as people with significant power to influence the decisions and judgments of others through social media. It can be concluded that social media influencers are individuals who can influence the decisions and judgments of others through the production, distribution of content, interaction, and personal image on social media platforms.

### *2.3 Parasocial Relationships*

Parasocial relationships are one-sided emotional feelings in which followers develop strong feelings and attachments to characters on media that they have never met in person (Rubin & Step, 2000). This relationship describes the process by which individuals form attachments to personas in the media (Ballantine, 2005). Meanwhile, in Chung & Cho (2017) research, parasocial relationships are defined as close relationships between audiences and media characters that develop when individuals are repeatedly exposed to media personas, which makes them feel intimacy, perceived friendship, and identification with media characters. It can be concluded that parasocial relationships are one-way relationships where individuals develop feelings of intimacy and attachment with characters through media without any direct interaction.

### *2.4 Brand Credibility*

Brand credibility is the ability to trust the product information contained in the brand to consistently fulfill the promises made to consumers (Erdem & Swait, 2004). Meanwhile, according to Keller (2013), brand credibility is a perception based on expertise, trust, and liking in a brand that reflects how customers assess the reliability of a brand. Then according to Alam et al. (2012), brand credibility reflects the quality and position of the product, so customers will be more confident and loyal to products from brands that have high credibility. Based on these several definitions, it can be concluded that brand credibility is the reliability of a brand in consumer perceptions, which is determined by the brand's ability to fulfill promises in the form of quality, expertise, trust, and liking, which in turn can influence customer behavior towards the product.

### *2.5 Persuasion Knowledge*

Persuasion knowledge refers to consumers' understanding of how persuasion works, including their views on the goals, strategies and tactics used by marketers (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000). Persuasion knowledge can influence customers' attitudes towards brands and how they react to sales promotions and advertisements (Friestad & Wright, 1994). So persuasion knowledge is the audience's understanding of the way marketers communicate their sales, be it their goals, tactics, or strategies.

## *2.6 Hypothesis Development*

### *2.6.1 Social Media Influencers and Purchase Intention*

Some previous studies also explain the influence of social media influencers on purchase intentions. As in the research of Ao et al. (2023) which states that all dimensions of social media influencers have a positive effect on customer purchase intentions. Then the results Wong & Wei (2023) research, show that the homophily attitude in social media influencers has a positive effect on the purchase intention of their followers. The results of research by Al-Mu'ani et al. (2023) also showed that all influencer attributes including trustworthiness, expertise, and information quality have both direct and indirect effects on purchase intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis :

H1 : Social media influencers have a positive effect on purchase intention

### *2.6.2 Social Media Influencers and Parasocial Relationships*

Several studies have successfully identified that social media influencers can positively and significantly influence parasocial relationships (Aw & Chuah, 2021). The same thing is also explained in the research of Taher et al. (2022) which states that the communication skills and expertise of social media influencers have a significant effect on parasocial relationships. Then X. Liu & Zheng (2024) also stated that the informative value of content, authenticity, and homophily of social media influencers have a positive effect on their audience's parasocial relationships. Therefore, the authors propose the following hypothesis :

H2 : Social media influencers have a positive effect on parasocial relationships

### *2.6.3 Social Media Influencers and Brand Credibility*

Furthermore, the results of research by S. W. Wang & Scheinbaum (2018) shows consumer perceptions of the attractiveness and trustworthiness of a celebrity who endorses a brand can positively increase brand credibility. Almost the same thing was also revealed in research Kareem & Venugopal (2023) which states that brand credibility can be formed from the value reflected by influencers on social media. Some of the research conducted also supports Erdem & Swait (1998) statement that a company can attempt to build brand credibility, with the quality of information conveyed through marketing strategies related to a brand. Therefore, the authors propose the following hypothesis :

H3 : Social media influencers have a positive effect on brand credibility

### *2.6.4 Parasocial Relationships and Purchase Intention*

Some literature has identified the link between parasocial relationships and purchase intentions. In the research by Sokolova & Kefi (2020), it is mentioned that parasocial relationships can positively influence the purchase intention of social media influencer followers. The same thing was also revealed by Fazli-Salehi et al. (2022) which explains that consumers who build parasocial relationships with influencers tend to have greater intentions to buy products recommended by these influencers. Then Rungruangjit (2022) also mentioned that parasocial relationships can have a positive effect on purchase intentions. Therefore, the authors propose the following hypothesis :

H4 : Parasocial relationships have a positive effect on purchase intention

#### *2.6.5 Brand Credibility and Purchase Intention*

Brand credibility can significantly affect customer purchase intention (Rizky et al., 2021) This is supported by Jun (2020) who states that brand credibility is a crucial variable in making consumer purchase intention decisions. The same thing is also explained in the research of Ramadania et al. (2023), where brand credibility has a positive and significant influence on brand purchase intentions. Therefore, the authors propose the following hypothesis :

H5 : Brand credibility have a positive effect on purchase intention

#### *2.6.6 Parasocial Relationships as a Mediator*

Yudha (2023) mentioned that attractiveness and trust in influencers can affect purchase intention through parasocial relationships. The same thing was mentioned by the results of Ashraf et al. (2023) which indicated an indirect positive effect of factors such as attractiveness, expertise, trust, similarity, interpersonal relationships, procedural, and fairness of social media influencer information on consumer purchase intention through parasocial relationships. In addition, the results of research by X. Liu & Zheng (2024) showed the informative value of influencers' content, authenticity, and homophily had a positive effect on their parasocial relationships, which in turn affect followers' purchase intentions. Therefore, the authors propose the following hypothesis :

H6 : Parasocial relationships mediate the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention

#### *2.6.7 Brand Credibility as a Mediator*

Some literature has also analyzed the mediating role of brand credibility. As in the case of influencer celebrity endorsement on social media, brand credibility plays a role in mediating the relationship between celebrity attachment and purchase intention (Aw & Labrecque, 2020). Then Chin et al. (2020) mentioned that using the right advertiser figures on social media supported by high brand credibility can increase consumer buying interest. In addition, in the research of (Kareem & Venugopal (2023) mentioned that the expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness of an endorser on social media can increase attitudes towards the credibility of a brand which then leads to customer purchase intentions. Therefore, the authors propose the following hypothesis :

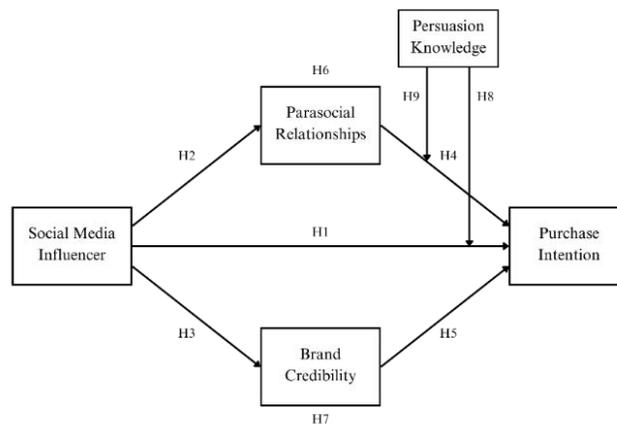
H7 : Brand credibility mediates the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention

### 2.6.8 Persuasion Knowledge as a Moderator

In research conducted by Iqbal et al. (2023) revealed that consumers with high persuasion knowledge tend to be more critical and analytical in assessing advertising content, which can lead to more accurate product evaluations. Meanwhile, the results of research by Hwang & Zhang (2018) state that high persuasion knowledge can reduce customer purchase intentions on advertised products. Then the results of research by Breves et al. (2021) show that, the parasocial relationship that exists between followers and their influencers results in a lower level of persuasion knowledge. As a result, followers reported higher brand evaluations and purchase intentions. Therefore, the authors propose the following hypothesis :

H8 : Persuasion knowledge moderates the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention

H9 : Persuasion knowledge moderates the effect of parasocial relationships on purchase intention



## 3. Research Methodology

This study was conducted using a quantitative approach method. The population in this study were all active followers of the Instagram social media @ariefmuhammad who domiciled at Java. The sample size was determined using the probability sampling method and the formulation of the number of respondents using the opinion of Hair et al., (2010) which is 5n (parameter) so that a sample of 185 people was obtained. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires online via Google Forms using a Likert scale with a range of 1 to 5. Analysis of the results of respondents' answers in this study was carried out using structural equation modeling analysis using the AMOS application.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Characteristic of Respondents

Data were collected by distributing questionnaires to 185 active followers of the Instagram account @ariefmuhammad in accordance with the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was prepared for academic purposes using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5.

Table 1. Characteristic of Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	94	51%
	Female	91	49%
Age	17 – 20	22	11,89%
	21 – 25	139	75,14%
	26 – 30	18	9,73%
	31 – 34	3	1,62%
	34 <	3	1,62%
	Income	< Rp1.000.000	40
	Rp1.000.000 – Rp3.000.000	84	45,41%
	Rp3.000.001 – Rp5.000.000	35	18,92%
	Rp5.000.001 – Rp8.000.000	18	9,73%
	Rp8.000.001 – Rp10.000.000	5	2,7%
	> Rp10.000.000	3	1,62%

Based on the results of the questionnaire received, this study has a fairly even distribution of respondents from gender, with a slight dominance of male respondents compared to females. This balanced distribution provides good representation for analysis that is not biased towards one particular gender. Then, the majority of respondents in this study are under the age of 30, especially in the age range of 21 - 25 years and can be seen that most of the respondents involved in the study had incomes ranging from IDR 1,000,001 to IDR 3,000,000. This is related to the majority of people who actively use social media are students, teenagers, or some adults and that relevated with their own income is still quite limited.

#### 4.2 Normality Test

The multivariate normality value in this model study is  $27.211 > 2.58$ , so it can be concluded that the data is not normally distributed (Haryono, 2016). SEM analysis requires a sample of at least 5 times the number of indicator variables used. In this case, the minimum sample is 160 respondents ( $5 \times 32 = 160$ ), while the sample in the study was 185 respondents, meaning that the sample in this study has met the minimum sample standard set. According to Haryono (2016), in research practice not every data produced is normally distributed. To reduce the impact of the non-normality of a data distribution, the use of a large sample size can be considered. In addition, in the Limit Central Theorem theory and Gujarati & Dawn (2004) , states that the normality assumption is not crucial for large samples ( $n \geq 100$ ). The theory also states that if the sample size is large, the sample statistics will approach the normal distribution.

#### 4.3 Validity and Reliability Test

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Construct Test Result

Variables	Items	Loading Factor	CR	AVE
Social Media Influencer	SMI1	0,757	0,877	0,505
	SMI2	0,741		
	SMI3	0,726		
	SMI4	0,709		
	SMI5	0,687		
	SMI6	0,703		
Parasocial Relationships	SMI8	0,644	0,803	0,510
	PR1	0,577		
	PR2	0,796		
	PR3	0,822		
Brand Credibility	PR4	0,632	0,877	0,589
	BC1	0,775		
	BC2	0,779		
	BC3	0,705		
	BC4	0,734		
Persuasion Knowledge	BC5	0,839	0,783	0,546
	PK1	0,745		
	PK2	0,730		
Purchase Intention	PK5	0,742	0,926	0,613
	PI1	0,747		
	PI2	0,787		
	PI3	0,797		
	PI4	0,588		
	PI5	0,852		
	PI6	0,862		
	PI7	0,861		
PI8	0,734			

All statement items for social media influencer variables, parasocial relationships, brand credibility, persuasion knowledge, and purchase intention have a loading factor value  $\geq 0.50$ , therefore all variable statement items in this study are declared valid. (Haryono, 2016). Then, the social media influencer, parasocial relationships, brand credibility, persuasion knowledge and purchase intention variables already have a Construct Reliability value  $\geq 0.70$  and a Variance Extracted value  $\geq 0.50$ , indicating that all variables in this study are valid and reliable (Haryono, 2016).

#### 4.4 Goodness of Fit Model Test

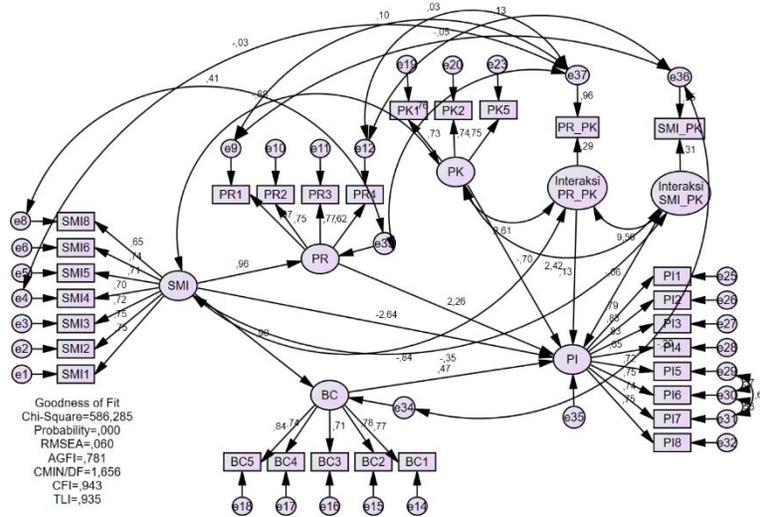


Figure 2. Final Model

Table 3. Goodness of Fit Final Model Result

Goodness of Fit Indices	Result	Cut – Off Value	Description
Chi Square	586,285		
Probability	0,000	$\geq 0,05$	Not Fit
RMSEA	0,060	$\leq 0,08$	Good Fit
AGFI	0,781	$\geq 0,90$	Not Fit
CIMN/DF	1,656	$\geq 0,90$	Good Fit
CFI	0,943	$\geq 0,90$	Good Fit
TLI	0,935	$\geq 0,90$	Good Fit

that the model in the study is fit, the model is said to be feasible if at least one of the model feasibility test methods is met (Haryono, 2016). There are four good fit model feasibility tests, namely RMSEA, CMIN/DF, CFI and TLI so that the model meets the criteria for good goodness of fit.

#### 4.5 Hypothesis Test

Table 4. Hypothesis Test Result

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Description
SMI	→	PI	-3,391	0,908	-3,735	*,***	H1 Rejected
SMI	→	PR	0,947	0,123	7,674	*,***	H2 Accepted
SMI	→	BC	0,986	0,098	10,073	*,***	H3 Accepted
PR	→	PI	2,938	0,753	3,901	*,***	H4 Accepted
BC	→	PI	0,547	0,242	2,260	0,024	H5 Accepted

Interaksi_SMI_PK	→	PI	-0,042	0,016	-2,560	0,010	H8 Accepted
Interaksi_PR_PK	→	PI	0,088	0,024	3,614	*,***	H9 Accepted

The SMI → PI path obtained a CR value of 3.735 > 1.96 and a P value of 0.000 < 0.05 and a negative coefficient value of -3.391, meaning that Social Media Influencers do not have a positive effect on Purchase Intention. Then H1 is rejected. The SMI → PR path obtained a CR value of 7.674 > 1.96 and a P value of 0.000 < 0.05 and a positive coefficient value of 0.947, meaning that Social Media Influencers significantly have a positive effect on Parasocial Relationships. Then H2 is accepted. The SMI → BC path obtained a CR value of 10.073 > 1.96 and a P value of 0.000 < 0.05 and a positive coefficient value of 0.986, meaning that Social Media Influencers significantly have a positive effect on Brand Credibility. Then H3 is accepted. The PR → PI path obtained a CR value of 3.901 > 1.96 and a P value of 0.000 < 0.05 and a positive coefficient value of 2.938, meaning that Parasocial Relationships significantly have a positive effect on Purchase Intention. Then H4 is accepted. The BC → PI path obtained a CR value of 2.260 > 1.96 and a P value of 0.024 < 0.05 and a positive coefficient value of 0.547, meaning that Brand Credibility significantly has a positive effect on Purchase Intention. Then H5 is accepted. The interaction SMI\_PK → PI path obtained a CR value of 2.560 > 1.96 and a P value of 0.010 < 0.05 and the coefficient is negative (-0.042), meaning that Persuasion Knowledge moderates the effect of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention negatively (weakens). Then H8 is accepted. The interaction PR\_PK → PI path obtained a CR value of 3.614 > 1.96 and a P value of 0.000 < 0.05 and the coefficient value is positive (0.088), meaning that Persuasion Knowledge moderates the effect of Parasocial Relationships on Purchase Intention positively (strengthens). Then H9 is accepted.

#### 4.6 Mediation Test

Table 5. Sobel Test Result

Path	a	b	SEa	SEb	Sobel Test
SMI → PR → PI	0,947	2,938	0,123	0,753	3,480
SMI → BC → PI	0,986	0,547	0,098	0,242	2,205

The SMI → PR → PI path obtained a sobel test value of 3.480 > 1.96, meaning that Parasocial Relationships mediate the effect of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention. The SMI → BC → PI path obtained a sobel test value of 2.205 > 1.96, meaning that Brand Credibility mediates the effect of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 The Effect of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention

Based on the hypothesis test conducted, the effect obtained from the relationship leads to a significant negative. In other words, the presence of a social media influencer in promoting a product can reduce purchase intention. This may occur for several reasons related to the audience's perception of the influencer's persona and promotional style. The results of similar research are similar to research conducted by Yudha (2023), which states that social media influencers have a negative effect on purchase intentions, which occurs because the influencer audience he studied may have access to other additional sources of information such as customer reviews, product evaluations, or recommendations from others, so that the influence received directly from the social media influencers he studied is not considered a major consideration. Xiong & Zeng (2024), also revealed that strong or consistent SMI recommendations and high fame, reduce the uniqueness perceived by consumers, thereby reducing purchase intentions.

### *5.2 The Effect of Social Media Influencers on Parasocial Relationships*

The findings of this study reveal that social media influencers significantly have a positive effect on parasocial relationships. This result shows that an influencer can build a good parasocial relationship with his followers through the content and persona he builds on social media. When followers interact with various personalized content on social media intensely, they feel as if they have a personal relationship with the influencer (Ki et al., 2020). This result is in line with the results of research conducted by X. Liu & Zheng (2024), which states that relevant social media influencers can build parasocial relationships with their followers positively and significantly. The same thing is also explained in the research of Taher et al. (2022), which mentioned that the communication skills and expertise of social media influencers have a significant positive effect on developing parasocial relationships with their followers.

### *5.3 The Effect of Social Media Influencers on Brand Credibility*

The findings of this study reveal that social media influencers significantly have a positive effect on brand credibility. This shows that the presence of an influencer who is considered to have a promotional content strategy and a good reputation can increase the credibility of a brand. Influencers are often considered a representation of a brand's values and character. When an influencer promotes a brand through the content he creates on social media, it will have an impact on the credibility value of the brand (Nafees et al., 2021). These results are in line with research conducted by Wang & Scheinbaum (2018), which states that the attractiveness and trust value of an influencer in his involvement in a brand can positively increase brand credibility. Then, Kareem & Venugopal (2023) also revealed that the credibility of a brand is positively formed from the expertise and attractiveness of an influencer in its promotion strategy on social media.

### *5.4 The Effect of Parasocial Relationships on Purchase Intention*

The findings of this study reveal that parasocial relationships significantly have a positive effect on purchase intention. This indicates that the one-way emotional connection between followers and the influencer can increase the audience's purchase intention response to the promoted product or service. A parasocial relationship is formed when the audience feels personally connected to the influencer without any direct interaction. Although the relationship is illusory, it creates a sense of trust, loyalty and emotional attachment, which ultimately affects the audience's

purchase intention for the product or brand associated with the influencer (Lou, 2022). These results are in line with Rungruangjit (2022) research, which indicates a positive influence of the parasocial relationship between followers and influencers on purchase intention on products promoted by influencers. Then Sokolova & Kefi (2020) research also states that the one-way emotional bond that exists between followers and their influencers has a positive role in building purchase intentions.

### *5.5 The Effect of Brand Credibility on Purchase Intention*

The findings of this study reveal that brand credibility significantly has a positive effect on purchase intention. This indicates that the credibility of a brand promoted by an influencer plays an important role in followers' desire to purchase goods or services from that brand. When a brand is considered credible, followers are more likely to believe that the brand provides value that meets their needs and preferences, so this encourages the creation of confidence in making purchases (Wang et al., 2017). These results are in line with the research of Rizky et al. (2021), which states that the credibility of a brand promoted by an influencer can have a positive effect on purchase intention. Then in the research of Ramadania et al. (2023) also stated that there is a positive and significant effect of brand credibility on purchase intention.

### *5.6 The Mediating Effect of Parasocial Relationships*

The findings of this study reveal that parasocial relationships mediate the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention. This shows that the parasocial relationship that exists between followers and their influencers plays an important role in increasing followers' purchase intention for the promoted product. Persona and relevant content from social media influencer will provoke personal connections in followers, which in turn form parasocial relationships. When parasocial relationships are formed, followers are more likely to accept product or brand recommendations promoted by their influencers (Leite & Baptista, 2022). Thus, parasocial relationships serve as a psychological bridge that connects the presence of influencers with purchase intentions. These results are in line with the research of Taher et al. (2022) which states that parasocial relationships mediate the effect of social media influencers on the purchase intentions of their followers. Then the research of Ashraf et al. (2023) also revealed that there is an indirect positive effect of social media influencers on purchase intention through parasocial relationships.

### *5.7 The Mediating Effect of Brand Credibility*

The findings of this study reveal that brand credibility mediates the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention. This shows that brand credibility plays an important role in increasing followers' purchase intention in the goods promoted by influencers. Influencers who can create a positive image of the promoted brand make followers believe that the products or services offered by the brand are reliable, relevant, and of high quality which is then called credible, so followers will be more confident to buy the item (Lee & Kim, 2020). In other words, brand credibility, in this case, acts as an important factor in bridging the influence of influencers on the purchase intention of their followers. These results are in line with the research of Chin et

al. (2020) which reveals that brand credibility positively and significantly mediates the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention. Kareem & Venugopal (2023) also revealed that the effect of an influencer on purchase intention occurs indirectly through the perceived brand credibility of the promoted product.

#### *5.8 The Moderating Effect of Persuasion Knowledge on The Causal Relationship Between Social Media Influencers and Purchase Intention*

The results of this study indicate that persuasion knowledge moderates the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention. Specifically, the moderating effect in this study is to weaken the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention. Need to know, the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention in this study is negative, or in other words, the presence of high persuasion knowledge in the minds of followers, it will weaken the negative effect of social media influencers on purchase intention. Persuasion knowledge allows followers to be more aware of the influencer's message because followers know the commercial purpose behind their promotion (Breves et al., 2021b). This creates psychological connectivity, which causes the influencer's marketing efforts to be more acceptable. The results of these findings are relevant to the research of Hwang & Zhang (2018) which states that the level of audience persuasion knowledge can weaken the influence of an influencer on the purchase intention of his followers on social media. The research of Iqbal et al. (2023) also revealed that in the presence of high knowledge of follower persuasion, the evaluation of the influencer's promotional campaign on a product will be more considered, thus having an impact on the relationship between influencers and their followers' purchase intention attitudes.

#### *5.9 The Moderating Effect of Persuasion Knowledge on The Causal Relationship Between parasocial Relationships and Purchase Intention*

The results of this study show that persuasion knowledge moderates the effect of parasocial relationships on purchase intention. Specifically, the moderating effect in this study is to strengthen the effect of parasocial relationships on purchase intention, or in other words, the high persuasion knowledge of followers will increase purchase intention due to the parasocial relationship established with the influencer. This can happen because followers with high persuasion knowledge can evaluate the influencer's promotional strategy more rationally (Tukachinsky & Stever, 2019). By doing so, followers will consider that the influencer's promotional strategy is more relevant to what they want, which in turn will increase their purchase intention attitude towards the promoted product. This result contradicts the statement in the previous study by Liu & Zheng (2024), which states that there is no moderating effect on the influence of parasocial relationships on the purchase intention of influencer-promoted products. Instead, this result supports the previous research by Breves et al. (2021), which revealed that persuasion knowledge has an impact on strengthening the effect of parasocial relationships established between followers and their influencers on purchase intentions for products that influencers promote.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study aims to explore the impact of influencer involvement in product marketing on the purchase intention behavior of their followers, considering the role of parasocial relationships

and brand credibility as potential mediators in the decision-making process, as well as further exploration of the impact of followers' persuasive knowledge. The results of this study indicate that the influence of a social media influencer does not directly increase the purchase intention of his followers, but through the mediation of parasocial relationships and brand credibility, the purchase intention of followers who influence the influence of social media influencers will increase. Persuasion knowledge also plays an important role in the causal relationship between social media influencers and parasocial relationships on followers' purchase intentions. Based on the results of this study, it is also suggested for further research on the role of other variables in increasing the influence of social media influencers on their followers' purchase intentions.

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