

INFLUENCER AUTHENTICITY AND HOMOPHILY ON TIKTOK: SHAPING PURCHASE INTENTION VIA PARASOCIAL RELATIONS

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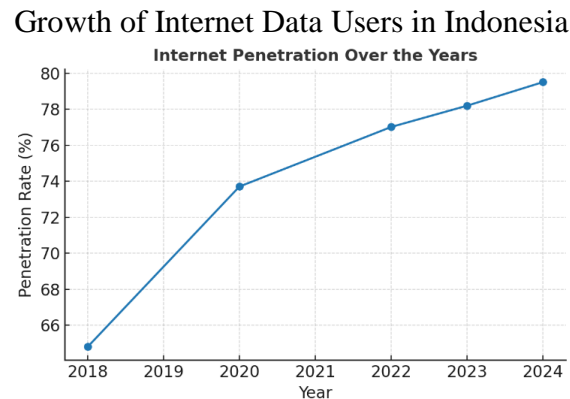
Abstract: Influencer characteristics influence consumer purchase intentions and are increasingly relevant to the digital era, especially through the TikTok platform. The main focus of this study is to analyze the influence of influencer characteristics using homophily, informative value, and authentic variables on the purchase intentions of Gen Z TikTok users in Indonesia, especially in Java, with parasocial relationships as a mediating variable. The research method used is a quantitative approach with a purposive sampling technique, involving 210 respondents aged 18-27 years who actively use TikTok. Data collection was carried out through an online questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1-5, and analysis using SmartPLS. The results of the study showed that homophily had a significant effect on purchase intentions through parasocial relationships. Informative and authentic values did not have a significant effect on purchase intentions through parasocial relationships. These findings emphasize the importance of closeness between influencers and their audiences in building a relationship that can drive purchasing decisions.

Keywords: *Homophily, Informative Value, Authenticity, Parasocial Relationship, Purchase Intention*

Submitted: 2025-05-19; Revised: 2025-05-27; Accepted: 2025-06-23

1. Introduction

Social media is one of the tools in digital marketing that changes traditional marketing into interactive marketing. Consumers can interact directly with a brand and influencers and share their experiences directly through social media (Dahl, 2018). The development of platforms known through social media also makes it easier for consumers to get information about a product. Social media is one option for building brand awareness, because sellers and companies can use social media as a tool to communicate with potential consumers (Gumalang et al., 2022)



Sources: APJII (2024)

According to data from APJII (Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers), social media users in Indonesia have increased to 221,563,479 people from a total of 278,696,200 people. This data emphasizes that the use of social media in Indonesia has increased from year to year, so that currently social media has become a tool for a company to market their products. Currently, many companies have separate departments to design and control content on social media platforms to promote their products among the public and to be able to recognize their brands (Karunarathne & Thilini, 2022).

Influencers are important in social media marketing because they provide information about brands they like and use in their daily lives, not just advice about a product (De Veirman, et al., 2020). Influencers make information from a brand available to their followers, and with the authentic attitude of the influencer, followers can trust the influencer and a sense of homophily can stimulate information searches, develop relationships with influencers, and share informative things. One of the social media platforms that can be utilized by influencers in marketing that can attract audiences is TikTok. TikTok is one of the platforms that can be used for marketing. According to Apliansyah, et al (2023), TikTok is a social media application that has rapid development in the world. TikTok allows its users to create videos, as well as buy goods for their users' needs.

There are differences in the results of Liu and Zheng's research (2024), this study shows that homophily has a significant effect on purchase intention through parasocial relationships, in contrast to Shoenberger and Kim (2022), who stated that not all forms of homophily can have a positive effect on consumer purchase intention. To overcome the existing gap, this study uses homophily, authenticity, and informative value variables simultaneously with parasocial relationships as mediating variables, a combination like this has not been widely used, especially in Indonesia. The research conducted by Liu and Zheng (2024), used respondents who were in China and were social media users in China who actively followed Influencers, while in this study, the respondents used were active TikTok users in Indonesia, especially in Java, and were aged 18 - 27 years.

The Phenomenon that emerged in this study is about Gen Z who feel emotionally connected to Tiktok influencers in Indonesia even though there is no personal interaction, besides that there is also a phenomenon that shows that the main factor in forming online shopping intentions is audience trust in influencers and also the perception of credibility, the similarity between influencers and audiences also strengthens this process (Khan et al., 2024). Gen Z tends to like this parasocial relationship combined with the similarities they feel, the

authenticity of the influencer, and the informative value possessed by the influencer, has the potential to influence their purchasing intentions.

Based on the background, the formulation of this problem is 1.) Do homophily, informative value, and authenticity of influencers affect parasocial relationships? 2.) Do parasocial relationships mediate the influence of influencer characteristics on purchase intentions?

The objectives of this study are: 1.) To analyze the influence of homophily, informative value, and authenticity on parasocial relationships between Gen Z TikTok users and Influencers; 2.) To test the mediating role of parasocial relationships on purchase intentions with influencer characteristics.

2. Research Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory method where this approach is suitable for measuring and analyzing numerical data statistically, and testing established hypotheses (Creswell, 2014). This study focuses on testing the direct and indirect effects between variables in the conceptual model, so the explanatory method is used in this study (Hair et al., 2019).

The population used in this study were TikTok generation Z users in Indonesia, especially in Java, with an age range of 18 to 27 years. Generation Z is the most active age group in using social media and this generation also has quite significant purchasing power in the digital ecosystem (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). The number of data collected was 223 respondents, but after elimination related to invalid responses, the final number analyzed was 210 respondents.

Purposive Sampling is used as a sampling technique which is a non-probability technique used in having respondents based on certain characteristics that are relevant to the objectives of the study (Etikan, 2016). The criteria for this study are generation Z aged 18-27 years and domiciled in Java, and have seen promotional content from Influencers on the TikTok application.

This questionnaire was distributed online via Google Form, because according to Wright (2005), this method is efficient in reaching large numbers of respondents quickly and is also cost-effective. Questions from each variable are measured using a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), because this Likert scale is commonly used in research and is able to describe the level of agreement (Joshi et al., 2015).

The Variable Structure of this study includes 3 Independent Variables, namely Homophily, which has 4 Indicators, Informative Value Variable has 4 Indicators, and also Authentic Variable, which has 2 Indicators. The dependent variable used in this study is the Purchase Intention Variable, which has 4 Indicators and Parasocial Relationship as a Mediating Variable, which has 3 Indicators.

Homophily is the similarity of characteristics shared by a communicator with a recipient (Bu et al., 2022). Homophily that occurs is a vital aspect in social interactions that strengthen social relationships between humans. Perceived similarities, such as thinking like me, behaving like me, and being similar to me, have been shown to strengthen the bond between influencers and consumers (Ladhari et al., 2019). In a study by Onotfrei et al (2022), homophily can influence consumers, behavioral involvement, and also purchase intentions. According to Schouten et al (2019), compared to traditional influencers, consumers feel more similar and trusting.

H1: Homophily has an influence on Parasocial relationships

Informative Value is something that influences whether the audience sees the influencer as someone who can shape their opinions. Influencers are often considered as someone who can be relied on by the audience, because they often provide information related to their personal experiences. Influencers can interact with their followers and also provide information that their followers are looking for through social media. Influencers have a value that shows that the information conveyed influences consumers to believe and have the intention to buy the products they offer.

H2: Informative value has an influence on Parasocial relationships

Authenticity is defined of being honest with oneself, a person can be said to experience authenticity when they are honest with themselves. According to Kim and Kim (2021), when an influencer becomes Authentic, then followers can believe what the influencer posts is their opinion. Lee et al (2021), revealed that authenticity can help build trust between influencers and their followers.

H3: Authenticity has an influence on Parasocial relationships

Purchase intention plays a role in social media campaigns, which helps marketers collaborate with Social Media Influencers (Tanwar et al., 2022). Influencers help in marketing a product that is being promoted. Influencers are used as a marketing tool; marketers create a strong relationship between the brand and the influencer, thereby increasing consumer purchase intention (Guolla et al., 2020).

H4: Parasocial relationships have an effect on purchase intention

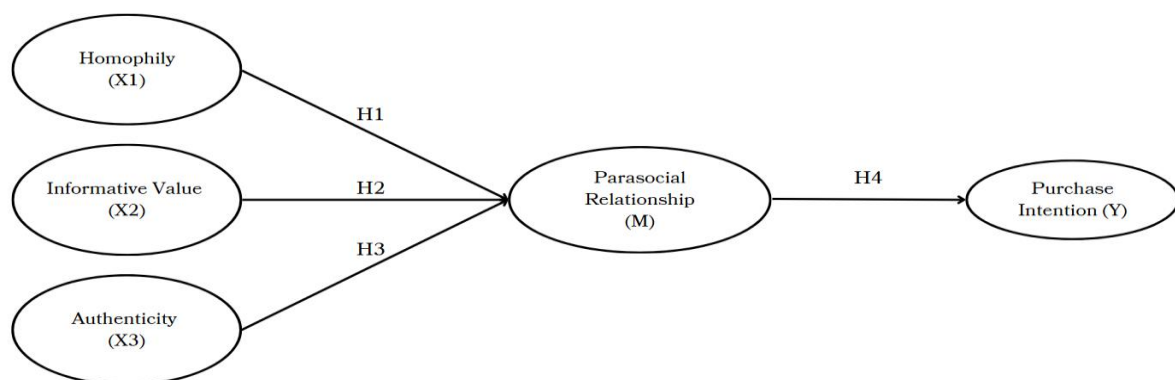


Figure 1. The Conceptual Research Framework

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

This study uses a quantitative approach with the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis method based on Partial Least Squares (PLS), and this study uses SmartPLS 4 software. This analysis is carried out through two main stages, namely testing the measurement model (outer model) and testing the structural model (inner model).

Table 1. Respondent Demographics (N=223 respondents)

Variables	Freq	(%)
Gender		
Man	60	26.91%
Woman	163	73.09%
Age		
< 18 Years	3	1.35%
18 - 22 Years	174	78.03%
23 - 27 Years	46	20.63%
Domicile		
Java Island	215	96.41%
Outside Java Island	8	3.59%
Work		
Government employees	1	0.45%
Private employees	21	9.42%
Students	194	87.00%
Businessman	7	3.14%

Based on the descriptive table, it can be seen that the number of samples in the initial stage of analysis consisted of 223 respondents, where this data is included in the data that will be eliminated. There are some data that will be eliminated, because there are respondents who do not meet the criteria, and also after testing with standard deviation, some respondents have a result of 0, which states that the answers from these respondents are no longer valid, so we will eliminate these respondents.

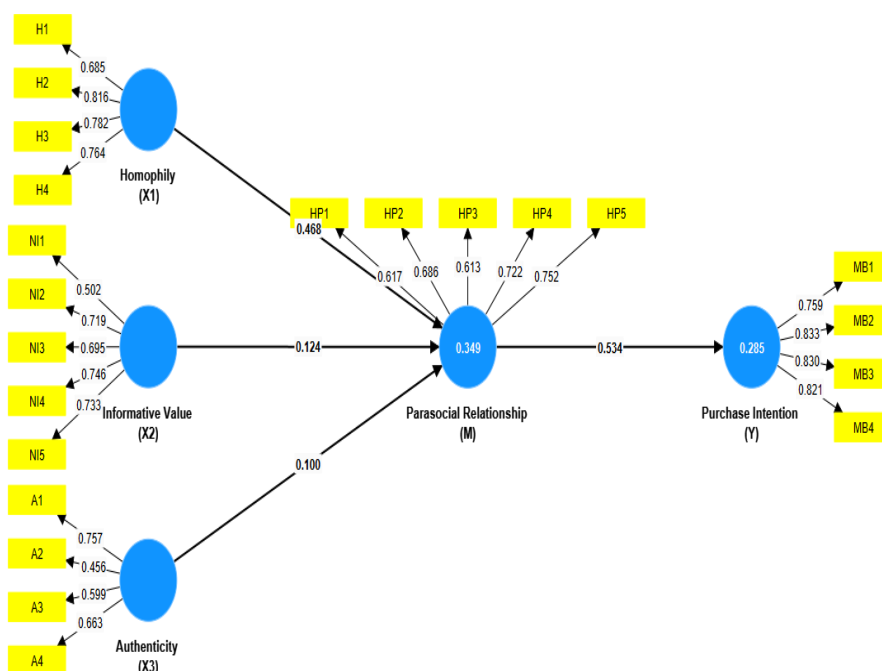


Figure 2: Diagram. Path Coefficient and P-Value (before elimination)

In the picture above, it is the first research model, where each indicator of each variable, such as Homophily, Informative Value, Authenticity that contributes to the formation of Parasocial Relationships, which affects purchase intention, must have an outer loading > 0.7, but some indicators in the variable have an outer loading that is less than the standard. Outer loading that does not meet the standard will be eliminated because the indicator does not meet the convergent validity criteria, which means that the indicator is not strong in presenting the measured variable. After eliminating respondents and indicators, the following is the data and research model that will be used:

Table 2. Respondent Demographics (N=210 respondents)

Variables	Freq	(%)
Gender		
Man	55	26.19%
Woman	155	73.81%
Age		
18 - 22 Years	165	78.57%
23 - 27 Years	45	21.43%
Domicile		
Java Island	210	100.00%
Work		
Government employees	1	0.48%
Private employees	21	10.00%
Students	182	86.67%
Businessman	6	2.86%

The descriptive table above is a sample that has been eliminated, where the initial number of respondents was 223 respondents, becoming 210 respondents, because they met the research criteria, namely respondents who have the TikTok application aged 18-27 years, and domiciled in Java. The respondents consisted of 55 men, equivalent to 26.19% of the total respondents, while 155 women (73.81%) were taken from the sample of 18-23 years, totaling 165 people or 78.57% and 45 people or 21.43% from 23-27 years. The occupations of these respondents, 0.48% were civil servants, 10.00% were private employees, while 86.67% were students, and 2.86% were entrepreneurs. Overall, the majority of respondents in this study were women aged 18 - 22 years, domiciled in Java, and were students.

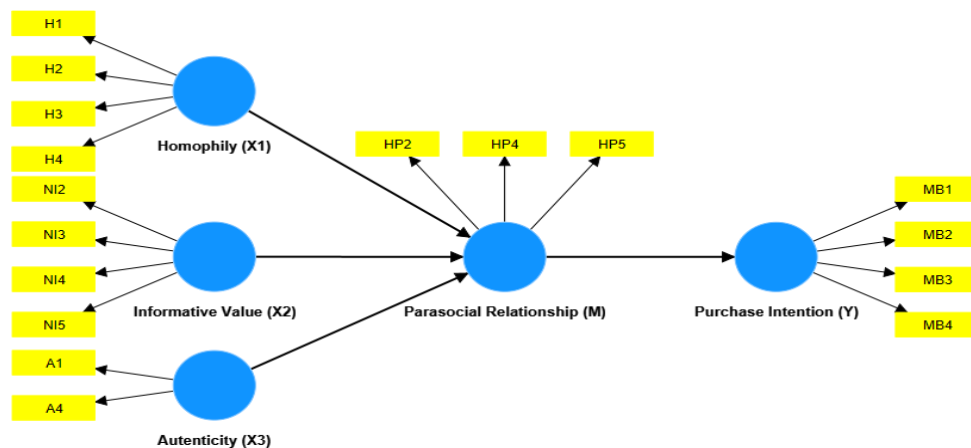


Figure 3: Diagram. Conceptual

After eliminating the indicators that do not meet the standards, the following is the research model that will be used. The NI indicator of the Informative Value Variable has been eliminated, and then 2 of the 4 Authentic Variable indicators, namely A2 and A3, have also been eliminated. The Parasocial Relationship Variable has been eliminated as many as 2 indicators from a total of 5 indicators, namely HP1 and HP3.

3.2. Discussion

Evaluation of Measurement Model

The variables of this model are measured using several indicators, which are then measured for validity with outer loading. If the outer loading value of each indicator is > 0.7 , then it can be said that the indicator has a significant contribution in forming its variables.

Table 3. Measurement Model Results

Construct	Measurement Items	Indicator	Outer Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Homophily	H1	Influencers have the same interests	0.664	0.764	0.846	0.580
	H2	Influencers have the same values	0.819			
	H3	Influencers have the same experience	0.795			
	H4	Influencers have the same preferences	0.760			
Informative Value	NI2	Need to get Information from Influencers	0.712	0.706	0.818	0.529
	NI3	The information provided from	0.703			

		influencers helps				
	NI4	Information is delivered in a practical manner	0.758			
	NI5	The information provided is functional	0.735			
Authentic (X1)	A1	Consistency of Influencers influences my purchase intention towards what is recommended	0.871	0.476	0.788	0.652
	A4	the trust I have in influencers influences purchase intentions	0.739			
Parasocial Relationship	HP2	Can rely on information from Influencers	0.717	0.645	0.808	0.585
	HP4	I think influencers help me for my interests	0.761			
	HP5	I feel quite close to the influencer	0.813			
purchase intention	MB1	will buy products recommended by Influencers	0.751	0.827	0.884	0.657
	MB2	intend to purchase the product in the near future	0.833			
	MB3	likely to purchase the product in the near future	0.830			
	MB4	I hope to purchase the product in the near future	0.826			

Homophily variable is measured by 4 valid indicators, where the value of the outer loading of this variable ranges from 0.664 - 0.819, which shows that these 4 indicators are correlated in explaining homophily, for indicator H1 it has an outer loading with a value of 0.664, where the standard of the outer loading value is >0.7 , but for this indicator it can still be included if the AVE and Cronbach's alpha values still meet the standards, so that the H1 indicator is not eliminated. The level of reliability of the Homophily variable is acceptable with a composite reliability value of 0.846 and Cronbach's alpha $0.764 > 0.70$ and convergent validity, which is indicated by AVE $0.580 > 0.50$. Of the 4 indicators, the Homophily variable looks stronger

reflected by H2 (LF = 0.819) namely Influencers have the same value and also H3 (LF = 0.795) namely Influencers have the same experience. The results show that consumers will tend to interact and feel more connected with other people who share similar characteristics, such as values and experiences.

The Informative Value variable is also measured by 4 indicators, where previously for the Informative Value variable it consisted of 5 indicators, but after data processing, there was an invalid indicator, namely NI1, so that the indicator was eliminated. Other indicators have outer loading values ranging from 0.703 - 0.758, of the 4 indicators are valid in measuring the Informative Value variable. The reliability level of this variable is also acceptable, which is indicated by the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha, each of which has a value > 0.70, namely 0.818 and 0.706. The level of convergent validity possessed by this Informative Value variable also meets good requirements, as seen from the AVE value of 0.529 > 0.50. Among the 4 indicators of the Informative Value variable, NI4 has the highest outer loading, which is 0.758, which shows that the information practically conveyed by influencers influences consumer purchasing intentions. The informative value of content shared by influencers significantly influences the purchase intentions of their audiences, where the informativeness of influencer posts helps consumers in decision making (Jayasingh et al., 2025).

The Authentic variable has 2 indicators in the measurement, where previously the authentic indicator had 4 indicators, after data processing, it was seen that the other 2 indicators, namely A2 and A3 were invalid so that elimination was carried out on these indicators. The outer loading values for the indicators used, namely A1 and A4, are 0.871 and 0.739 respectively. The value of Cronbach's alpha for this authentic variable is 0.476, where this value is below the set threshold, but according to Hair et al. (2021) this does not determine the invalidity of the variable, when the Composite Reliability (0.788) and AVE (0.652) are still above the threshold, then this can be tolerated. Indicator A1 has a higher outer loading of 0.871 when compared to indicator A4, this shows that the consistency of Influencers influences consumer purchasing intentions towards what they recommend.

The Parasocial Relationship variable has a total of 5 indicators before elimination, but after elimination only 3 indicators are used. There are several indicators that have outer loading values below the threshold, namely indicators HP1 and HP 3 where both indicators do not meet the outer loading value standard > 0.7, so both indicators need to be eliminated. The indicators used are HP2 (0.717), HP4 (0.761), and HP5 (0.813). The reliability level of this variable is measured using composite reliability 0.808 and Cronbach's alpha 0.645, as explained, if Cronbach's alpha is less than 0.70, then it is still permissible if the composite reliability is above the threshold and also convergent validity, which is indicated by AVE 0.580 > 0.50. HP5 has the highest outer loading value, which shows that Parasocial Relationships more strongly reflect consumers feeling quite close to influencers.

The Purchase Intention variable has 4 valid indicators, where the outer loading value of this variable has a value between 0.751 - 0.833 which shows that the 4 indicators have a strong correlation in explaining consumer purchase intentions. The level of reliability of this purchase intention variable is acceptable, because it has a composite reliability value of 0.884 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.827 above 0.70 and also an AVE of 0.657 > 0.50. Of the 4 items that are indicators of this purchase intention variable, one of them has the highest outer loading, namely MB2 which has a value of 0.833, where this indicator shows that consumers have the intention to buy products promoted by influencers in the near future, this supports research by Liu & Zheng (2024), which shows that the informative value of influencer content, authenticity, and

homophily, positively influences consumer purchase intentions, through parasocial relationships.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

Method: Fornell and Lacker					
	Authentic	Homophily	Parasocial Relationship	purchase intention	Informative Value
Authentic	0.808				
Homophily	0.301	0.762			
Parasocial Relationship	0.246	0.540	0.765		
purchase intention	0.241	0.345	0.521	0.811	
Informative Value	0.462	0.468	0.371	0.329	0.728
Method : HTMT					
	Authentic	Homophily	Parasocial Relationship	purchase intention	Informative Value
Authentic					
Homophily	0.510				
Parasocial Relationship	0.449	0.723			
purchase intention	0.359	0.424	0.698		
Informative Value	0.805	0.661	0.555	0.433	

Discriminant Validity Evaluation is an evaluation of the measurement model to ensure that each research variable has a clear difference from the other. A discriminant variable can be said to be good if the indicator of the variable does not measure other variables excessively. In this study, discriminant validity with the Fornell-Larcker method was tested using the Fornell-Larcker method and also the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio) value. The criteria for this test are that the root of the variable's AVE has a greater correlation than other variables. The Authentic variable has a higher AVE root (0.808) compared to its correlation with other variables, such as Homophily (0.301), Parasocial Relationships (0.246), Purchase Intention (0.241), and Informative Value (0.462). According to Hair et al. (2021) for testing discriminant variables with the HTMT method is more recommended when compared to testing discriminant variables with the Fornell-Larcker method, because the HTMT method has the advantage of providing more reliable and sensitive results to discriminant validity issues. Based on the HTMT results in this study, it can be seen that each variable has a value <0.90, such as the Authentic HTMT value and Informative Value are 0.805, Homophily with Parasocial Relationships has an HTMT value of 0.723, and also between Parasocial Relationships and purchase intention is 0.698. The variables in this research model have met the discriminant validity based on both the Fornell-Larcker method and the HTMT method.

Structural Model Evaluation

Structural model evaluation aims to assess the relationship between latent variables and the predictive ability of the model as a whole. This process, it involves analysis of the path coefficient value, statistical significance, and R-square and Q-square values.

Table 5. Structural Model Testing

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	P value	Test results	F square	R Square	Q Square
Direct Influence						
H1. Homophily - Parasocial Relationships	0.464	0,000	Significant	0.241	0.311	0.169
H2. Informative Value - Parasocial Relationships	0.133	0.081	Not Significant	0.017		
H3. Authentic - Parasocial Relationships	0.045	0.492	Not Significant	0.002		
H4. Parasocial Relationships - purchase intention	0.521	0,000	Significant	0.373	0.272	0.166
Indirect Influence/Mediation						
H5. Homophily - Parasocial Relationship - Purchase Intention	0.242	0,000	Significant	-	-	-
H6. Informative Value - Parasocial Relationship - Purchase Intention	0.069	0.102	Not Significant	-	-	-
H7. Authenticity - Parasocial Relationship - Purchase Intention	0.024	0.505	Not Significant	-	-	-

Based on the results of the tests that have been conducted, there are direct and indirect influences on each variable. In this study, there are 5 hypotheses that explain the results of the tests conducted.

H1. Homophily - Parasocial Relationships: The results of the analysis show that homophily has a positive and significant effect on Parasocial Relationships (path coefficient = 0.464, $p < 0.01$), supporting H1. The similarities between Influencers and audiences are the main drivers of parasocial relationships in the current digital era, where according to Sundström et al. (2022), demographic and psychographic similarities between influencers and their audiences create a stronger "illusion of intimacy" in the current digital era. The effect value ($f = 0.241$) also shows that this homophily explains 24.1% of the variance in parasocial relationships after controlling for other variables.

H2. Informative Value - Parasocial Relationships: Informative value does not show any significant influence on parasocial relationships, as seen from the path coefficient of 0.133. and p value of 0.08, which has a value that does not meet the standard. According to Zhang et al. (2024) informative value only has an effect when conveyed by influencers who are experts in their fields specifically, so that the audience will trust influencers who are experts in their fields more. The effect size which tends to be small ($f = 0.017$) reinforces that although the informative value conveyed tends to be important, it is not enough to create an emotional bond, which is the basis of parasocial relationships.

H3. Authenticity - Parasocial Relationship: The results show that Authenticity does not significantly influence parasocial relationships, where the value of the path coefficient is 0.045, and the p value is 0.429, and the value of f square is 0.002, which shows a very small effect. Although the authenticity of influencers is often considered important in building trust, in this case it is not strong enough to influence the formation of parasocial relationships.

H4. Parasocial Relationship - Purchase Intention: Parasocial Relationship has a significant influence on purchase intention, which can be seen from the path coefficient of 0.521, and p value of 0.000. The effect is large ($f = 0.373$), with an R square value of 0.272 and a Q square of 0.166 on purchase intention. This means that the emotional relationship built through parasocial can increase the audience's desire to buy products promoted by influencers.

H5. Homophily - Parasocial Relationship - Purchase Intention: There is a significant indirect influence between homophily and purchase intention through parasocial relationships, with a path coefficient of 0.242 and a p value of 0.000. This means that homophily has an influence in the formation of parasocial relationships between influencers and their audiences, which then affects consumer purchase intentions.

H6. Informative Value - Parasocial Relationship - Purchase Intention : The indirect influence of Informative Value on purchase intention through parasocial relationship is not significant, where from the existing results, the value of the path coefficient is 0.069, with a p value of 0.102, which shows that even though there is useful information conveyed by influencers, it is not enough to form an emotional connection with the audience and encourage them to have purchase intention towards the promoted product.

H7. Authentic - Parasocial Relationship - Purchase Intention: The results show that there is no significant influence between authenticity and purchase intention through parasocial relationships, where the path coefficient is 0.024 and also p value 0.505. The perception held by the influencer is not strong enough to create an emotional influence that will have an impact on consumer purchase intention.

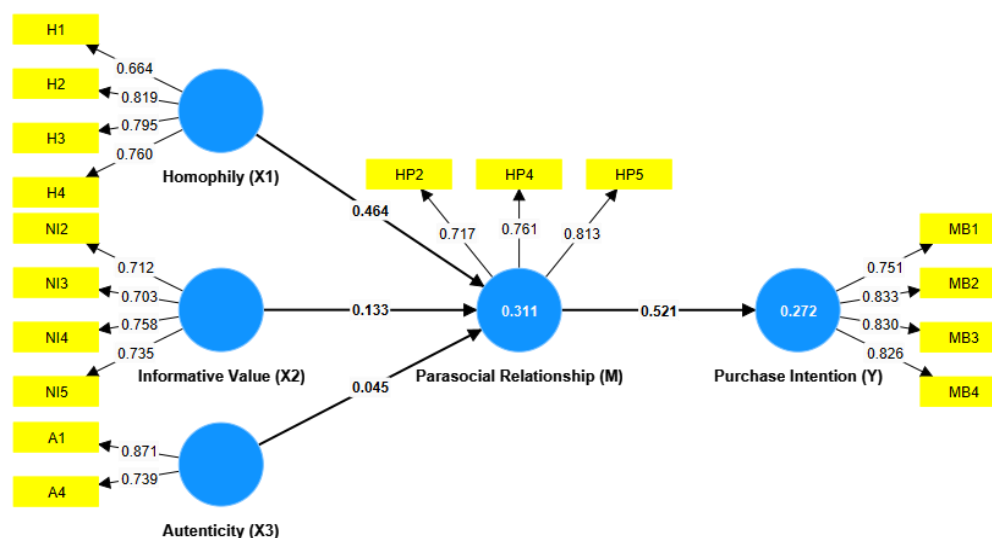


Figure 4: Diagram. Path Coefficient and P-Value

4. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that homophily has a significant effect on parasocial relationships, and parasocial relationships significantly affect the purchase intention of Generation Z in Indonesia who are TikTok users. In addition, parasocial relationships significantly mediate the effect of homophily on purchase intention. However, for Informative and Authentic values, they do not show a direct effect, nor a significant indirect effect on purchase intention through parasocial relationships. The results of this study confirm that this aspect of similarity or homophily is important for forming emotional closeness between the audience and influencers which will influence the purchasing decision of a promoted product.

Future research can use mediating variables or other moderating variables that have strong potential for the relationship between influencer characteristics and purchase intentions, such as trust, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), or Engagement. The sample used for further research can also use a broader demographic sample, such as sampling outside Java, or sampling outside Gen Z. The use of a qualitative approach with interviews can also be done to understand the emotions in parasocial relationships on Tiktok platform.

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