

The Effect of Parasocial Intervention on Purchase Intention with Consumer Online Purchase Behavior as an Intervention Variable in Fashion Products

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the relationship between parasocial interaction and purchase intention (Interest in Shopping) and how consumer online purchase behavior acts as an intermediary variable. The quantitative method used in this research is the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. Hypotheses are tested via statistical t tests. Data was collected through a questionnaire distributed to 211 respondents who were followers of Zara's social media accounts and had never purchased products from this brand. The research was conducted for 4 months, from February to May 2022. The results showed that parasocial interactions had a 54% influence on consumer online purchasing behavior, 39% on purchasing interest, and consumer online purchasing behavior had a 42% influence on purchasing interest. Apart from that, consumer online purchasing behavior also acts as an intermediary variable with an influence of 22%. This research provides insight into how parasocial interactions influence purchase intention and through what mechanisms consumers' online purchasing behavior plays a role in this relationship.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the trend of online shopping has experienced a significant increase. Consumers now prefer to shop online from the comfort of their homes, avoiding the hassle of in-person visits to physical stores, especially if the store they want to visit is far from where they live. Apart from providing benefits for consumers, this online shopping trend also provides broad opportunities for manufacturers to develop markets that they can reach. One of the strategies adopted in this context is digital marketing, which is known as marketing through digital media (Sumarlia et al., 2021). Shopping via online platforms has become a common lifestyle among modern society.

In today's business world, the role of influencer marketing has become very important in every marketing campaign. Based on data from Google Trends, searches related to 'influencer marketing' have increased by 500% every month. This trend has encouraged marketers and brands

to involve influencers in their marketing strategies, as influencers' roles are also incorporated into digital marketing practices in the current era. As noted by previous research (Chetioui et al., 2020)

The role played by these influencers brings about a social presence effect for potential buyers, creating a sense of trust in the online store they go to. In the view of (Jin et al., 2021), marketing fashion products online involves two key aspects: the presence of influencers to build trust, and the role of humans in increasing trust in brands.

Personal appeal is needed by an influencer to build an image that attracts interest from the audience. The existence of this attraction, both socially and physically, creates communication between the influencer and the audience, which arises because of this attraction (Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2020). This attraction also has a role in increasing the closeness or relationship between the influencer and the audience, even if the relationship is one-way.

This kind of interaction is known as parasocial interaction, where an intimate relationship is formed between the audience and the influencer without any face-to-face meetings. The concept of parasocial interaction describes the psychological relationship that arises when someone observes a public figure or idol, even though direct communication is impossible (Chen et al., 2021). This approach is in accordance with the idea of Horton and Wohl (1956) that parasocial interaction is an imaginary form of interaction between viewers and media personalities, where viewers feel involved in a face-to-face relationship with the media character.

This parasocial interaction has the potential to influence consumer buying interest in the context of online shopping, because consumer buying behavior has shifted from the conventional model to the online model. In online purchases, consumers do not have direct physical access to the products they want to buy. This carries the risk of receiving an unsuitable product or even the risk of fraud by the seller. In response, consumers form perceptions and experiences of the risks and benefits of shopping online, which in turn influence their attitudes and purchase intentions. In an effort to reduce risk, consumers tend to seek more complete information about products before shopping, to build a sense of trust.

Consumer trust in products or online stores can be increased when promotions are carried out by individuals they trust or have credibility. In this case, influencers who are consumers' favorites play an important role (Chen et al., 2021). Online consumer behavior engagement becomes an intermediary factor in the relationship between parasocial interactions and purchase intentions, because these interactions influence how consumer buying behavior changes on online platforms.

Zara, as a modest fashion brand that we produce, focuses on casual clothing for women, including dresses, blouses and suits. Zara's target market is women aged 20-30 years who are looking for a relaxed but attractive look, especially women who wear the hijab. Zara completely relies on social media, especially Instagram and Shopee, to market its products. In its marketing strategy, Zara uses various digital marketing techniques, including advertising on Instagram and working with influencers on various platforms.

Since its inception, Zara has implemented an influencer marketing strategy with the aim of increasing the number of followers and brand awareness on Instagram. Whenever launching a new product, Zara always plans an advertising campaign through Instagram ads, while continuing to actively produce detailed content about products on the platform. On the basis of the above phenomena, this research aims to explain the relationship between parasocial interactions and buying interest (Shopping Interest), with online purchasing behavior as a factor that mediates this relationship.

Although much research has focused on the role of influencers in influencing consumer purchasing intentions in the context of digital marketing, there is a lack of understanding of how parasocial interactions with influencers can influence consumers' online purchasing behavior. While some research has identified the positive impact of these interactions on purchase intentions, there remains a need for more depth on how these interactions influence purchasing decisions specifically in online purchasing environments, as well as clarifying the role of online consumer behavior as a link in this relationship.



Figure 1. Research Model

Based on the research results of Sokolova and Kefi (2020), it was concluded that when viewers develop parasocial interactions with idol figures, there will be a sense of closeness that motivates them to purchase related products. Furthermore, S. Venus Jin (2021) reveals that Instagram posts of a fashion brand promoted by fashion influencers can trigger parasocial interactions that build trust in the brand, and positive interactions between followers and influencers are related to materialistic views, which in turn relate to intentions. purchasing products promoted by influencers.

In the context of online purchases, consumer behavior has different dynamics compared to offline purchases. Many aspects arise in online purchases that are not present in offline purchases. Several studies show that consumer behavior in online purchasing has a positive impact on their purchase intentions. Research by Chen, T.Y. (2021) show that influencers influence their followers in purchasing decisions for the products they use or promote.

Consumer behavior is an important factor for understanding purchase intention, and companies always want consumer behavior that supports increased purchase intention. In the digital era, consumers tend to feel more satisfied when they can search for product information and compare product prices and quality from various online stores. Research by Shim et al (Vazquez & Xu, 2009) shows that consumer attitudes toward online shopping significantly influence their intention to make purchases via the internet. This indicates that online purchasing behavior by consumers has a correlation with purchasing intentions.

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of parasocial interactions in the context of online purchasing by focusing on the mediating role of online consumer behavior. While much previous research has explored the influence of influencers in the context of digital marketing, this research explores how that influence is linked to the psychological interactions that exist between influencers and consumers. In addition, this research tries to look further at how these interactions not only influence purchase intentions, but also how online purchasing behavior mediates the relationship between parasocial interactions and purchase intentions. Thus, this research presents a new concept in understanding the complex relationship between parasocial interactions, online purchasing behavior, and consumer purchasing interest in the digital marketing era.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The population of this study consists of individuals who are Instagram users and follow the official Zara account. The total population that meets these criteria is 450 people. The research sample was taken from this population using a purposive sampling technique. A total of 211 respondents who are followers of Zara's Instagram account are the research subjects. This sample is thought to be representative of the wider population in the context of parasocial interactions with brands and online purchases.

The data in this study were collected through the use of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to measure the constructs studied, namely parasocial interactions, online buying behavior and purchase intentions. The questionnaire was compiled in Google Forms format and distributed via direct messages on Zara's official Instagram account. Respondents were asked to rate the statements in the questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, where a value of 1 indicated "strongly disagree" and a value of 5 indicated "strongly agree".

The data collected will be analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method. This approach makes it possible to examine the relationship between the variables in the proposed model. The first step involves checking the quality of the data, including testing basic assumptions regarding normality, multicollinearity and outliers. Furthermore, path analysis will be carried out to test the hypotheses proposed in this study. The validity and reliability of the instrument will also be evaluated (Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

After data collection is complete, the data will be processed and analyzed using appropriate statistical software. The results of the analysis will be interpreted to test the validity of the proposed hypothesis. Research conclusions will be presented based on the results of data analysis and relevant literature review.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study indicate that the respondents in the overall study were women, data regarding the frequency of the characteristics of the respondents can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Variables and Indicators

Variabel	Indikator	Sumber	Loading Factors
Parasocial Interaction	1. Trusted	Lou dan Kim (2019), Sokolova dan Kefi (2019), Indahwati (2015)	0.813
	2. Expertise		0.742
	3. Attraction		0.800
	4. Similarity		0.777
Shopping Interest	1. Transactional interest	Schiffman & Kanuk (2010), Hwang dan Zhang (2018)	0.773
	2. Referential interest		0.710
	3. Preferential interest		0.727
	4. Exploratory interest		0.786
Online Shopping Behavior	1. Attitude towards online shopping	Vazquez and Xu (2006) dan Widiyanto and Prasilowati (2015)	0.833
	2. Motivation		0.840
	3. Online information search		0.861

In this study, 211 respondents were women. The majority of respondents work as employees, reaching 74 individuals with a proportion of 35%. The second position is filled by students, numbering 55 people or 26%, followed by freelancers who reach 29 individuals with a proportion of 14%. When viewed in terms of age range, there were 130 respondents (62%) who were in the 25-34 year age category. Furthermore, there were 74 respondents (35%) who were in the 18-24 year age range. Regarding the budget allocation for shopping for fashion items, the majority of respondents (44%) indicated a price range of Rp.201,000-350,000 as their preference.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test

Variabel	Cronbach Alpha's	Composite Reliability	AVE	R square
Parasocial Interaction	0.799	0.882	0.613	
Online Shopping Behavior	0.792	0.864	0.714	0,290
Shopping Interest	0.739	0.837	0.562	0,502

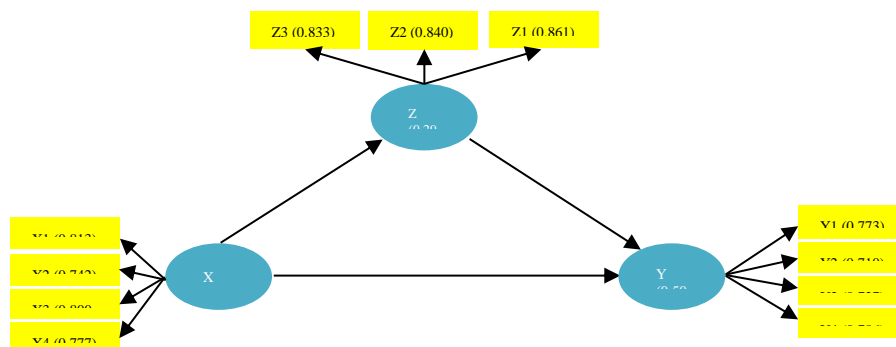


Figure 2. PLS model

Figure 2 illustrates that this research model has passed reliability and validity tests. Based on the AVE, Composite Reliability, and Cronbach Alpha values, all scores for each AVE item are greater than 0.50, Composite is greater than 0.70, and Cronbach Alpha is greater than 0.60. From the table, it can be seen that the R-Square value for Online Shopping Behavior is 0.29, which indicates that Parasocial Interaction has a 29% influence on consumer buying behavior at Zara. Meanwhile, the remaining 71% was influenced by other variables not included in this research. Likewise, the R-Square value for Shopping Interest is 0.502, indicating that Parasocial Interaction and Online Shopping Behavior have an impact of 50% on Consumer Shopping Interest at Zara. The remaining 50% is influenced by other variables not included in this study.

Tabel 3. Hypothesis Testing

Direct			
	Original Sample (O)	T Stat.	Ket.
Y1 → Z1	0,418	5,775	Signifikan
X1 → Y1	0,539	6,974	Signifikan
X1 → Z1	0,389	5,472	Signifikan
Indirect			
X1 → Y1 → Z1	0.225	4.102	Signifikan

Table 3 describes the results of hypothesis testing in this study. Hypothesis testing is carried out by measuring the path coefficient, comparing the T statistic with the T-table value at a significance level of 5% or 1.96. If the T statistics value is smaller than the T-table, it is considered not significant; However, if the T statistic value is greater than the T-table, it is considered significant. All hypotheses show significant results because both direct and indirect relationships between variables have values that exceed 5% and 1.96.

The test results listed in Table 4 indicate that there is a significant impact of Parasocial Interaction on Shopping Interest. This is reinforced by the T-table value of the hypothesis which is 5.47. This value shows that any increase in parasocial interaction generated by influencers in Zara's Instagram account will also increase consumer shopping interest. This finding is in line with research conducted by Sokolova (2019) and Chetioui, Benlafqih, and Lebdaoui (2020) who also observed similar results.

In the Parasocial Interaction variable, the Attractiveness aspect has the highest mean value of 4.37. This reflects the respondents' agreement that fashion influencers on Instagram have an attractive visual appeal. The attraction is able to attract attention instantly, outperforming other factors that require repeated exposure before creating a similar effect (Lou & Kim, 2019). Apart from the attractive appearance aspect, the honesty factor also has the second highest mean value. This illustrates that respondents believe that fashion influencers provide honest reviews, triggering buying interest from consumers based on influencer recommendations. This finding is consistent with the

results of respondents' answers on the variable Shopping Interest, especially on the explorative interest indicator which has the highest mean value of 4.35. This illustrates that respondents are willing to seek more detailed information about Zara products if the influencer gives a positive review.

This phenomenon is also reflected in real practice, where some new consumers ask about Zara products used by their favorite influencers. This confirms that consumers tend to seek more information about products and brands, and grow buying interest when they see Zara products being used by influencers.

The results of the research test showed that there was a significant influence of Parasocial Interaction on consumer online buying behavior, with a hypothesis T-table value of 6.97. This finding is in line with research conducted by Chen, T.Y (2021) which produced similar findings. One of the factors that influence consumer online buying behavior is psychological factors, which include motivation, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs. If Zara can increase parasocial interaction with consumers through influencers to promote its products, this will increase the possibility of consumers to explore, choose and buy these products. Reviews provided by influencers can psychologically motivate consumers to explore Zara products, increasing their desire to make purchases. Positive reviews from influencers on Instagram about Zara products will also shape consumer perceptions of Zara products and brands. Positive reviews shared by consumers may strengthen consumer confidence in Zara. As a brand, Zara must also provide other supporting factors, such as services that make it easier for consumers to purchase online until the transaction is complete. Apart from that, providing attractive promotions or discounts can also influence consumer behavior in making purchases via the internet.

The findings of this test state that Parasocial Interaction has an influence on consumer online buying behavior, which is supported by a hypothetical T-table value of 5.77. This is in line with research conducted by Vazquez and Xu (2006) which produced similar findings. The findings of this hypothesis can be interpreted to mean that any increase in consumer online purchasing behavior, such as ease of shopping, discounts, and ease of searching for products, will increase consumer purchase intentions. Changes in consumer behavior in recent years, especially in the area of online purchasing, have also influenced shifts in consumer behavior. Consumers' online purchasing decisions are influenced by several factors, such as attitudes towards online purchasing, shopping motivation, and information search. The findings in this research reflect that consumers tend to agree that the convenience of shopping online without having to come to a physical location is the reason behind their intention to purchase. On the other hand, the lowest results were found in the online information search indicator, with a mean value of 4.25. This shows that consumers tend to look for information about similar products to compare before buying. This action arises because online purchases do not allow consumers to see or touch the product directly, so they are more likely to look for similar products as a reference. In addition, consumers feel more satisfied when they search and compare products before making a purchase, because they feel the purchase resulting from this process is the best product they can choose.

As a concrete example, practice from Zara's Instagram account shows that some followers like to shop through the Shopee platform because of the convenience and free shipping facility it offers. When Zara's Instagram account promotes a new product, a question that is often asked via direct messages is regarding product availability at Shopee.

Furthermore, the results of this test also reveal the existence of partial mediation in the observed relationship. This test was carried out in two stages, namely (1) testing the effect of Parasocial Interaction on consumers' online buying behavior, and (2) testing consumers' online buying behavior on Shopping Interest. Both of these tests produced significant results. These findings indicate that when Zara increases one-way interactions from influencers to followers to promote or review Zara products, it will increase the probability of consumers to seek further information or compare Zara products. The impact will also encourage consumer buying interest in these products.

It is important to note that the magnitude of the influence of Parasocial Interaction on Shopping Interest through consumer online buying behavior is 22%. This value is smaller than the direct influence of Parasocial Interaction on Shopping Interest, which is 39%. Because the indirect

influence is smaller than the direct influence, it can be concluded that the direct influence has a more dominant influence.

4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of Parasocial Interaction on Consumer Purchase Intentions in the context of the fashion brand Zara, as well as to examine the role of Online Shopping Behavior in mediating this relationship. The method used in this research is quantitative research using the Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) analysis tool. The research sample consisted of 211 followers of Zara's Instagram account, selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data collection was carried out through a questionnaire distributed via direct message on Instagram.

The research results show that Parasocial Interaction has a significant positive influence on consumer Shopping Interest. This finding is consistent with related literature which indicates that positive interactions between influencers and their followers on social media can influence consumer shopping decisions. Another finding is that there is a significant influence between Parasocial Interaction and Online Shopping Behavior and between Shopping Interest. These findings indicate that consumers' online buying behavior plays an important role in linking the effect of Parasocial Interaction with Shopping Interest.

The implication of this research is the important role of influencers in digital marketing strategies. Parasocial interactions created by influencers on social media can increase consumer shopping interest. In the context of a fashion brand such as Zara, efforts to build positive interactions and strengthen consumer online buying behavior can increase consumer purchase intention and loyalty towards the brand.

The contribution of this research lies in a deeper understanding of how Parasocial Interaction through social media, especially Instagram, can influence Shopping Interest and consumer online buying behavior. This research provides empirical evidence supporting the important role of influencers in influencing consumer behavior, especially in the context of fashion and online shopping.

However, this research has several limitations. First, the research sample was taken from followers of Zara's Instagram account, who may have similar preferences and characteristics. In addition, the use of self-reporting questionnaires can affect the validity of respondents' answers. Lastly, this study focuses on one particular fashion brand (Zara), so generalization of the findings to other brands needs to be done with caution.

Overall, this research provides valuable insights into the role of Parasocial Interaction and online buying behavior in shaping consumer Purchase Intentions. The practical and theoretical implications of these findings can help fashion brands and other industry players design more effective marketing strategies in the digital era.

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