

# Celebrity Characteristics and Purchase Intentions: A Structural Equation Modeling Analysis of YouTube Culinary Content

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(Received: December 16, 2024; Revised: January 17, 2025; Accepted: March 18, 2025; Available online: April 15, 2025)

## Abstract

The increasing popularity of YouTube Vloggers has attracted attention in marketing strategies, specifically in the Food Industry. This phenomenon highlights a behavioral shift where relationships between YouTube Vloggers and their followers generate trust, influencing purchase intention. Previous research has explored the formation of parasocial interactions between YouTube vloggers and their followers; this study examined the characteristics of YouTube vloggers that influence credibility and parasocial interactions and the role of these two variables in driving purchase intention, which is still limited. This study collected data through a survey targeting active social media users on Instagram and TikTok who have been exposed to content from YouTube vloggers with food content. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the relationships between variables. The results suggest that homophily and social beauty broadly influence credibility and parasocial interactions. In contrast, physical attractiveness only influences credibility, while self-disclosure does not significantly affect parasocial interactions. Credibility and parasocial interactions were found to play an important role in driving consumer purchase intention. This finding strengthens the relevance of the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory and inducement theory in understanding consumer actions in digitalization.

**Keywords:** Celebrity Characteristics, Credibility, Parasocial Interaction, Purchase Intentions, Culinary Vloggers, Social Media Influencers

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and others have obtained wide attraction as instruments in promoting. The presence of social media has become a crucial element in marketing strategies, with online brand promotion by business accounts and the advert on these platforms attesting extremely streamlined. Social media has become an undamaged part of daily life, particularly in Indonesia, which has a big user base of social media about 203 million-73% of the total population, based on We Are Social as well as Hootsuite news. This widespread usage has influenced individual behaviors, mainly how people use social media to seek information and recommendations. Among the most widely used social media platforms is YouTube. In Indonesia, 96% of internet users actively engage with YouTube, making it the most popular platform. Its diverse video content and ability to reach a broad audience make YouTube a preferred choice for entertainment, education, and creative content. Unlike traditional television or radio, which require substantial production teams and budgets, YouTube has evolved into a cost-effective and popular video-sharing sites, particularly for video blogs (vlogs) [1]. Vlogs display identities reviewing brands or services, often as part of promotional efforts for companies.

Vlogging, a trend especially prominent among YouTube audiences, has rapidly proliferated content on the platforms. YouTube dominates a third of the online media population [2] and is recognized as a pioneering video website hosting millions of uploads [3]. The platform's growth has drawn considerable attention from academics. For example, Frobenius [4] analyzed how vloggers engage viewers through monologues, while Lee and Watkins [5] explored the way YouTube vloggers influence consumer perceptions of luxury products. Bhatia et al. [2] investigated YouTube's

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47738/jads.v6i2.634>

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role in digital professions, such as tutorials. Despite the breadth of YouTube-related research, only limited research examines the way vloggers affect potential viewers in purchasing brands or at least developing purchase intentions. One particularly popular category is food-themed vlogs, which feature culinary content. Hill et al. [1] noted that the vlogging fast development has driven trends in vlog-based advertising, where vloggers are paid to review, advertise, and market brands or services on their channels. This phenomenon has created fresh viewing designs, social interplay, and dynamic interaction among vloggers and their audiences, typically online consumers.

YouTube thus offers a novel design for self-disclosure as well as identity construction, which has attracted the user attitude interest researchers [3]. This evolution has also led to a social interplay known as parasocial interaction [6]. According to Stever and Lawson [7], parasocial Interaction is an effective theory for analyzing one-sided relationships among celebrities as well as fans. This construct can be expanded to vloggers [5]. Fans often think as though they deeply know these personalities from their media exposure. Reiterated exposure to vloggers can foster a sense of relationship the same as formed through traditional media. As this relationship increases, viewers start to see trusted references and ask for their recommendation. [8]. Consequently, vlogger recommendations are perceived as reliable and valuable in this social media era.

This study focuses on the impact of food-related content reviewed by vloggers, which significantly influences their followers. Consumers now access information not only from companies promoting innovative or new food products but also from fellow users. Vloggers frequently provide reviews and recommendations on products they find satisfactory or unsatisfactory and suggest trustworthy food outlets. These recommendations and reviews can shape consumer decisions to purchase a product or switch to another.

This research also addresses a gap highlighted by Sokolova and Kefi [9]. In this study, credibility and parasocial interaction are the focus of understanding the relationship between culinary vloggers and audiences on YouTube. Credibility refers to the audience's perception of a media figure in terms of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and relevance of the information conveyed. Credibility is measured through three main dimensions, namely physical attractiveness, homophily attitudes, and social attractiveness. Meanwhile, parasocial interaction refers to a one-way relationship that the audience perceives as an emotional connection with the vlogger, measured through physical attractiveness, homophily attitudes, social attractiveness, and self-disclosure.

The study explicitly targets generational groups, Generations Y and Z, that are highly engaged with or addicted to vlogging content. According to Sokolova and Perez [10], Parasocial Interaction is particularly likely to be associated with "addictive" content for younger generations. The study, therefore, focuses on these generations to measure the Parasocial interplay and credibility impact on their buying attractions for food products after viewing reviews or recommendations from YouTube vloggers. The concept of consumer participation with media figures has existed for decades, predating the Internet [11]. However, it remains a popular topic among researchers investigating media effects [12]. However, more studies are needed to examine vloggers' influence on Parasocial Interaction and its consequences, including user experiences, feelings of belonging, addiction, and purchase intentions or behaviors.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

The literature on social media marketing highlights those theoretical approaches such as the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), Persuasion Theory, and Parasocial Interaction (PSI) are highly relevant in analyzing the influence of various characteristics of social media celebrities on purchase intention. The uses and Gratifications Theory emphasizes that individuals actively choose and utilize social media to fulfil specific needs such as entertainment, information, social interaction, or personal identity formation [13], [14]. This theory is particularly relevant for understanding the motivations of social media users who engage with influencers based on their intrinsic needs, thus explaining how elements such as physical attractiveness, homophily attitude, and social attractiveness influence audience engagement [15], [16]. According to Phua et al. [16], social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube contribute to building social capital through mechanisms that strengthen social relationships (bridging and bonding). In the context of this research, UGT serves as a foundation for exploring how consumers selectively interact with content or influencers that align with their preferences, whether for entertainment, social engagement, or the fulfillment of personal needs [17], [18].

Persuasion Theory and PSI provide deeper insights into how audiences are influenced by influencer content on social media. Persuasion Theory, particularly through the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), explains that persuasion can occur via the central route, where audiences critically evaluate the arguments presented, or the peripheral route, which relies on cues such as physical attractiveness, source credibility, or emotions evoked [19], [20]. In this context, influencer characteristics such as self-disclosure and credibility play a crucial role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions [21], [22]. Additionally, the theory of Parasocial Interaction is relevant for understanding the emotional connections audiences feel toward influencers, creating an illusion of interpersonal relationships [23], [24]. According to Horton and Wohl [25], parasocial relationships are often marked by a sense of closeness, attentiveness, and responsiveness between audiences and media figures. These interactions foster trust and engagement, significantly impacting purchase decisions. The combination of these three theories provides a robust framework for analyzing how elements such as physical attractiveness, social attractiveness, homophily, self-disclosure, and influencer credibility shape parasocial interactions, ultimately influencing consumers' purchase intentions on social media [9], [11].

## 2.1. Physical Attractiveness

Physical attractiveness refers to the degree to which an individual's physical features and aesthetic appeal are perceived as pleasing or appealing [9], [10]. It encompasses visible attributes such as facial and bodily appearance but also non-physical traits, including how an individual communicates, speaks, and expresses thoughts [26]. These aspects contribute to forming positive impressions and enhancing the perceived credibility of media figures, ultimately fostering a stronger emotional connection with the audience. Rubin et al. [17] emphasized that physical attractiveness is a key factor in strengthening parasocial relationships, as it elicits positive emotions and shapes perceptions of credibility, friendliness, and attentiveness, especially in interactions involving visually appealing sellers. Grounded in these considerations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1: Physical Attractiveness has a positive effect on Credibility.*

In parasocial interactions, physical attractiveness plays a pivotal role in fostering emotional connections between audiences and media figures. The visual appeal of media figures facilitates one-sided parasocial relationships, where audiences develop feelings of closeness despite the lack of reciprocal interaction [6], [25]. Research indicates that audiences are more likely to engage with and revisit content from media figures they perceive as physically attractive, which further strengthens parasocial interactions [10]. For instance, Lee and Watkins [7] found that in the context of luxury brand vlogs on YouTube, the physical attractiveness of influencers significantly enhances parasocial interactions, subsequently deepening emotional engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H2: Physical Attractiveness has a positive effect on Parasocial Interaction.*

## 2.2. Homophily Attitude

Homophily refers to the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as similar to others, serving as a critical factor in understanding interpersonal dynamics and influence-based relational designs, particularly in social network research [27], [28]. According to Eyal and Rubin [29], homophily is the degree to which individuals recognize similarities with those they interact with, where more remarkable perceived similarity increases the likelihood of frequent interactions [5]. Attitudes toward specific attributes can shape perceptions of homophily, particularly when individuals share common characteristics with a source, such as a role model or a media personality [30]. For instance, people often feel a heightened sense of homophily with social media celebrities who share similar attributes, such as gender, making them more inclined to follow and engage with such figures [31]. Previous studies suggest that perceptions of homophily significantly influence user behaviors, including audience engagement and interaction patterns [29].

The relationship between homophily and credibility has also been extensively explored in prior research. Wright and Cropanzano [32] highlighted how the perceived credibility of support group members is enhanced by shared values and similarities, reflecting internalization processes. Djafarova and Rushworth [33] further argue that homophily positively correlates with influencer credibility, suggesting that YouTube audiences are more likely to view their favourite vloggers as credible when they perceive shared characteristics. This credibility, in turn, drives purchase intentions for products reviewed by these vloggers. Based on this understanding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H3: Homophily Attitude positively influences credibility.*

Homophily is also a strong predictor of individuals' exposure to media information and plays a key role in fostering parasocial interactions. Parasocial interaction refers to the perceived one-sided relationship that audiences form with media personalities. Consumers are more likely to maintain continued interaction when they perceive a higher degree of alignment between their values and a media personality's traits [5]. The correlation between homophily attitudes and parasocial interaction emphasizes the connection between audiences and media figures in influencing engagement and viewing outcomes [34]. For instance, recurring television characters or social media vloggers who display characteristics admired by their audience foster stronger parasocial interactions [5]. Lee and Watkins [5] noted that vloggers who are perceived as relatable or similar by viewers are more successful in encouraging such interactions. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H4: Homophily Attitude positively influences parasocial interaction.*

### 2.3. Social Attractiveness

Social attractiveness is a concept that reflects the degree to which an individual is perceived as enjoyable and desirable in social interactions. McCroskey and McCain [35] define social attractiveness as the extent to which individuals enjoy interacting and spending time with others. Those deemed socially attractive often experience increased friendship requests and an expansion of their social networks over time. Similarly, Preece [36] characterizes social attractiveness as the capacity to facilitate and enhance social interactions, enabling individuals to participate in community activities through various platforms or media actively. Sociability, which measures the extent to which a site or system supports social engagement, serves as a parallel to social attractiveness. In this context, social attractiveness is considered a key factor in the likelihood of selecting a media figure as a social partner or companion [9], which plays a significant role in evaluating credibility [37]. Masuda et al. [37] found that social attractiveness directly influences expertise and trust, which are fundamental components of credibility. Based on these considerations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H5: Social Attractiveness positively influences credibility.*

Within the realm of physical attractiveness, social attractiveness has also emerged as a significant predictor of parasocial interaction (PSI). Zheng et al. [38] demonstrated that social attractiveness is a critical factor influencing users' engagement in parasocial interactions. Their findings align with those of Sokolova and Kefi [9], who observed that the association between social attractiveness and PSI among younger populations has evolved with changes in media consumption patterns. Building upon these insights, this study seeks to explore the correlation between vloggers' social attractiveness and PSI within the same conceptual framework. By focusing on younger audiences, the study aims to identify the key drivers that encourage continued engagement and loyalty toward influencers. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is formulated:

*H6: Social Attractiveness positively influences parasocial interaction.*

### 2.4. Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure refers to the act of sharing one's thoughts and emotions with others, allowing for a deeper connection and understanding in interpersonal interactions [39], [40]. Leite and Baptista [41] emphasize that social media influencers frequently engage in self-disclosure as they interact with their followers, revealing personal aspects of their lives to build stronger connections. This behavior is particularly evident in parasocial interactions, where self-disclosure by vloggers encourages their audiences to form stronger emotional bonds and advance to higher levels of parasocial relationships. By sharing their personal experiences and emotions, influencers attract attention and cultivate a sense of engagement and trust among their followers [42]. The frequent sharing of personal narratives, emotions, and opinions by social media celebrities on various platforms enhances the perception of social presence and creates a sense of intimacy [38], [43], [44]. This perceived intimacy fosters a stronger parasocial connection, making audiences feel closer to the influencer and more invested in their content. Self-disclosure thus plays a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of parasocial interaction by evoking feelings of familiarity and closeness. Based on this understanding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H7: Self-disclosure positively influences parasocial interaction.*

## 2.5. Credibility

Credibility is a multidimensional construct encompassing expertise, reliability, intent, activeness, and personal appeal, as described by Giffin [45]. Previous research highlights that information from credible sources significantly impacts consumer attitudes and behaviors [46], [47]. In the context of social media, higher credibility of influencers has been found to strengthen consumers' attraction to purchase products or services [48]. Credible sources in advertising not only shape consumer beliefs and judgments but also influence their attitudes and behaviors, leading to the accurate acceptance and utilization of the presented information [49]. Specifically, in social media marketing, followers often purchase products recommended by influencers perceived as trustworthy or credible [50]. On platforms like YouTube, vloggers' credibility plays a crucial role in shaping viewers' purchase intentions for products featured on their channels [51]. Based on this understanding, the present study investigates the influence of YouTube vloggers' credibility on viewers' purchase intentions. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

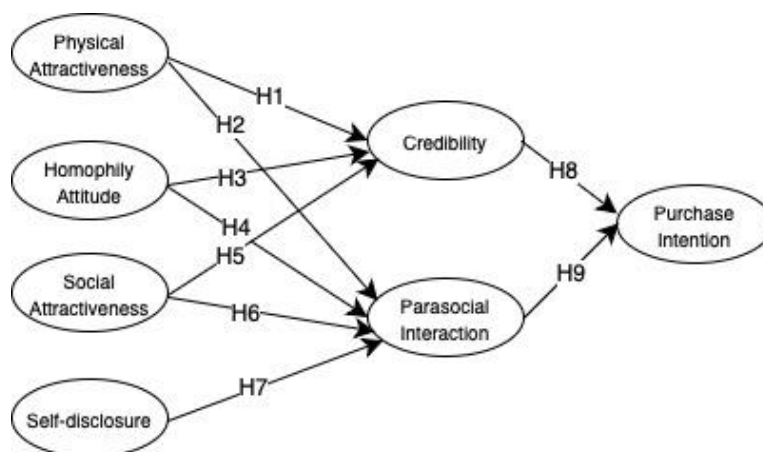
*H8: Credibility significantly influences purchase intentions.*

## 2.6. Parasocial Interaction

Parasocial Interaction (PSI) refers to the illusion of a face-to-face relationship between individuals and media personalities [6]. This one-sided relationship occurs when audiences engage emotionally and cognitively with media characters without mutual interaction [52]. PSI is essentially a pseudo-interaction that reflects the perceived bond between audiences and mediated personas [53]. It involves a one-way relationship wherein viewers develop a sense of familiarity and connection with media figures through mediated experiences [54]. According to Putnam[55], such interactions can enhance social cohesion by facilitating coordinated actions and fostering a sense of belonging, which may influence consumer behaviors, including purchase decisions. Previous studies have identified PSI as a significant antecedent of purchase intentions [5], [56], [57]. Building on this reasoning, Parasocial Interaction between vloggers and their audiences is hypothesized to positively influence purchase intentions for food products. The relationship suggests that as viewers form stronger parasocial bonds with vloggers, their trust and perceived familiarity increase, which may ultimately drive their purchase decisions. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H9: Parasocial Interaction significantly influences purchase intention*

The hypothesized relationships contribute to a broader understanding of how celebrity characteristics, parasocial interactions, and credibility collectively influence purchase intention. The research framework, as previously described, is designed to comprehensively capture these dynamics, as illustrated in the conceptual model in [figure 1](#).



**Figure 1.** Research model

## 3. Methodology

This research employed a survey method, utilizing a questionnaire as the primary measurement tool. The questionnaire was distributed to the population of YouTube users in Indonesia. The sample unit consisted of consumers residing in Indonesia who follow and watch culinary YouTube vloggers and have bought beverage brands at least 3 times within the past month. Data collection and processing were based on respondents' answers obtained through online and offline



questionnaire distribution. The study applied purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling, to select participants whose characteristics align with the research needs [58]. To evaluate the variables, this study adapted statement items from prior research: physical attractiveness, social attractiveness, and parasocial interaction [9], [59] homophily attitude, credibility, and purchase intention [9]; and self-disclosure [43].

The analysis used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Partial Least Squares (PLS) mechanism. SEM is a statistical model package that accounts for the relations among various variables.[60]. It mixes 2 multivariate methods: Element analysis and multiple regression study [61]. PLS is undoubtedly beneficial when analyzing relatively fresh phenomena [62]. This study was carried out utilizing Smart PLS 3.0, an instrument formulated to assess the quality of statistics through descriptive statistics. Initially, the step included examining the validity as well as the statement elements' reliability: Validity was tested utilizing the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with the recommended AVE value of  $> 0.5$ , denoting that the elements are valid. Reliability was examined through Composite Reliability (CR) as well as Cronbach's Alpha (CA), with CR and CA recommended score is  $> 0.6$ , denoting the consistency of internal [61]. The statement elements were assumed to be valid and reliable by fulfilling these thresholds, assuring consistency as well as the accuracy in the measurement.

#### 4. Results

The participants in this analysis were culinary YouTube vloggers followers and watchers in Indonesia who have bought beverage products at least 3 times in the last month. 310 respondents fulfilled the sampling criteria and joined in the survey. They were from across various districts. Yogyakarta is the most represented district, summing up 24.8 percent of the respondents. The sample involved were Millennials, the Z generation, as well as the Alpha generation, with the Z generation majoring the respondent distribution at 53.5 percent. Moreover, 31.5 percent of participants often looked for news related to beverages through the content of vloggers, with the total at least up to twelve times, showing a firm engagement with culinary content and its effect on their consumption attitude. The respondents' profiles are shown in table 1.

**Table 1.** Respondent Profile

No	Profile	Frequency	Percentage	
1	Origin of Domicile	Yogyakarta	77	24.8%
		Jawa Barat	65	21%
		DKI Jakarta	65	21%
		Jawa Timur	54	17.4%
		Banten	49	15.8%
2	Gender	Woman	159	51.3%
		Man	151	48.7%
3	Ager	21 - 30	166	53.5%
		15 - 20	48	15.5%
		30 – 40	82	26.5%
4	How often have you searched for information about beverage brands to the Vloggers on social media YouTube in the last six months?	3 – 5 times	35	31.5%
		>12 times	35	31.5%
		1 – 2 times	20	18%
		6– 8 times	18	16.2%
		9 – 11 times	3	2.7%

##### 4.1. Model and Measurement Assessment

The model and measurement evaluation in this analysis, carried out utilizing the Smart PLS 3.0 research instrument, showed that the validity as well as reliability traits were fulfilled. The validity test was according to the AVE square root for every construct, where it must be more excellent than the highest correlation among the construct and any others [60]. The reliability of internal consistency was examined utilizing Composite Reliability (CR). Based on Hair

et al. [60], a reliability value between 0.60 and 0.70 is suitable; meanwhile, 0.70 or up to it displays great reliability. The value for Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), as well as AVE for every construct are displayed in table 2.

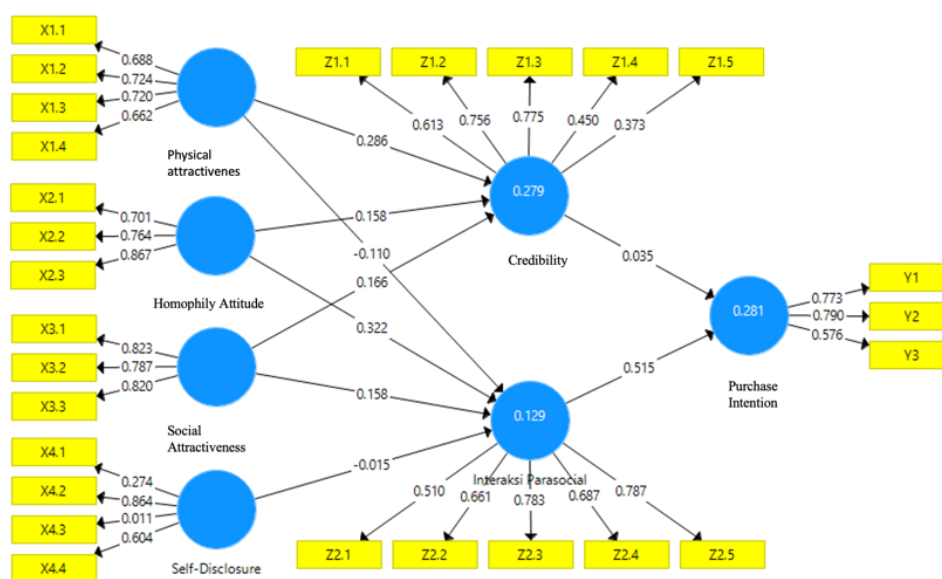
**Table 2.** Validities and Reliabilities

	Alpha Cronbach	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
PA	0.665	0.792	0.489
SA	0.739	0.851	0.656
SD	0.526	0.522	0.297
HA	0.699	0.784	0.609
CD	0.579	0.640	0.378
PSI	0.732	0.769	0.480
PI	0.528	0.554	0.517

PA: Physical Attractiveness, SA: Social Attractiveness, SD: Self-Disclosure, HA: Homophily Attitude, CD: Credibility, PSI: Parasocial Interaction, PI: Purchase Intention,

## 4.2. Loading Factor

The loading factor in SEM-PLS (Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares) represents the contribution or strength of the relationship between an indicator and the latent construct being measured. It reflects how well an indicator represents its corresponding construct. Higher loading factor values indicate a stronger relationship between the indicator and the construct. Evaluating the loading factor is crucial to ensure that the indicators have sufficient convergent validity, leading to reliable and accurate measurement results in the research model. In this study, the loading factor values can be seen in figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Loading Factor

Figure 2 and table 3 present the factor loadings of all constructs in this study. Factor loadings with values greater than 0.4 are considered acceptable, while values of 0.7 or higher are deemed ideal and very strong [61]. The results showed that SD1 and SD3 had factor loadings below 0.3, which is the minimum acceptable threshold. According to Hair et al. [61], such indicators should be considered for removal from the scale. However, this decision should be based on whether the Composite Reliability or Average Variance Extracted (AVE) remains above the recommended threshold values after their removal. Thus, the evaluation ensures that the constructs' reliability and validity meet the required criteria while optimizing the model fit.

**Table 3.** Outer Loading value

Item	Loading	Item	Loading	Item	Loading
PA1	0.688	SD3	0.011	CD5	0.373
PA2	0.724	SD4	0.604	PSI1	0.510
PA3	0.720	HA1	0.701	PSI2	0.661
PA4	0.662	HA2	0.764	PSI3	0.783
SA1	0.823	HA3	0.867	PSI4	0.687
SA2	0.787	CD1	0.613	PSI5	0.787
SA3	0.820	CD2	0.756	PI1	0.773
SD1	0.274	CD3	0.775	PI2	0.790
SD2	0.864	CD4	0.450	PI3	0.576

*Note= PA: Physical Attractiveness, SA: Social Attractiveness, SD: Self-Disclosure, HA: Homophily Attitude, CD: Credibility, PSI: Parasocial Interaction, PI: Purchase Intention.*

### 4.3. Fit Models

Model Fit Testing or Goodness of Fit (GoF) is generally used to assess the accuracy of a regression model in representing factual values in a study. In measuring model fit using PLS-SEM, the metrics employed include the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Squared Euclidean Distance (d\_ULS), Geodesic Distance (d\_G), Chi-Square, and Normed Fit Index (NFI). SRMR is used to evaluate the average of residual differences between the observed and predicted covariance matrices. An SRMR value  $\leq 0.08$  indicates a good model fit [61]. NFI is utilized to compare the hypothesized model against the null model (with no relationships among variables). An NFI value  $\geq 0.90$  is considered adequate to indicate improved model fit [61]. A small Chi-Square value reflects a good model fit, although this metric is sensitive to large sample sizes. In this study, the results showed an SRMR value of 0.10, indicating that the model has a fit level close to the acceptable limit since 0.10 is considered marginal [61]. The NFI value of 0.40 indicates a low value, which could be due to the complexity of the model and its sensitivity to the null model, which is less relevant in a variance-based approach like PLS-SEM [61], [63]. Meanwhile, the Chi-Square value of 1856.929 is significantly influenced by the large sample size, as even a sufficiently good model tends to produce high Chi-Square values when a large sample is used. Overall, the results of the model fit test in this study indicate some discrepancies. However, metrics like Chi-Square and NFI are often not relevant as primary benchmarks due to their sensitivity to sample size and model complexity [61], [64].

The outcomes of hypothesis testing, as presented in table 4, are summarized as follows: For H1, physical attractiveness positively influences credibility ( $\beta=0.286$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), supporting the first hypothesis. However, for H2, physical attractiveness has a negative as well as non-significant effect on Parasocial Interaction ( $\beta=-0.110$ ,  $P>0.05$ ), meaning H2 is not supported. homophily attitude positively and widely affects credibility ( $\beta=0.158$ ,  $P<0.05$ ), supporting H3. Similarly, homophily attitude positively and significantly affects Parasocial Interaction ( $\beta=0.322$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), thus supporting H4. social attractiveness positively and widely affects credibility ( $\beta=0.166$ ,  $P<0.05$ ), supporting H5. Additionally, social attractiveness positively and widely influences Parasocial Interaction ( $\beta=0.158$ ,  $P<0.05$ ), encouraging H6. Self-disclosure, however, has a negative as well as non-significant impact on Parasocial Interaction ( $\beta=-0.015$ ,  $P>0.05$ ), meaning H7 is not supported. credibility positively but non-significantly influences Purchase Intention ( $\beta=0.035$ ,  $P>0.05$ ), resulting in H8 not being encouraged. On the other side, Parasocial interplay owns a positive and positive influence on Food Buying Desire ( $\beta=0.515$ ,  $P<0.05$ ), supporting H9. The results of hypothesis testing are shown in table 4.

**Table 4.** Hypothesis testing

Path	Beta ( $\beta$ ) -Value	P-Value	Decision
PA→ CD	0.286	0.003	H1: Supported
PA→ PSI	-0.110	0.312	H2: Not Supported
HA→ CD	0.158	0.035	H3: Supported
HA→ PSI	0.322	0.000	H4: Supported



SA → CD	0.166	0.031	H5: Supported
SA → PSI	0.158	0.039	H6: Supported
SD → PSI	-0.015	0.868	H7: Not Supported
CD → PI	0.035	0.603	H8: Not Supported
PSI → PI	0.515	0.000	H9: Supported

*Note = PA: Physical Attractiveness, SA: Social Attractiveness, SD: Self-Disclosure, HA: Homophily Attitude, CD: Credibility, PSI: Parasocial Interaction, PI: Purchase Intention.*

#### 4.4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Physical Attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on Credibility, supporting the first hypothesis. This result aligns with previous studies [9], [65], emphasising that physical attractiveness is a key predictor in building trust and credibility, influencing consumer behavior. According to Sokolova and Kefi [9], physical appeal can be a determining factor in shaping the credibility of a public figure, where attractive celebrities enhance the marketability of a product. This finding is relevant to the Persuasion Theory, as it demonstrates that credibility, a core component of persuasion, can be strengthened through physical attractiveness. However, Physical Attractiveness has a negative and insignificant effect on Parasocial Interaction, leading to the rejection of the second hypothesis. This result is consistent with prior research [10], [38], which found that physical attractiveness does not significantly impact parasocial interactions. Rubin and McHugh [8] argue that audiences are more drawn to individuals with strong social interaction skills and task performance rather than mere physical appeal. Within the framework of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, this suggests that audiences seek greater emotional and cognitive satisfaction from social interactions rather than relying solely on visual appeal.

Homophily Attitude has a positive effect on Credibility, supporting the third hypothesis. This result aligns with previous research [66], [67], which explains that consumers are more responsive to content created by individuals they perceive as similar to themselves, including fellow consumers and celebrities such as vloggers. Ismagilova et al. [68] state that users are more likely to be influenced by recommendations from people who share similarities. Within the Uses and Gratifications Theory, this similarity contributes to information-seeking behavior and the formation of trusted opinions. Homophily Attitude also has a positive and significant effect on Parasocial Interaction, confirming the fourth hypothesis. This finding is consistent with studies by Eyal and Rubin [29], Ladhari et al. [69], and Sokolova and Kefi [9], which state that shared values between vloggers and their audiences create strong emotional bonds, enhancing the quality of the presented content. This result closely relates to Parasocial Interaction Theory, which posits that perceived similarity between audiences and media figures strengthens emotional closeness and engagement in media consumption.

Social Attractiveness positively affects Credibility, meaning the fifth hypothesis is supported. This result is consistent with the study by Le and Hancer [70], which suggests that the social appeal of vloggers fosters audience trust. Traits such as friendliness, warmth, and the ability to build positive relationships are crucial factors in establishing credibility. Within the context of Persuasion Theory, credibility derived from social attractiveness enhances the effectiveness of persuasive communication. Furthermore, Social Attractiveness also has a positive and significant effect on Parasocial Interaction, supporting the sixth hypothesis. This finding aligns with research by Liu et al. [71]; Sokolova as well as Kefi [9], and Zheng et al. [38], which found that social attractiveness significantly influences parasocial interactions. Such interactions often resemble two-way social relationships or real friendships, as defined in traditional media studies [5]. In the framework of Parasocial Interaction Theory, social attractiveness enables audiences to feel a deeper emotional connection with vloggers, reinforcing their engagement with content consumption. However, Self-Disclosure has a negative and insignificant effect on Parasocial Interaction, contradicting the seventh hypothesis. This result suggests that a vlogger's level of openness is insufficient to create strong emotional bonds with their followers. As stated by Kim and Song [72], self-disclosure does not directly affect parasocial interaction unless mediated by social presence. From the perspective of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, this implies that audiences may seek other compelling aspects of content beyond self-disclosure.

Furthermore, although the findings reveal that credibility has a positive effect on purchase intention or the desire to buy food, its influence is statistically insignificant, leading to the rejection of the eighth hypothesis. This challenges

the prevailing assumption that a vlogger's credibility alone can drive consumer decisions [73]. Schouten et al. [74] state that when audiences perceive recommendations as commercially motivated, they are more likely to rely on personal experiences rather than influencer endorsements. From the perspective of Persuasion Theory, credibility alone lacks sufficient persuasive power to shape purchasing behavior. Instead, message relevance, emotional appeal, and alignment with consumer needs play a critical role in enhancing the impact of influencer marketing.

Finally, Parasocial Interaction has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention, confirming the ninth hypothesis. This finding is consistent with previous studies [10], [75], [76], which indicate that parasocial interaction is the only direct significant predictor of purchase intention. Such interactions are often perceived as a form of “addiction,” where strong emotional bonds with influencers drive followers to emulate their behavior, including purchase decisions [9]. According to Parasocial Interaction Theory, the high emotional attachment between celebrity vloggers and their followers, particularly concerning shared values, is closely linked to credibility and parasocial interaction [75]. Therefore, the findings of this study affirm that the Uses and Gratifications Theory, Persuasion Theory, and Parasocial Interaction Theory are highly relevant in explaining how vlogger characteristics influence audience purchase decisions.

#### 4.5. Theoretical Contribution

This analysis redounded to the marketing literature, mainly vlogger celebrities’ sales, centring on YouTubers. It emphasizes the Parasocial Interaction Theory, highlighting how such interactions serve as a foundation for building connections between followers and YouTubers, ultimately influencing purchase intentions for products showcased by YouTubers. The research expands the parasocial interaction theory within the context of culinary content on YouTube, diverging from its traditional applications in television and radio. The findings reveal that the illusion of intimacy between followers and vloggers is pivotal in modern digital sales. This research enriches the literature on physical and social attractiveness and homophily attitudes about credibility and parasocial interaction in the YouTube vlogger context. Parasocial interaction is the primary predictor of purchase intention among fans exposed to content created by YouTube vloggers, challenging earlier theories that positioned credibility as the primary determinant. Moreover, this analysis gives a specific perspective to the behavioral patterns of Generation Z as well as Millennials, showcasing their distinct responses to the physical as well as social attractiveness of YouTube vloggers and the influence of parasocial interaction on their purchasing decisions.

#### 4.6. Managerial Contribution

This research is highly beneficial for companies seeking to select influencers (YouTube vloggers) as effective intermediaries who can engage with their audiences. The findings indicate that respondents in Indonesia place less emphasis on physical attractiveness, such as beauty or handsomeness, in the context of promoting food products through YouTube vlogs. Companies can consider other factors, such as social appeal and audience connection. In the context of influencer marketing, the social appeal possessed by YouTube vloggers provides significant advantages for enhancing the effectiveness of marketing media, particularly in building interactions and fostering strong relationships with their viewers or audiences. These findings offer a foundation for businesses to leverage social appeal by selecting YouTube vloggers whose preferences, values, and communication styles align with their target consumers. Moreover, companies can encourage YouTube vloggers to create interactive content, which helps to enhance engagement with viewers. For businesses, maintaining long-term relationships with YouTube vloggers who possess strong social appeal can consistently support brand loyalty, as their social appeal becomes a crucial element in creating effective marketing media capable of building connections between the brand and consumers. Therefore, companies should focus on collaborating with influencers, especially YouTube vloggers, who can foster positive social relationships with their followers. Additionally, the homophily exhibited by YouTube vloggers in the food-related niche can enhance credibility and parasocial interactions. This highlights the importance of shared values and preferences between YouTube vloggers and their audiences in cultivating trust. Companies can utilize this information to select YouTube vloggers more aligned with their target consumers, thereby increasing marketing effectiveness.

## 5. Conclusion

This research proposes to clarify the celebrities' traits, such as physical attraction, social attractiveness, homophily attitude, as well as self-disclosure, as constructs related to parasocial interaction and credibility. The research involved an online survey targeting followers of food-related YouTube vloggers who had yet to purchase the food products despite watching the content shared by the vloggers. The results indicate that credibility does not significantly influence purchase intention. This suggests that even though vloggers may have a large following and be perceived as credible, their recommendations are not enough to influence their followers' intentions directly. As revealed in this study, parasocial interaction is the key factor determining purchase intention. The parasocial interaction between vloggers and their followers positively and significantly affects purchase intention. This underscores the importance of the illusion of intimacy created through food vloggers' content, which plays a pivotal role in encouraging followers to buy the products reviewed and recommended by the vloggers. Additionally, the study highlights that social attractiveness is a more substantial characteristic compared to physical attractiveness when it comes to fostering parasocial interaction. While both characteristics influence credibility, social attractiveness proves to be more impactful. Lastly, self-disclosure does not significantly affect parasocial interaction. This finding suggests that followers are less influenced by personal information shared by vloggers and are more focused on the relevance and quality of the content provided by food vloggers.

## 6. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This analysis has several significant limitations. First, this study focuses solely on YouTube vloggers specializing in food-related content. While this provides valuable insights into a specific niche, future research could be expanded by examining YouTube vloggers from other types or categories of content, such as technology, beauty, or fashion, to explore how these categories influence the dynamics of parasocial interaction and the credibility of YouTube vloggers. For instance, culinary vloggers may build trust through their expertise in food reviews. In contrast, fashion vloggers may be considered more credible based on their aesthetic appeal, and technology vloggers may gain credibility from their extensive knowledge, detailed information, and product demonstrations. Second, using the research model discussed, this study highlights specific celebrity characteristics, but two variables, physical attractiveness and self-disclosure, were found to have no significant influence on parasocial interaction. Future research could further analyze these variables in different contexts to provide deeper insights. Additionally, this study is limited to YouTube as the sole research platform. Future research could explore other platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, to measure parasocial interaction in various social media environments and user behaviors. Third, this study primarily focuses on parasocial interaction, representing the initial stage of the broader parasocial relationship framework. Parasocial interaction emphasizes the illusory, one-sided interaction experience between followers and vloggers. However, this study does not comprehensively measure parasocial relationships, which include dimensions such as emotional intimacy, loyalty, and long-term impacts on followers' perceptions. Future research should aim to evaluate parasocial relationships more comprehensively, incorporating these broader dimensions to obtain a holistic understanding of their impacts. Including longitudinal studies in future research could identify how these relationships develop over time and analyze how they influence purchasing decisions.

Lastly, this study does not account for the role of cultural factors in shaping the credibility of YouTube vloggers. Culture plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions, especially in diverse countries where values such as norms, beliefs, religion, and traditions vary significantly. Future research could incorporate cultural dimensions, such as collectivism, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance, to examine how these factors influence the credibility, appeal, or interactions of YouTube vloggers in regions with similar cultural diversity. Cultural influences can significantly affect the effectiveness of YouTube vloggers. For instance, in contexts emphasizing collectivism, YouTube vloggers who demonstrate respect and align with community values are more likely to be well-received. Conversely, in regions characterized by individualism, YouTube vloggers who showcase self-expression and originality are often more appreciated. Future studies should compare these two cultural characteristics to understand how they shape audience perceptions of the appeal, credibility, and interactions of YouTube vloggers with their audiences.

Examining cultural factors in making comparisons across countries or regions can reveal insights into marketing strategies involving YouTube vloggers that are appropriate for audiences in different cultural contexts, which can later provide a deeper understanding of the credibility of YouTube Vloggers perceived globally across countries enriches the literature on marketing strategies related to YouTube vloggers. Not only examining cultural factors, but it would be more interesting to compare results across demographic groups to see significant differences in viewing vlogger characteristics to influence purchase intentions. Besides that, this study utilized the purposive sampling method, which was chosen to ensure the suitability of the sample with the research criteria, specifically targeting Generation Y and Z who are active users of social media, particularly YouTube. However, this approach limits the generalization of the findings to a broader population. Therefore, future research could employ more representative sampling methods to encompass a more heterogeneous population.

## 7. Declarations

### 7.1. Author Contributions

Conceptualization: N.A.G.M., S.H., S.S.S., and L.F.L.; Methodology: S.S.S.; Software: N.A.G.M.; Validation: N.A.G.M., S.S.S., and L.F.L.; Formal Analysis: N.A.G.M., S.S.S., and L.F.L.; Investigation: N.A.G.M.; Resources: S.S.S.; Data Curation: S.S.S.; Writing Original Draft Preparation: N.A.G.M., S.S.S., and L.F.L.; Writing Review and Editing: S.S.S., N.A.G.M., and L.F.L.; Visualization: N.A.G.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

### 7.2. Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

### 7.3. Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### 7.4. Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

### 7.5. Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

### 7.6. Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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