From Influence To Identity: A Review Of Parasocial Relationships And Consumer Brand Attachment In The Social Media Era

Dr. Sunita Kumar[1] , Dr. Praveen Babu P[2], Dr. Kalyani V[3], Dr. Roy Mathew[4]

[1,4]Associate Professor, Department of Business and Management, CHRIST University, Bangalore, India.

[2,3]Assistant Professor, Department of Business and Management, CHRIST University, Bangalore, India.

Corresponding Author

Dr. Sunita Kumar1

Email ID : sunita.kumar@christuniversity.in

KEYWORDS

Parasocial relationships, brand attachment, influencer marketing, social identity, authenticity.

ABSTRACT

Parasocial relationships (PSRs)—one-sided yet emotionally important connections between viewers and media personalities—have become strong drivers of consumer brand attachment in the social media age. Based on attachment theory, social identification theory, and self-congruity theory, PSRs go above passive admiration to encourage intimacy, believed reciprocity, and trust. Modern "human brands," social media influencers (SMIs), shape consumer identity and enable emotional and cognitive brand relationships via authenticity, relatability, and credibility. Review of PSRs from conventional media to interactive digital platforms using present literature emphasizes the growing significance of micro- and nano-influencers in developing closer consumer relationships through niche community participation. It investigates the psychological mechanisms underlying internalization, self-brand relationship, and aspirational identification to demonstrate how influencers insert brands into consumers' self-concept and everyday life. Platform dynamics—ranging from YouTube's narrative depth to TikTok's algorithmic virality—are found to be structural factors influencing PSR formation, engagement quality, and brand equity. Particularly among vulnerable groups, the study also looks at ethical issues including manipulation via clandestine marketing, parasocial dependency, and hazy commercial intent. Challenges of inadequate disclosure, psychological health impacts, and influencer liability point up the need of more severe regulatory frameworks, media literacy initiatives, and truthful sponsorships. Opportunities and problems for next influencer marketing are presented by emerging trends like virtual influencers (VIs) and immersive technologies including augmented and virtual reality. Though VIs offer scalability and consistency, their veracity is in doubt; hence strict ethical examinations are required to maintain trust. Implications for marketers include putting long-term influencer partnerships suited with brand values first priority, achieving reach with authenticity using smaller-scale influencers, and strategically managing reputational risks. For consumers, developing a critical awareness of persuasive techniques and requesting precise product information fosters independence in decision-making. Influencers need constant audience engagement, avoidance of inappropriate brand partnerships, and balancing of commercial goals with personal integrity to establish enduring credibility. PSRs have evolved into dynamic relational networks including brand loyalty, identity development, and emotional connection all things considered. In a digital world where influence, identity, and consumption are increasingly linked, brands can use PSRs strategically to create over time trust-based relationships. Success, nevertheless, relies on striking a balance between ethical responsibility and technological innovation to ensure that the interactions between influencers, businesses, and audiences remain both important and mutually beneficial.

Dr. Sunita Kumar , Dr. Praveen Babu P, Dr. Kalyani V, Dr. Roy Mathew

1. INTRODUCTION

People are growing deep emotional attachments with influencers, celebrities, and fictional characters—people they have never met—in the changing social media landscape. Parasocial relationships (PSRs) are those one-sided, emotionally charged ones. First brought forth by Horton and Wohl in 1956, PSRs define the illusion of a face-to-face relationship with a mediated figure, such a celebrity or digital content creator, usually regarded as a friend or confidant [1]. Even in the lack of reciprocity, studies indicate that PSRs—covering emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects—are practically comparable to real-life social bonds (Hartmann, 2016; Klimmt et al., 2006). Recently academic debate views PSRs as more than simple fanmanship. Attachment theory views PSRs as attachment processes—biosocial mechanisms via which people develop emotional ties in quest of psychological safety [2]. Traditionally linked with attachment, behavioral markers—proximity seeking, safe-haven, secure base, and separation distress—have all been reported in PSR settings (Pimienta, 2023). For instance, viewers may find solace seeing a beloved influencer during periods of stress or sense loss when a favorite content creator quits publishing, reactions akin to those observed in personal relationships. As companies use influencers more and more to humanize their identity [3], brand attachment—the emotional connection between consumers and brands—has also become significant. Often viewed through the lens of PSRs [4], influencers serve as mediators that allow emotional brand relationships via their claimed genuineness and friendliness. Understanding the psychological underpinnings of PSRs provides important insight into how brand attachment evolves and stays strong in this digital age when identity, consumption, and media are closely intertwined as consumers internalize influencer preferences. Because endorsements are identity markers, strengthening consumer-brand interactions. By revisiting existing literature from an attachment theory viewpoint, this study looks at how PSRs influence consumer identity, encourage emotional engagement in brands, and transform the actual nature of loyalty in the social media age [5]. In the modern age, social media influencers (SMIs) have become very important players in shaping consumer opinions and behavior. Unlike traditional brand communication channels, influencers provide pertinent, genuine, and captivating content that appeals to their followers (Sokolova & Perez, 2021; Kim & Kim, 2021) [6] and are credible intermediaries between businesses and consumers. By aggressively generating multimedia content—from images to live streams—across Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok (Sakib et al., 2020) [7], these influencers significantly influence brand impressions and purchase decisions of fans.

Earlier on, clients interacted directly with businesses via advertising and customer service contacts (de Vries et al., 2017). However, the rise of influencer culture has altered this dynamic. Companies are hence giving long-term partnerships with influencers first priority since they recognize the strategic value of parasocial relationships (PSRs) in growing consumer loyalty and increasing conversions (Kapitan et al., 2021; Yousaf, 2022) [8]. The influencer marketing sector shows this change; its market value in 2023 is $21.1 billion, and projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) is 33% (Grand View Research, 2023; Dencheva, 2024). Empirical research confirms that PSRs with influencers improve brand trust, attitude, and purchase intent (Gong & Holiday, 2023; Reinikainen et al., 2021). Social media influencers are therefore vital participants in the changing consumer behavior and brand plan, not only trendsetters.

2. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS:

2.1 Origin and Development of Pulsars:

Originally presented by Horton and Wohl in 1956, the idea of Parasocial Relationships (PSRs) refers to a one-sided interpersonal link audience members have with media personalities especially television celebrities. Though the media figure is unaware of the audience's presence [11], these relationships mirror the intimacy of face-to--face contacts. Horton and Wohl contended that the illusion of intimacy generated by frequent exposure, conversational style, and direct eye contact on screen encourages the audience's real involvement. This fundamental theory set the stage for knowledge of how people emotionally invest in media figures without real social reciprocity. As media developed, so did the manifestations of PSRs [12]. The rise of reality television, celebrity culture, and now social media influencers has greatly broadened the scope and intensity of PSRs. Unlike traditional celebrities, influencers often appear more relatable, accessible, and interactive, which deepens the parasocial connection. Today, PSRs are no longer restricted to passive consumption; rather, likes, comments, DMs, and livestream interactions strengthen them, therefore providing consumers with the impression of reciprocal engagement. Recent studies have recast PSRs as potent means affecting consumer behavior, identity building, and brand attachment [13] instead of only as psychological oddities.PSRs have become integral to digital marketing strategies, particularly in influencer marketing, where emotional bonds between followers and influencers drive brand trust, loyalty, and purchase intentions.Furthermore, PSRs now intersect with brand anthropomorphism, where consumers form similar parasocial ties with brands that are personified or endorsed by familiar digital figures [14]. From Horton and Wohl's original definition to today's influencer economy, it is clear that PSRs are not fixed but dynamic social constructs—integral to understanding consumer-brand relationships in the social media age [15]—this shift marks a great theoretical evolution from seeing PSRs as passive fandom to recognizing them as active relational frameworks shaping how consumers interact with both people and products in the digital age.

2.2 Attachment theory, social identity theory, self-congruity theory: psychological foundation

One's knowledge of the psychological basis of parasocial interactions (PSRs) and customer brand attachment is based on three major theoretical frameworks: attachment theory, social identity theory, and self-congruity theory. Originally proposed by Bowlby (1969), attachment theory holds that people form emotional bonds to satisfy basic psychological needs including connection, comfort, and safety [16]. Like attachment figures, social media influencers frequently offer consistency, seen approachability, and emotional resonance. Especially when under duress or in solitude, fans can come to rely on these characters for emotional regulation, hence fostering a parasocial relationship that seems emotionally true. This emotional dependence can carry over to the brands backed by these influencers, therefore generating brand loyalty founded on trust, knowledge, and constancy [17]. Developed by Tajfel and Turner, social identity theory clarifies how people classify themselves into groups to raise self-esteem and establish their social identities. Symbolic leaders of these groups, influencers shape group values and behavior by means of carefully chosen material and vibrant online communities. Followers who relate to these online groups sometimes take on the preferences, language, and brand affiliations of the influencer as reflections of their own self- [18]. This style of group alignment promotes brand loyalty as well as stronger parasocial links. Self-congruity theory adds still another level, whereby customers are drawn to brands and people that reflect their true or desired self-concept. It increases both parasocial interaction and consumer-brand connection when customers see alignment between an influencer's image and their own values or objectives. This positioning improves sentiments of genuineness, trust, and symbolic fulfillment, therefore transforming influencers into strong brand relationship mediators [19]. Emphasized in the CEEOL review article, these psychological models converge in the digital environment wherein emotional needs, identity expression, and self-concept reinforcement combine through parasocial links. Together, they help to clarify why social media users build close, devoted connections not only with influencers but also with the companies that those influencers support. This theoretical underpinning emphasizes the importance of PSRs in grasping how contemporary consumers use digital interactions to create both personal and corporate identities [20].

3. DEVELOPMENT OF PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

Originally conceived in the middle of the 20th century to characterize the one-sided, apparently face-to-face ties viewers created with media personalities in mass communication settings like television and radio (Horton & Wohl, 1956), parasitic relationships (PSRs) were first conceived. Originally, interactions were unidirectional; audiences consumed content without chances for direct participation but yet felt closeness, familiarity, and emotional investment in the media personalities they followed. PSRs have changed radically with the advent of digital and social media [21]. Interactive, on-demand settings where audiences and media figures may interact in almost real time have replaced the static, planned nature of traditional media. Features such live streaming, comments, direct messaging, and interactive polls on channels like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok enable dynamic engagement by promoting a sense of reciprocity and accessibility (Hartmann, 2016; Klimmt et al., 2006) [22]. These affordances help influencers to seem as approachable pals rather than aloof celebrities by lowering the psychological distance between them and their audience, hence fostering more sincere sentiments of authenticity and social presence. Furthermore, the social media environment has drawn the boundaries between public and private spheres. The rise of micro- and nano-influencers, whose smaller yet extremely engaged audiences sometimes create more strong PSRs due to perceived similarity and approachability (Pimienta, 2023) [23]. Particularly, the social media age has ushered in algorithm-driven personalization, ensuring that customers are continually exposed to content from selected artists. This repeated exposure fastens PSR connections and aids in users' inclusion of them into daily life. As they grow in this interactive setting, PSIs become a primary issue because they not just keep emotional link but also influence consumer behavior, brand perception, and identity formation—so making them vital for grasping marketing and social impact in the digital age [24].

3.1 Characteristics of modern PSRs include closeness, perceived reciprocation, accessibility, and the role of micro- and nano-influencers in improving PSRs.

Viewers and media celebrities have one-sided yet emotionally significant connections known as parasocial relationships (PSRs). Originally discovered in one-way media like television and radio, PSRs evolved from repeated exposure and ongoing mediated presence hence fostering closeness and familiarity despite the absence of real reciprocity [25]. Interactive media like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have made possible these relationships that have evolved from passive consumption to active engagement in the social media age. Here, viewers may remark, respond, and even get immediate answers, therefore improving the impression of mutual exchange and accessibility [26]. Modern PSRs are distinguished by intimacy, in which followers see influencers as approachable and credible; perceived reciprocity, as interactive elements produce the appearance of two-way communication; and accessibility, in which audiences feel they can constantly access influencers' personal lives. The curated sharing of behind-the-scenes moments, direct messaging options, and real-time interactions like livestreams— which were missing in traditional media environments [27]—greatly enhances this feeling of closeness. Within this digital environment, micro- (10,000–100,000 followers) and nano-influencers (1,000–10,000 followers) have proven very successful in developing strong PSRs. Studies reveal that smaller, niche-focused audiences often exhibit greater loyalty, deeper trust, and higher engagement rates than macro-influencers. Working in clearly defined interest groups, these artists use sincerity and customized messaging to strengthen assumed ties. These methods—which increase the psychological attachment inherent in PSRs [28]—foster community involvement, respond to feedback, and match brand partnerships to the ideals of the audience. Furthermore, algorithm-driven personalization guarantees consistent exposure to chosen creators, hence embedding them in consumers' daily lives, thereby shaping the development of PSRs in the social media age. By

providing touchpoints for involvement, influencers' availability across several platforms improves the relationship and includes the consumer's identity formation process. From remote, one-way celebrity adulation to interactive, multi-platform connections, this metamorphosis has changed both how viewers interact with public figures and also how businesses use these relationships to influence consumer behavior [29].

4. CREATION AND POWER OF BRAND ATTACHMENT THROUGH INFLUENCERS:

The emotional and cognitive connections customers create with these famous personalities underlie the development and force of brand affinity achieved through influencers. Modern-day "human brands," influencers are more than just marketing tools; they are identity-shaping entities whose personal beliefs, habits, and successes connect with their fans [30]. Under the attachment theory paradigm (Bowlby, 1969), influences can act as attachment objects, so promoting relationships akin to those of human connection. When the influencer backs a good or service, this attachment becomes brand attachment and symbolic meaning and perceived value are transferred from themselves to the company (McCracken, 1989) [31]. When the image of the influencer matches the consumer's actual or ideal self-concept, the meaning transfer process becomes stronger and improves both self-congruence and perceived brand quality (Hung et al., 2011; Park et al., 2010). Emotional bonds with brands often emerge through parasocial relationships (Horton & Wohl, 1956), in which repeated exposure to an influencer creates perceived intimacy and trust. People who relate strongly to an influencer take their values and attitudes to heart, then apply this identification to sponsored brands (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986)[32]. From a cognitive perspective, endorsements are quality signals (Kirmani & Rao, 2000), where an influencer's credibility, skill, and honesty improves brand perceptions [33]. High perceived quality supports brand attachment by making the brand seem irreplaceable in the consumer's life (Fournier, 1998). By combining affective and cognitive routes, influencers create strong consumer-brand connections resistant to switching and supporting behaviors such premium purchasing and active brand defense (Thomson et al., 2005; Japutra et al., 2014) [34]. Generally, influencers merge emotional resonance with perceived quality hence fostering multi-layered connections extending beyond transactional interactions, thereby amplifying brand attachment. This dynamic explains why genuine attachment and congruence in influencer marketing lead not only to immediate involvement but also to long-lasting brand loyalty throughout many cultural situations [35].

4.1 Building of Brand Attachment Through Influencers: Credibility, Authenticity, and Relatability as Trust-Building Blocks

Authenticity, relateability, and credibility have become fundamental building blocks for brand attachment via influencers in today's digital marketing scene. Unlike conventional celebrity endorsements, in which distance between the endorser and the audience sometimes restricted personal connection, social media influencers work in a sphere of seen intimacy [36]. Sharing personal stories, daily routines, and honest moments projects authenticity in influencers, therefore making their recommendations feel less like paid advertisements and more like actual advice. This authenticity builds emotional trust, a requirement for strengthening consumer–brand relationships. Relatability is very important in reinforcing this link [37]. Encouragement for followers to connect with them on a personal level comes from influencers who present themselves as "real people" with common interests, challenges, and lifestyles. Such recognition causes customers to project their good sentiments for the influencer onto the products they market [38]. Self-congruity theory—which holds that the perceived resemblance between an influencer's personality and the consumer's self-image increases the persuasive power of endorsements, so improving brand attachment—this process matches self-congruity theory. Often defined by perceived knowledge, honesty, and appeal, credibility serves as the third main pillar. Influencers become dependable sources and boost brand trust [39] when they routinely give relevant, relevant, and accurate product information. Credibility indicates that emotionally and financially, a brand is worth investing. The source credibility model says that endorsements from legitimate influencers not only enhance brand attitudes but also sustain long-term loyalty since customers view these relationships as honest and mutually beneficial. The interaction of these three factors—authenticity, relatability, and credibility—creates a reinforcing cycle [40]. Authentic influencers appear more relatable; relatable influencers are more easily trusted; and credible influencers reinforce perceptions of authenticity. Together, they transform short-term promotional exposure into enduring brand attachment, influence both immediate purchasing decisions and long-term brand loyalty. Brands that intentionally partner with influencers showcasing these characteristics are more likely to foster sustainable consumer relationships beyond transactional exchanges into emotional brand advocacy [41] in a saturated digital environment.

4.2 Psychological mechanisms: Internalization, Self-Brand Connection, Aspirative Identification and Building and Strengthening of Brand Attachment Through Influences: Psychological Processes

Along three main channels—internalization, self-brand connection, and aspirational identification [42], the psychological processes by which influencers promote brand attachment run. Internalization results from consumers adopting the beliefs, values, and preferences of influencers since they are seen as credible and reliable sources. This process is more than just persuading; it shows a deep alignment of beliefs such that the influencer's approval becomes part of the consumer's own value system. Internalized brand attitudes are very resistant to change and often lead to sustained loyalty [43]. The degree to which a brand becomes associated to a consumer's self-concept is reflected by self-brand connection. By acting as symbolic connections between the consumer and the brand, influencers are absolutely essential in this process. Through frequent exposure and shared stories, influencers help integrate the company into the consumer's identity, transforming consumption

from a merely practical decision into an act of self-expression [44]. Aspiratory identification is fueled by the impression of the influencer as an embodiment of an ideal self. Consumers are driven to buy and use brands supported by influencers to help to close the gap between their real and ideal selves. In lifestyle categories like fashion, beauty, and fitness, where the influencer's image represents success, attractiveness, or social position [45], this is especially potent. Together, these psychological processes create a reinforcing cycle: internalization strengthens faith in the brand, self-brand connection incorporates it into identity, and aspirational identification motivates constant involvement. This synergy helps to explain why influencer-driven brand attachments often endure past single campaigns, therefore defining long-term consumer relationships [46].

5. CONSUMER BEHAVIOR & SOCIAL IDENTITY; CONSUMERS ESTABLISHING IDENTIFICATION BY WAY OF AGREEMENT WITH INFLUENCERS/BRANDS:

Particularly in the social media age, where online sites serve as virtual societies for self-expression and group membership, social identity is a major influence on customer behavior. Social Identity Theory holds that people get some of their identity from the social groups they identify with; in digital worlds, this frequently manifests as association with particular influencers, brands, and lifestyles [47]. Through the goods they buy and the companies they endorse, platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok allow customers to exhibit their personal values, therefore reaffirming their self-image and signifying membership in particular social groups [48]. According to empirical data from Indonesia's digital economy, online purchasing habits (path coefficient = 1.063, p < 0.001) as well as social media influence (path coefficient = 0.789, p < 0.001) significantly shape social identity [49]. This implies that consumer-brand alignment is not only financial; it is symbolic, representing values, aspirations, and social belonging. For example, interacting with products endorsed by influencers lets customers project a desired image while supporting certain brands signals agreement with specific cultural or lifestyle stories [50]. The interplay between social identity and consumer behavior also has a reinforcing effect. Consumers who associate with a brand community are more likely to show brand loyalty, greater purchase frequency, and active engagement, so enhancing their personal and social identities [51]. This cyclical relationship underscores how in the social media age, buying choices are very much part of identity building. Companies that tap into this dynamic by sponsoring brand communities, soliciting user-generated content, and advertising genuine influencer partnerships can successfully position themselves as essential to consumer self-concept and lifestyle expression [52].

5.1 Online identity signaling, self-expression, and community belonging:

In the age of social media, where online interactions promote identity signaling, self-expression, and community belonging, social identity plays a significant role in influencing consumer behavior. According to the Social Identity Theory, people get a sense of who they are from belonging to social groups, and digital platforms have made this process even more possible by allowing customers to interact with brand communities and like-minded people [53]. Whether based on common values, interests, or lifestyles, these communities give consumers a sense of belonging that deepens their emotional bonds with the group and related brands [54]. Self-expression is a key driver in this relationship, as consumers use brands and influencer affiliations to communicate personal values, aspirations, and tastes.

 Social media platforms offer interactive and visual tools, like stories, hashtags, and posts, that serve as identity-signaling symbols [55]. This identity signaling creates a feedback loop that strengthens brand attachment by reinforcing the consumer's self-concept and influencing how others see them [56]. Parasocial connections with influencers, who act as dependable sources of cultural capital and relatable role models, further strengthen online identity signaling. People can participate in a broader social narrative and project an image that is consistent with their desired identity by aligning with influencers or brand communities [57].Consequently, consumer choices become highly symbolic acts that go beyond functional needs, as purchasing behavior becomes entangled with identity construction and maintenance. Incorporating belonging, self-expression, and signaling highlights how crucial it is for brands to create inclusive online communities, encourage genuine storytelling, and allow customers to participate in brand narratives that are co-created [58].
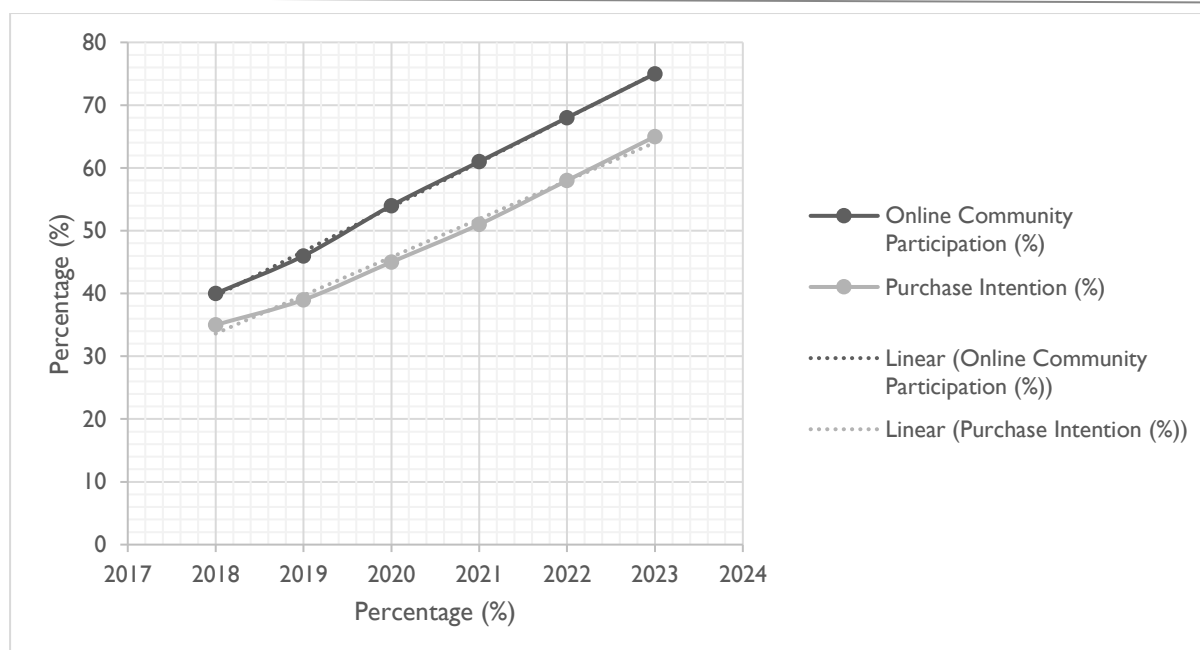
Figure 1. Growth in Participation in Online Brand Communities and Associated Purchase Intentions,2018–2023. Over the course of six years, the graph would demonstrate a parallel increase in both purchase intention and community participation. This suggests that purchasing is more likely when one actively participates in brand communities, confirming the importance of identity signaling and social belonging in consumer decision-making (see figure 1.1).

6. ROLE OF PLATFORM DYNAMICS:

In the age of social media, the dynamics of individual platforms have a significant impact on the formation of consumer-brand attachments and parasocial relationships (PSRs). The algorithms, engagement tools, and community affordances of each platform's architecture establish unique channels for interaction that impact the quality of brand engagements as well as the strength of user-influencer relationships. Platform-specific impacts are evident when comparing YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Long-form, searchable content on YouTube allows influencers to gradually establish authority and credibility by fostering longer viewer immersion and deeper story arcs [59]. Instagram is a follower-based, highly visual network where aspirational appeal and aesthetic brand alignment are driven by curated imagery, Stories, and Reels [60].

On the other hand, TikTok uses a short-form, algorithm-first distribution strategy that puts an emphasis on discovery over pre-existing networks. By democratizing reach and removing barriers to entry, its "For You Page" has the ability to propel unknown creators and brands into viral visibility based only on engagement signals [61]. One of the main forces behind these dynamics is algorithmic visibility. Machine learning systems that prioritize engagement velocity—likes, comments, shares, and watch time—over static popularity metrics mediate content surfacing across platforms [62]. Minor visibility triggers can result in exponential exposure due to nonlinear amplification effects. While Instagram's Explore and TikTok's FYP react quickly to trending signals and frequently prioritize emotionally charged or interactive content, YouTube recommendation engines favor channels with a lot of watch time [63]. Because of this algorithmic gatekeeping, influencers and brands must align their outputs with platform-specific engagement heuristics in addition to ensuring the quality of their content. PSR formation is further distinguished by community features and engagement tools. Long-term back-and-forth is made possible by YouTube's live streams, community posts, and comment threads, which foster intimacy and genuineness [64]. Instagram's ephemeral Stories, polls, and Q&As encourage small conversations that strengthen everyday familiarity. Duets, stitches, and challenge formats on TikTok promote co-creation, turning viewers into engaged brand participants and enhancing group identity [65]. By transforming audiences from passive consumers into cooperative agents, these tools strengthen brand attachment and parasocial ties. The quality of interactions is also influenced by platform design. By providing instantaneous acknowledgement, synchronous environments such as Twitch or YouTube Live enhance real-time reciprocity and strengthen PSRs [66]. Although they allow for controlled curation, asynchronous formats—which are popular on Instagram and partially on TikTok—may result in more performative connections. Perceived authenticity, a crucial precondition for brand trust and loyalty, is impacted by the harmony between spontaneity and curation [67]. In conclusion, platform dynamics—algorithmic amplification, participatory affordances, and temporal modes of engagement—are active co-creators of relationships between influencers and followers as well as between brands and consumers rather than passive backdrops. Brands can strategically choose platforms and content formats that best suit their intended depth of PSR and long-term customer attachment by being aware of these distinct impacts. Understanding platform-specific dynamics is crucial to maintaining influence and brand equity in an attention economy where visibility is a limited and algorithmically mediated resource [68].
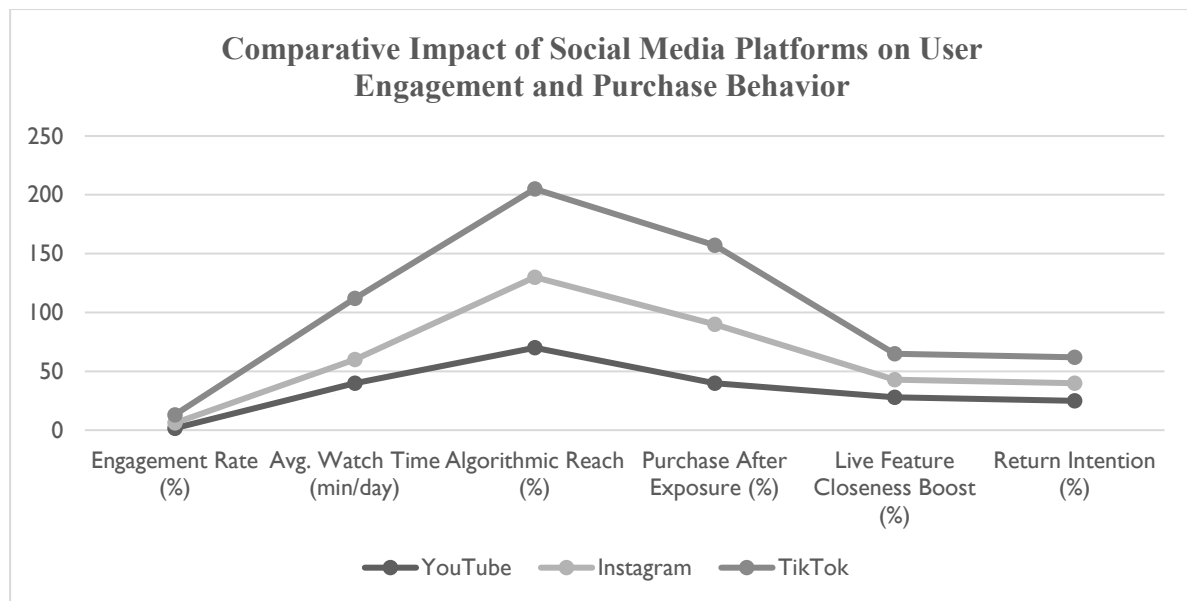
Figure.2 Across six performance metrics—engagement rate, average watch time, algorithmic reach, purchase likelihood following exposure, live feature closeness boost, and return intent—the figure compares YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok.

With its excellent content discovery system and compelling influence on consumer behavior, TikTok frequently beats the other platforms in average watch time, algorithmic reach, and purchasing probability following exposure. Instagram trails TikTok in view time and reach but tracks closely in purchase influence and engagement rate. Though overall performance is mediocre, YouTube keeps a consistent return intention rate—possibly owing to its well-known user loyalty. Lower "live feature closeness boost" scores for all platforms indicate that live features contribute less to seen closeness than other criteria seen in figure 2.

7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CRITICISMS: MANIPULATION, PARASOCIAL DEPENDENCY, AND BLURRED COMMERCIAL INTENT:

Ethical worries about manipulation, dependency, and covert commercial intent have increased as parasocial relationships (PSRs) in influencer-follower interactions have grown. Influencers often mix ads with their own life stories, making it seem like they truly like the products. This smart move gets around their followers' usual way of judging products by using feelings like being relatable, open, and living the dream [69]. This method could lead to a situation where people rely too much on what influencers say, which can stop them from making choices on their own. Young folks, mainly teens, are more open to this and often accept things as true without checking [70]. A big issue here is how hard it is to tell ads apart from real advice. Since these influencer-brand deals don't always clearly say they're ads, followers might mix up paid posts with just sharing favorites. The effectiveness and transparency of disclosures are often diminished, even when they are present, by being buried in captions, obscured by hashtags, or positioned far from the main content [71]. Algorithmic amplification, in which social media platforms give preference to emotionally charged content in recommendation systems, makes these ethical concerns worse. PSRs are strengthened and followers are exposed to more covert marketing messages as a result of this reinforcement loop [72]. In order to lessen the manipulative potential of parasocial marketing, academics advocate for stronger media literacy initiatives, platform-level accountability, and more stringent advertising disclosure laws [73].

7.1 Disclosure concerns (such as sponsored or ad):

Since the rise of parasocial connections in the social media age has increased influencers' persuasiveness, ethical issues are now at the forefront of conversations about consumer brand attachment. Disclosure of commercial relationships is a major concern, especially when it comes to sponsored content. Although disclosure is required by U.S. and European regulatory bodies through hashtags like #sponsored or #ad, research shows that many influencers are still reluctant to reveal partnerships for fear of their perceived authenticity being diminished [74]. The distinction between sponsored promotion and organic content is blurred by inadequate disclosure, which may deceive audiences about the objectivity of suggestions. Beyond openness, careful consideration of influencer marketing's effects on mental health is necessary. Especially among young or vulnerable audiences, exposure to carefully chosen, idealized imagery—especially in the fields of beauty, fashion, and aesthetic surgery—has been associated with negative self-comparison, body dissatisfaction, and a decline in followers' well-being [75]. Even influencers are susceptible; continual pressure to stay involved and maintain a flawless appearance can lead to burnout, anxiety, and depression. Social media influence is significant in high-risk industries like aesthetic surgery; according to Shahuly et al. (2023), about 50% of patients said social media influenced their decision to have procedures

done, highlighting the possibility of long-term psychological and health effects [76]. Consumer autonomy is included in ethical discourse as well.While influencers can inspire informed choices, parasocial trust may impair critical evaluation, leading consumers to adopt influencer-endorsed brands or procedures without fully assessing risks [77]. Safeguarding autonomy requires accurate, balanced information, disclosure of limitations, and acknowledgement of potential harms. At last, holding influencers to account is now seen as a big issue. With their power to change how people buy things, influencers—like old-school ad people—must be honest, work in good ways, and look after their followers. With health ads, they should only push trusted pros, make sure people agree to what they know, and dodge anything that makes bad or unneeded steps look good [78]. Together, these points show why we need clear, fair rules, and the same open-ness standards, and answer-back rules for everyone. Taking care of these matters is key not just to keep buyers safe but also to keep the trust and belief that hold influencer–follower ties strong in the time of social media [79].

7.2 Mental Health, Consumer Autonomy, and Influencer Accountability:

The rise of one-sided bonds has made social media stars more key in shaping what people buy. This brings up big worries about mental health, freedom, and who is to blame. Mental health leaders, including actual therapists and other experts, can reach many people, giving tips about mental care, self-help ways, and how to live [80]. While these shares can make more people know about these issues, they also may make the lines between professional roles less clear and might show skills in the wrong way, especially when fans think titles mean they know everything about mental health [81]. From the angle of the buyer being able to choose, the trust built through these one-sided links might stop a full check of what is shared. Fans might take up suggestions without enough looking into them, especially when it's not clear what the limits or full facts are [82]. In the mental health context, this effect can be amplified when content combines personal anecdotes with professional guidance, leading to a power imbalance that undermines informed decision-making. Influencer accountability is equally significant. Research highlights that many mental health professionals on social media do not consistently adhere to existing ethical guidelines, leaving interpretation to individual discretion [83]. This includes managing confidentiality breaches, addressing online interactions with at-risk individuals, and recognising the psychological toll of influencer work on practitioners themselves. Professional bodies have issued general social media guidance, yet gaps remain in addressing platform-specific risks, crisis engagement, and commercial partnerships [84]. Collectively, these concerns underscore the urgent need for clearer, enforceable ethical frameworks that balance accessibility with responsibility, safeguard consumer autonomy, and ensure that influencer practices promote mental well-being without compromising professional integrity [85].

8. EMERGING TRENDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

The landscape of parasocial relationships (PSRs) and brand attachment is undergoing a profound transformation with the emergence of virtual influencers (VIs) and AI-generated personas. Enabled by rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, machine learning, and computer-generated imagery, VIs such as Lil Miquela and Ayayi have evolved into influential digital figures capable of cultivating strong emotional bonds with audiences through tailored storytelling and interactive engagement [86]. Unlike old-school human leaders, VIs give brands new power over their message and how they can change with the times, letting them move fast with what buyers now want. But, as more AI faces show up, people are also starting to doubt them more. As audiences become more digitally literate, they increasingly scrutinize the authenticity of influencer content, with transparency emerging as a critical determinant of trust [87]. Surveys indicate that younger consumers, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, value clear disclosures and ethical alignment between an influencer's portrayed values and brand affiliations [88]. This demand for openness extends to concerns over data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the manipulation of social identities through hyper-curated virtual personas [89]. Failure to address these issues risks eroding both consumer trust and brand credibility. Immersive technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) are amplifying the capacity of VIs to deepen PSRs. Brands are increasingly deploying these technologies to create interactive experiences — such as VR fashion shows or AR product trials — that transcend conventional advertising and foster a heightened sense of social presence [90]. By simulating face-to-face interaction and embedding influencers in fully immersive environments, these tools intensify feelings of companionship, relatability, and brand intimacy. The mix of VIs with AR/VR lets people change how things look and the story told, to fit local ways but still keep a one look all over the world [91]. Looking forward, how PSRs grow on social media will be based on how tech moves, clear ethics, and how much power the buyers hold. Brands using AI faces must find the right mix of new ideas and strong ethical rules - making sure that deep connections do not hurt realness, open arms, or careful use of data. The road ahead for those who speak for brands, real or not, may rest on how well they handle this tricky ground and build trust and ties that touch hearts in a world more and more run by AI [92].

9. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS:

This text looks into the mix of things like friend-like bonds with influencers, how much we like brands, and how marketing with influencers is changing. It shows that being real, sharing values, and staying consistent are key in keeping a brand liked and trusted. Working long term with influencers, if done in a real way and based on shared values, makes a strong emotional link between people and brands, leading to stronger support and more repeat contact. On the other hand, seeing too much of an influencer and any bad news related to them can make people trust a brand less, engage with it less, and lower the brand's value. Advice for Marketers. For brands, the results show the good side of keeping long-term relationships with influencers who share the same values and stories as the brand. These ties should be actively managed, keeping track of how things are

going, listening to the audience, and having clear plans for handling crises. Being open about sponsorships and sticking to good ethics can also build trust and lower the risks that come up when people doubt how real an influencer is. Also, using both less-known and well-known influencers could mix wide reach and real-feel, making the audience less tired. Advice for Consumers. For shoppers, it's key to know how influencers try to persuade them to keep control. More programs teaching about media and a rise in "deinfluencing" show that people are getting better at thinking critically about endorsements. Giving people clear info on products and being open about ads helps in making smart choices and being less fooled by tricky tactics. Advice for Influencers. For influencers, the findings show the need for being real and consistent. Trust grows not just from good content but also from listening to the audience and avoiding mismatched brand deals. As the field grows, influencers must balance making money and keeping their real image that draws people's trust. Final Thoughts. In our digital world, our sense of self, our influence, and loyalty to brands are all tightly linked. Bonds made through social media with influencers have grown from quick interactions to long-term ties that form what people like and choose. Influencer marketing is more than just a way to be seen; it's a way to build a brand for the long run—one that needs matching values between the brand, the influencer, and the audience. As tech keeps changing how we connect, success will rest on building trust, being real, and having a shared goal, making sure that influence does more than just sell but also makes the bond between brand and buyer stronger over time.

REFERENCES

[1] Horton D, Wohl R. Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance. Psychiatry [Internet]. 1956 Aug;19(3):215–29. Available from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049

[2] Reinecke L, Mary Beth Oliver. The Routledge handbook of media use and well-being : international perspectives on theory and research on positive media effects [Internet]. London: Routledge; 2020. Available from: https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-Handbook-of-Media-Use-and-Well-Being-International-Perspectives-on-Theory-and-Research-on-Positive-Media-Effects/Reinecke-Oliver/p/book/9780367736996?srsltid=AfmBOornQADdmcwGHK10Je58QE3azGv5mnaCyIS6y3PxOoIKnO5YKTq1

[3] Valkenburg PM, Peter J, Walther JB. Media Effects: Theory and Research. Annual Review of Psychology [Internet]. 2016 Jan 4;67(1):315–38. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281554023_Media_Effects_Theory_and_Research

[4] Coombs WT, Holladay SJ. The Handbook of Crisis Communication [Internet]. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell; 2010. Available from: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/9781444314885#page=92

[5] Dwayne Ball A, Tasaki LH. The Role and Measurement of Attachment in Consumer Behavior. Journal of Consumer Psychology [Internet]. 1992 Jan;1(2):155–72. Available from: https://myscp.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1016/S1057-7408(08)80055-1

[6] Sokolova K, Perez C. You Follow Fitness Influencers on YouTube. But Do You Actually exercise? How Parasocial relationships, and Watching Fitness influencers, Relate to Intentions to Exercise. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services [Internet]. 2021 Jan;58(102276):102276. Available from: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0969698920312844

[7] Hund E. The Influencer Industry : The Quest for Authenticity on Social Media. wwwtorrossacom [Internet]. 2023;1–232. Available from: https://www.torrossa.com/gs/resourceProxy?an=5564401&publisher=FZO137

[8] Liu L, Dong Q, Wang X, Su C, Zhu M. Unpacking the link between parasocial relationships and gifting in live streaming: A mediation and moderation perspective. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services [Internet]. 2025 Jul 21;87:104436. Available from: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0969698925002152

[9] Zhang Y, He J, Li J. The role of flow experience in virtual influencer marketing: insights into aesthetic, entertainment and parasocial influences on purchase intention. Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal [Internet]. 2025 May 16; Available from: https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JFMM-05-2024-0201/full/html

[10] Li J, Hosain MS, Zaman FU. Parasocial Relationship, Brand Attitude, and Purchase Intention: A Dual Mediation Model. Journal of Relationship Marketing [Internet]. 2025 Jun 4;1–45. Available from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15332667.2025.2508024

[11] Perse EM, Rubin RB. Attribution in Social and Parasocial Relationships. Communication Research [Internet]. 1989 Feb;16(1):59–77. Available from: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/009365089016001003

[12] Calvert SL, Wilson BJ, editors. The Handbook of Children, Media, and Development [Internet]. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.; 2008. Available from: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/9781444302752#page=328

[13] Rubin RB, McHugh MP. Development of Parasocial Interaction Relationships. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media [Internet]. 1987 Jun;31(3):279–92. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1080/08838158709386664

[14] Tukachinsky R, Walter N, Saucier CJ. Antecedents and Effects of Parasocial Relationships: A Meta-Analysis. Journal of Communication [Internet]. 2020 Nov 10;70(6). Available from: https://academic.oup.com/joc/article-abstract/70/6/868/5964783

[15] Giles DC. Parasocial Interaction: A Review of the Literature and a Model for Future Research. Media Psychology [Internet]. 2002 Aug;4(3):279–305. Available from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0403_04

[16] Shaver PR, Fraley RC. APA PsycNet [Internet]. psycnet.apa.org. 2008. Available from: https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2008-13837-003

[17] Burroughs ER. The Master Mind of Mars [Internet]. 2018. Available from: https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1986-97394-001

[18] Sirgy MJ. Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: a Critical Review. Journal of Consumer Research. 1982 Dec;9(3):287–300. Available from: https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/9/3/287/1795763

[19] Rosdiana SIJABAT. The Impact of Parasocial Relationships and Self-Congruity on Online Purchasing Decisions: The Mediating Role of Fear of Missing Out. Journal of Ecohumanism [Internet]. 2024 [cited 2025 Aug 9];3(7):437–50. Available from: https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1275717

[20] Labrecque LI. Fostering Consumer–Brand Relationships in Social Media Environments: the Role of Parasocial Interaction. Journal of Interactive Marketing. 2014 May;28(2):134–48. Available from: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.003

[21] Dibble JL, Hartmann T, Rosaen SF. Parasocial Interaction and Parasocial Relationship: Conceptual Clarification and a Critical Assessment of Measures. Human Communication Research. 2016 Mar 17;42(1):21–44. Available from: https://academic.oup.com/hcr/article-abstract/42/1/21/4067693

[22] Chadwick DD, Chapman M, Caton S. Digital Inclusion for People with an Intellectual Disability. Attrill-Smith A, Fullwood C, Keep M, Kuss DJ, editors. The Oxford Handbook of Cyberpsychology [Internet]. 2018 Nov 7;260–84. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198812746.013.17

[23] Liebers N, Schramm H. Parasocial Interactions and Relationships with Media Characters–An Inventory of 60 Years of Research [Internet]. Scholar Commons. 2019. Available from: https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/crt/vol38/iss2/1

[24] Tukachinsky R, Stever G. Theorizing Development of Parasocial Engagement. Communication Theory [Internet]. 2018 Dec 15;29(3):297–318. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qty032

[25] Rao KR. Theories of Psi. Advances in Parapsychological Research [Internet]. 1978;245–95. Available from: https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-1-4615-9092-7_4?pdf=chapter%20toc

[26] Kim J, Song H. Celebrity's self-disclosure on Twitter and parasocial relationships: A mediating role of social presence. Computers in Human Behavior [Internet]. 2016 Sep;62(62):570–7. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.03.083

[27] Lou C, Yuan S. Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media. Journal of Interactive Advertising. 2019 Oct 30;19(1):58–73. Available from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501

[28] De Veirman M, Hudders L, Nelson MR. What is influencer marketing and how does it target children? A review and direction for future research. Frontiers in Psychology [Internet]. 2019 Dec 3;10(2685):1–16. Available from: https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02685/full

[29] Djafarova E, Rushworth C. Exploring the Credibility of Online celebrities' Instagram Profiles in Influencing the Purchase Decisions of Young Female Users. Computers in Human Behavior. 2017 Mar;68(1):1–7. Available from: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563216307506

[30] Park CW, MacInnis DJ, Priester J, Eisingerich AB, Iacobucci D. Brand Attachment and Brand Attitude Strength: Conceptual and Empirical Differentiation of Two Critical Brand Equity Drivers. Journal of Marketing. 2010;74(6):1–17. Available from: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1509/jmkg.74.6.1

[31] Malär L, Krohmer H, Hoyer WD, Nyffenegger B. Emotional Brand Attachment and Brand personality: the Relative Importance of the Actual and the Ideal Self. Journal of Marketing [Internet]. 2011 Jul;75(4):35–52.

Available from: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1509/jmkg.75.4.35

[32] Rai JS, Yousaf A, Itani MN, Singh A. Sports celebrity personality and purchase intention: The role of endorser-brand congruence, brand credibility and brand image transfer. Sport, Business and Management: an International Journal [Internet]. 2021 Mar 25;11(3). Available from: https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/SBM-06-2020-0062/full/html

[33] Japutra A, Ekinci Y, Simkin L. Exploring brand attachment, its determinants and outcomes. Journal of Strategic Marketing [Internet]. 2014 May 6;22(7):616–30. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2014.914062

[34] Thomson M, MacInnis DJ, Whan Park C. The Ties That Bind: Measuring the Strength of Consumers' Emotional Attachments to Brands. Journal of Consumer Psychology [Internet]. 2005;15(1):77–91. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1501_10

[35] Kirmani A, Rao AR. No Pain, No Gain: A Critical Review of the Literature on Signaling Unobservable Product Quality. Journal of Marketing [Internet]. 2000 Apr;64(2):66–79. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.64.2.66.18000

[36] Audrezet A, de Kerviler G, Guidry Moulard J. Authenticity under Threat: When Social Media Influencers Need to Go beyond self-presentation. Journal of Business Research. 2020 Jul;117(1):557–69. Available from: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0148296318303229

[37] Ki CW, Cuevas LM, Chong SM, Lim H. Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive marketing results by fulfilling needs. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services. 2020 Jul 1;55(102133):102133. Available from: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0969698920300059

[38] Shamim K, Islam T. Digital influencer marketing: How message credibility and media credibility affect trust and impulsive buying. Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science [Internet]. 2022 May 10;32(4):1–26. Available from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21639159.2022.2052342

[39] Djafarova E, Trofimenko O. "Instafamous" – Credibility and self-presentation of micro-celebrities on Social Media. Information, Communication & Society [Internet]. 2019 Feb 19;22(10):1432–46. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1438491

[40] Reinikainen H, Munnukka J, Maity D, Luoma-aho V. "You Really Are a Great Big Sister" – Parasocial relationships, credibility, and the Moderating Role of Audience Comments in Influencer Marketing. Journal of Marketing Management [Internet]. 2020 Jan 9;36(3-4):279–98. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2019.1708781

[41] Schouten AP, Janssen L, Verspaget M. Celebrity vs. Influencer Endorsements in advertising: the Role of identification, credibility, and Product-Endorser Fit. International Journal of Advertising [Internet]. 2020;39(2):258–81. Available from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02650487.2019.1634898

[42] Escalas J, Bettman James R. Self-Construal, Reference Groups, and Brand Meaning. Journal of Consumer Research [Internet]. 2005;32(3):378–89. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23547268_Self-Construal_Reference_Groups_and_Brand_Meaning

[43] Chaplin L, Roedder John D. The Development of Self-Brand Connections in Children and Adolescents. Journal of Consumer Research [Internet]. 2005 Jun;32(1):119–29. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1086/426622

[44] Escalas JE, Bettman JR. You Are What They Eat: The Influence of Reference Groups on Consumers' Connections to Brands. Journal of Consumer Psychology [Internet]. 2003;13(3):339–48. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327663JCP1303_14

[45] Nowak L, Thach L, Olsen JE. Wowing the millennials: creating brand equity in the wine industry. Journal of Product & Brand Management [Internet]. 2006 Aug;15(5):316–23. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420610685712

[46] Sprott D, Czellar S, Spangenberg E. The Importance of a General Measure of Brand Engagement on Market Behavior: Development and Validation of a Scale. Journal of Marketing Research [Internet]. 2009 Feb;46(1):92–104. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.46.1.92

[47] Schulte M, Bamberg S, Rees J, Rollin P. Social identity as a key concept for connecting transformative societal change with individual environmental activism. Journal of Environmental Psychology [Internet]. 2020 Nov;72(72):101525. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2020.101525

[48] Avşar Arık I, Şahin Kütük B. The Relationship Between Online Socialization and Online Social Identity.

Journal of Economy Culture and Society [Internet]. 2022 Jun 17 [cited 2022 Sep 7];0(0). Available from: https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jecs/issue/75342/1062465

[49] Susanti D, Hantoro PD. Indonesian Netizens' Digital Self and Identity Creation on Social Media. Komunikator [Internet]. 2022 Nov 14 [cited 2022 Dec 9];14(2):104–13. Available from: https://journal.umy.ac.id/index.php/jkm/article/view/16541

[50] Casilli A. Être présent en ligne : culture et structure des réseaux sociaux d'Internet. Idées économiques et sociales [Internet]. 2012 [cited 2020 Sep 24];N° 169(3):16. Available from: https://esipreprints.org/index.php/esipreprints/article/view/925

[51] Pérez-Torres V. Social media: A digital social mirror for identity development during adolescence. Current Psychology [Internet]. 2024 Apr 24;43:22170–80. Available from: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12144-024-05980-z

[52] Ilieva G, Yankova T, Ruseva M, Dzhabarova Y, Klisarova-Belcheva S, Bratkov M. Social Media Influencers: Customer Attitudes and Impact on Purchase Behaviour. Information [Internet]. 2024 Jun 1;15(6):359. Available from: https://doi.org/10.3390/info15060359

[53] Böhm R, Rusch H, Baron J. The psychology of intergroup conflict: A review of theories and measures. Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization [Internet]. 2020 Jan;178(1):947–62. Available from: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167268118300209

[54] Ciravegna L, Lopez L, Kundu S. Country of origin and network effects on internationalization: A comparative study of SMEs from an emerging and developed economy. Journal of Business Research [Internet]. 2014 May;67(5):916–23. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.07.011

[55] Schau HJ, Muñiz AM, Arnould EJ. How Brand Community Practices Create Value. Journal of Marketing [Internet]. 2009 Sep;73(5):30–51. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.5.30

[56] Belk RW. Extended Self in a Digital World. Journal of Consumer Research [Internet]. 2013 Oct 1;40(3):477–500. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1086/671052

[57] Jarzyna CL. Parasocial Interaction, the COVID-19 Quarantine, and Digital Age Media. Human Arenas [Internet]. 2020 Nov 7;4(3). Available from: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42087-020-00156-0

[58] Wei Y, Yu C. How Do Reference Groups Influence Self-Brand Connections among Chinese Consumers? Journal of Advertising [Internet]. 2012 Jul;41(2):39–54. Available from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2753/JOA0091-3367410203

[59] Giertz JN. My Friend, the Content Creator: Consequences of Parasocial Relationships for Engagement in Emerging Social Media [Internet]. ediss.uni-goettingen.de. 2022. Available from: https://ediss.uni-goettingen.de/handle/11858/14151

[60] Pushparaj P, Kushwaha BP. A Systematic Literature Review of Virtual Influencers in Marketing Using Bibliometric Analysis [Internet]. Social Science Research Network. Rochester, NY; 2023 [cited 2023 Oct 19]. Available from: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4593307

[61] Sulonen S. Brand building in the era of social media : the role of TikTok in shaping brand identity. Lutpublutfi [Internet]. 2025; Available from: https://lutpub.lut.fi/handle/10024/169765

[62] Garg A. Perceived Influence Capital and Algorithmic Amplification: A Strategic Analysis of Attention-Economy Asymmetries in Social Media Commerce. 2025 Jan 1 [cited 2025 May 20]; Available from: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5243669

[63] Montag C, Yang H, Elhai JD. On the Psychology of TikTok Use: A First Glimpse From Empirical Findings. Frontiers in Public Health [Internet]. 2021;9(1). Available from: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2021.641673/full

[64] Hilvert-Bruce Z, Neill JT, Sjöblom M, Hamari J. Social Motivations of live-streaming Viewer Engagement on Twitch. Computers in Human Behavior [Internet]. 2018 Jul;84:58–67. Available from: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563218300712

[65] Apenes Solem BA. Influences of customer participation and customer brand engagement on brand loyalty. Journal of Consumer Marketing [Internet]. 2016 Aug 8;33(5):332–42. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305877806_Influences_of_customer_participation_and_customer_brand_engagement_on_brand_loyalty

[66] Gros D, Wanner B, Hackenholt A, Zawadzki P, Knautz K. World of Streaming. Motivation and Gratification on Twitch. Social Computing and Social Media Human Behavior [Internet]. 2017;10282:44–57. Available from: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-3-319-58559-8_5

[67] Leung FF, Gu FF, Palmatier RW. Online Influencer Marketing. Journal of the Academy of Marketing

Science [Internet]. 2022 Jan 8;50(2):226–51. Available from: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11747-021-00829-4

[68] Appel G, Grewal L, Hadi R, Stephen AT. The Future of Social Media in Marketing. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science [Internet]. 2020 Oct 12;48(1):79–95. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1

[69] Haimson OL, Liu T, Zhang BZ, Corvite S. The Online Authenticity Paradox: What Being "Authentic" on Social Media Means, and Barriers to Achieving It. Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction [Internet]. 2021 Oct 13;5(CSCW2):1–18. Available from: https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/3479567

[70] Erickson SE, Harrison K, Dal Cin S. Toward a Multi-Dimensional Model of Adolescent Romantic Parasocial Attachment. Communication Theory [Internet]. 2018 Apr 18;28(3):376–99. Available from: https://academic.oup.com/ct/article-abstract/28/3/376/4975453

[71] Feijoo B, Sádaba C. Adolescents' advertising literacy and body self-perception in the face of influencer marketing. Cuadernosinfo [Internet]. 2025 [cited 2025 Feb 20];(60):93–120. Available from: https://digiuv.villanueva.edu/handle/20.500.12766/699

[72] Evans NJ, Wojdynski BW, Grubbs Hoy M. How sponsorship transparency mitigates negative effects of advertising recognition. International Journal of Advertising [Internet]. 2018 Nov 8;38(3):364–82. Available from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02650487.2018.1474998

[73] Cotter K. Playing the Visibility game: How Digital Influencers and Algorithms Negotiate Influence on Instagram. New Media & Society [Internet]. 2018 Dec 14;21(4):895–913. Available from: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1461444818815684

[74] Hudders L, Jans SD, Veirman MD. The Commercialization of Social Media Stars: A Literature Review and Conceptual Framework on the Strategic Use of Social Media Influencers. Social Media Influencers in Strategic Communication [Internet]. 2021 Nov 9;24–67. Available from: https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003181286-3/commercialization-social-media-stars-literature-review-conceptual-framework-strategic-use-social-media-influencers-liselot-hudders-steffi-de-jans-marijke-de-veirman

[75] Murphy PE, Laczniak GR, Harris F. Ethics in Marketing [Internet]. Routledge; 2016. Available from: https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9781315626642&type=googlepdf

[76] Walker CE, Krumhuber EG, Dayan S, Furnham A. Effects of Social Media Use on Desire for Cosmetic Surgery among Young Women. Current Psychology [Internet]. 2019 Apr 30;40(7):3355–64. Available from: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12144-019-00282-1

[77] Oesch S, Vingan NR, Li X, Hoopman J, Akgul Y, Kenkel JM. A Correlation of the Glogau Scale With VISIA-CR Complexion Analysis Measurements in Assessing Facial Photoaging for Clinical Research. Aesthetic Surgery Journal [Internet]. 2022 Apr 25;42(10). Available from: https://doi.org/10.1093/asj/sjac108

[78] Kington RS, Arnesen S, Chou WYS, Curry SJ, Lazer D, Villarruel AM. Identifying credible sources of health information in social media: Principles and attributes. NAM Perspectives [Internet]. 2021;2021(1):1–37. Available from: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8486420/

[79] Gupta N, Dorfman R, Saadat S, Roostaeian J. The Plastic Surgery Social Media Influencer: Ethical Considerations and a Literature Review. Aesthetic Surgery Journal [Internet]. 2019 Nov 19;40(6). Available from: https://academic.oup.com/asj/article-abstract/40/6/691/5628880

[80] White E, Hanley T. Therapist + Social Media = Mental health influencer? Considering the research focusing upon key ethical issues around the use of social media by therapists. Counselling and Psychotherapy Research [Internet]. 2022 Aug 20;23(1). Available from: https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12577

[81] Mun IB, Kim H. Influence of False Self-Presentation on Mental Health and Deleting Behavior on Instagram: The Mediating Role of Perceived Popularity. Frontiers in Psychology [Internet]. 2021 Apr 12;12(1). Available from: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8071929/

[82] Baier AL. The Ethical Implications of Social Media: Issues and Recommendations For Clinical Practice. Ethics & Behavior [Internet]. 2018 Oct 11;29(5):341–51. Available from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10508422.2018.1516148

[83] Fox J, Karson M, Erickson Cornish J. From the blues to gray matters: Affirming a senior professional identity. Professional Psychology: Research and Practice [Internet]. 2022 Oct [cited 2022 Nov 10];53(5):523–9. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1037/pro0000379

[84] DiLillo D, Gale EB. To Google or not to Google: Graduate students' use of the Internet to access personal

information about clients. Training and Education in Professional Psychology [Internet]. 2011 Aug;5(3):160–6. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024441

[85] BACP. Good practice in action resources [Internet]. Bacp.co.uk. 2019. Available from: https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/good-practice-in-action/

[86] Jones SJ, Laird JE. A cognitive architecture theory of anticipatory thinking. AI Magazine [Internet]. 2023 Jun [cited 2025 Feb 10];44(2):155–64. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1002/aaai.12102

[87] Gerlich M. The Power of Virtual Influencers: Impact on Consumer Behaviour and Attitudes in the Age of AI. Administrative Sciences [Internet]. 2023 Aug 1;13(8):178. Available from: https://www.mdpi.com/2076-3387/13/8/178

[88] Leo X, Huh YE. Who gets the blame for service failures? Attribution of responsibility toward robot versus human service providers and service firms. Computers in Human Behavior [Internet]. 2020 Dec;113:106520. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106520

[89] Srivastava V, Kishore S, Dhingra D. Technology and the Future of Customer Experience. Crafting Customer Experience Strategy [Internet]. 2021 May 4;91–116. Available from: https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/978-1-83909-710-220211006

[90] DeZao T. Enhancing transparency in AI-powered customer engagement: Ingenta Connect [Internet]. Ingentaconnect.com. 2024. Available from: https://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/hsp/airwa/2024/00000003/00000002/art00004

[91] Suardana IGP. The Evolution of Consumer Behavior in the Age of Information: An Analytical Review. Vifada Management and Digital Business [Internet]. 2025 Feb 27;2(1):1–16. Available from: https://jurnal.vifada.id/index.php/mdb/article/view/104

[92] Gandhi M. STUDY ON THE USE OF AUGMENTED REALITY AND VIRTUAL REALITY IN ENHANCING THE RETAIL SHOPPING EXPERIENCE AMONG CONSUMERS IN ERNAKULAM CITY. Dissertation Submitted by MARIA THOMAS: (SM22COM013) Under the guidance of Ms. DIVYA TOMY In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of MASTER OF COMMERCE Nationally Re-Accredited with A++ Grade Affiliated to [Internet]. 2024 [cited 2025 Aug 9]. Available from: http://117.239.78.102:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/4508/1/MARIA%20THOMAS.pdf

fffff