How Does Parasocial Interaction Influence Skincare Purchase Intention?

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Abstract:- The pandemic has caused changes in consumer behavior, especially in the beauty industry, people tend to buy skincare rather than make-up due to reduced activities outside home. In addition, internet usage is increasing as consumers search for information online before purchasing products. This study aims to examine the effect of reviews from fellow consumers and influencers on social media on skincare purchase intention in Indonesia. The research method used is a quantitative method. Data was collected using a questionnaire via Google Form, afterwards the data was processed using Smart PLS software. The results of this study are that all variables have influence on purchase intentions except for homophile attitudes. Parasocial interactions are influenced by influencer credibility and homophile attitudes. It can be concluded that fellow consumers' reviews and influencer credibility are able to increase purchase intention, but not with homophile attitudes because it is an antecedent of parasocial interaction.

Keywords:- E-WOM, Purchase Intention, Parasocial Interaction, Attitude Homophily, Influencer Credibility.

I. INTRODUCTION

Early in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, altering people's lives all across the world, including Indonesia. With the disease that spreads very easily, people are forced to reduce their activities outside the home, therefore pandemic weakened the state of the country's economy. Indonesian Minister of Finance, Sri Mulyani stated that the second quarter of 2020 saw a downturn in the Indonesian economy as a result of COVID-19, which resulted in a decline in real GDP. Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) declared there were 6 industrial sectors affected by the Pandemic COVID-19, namely accommodation, food and beverages, other services, transportation and warehousing, construction, processing, and trading industries. Weakening business was the reason behind the increasing number of layoffs in 2020. An increase in the number of layoffs up to 3.6 million people, was reflected in changes in the consumption behavior of Indonesian people. In 2020, there is an increase in consumption compared to the situation before the pandemic. There was an increase in consumption for food by 45%, household needs by 36%, entertainment at home by 21%, personal care products by 19%, and snacks by 7%.

The changes in consumer behavior also had an impact on the beauty industry, the skincare and make-up industry experienced a 26% decrease in consumption compared to the period before the Pandemic COVID-19. However, in 2021, there was 85% increase in the launch of skincare products in Indonesia [1]. Kilala Tilaar as the CEO of renowed beauty company, Martha Tilaar stated that before the Pandemic COVID-19, people tended to remove make-up, use face cream every day and use colored make-up freely. However, after the COVID-19 outbreak, people showed high interest in skincare products. Before the Pandemic COVID-19, people were able to try product testers directly, yet due to limited movement, consumers are looking for honest reviews to buy products such as reviews on blogs or Youtube.

Moreover, reduction in direct interaction caused by restrictions on activities outside the home due to the Pandemic COVID-19 has increased the use of social media. There has been a rise in internet users in Indonesia, per survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII). The percentage of Indonesians who use the internet as of 2020 was 64.8% of the country's whole population, and by 2022, that percentage had risen to 77.02%.. 98.02% of people use the internet to access social media, including Facebook, Whatsapp, Telegram, Line, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube and so forth. These data were also confirmed in survey conducted by Inventure, Alvara and Ivosights where people like to search for information by online because it can save time and effort compared to having to compare products directly by offline.

Last but not least, the experience of the modern pandemic and quarantine drastically impacted many significant aspects of how we go about living our daily lives, not the least of which is how we engage with one another for socializing and business purposes. Therefore, Pandemic COVID-19 offers important and distinctive chances to study parasocial interaction (PSI) especially in the current digital environment [2]. When using social media as a marketing tool, it is crucial to detect and comprehend the significance of parasocial connections with influencers or celebrities [3]. Aside from influencers, consumers can obtain honest review from fellow consumers through social media. Users of social media interact and share information using a variety of platforms, including blogs, microblogging services (Twitter), social networking sites (Facebook) and video sharing sites (YouTube). Consumers sharing product information online with other consumers is not unusual. Online consumers are

more likely to accept and use online information in their decision-making process when they share their personal experiences and thoughts about the goods and services [4].

Based on this emphasis, the study's main goal is to ascertain how E-WOM, influencer credibility, attitude homophily, and parasocial interaction affect consumers' intentions to purchase skincare.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Marketing Communication

Marketing communications are a tool used by businesses to directly and indirectly inform, persuade, and remind their customers about the goods and brands they sell. Marketing communications serve as the company's voice and brand, providing a platform for interaction and relationship-building with consumers. [5]. The spending behavior of advertising media changes over time. In 2005 the company spent more on advertising on television but in 2013 it began to shift to internet media [6]. One of the internet-based marketing communication techniques is the use of social media to leverage influencer endorsements, which are seen as more legitimate since they develop cordial relationships with customers, especially among the younger generation. [7]. The literature also discusses a different strategy for marketing communication over the internet, known as "word of mouth," where product advertisements are passed on orally or in writing between current and future clients. This is more accurately characterized as personal suggestions [8].

B. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The theory of planned behavior is a renewal of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) [9] where in the theory of planned behavior, there is a new factor that can explain the reasons behind consumer behavior, namely perceived behavioral control. According to TPB, attitudes, subjective norms and behavioral control affect individual intentions to perform certain behaviors. Intention is a key construct in theory as a mediating variable between consumer dynamics and personal behavior; it is claimed to be a precursor to behavior. According to TPB, intention is a direct function of attitude, subjective norms and control over behavior [10].

Intention is assumed as a motivational factor that influences behavior which is an indication of how hard an individual wants to try, how much effort is made to do something. Behavioral control factors refer to the perceived influence of certain factors to facilitate or prevent certain behaviors. Ajzen (2011) recognizes that emotions resulting from beliefs can affect intentions and behavior. TPB has received criticism that this theory is purely rational because it ignores two dimensions that seriously change human judgment and behavior, namely affective and cognitive factors [11]. Thus, integrating other variables along with the determinants outlined by the TPB in one model is an attractive research outlet for beauty industry researchers, academics, companies, and advertisers.

C. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a state that represents a customer where it is possible for a customer to purchase a product or subscribe to a service based on the customer's experience or purchase history [12]. According to Ha and Janda (2014)[13], customer purchase intention comes from the customer's need for a particular product or service. Getting customers is definitely one of the main goals of any business organization. It is the customer who will bring in the revenue based on the process of exchanging dollars and product benefits. Customer purchases are part of the process that customers may go through to complete the transaction process. Consumer purchase intention has become an important notion in the field of marketing and is considered an important concept for predicting consumer buying behavior [14]. The concept of purchase intention has psychological roots and is widely used in behavioral studies [15].

Purchase intention is described as the willingness of consumers to buy certain products, and companies can provide information that eliminates risks to increase customer purchase intentions and benefit them [16]. The indicators in this study [17] is stated below:

- Transactional intention, wanting to buy products reviewed by influencers in the future.
- Referential intention, inviting relations to buy products reviewed by influencers.
- Preferential intention, buying products reviewed by influencers if you wish.
- Explorative intention, buying products reviewed by trusted influencers and preferring to buy products reviewed by influencers.

D. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)

Traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) is limited to face-to-face communication, but the concept of electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM), is a positive or negative statement made by a potential customer, current or former customers about a product or company, where the information is available to many people and institutions via the internet. According to [18] E-WOM is an enhancement of traditional word-of-mouth communication through social media, thereby changing face-to-face communication into computer-mediated word-of-mouth communication.

One of the categories of E-WOM is, social E-WOM where information about products/brands is exchanged by fellow social media users [19]. Social networking sites are used as a means of conducting electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) among users to share information and opinions regarding products. The existence of these sites such as social media has changed the way consumers make purchasing decisions because they can easily exchange information quickly without geographical and time restrictions [20].

The measurement of social electronic word of mouth (social E-WOM) using the dimension of vulnerability to online product reviews [21] which is described by the following indicators:

- Read other consumer reviews to buy the right product.

- Read other consumer reviews to find out what they think about the product.
- Read other consumer reviews to gather information about the product.
- Read other consumer reviews to convince yourself before buying a product.

E. Influencers Credibility

As opposed to traditional celebrities who rose to fame through media such as TV, influencers are people who gained notoriety through their social media presence [22]. Traditionally, celebrity endorsements only consider celebrities who create value for themselves through sports, music, or movies, before participating in advertising activities. However, the alternative forms of celebrity that we see today fall outside the traditional categories, which is a phenomenon that arguably started with the rise of reality TV stars. When studying the effects of this new type of celebrity or so-called influencer, it was found that consumers have stronger ties with them and perceive influencers as more authentic [23].

The idea of "influencer credibility" expresses all the favorable traits that influence recipients' acceptance of messages and traits utilized to persuade others. [24]. Influencer credibility demonstrates the degree of the recipient's faith in the sender [25]. The degree to which content creators are regarded as reliable, knowledgeable, and reputable in the context of social media [26]. Through a process known as internalization, which takes place when recipients embrace the impact of the source in terms of their own personal attitudes and value structures, information from reliable sources (such as celebrities) can affect beliefs, views, attitudes, and/or behavior. Source credibility is divided into three sub-dimensions, namely attractiveness, trust, and expertise with indicators from each dimension of influencer credibility as follows:

➢ *Attractiveness*
- *Likes influencers who are physically attractive.*
- *Likes influencers who are attractive in appearance.*
- *Want to look the same as influencers.*

➢ *Expertise*
- *Likes influencers who are experts in their fields.*
- *Find expert influencer reviews more interesting.*
- *Following competent influencers on social media.*

➢ *Trust (trustworthiness)*
- *More considering a trustworthy influencer.*
- *Stop buying products reviewed by scandal-hit influencers.*
- *Keep in mind trustworthy* influencers.

F. Attitude Homophily

The homophile attitude is defined as, the extent to which people who interact have similarities in belief, education, social status, and their liking. People are more likely to interact with someone frequently if they perceive themselves as being similar to other people. Through this interaction, a person can confirm their own beliefs [27]. An interesting speaker can influence the audience through the identification proces. An audience member will feel like or want to be like the speaker and create a positive relationship with him. Millenials are considered users of extensive online social networks and often identify with celebrities and borrow some aspects of the celebrity's personality and lifestyle to look like them. Thus, when celebrities and online influencers launch a new trend, it will be followed by an admiring audience. The impact of celebrity's actions can be greater when the audience perceives them as someone they can rely on personally [28].

The similarities between individuals who interact in terms of belief, education and social status are called homophile attitudes. This construct is related to the number of interactions individuals have, as similar communicators are more likely to interact with one another. Repeated interactions help develop relationships or, in the case of celebrities, parasocial relationships which are strongly linked to the process of identification [29]. Indicators of homophile attitudes are as follows:
- Has the same value as the influencer.
- Have the same mindset as influencers.
- Assume influencers are ordinary people just like themselves.
- Want to interact with influencers on social media.
- Want to be good friends with influencers.

G. Parasocial Interaction

The psychological connections that media consumers have with media personalities (such as celebrities or fictious characters) are known as parasocial interactions. Despite having little or no connection with their favorite media figures, viewers nevertheless identify with them and feel connected to them. When they learn more about the influencers, some viewers even develop a genuine bond with media celebrities [30]. Parasocial interaction occurs unilaterally, non-dialectically and are closed to joint development [31]. Social media sites are a sitable medium for creating parasocial relationships [32]. Relationships between influencers on Instagram, Youtube or Facebook are included in parasocial relationships. While users can add comments and discuss content, then influencers have the possibility to reply to messages and comments regarding that content, but influencers cannot respond to all requests of their followers and engage fully in the actual discussion because of the number of followers and reactions they may have on social media are very high [33]. Thus, influencers on social media are like celebrities on traditional media. As a result, influencers and followers cannot truly be a friends or have a true two-way connection, contrary to what the concept of parasocial interaction in the context of traditional media celebrities originally implied. [34].

Parasocial interaction is a unidimensional variable, so indicators of parasocial interaction are as follows [35]:
- Stay tuned for content uploaded by influencers.
- Feeling the influencer is a friend.
- Following and interacting with influencers on social media.
- Read articles about influencers.
- Feel part of the influencer team.
- Want to meet influencers in the real world.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

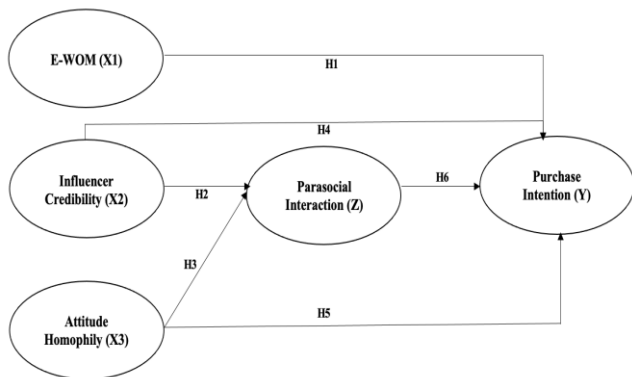As a result of the foregoing explanation, a conceptual framework that was briefly applied in this study is as follows:

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework

In this study, there are six hyphotheses based on the framework mentioned above, including:

H1: Electronic word of mouth has a positive effect on purchase intention.

H2: Influencer credibility has a positive effect on parasocial interaction.

H3: Attitude homophily has a positive effect on parasocial interaction.

H4: Influencer credibility has a positive effect on purchase intention.

H5: Attitude homophily has a positive effect on purchase intention.

H6: Parasocial interaction has a positive effect on purchase intention.

IV. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed quantitative techniques, by using online questionnaire through Whatsapp and Instagram. There are 166 respondents in all, representing Gen Z (15-24 years old), Gen Y (25-40 years old) and Gen X (41-56 years old), who use social media, skincare enthusiast and follow beauty influencer. To evaluate the measurement and structural model, this study used a Structural Equation Model using Partial Least Square (PLS) with SmartPLS version 3.2.9.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data obtained, there are 166 respondents. Based on gender, are female and are male. Table 1 also includes the outcomes of the data analysis, which were handled as follows.

Table 1: Reliability Construct and Validity Results

Variables	Items	Outer Loadings	CR	CA	AVE
E-WOM	X1.1	0.872	0.895	0.844	0.682
	X1.2	0.861			
	X1.3	0.780			
	X1.4	0.786			
Influencer Credibility	X2.1	0.877	0.899	0.850	0.689
	X2.2	0.852			
	X2.3	0.856			
	X2.4	0.778			
Attitude Homophily	X3.3	0.891	0.906	0.862	0.708
	X3.4	0.868			
Parasocial Interaction	Z1.3	0.771	0.910	0.867	0.716
	Z1.4	0.808			
	Z1.5	0.839			
	Z1.6	0.833			
	Z1.7	0.705			
Purchase Intention	Y1.1	0.876	0.872	0.707	0.773
	Y1.2	0.881			
	Y1.3	0.859			
	Y1.4	0.763			

If the outer loading value, composite reliability, and Cronbach Alpha value are all larger than 0.70, the indicator has good validity and reliability. An AVE value larger than 0.50 is also present with it. As can be shown in Table 1, the AVE value and the outer loading, composite reliability and Cronbach Alpha values in this study are greater than 0.70, followed by AVE value is greather than 0.50. These findings indicate that all variables are reliable and valid.

Additionally, the HTMT test was run to make use of discriminant validity. The multitrait-multimethod matrix method was utilized in this exam to measure the basic parameters. Where it is advised that the measurement value be less than 0.85, while values up to a maximum of 0.90 are still thought to be adequate. Based on the data shown below, it can be concluded that every construct is legitimate in terms of discriminant validity.

Table 2. HTMT Result

Variables	E-WOM	IC	AH	PSI	PI
E-WOM	0.826				
Influencer Credibility (IC)	0.458	0.830			
Attitude Homophily (AH)	0.602	0.760	0.841		
Parasocial Interaction (PSI)	0.593	0.753	0.800	0.846	
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.184	0.387	0.323	0.352	0.879

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination (R2) and (Q2)

Variables	R-Square	Q-Square
Parasocial Interaction	0.600	0.400
Purchase Intention	0.711	0.486

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination (F2)

Variables	f-Square	Notes
'E-WOM > Purchase Intention	0.068	Low
Influencer Credibility > Parasocial Interaction	1.128	High
Attitude Homophily > Parasocial Interaction	0.056	Low
Influencer Credibility > Purchase Intention	0.216	Middle
Attitude Homophily > Purchase Intention	0.009	Low
Parasocial Interaction > Purchase Intention	0.147	Middle

The amount by which the independent variable explains the dependent variable is shown by the R-Square coefficient of determination (R2). R-Square values range from 0 to 1. The R=Square of purchase intention is 0.711, indicating that the independent variables is explained. The test results demonstrate that the purchase intention value is greater than zero, in addition to the Q-Square value, demonstrating that the model has achieved the necessary predictive value. Meanwhile, the smallest F-square value is shown by the attitude homophily variable on purchase intention and the strongest is shown by the influencer credibility variable on parasocial interaction. Furthermore, the results of hypothesis testing of direct effects is in table 5.

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

No	Hyphothesis	T- Statistics	P Values	Results
H1	E-WOM -> Purchase Intention	1.975	0.049	Significant
H2	Influencer Credibility -> Parasocial Interaction	14.377	0.000	Significant
H3	Attitude Homophily -> Parasocial Interaction	2.485	0.013	Significant
H4	Influencer Credibility -> Purchase Intention	4.076	0.000	Significant
H5	Attitude Homophily -> Purchase Intention	0.996	0.320	Not Significant
H6	Parasocial Interaction -> Purchase Intention	3.000	0.003	Significant

According to the results of the first hypothesis test, electronic word of mouth has a favorable and significant impact on purchase intention. This shows that the more positive electronic word of mouth from fellow consumers will stimulate purchase intention towards skincare products. Online reviews such as electronic word of mouth act like strong informant and recommendation, which able to influence purchase intention and actual purchase significantly. Quality and quantity of electronic word of mouth given in any social media channel, stimulate consumer's purchase intention simultaneously [36].

Based on the second hypothesis test, the results is influencer credibility has a positive and significant effect on parasocial interaction. It can be interpreted that credible influencers increase the desire to interact with influencers on social media. Information from credible source, influence beliefs, opinions, attitudes and/or behaviour through process called internalization, which occurs when recipients accept the

influence of a souce in terms of their personal attitudes and value structures [37].

Furthermore, there are significant positive results from the third hypothesis test, namely attitude homophily towards parasocial interaction. Similarity between influencers and their audiences will increase purchase intention. Attitude homophily between influencers and audiences is important because it helps to strengthen the parasocial interaction between them. When audiences can identify themselves on their favourite influencers through attitude homophily, and continue to connect with them via social media, audiences may be more likely to adopt similar behaviour and/or lifestyles, including having the intention to purhcase similar clothing, makeup, beauty products and accessories endorsed by the same influencers [38].

The fourth hypothesis test, which examined the impact of influencer credibility on purchase intention, produced favorable and significant results. The more credibility that

influencer has on their reviews in social media, the higher the level of buying interest of potential customers of the skincare products they reviewed. Influencer on socia media has unique identity as famous and ordinary people at the same time. Their expertise as endorser is a qualification that directly affects people's trusts and eventually persuade consumers to buy the product [39].

Based on the fifth hypothesis test, attitude homophily has no significant effect on purchase intention. This reflects that the similarity between audiences and their influencers cannot influence an interest in purchasing skincare products, there is no previous research that supports this finding, though it has been described that attitude homophily is an antecedent of parasocial interaction [40] where the influence of parasocial interaction is strong, therefore audiences who feel similarity with their following influencers, will affect positively on purchase intention. This could explain why attitude homophily itself cannot influence purchase intention without the absence of parasocial interaction.

Next, the parasocial interaction to purchase intention hyphothesis test produced favorable and significant results. Parasocial interaction is an appropriate teoritical framework to study the unilateral relationship between influencers/celebrity and their audiences. Audiences feel like they know their following influencers through their exposure on social media. The re-exposure of them engenders a feeling of increased connection similar to traditional media. Audiences will start to regard influencers as a reliable source of information as the connection progresses and turn to them for advice. [41]. Specifically, women who have the parasocial relationship with a celebrity would want to have the similar look as their influencer to be a part of a group [42]. The audience might as well feel close to their influencers and will buy the product they recommend because to express how close they are in a relationship. This study shows the result that there is an influence between parasocial interaction and consumer buying interest in skincare.

VI. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on author's findings, below are the following recommendations for the management of the beauty industry:

- Marketing strategy that is used by companies through endorsement should notice that every influencer must has engagement with its followers thorugh good interaction. Because this interaction will influence the intention of consumer to buy the product.

- Companies should also ensure that every influencer understand or have the knowledge about the product that wants to be reviewed. A thorough and informative reviews will increase consumer's trust and increase the purchase intention as well.

- Companies should also pay attention on reviews made through a website that is written by existing consumers. Since a fellow consumer's review also considered important to another consumer. Therefore, positive

- reviews from fellow consumers will increase purchase intention.

VII. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

From the research conducted, the result shows that E-WOM, influencer credibility and parasocial interaction has significant effect on skincare purchase intention. Meanwhile, attitude homophily has no direct effect to skincare purchase intention. However, attitude homophily has significant effect on parasocial interaction along with influencer credibility. This has shown that attitude homophily is a predictor of parasocial interaction, therefore cannot be independently influence purchase intention like other variables.

This research has a limitation, which only use E-WOM, influencer credibility, attitude homophily and parasocial interaction to predict purchase intention. As for this research only examine beauty industry and influencer in general. Future research can examine specific beauty brand or specific influencer by giving stimulation to the respondent through a sample of campaign that has been done by this particular influencer. Therefore, researcher could have better perspective about the effectiveness of one marketing program.

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