

## INFLUENCER MARKETING : ASSESSING THE EFFECT OF SELF-INFLUENCER COUNGRUENCE, PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, CREDIBILITY AND ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH (E-WOM) ON SOCIAL MEDIA TIKTOK

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### ABSTRACT

*Purpose – This study aims to explore the impact of social media influencers (SMIs) intimate self-influencer congruence on consumers' electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), with a focus on the role of parasocial relationships and congruence among the influencer, product and consumer. The study finds its theoretical foundation in parasocial theory and self-congruency theory. Design/methodology/approach – This study employs a quantitative approach, utilizing a sample of 170 collected survey responses. The proposed hypotheses are evaluated using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Findings – This study reveals the sequential mediating effect of parasocial relationships and credibility on the link between self-influencer congruence and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on TikTok. Credibility plays a significant role in converting parasocial connections into consumer purchase intent. These findings highlight the importance of selecting credible influencers who align with brand values and audience interests to utilize social media marketing. Originality/value – This study brings new perspectives by identifying a limiting factor that shapes the impact of self-influencer congruence on electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) via sequential mediating effect of parasocial relationships and credibility. In doing so, this study provides a novel perspective in understanding the dynamics between SMIs and consumers in the rapidly evolving marketing landscape.*

### KEYWORDS

*Influencer marketing, social media influencers, self-influencer congruence, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), parasocial relationships*



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## INTRODUCTION

Associating a celebrity figure with a brand has become an effective marketing strategy in today's marketing environment. Hence personality research has become an integral part of the marketing field today. According to (Aaker 1997), a brand's personality can increase market connection. In addition, in the journal (Abbasi, et al. 2023) shows that personality congruence between customers and brands in an

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important element in brand attachment. Personality congruence tends to influence brand loyalty and purchase decisions (Mahjoub, Kordnaeij and Moayad 2015).

With the widespread use of social media around the world, there is increasing interest in social networking platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, where content is quickly created, shared, and consumed by users (Sokolova and Kefi 2019), Social media users tend to market themselves as a brand, also known as social media influencers (SMI) (Guan, Ni and Liu 2020). Similarly, consumers today are increasingly reading posts and watching videos on social media platforms to get information related to the products they want. In general, consumers see SMIs as credible sources, especially Generation Y and Z consumers (Xu and Pratt 2018). Consumers usually trust SMIs more than traditional celebrities, as their credibility comes from their expertise in a particular field (Ki and Kim 2019). They exist in almost all personal care products, such as fashion, beauty, food, health, fitness, and others (Raggat, et al. 2018).

Today, brands are well aware of the important role of SMI in influencing consumer behavior, which has resulted in the emergence of a new phenomenon known as social media influencer marketing (Soga, et al. 2021). It is considered a marketing tactic for companies to promote their products through "someone like you" (Miachon 2018) as customers make comparisons with them. According to data from datareportal.com, Indonesia has a total of 185.3 million internet users, covering about 68% of the total population. Amidst this rapidly growing digital ecosystem, social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram play an important role, especially in marketing. TikTok, a social media newcomer, is cementing its position with rapid user growth, while Facebook remains relevant despite a slightly slower usage trend. YouTube remains the main source of video content, while Instagram continues to attract users with its creative features.

Thus, through its rapid growth and growing influence in Indonesia's digital landscape, TikTok has established itself as one of the major forces in the social media ecosystem. Previous studies (Koay, Cheah and Goon 2023) indicated that self-influence congruence has a significant influence on purchase intention with sequential mediation from parasocial relationships and credibility, then from the study, it is said that in addition to influencing purchase intention, credibility also influences on. So from this study, we found a gap that the research model from 2023 influences other variables such as EWOM.

#### ***Social media Influencers (SMIs)***

Social media influencers (SMIs) are defined as individuals who have amass large followings on platform online social media and experts in significant roles to influence their audience through engaging content (Engel, et al. 2024). Social media influencers (SMIs) can provide authentic sources and become a positive role model for their audience on social media, also they can provide valuable content on the role they're experting most such as exercise, health, beauty, etc (Hudders and Jans 2022). Social media influencers (SMIs) play a greater role in controlling and influencing the behavior of their consumer, especially teenagers. Influencer marketing was considered the most powerful influencers who widespread and trendiest their communication strategy used for the companies, Therefore,

influencers have been considered marketing experts and opinion leaders because they play an important role in persuading and promoting the brand to their followers/audience on social media. Influencers have a two-step flow of communication theory through their audience such as a representative of an organization, inviting to filter and create messages to match with their particular followers/audience, also they have capabilities positive effect on customer relationships in social media to influence when the consumers use precedent information.

Accordingly, social media influencers have many followers who trust them, especially on the role where they expert the most knowledge. According to psychology theory, the attachment of this theory helps the SMIs to clarify interpersonal relations for their audience. Of influence perspective live, perspective people and they also realized the effect occurs mainly in their subconscious. Several studies have confirmed that the distinctive feature of social media influencers (SMIs) affects the behaviour of the psychological situation and the emotional side of their consumer audience on social media.

#### ***Self-influencer congruence theory***

The concept of self-congruity theory, was first introduced by (Sirgy 1982) refers to the extent to which an individual perceives a product or service as matching their self-image. The concept of self-influencer congruence suggests that people tend to evaluate products or services based on how well they match their self-image. This self-image is composed of both the actual self (who they are) and the ideal self (who they aspire to be) (Malar, et al. 2011); (Abbasi, et al. 2023). Self-congruence in marketing refers to the extent to which a product, brand, or advertisement aligns with an individual's self-image or self-concept (Ardyan and Wibisono 2019). This concept is rooted in the self-congruity theory, which posits that people tend to evaluate products or services based on how well they match their self-image.

Recent studies have demonstrated the significance of self-influencer congruence in influencing consumer behavior, particularly in terms of purchase intention (Koay, Cheah and Goon 2023); (Raj and Ved 2023); (Shan, Chen and Lin 2019). These studies explain that when individuals perceive influencers as similar to themselves, either in terms of their actual self or ideal self, they are more likely to engage with the influencer's content and be influenced by their recommendations. This congruence can also influence consumer behavior, particularly in terms of purchase intention. Recent studies about self-influencer congruence have consistently shown that self-influencer congruence plays a significant role in influencing consumer behavior, particularly in terms of purchase intention.

#### ***Parasocial Relationship theory***

A study by (Horton and Wohl 2016) introduced the concept of parasocial interaction, which refers to the one-sided, non-reciprocal relationships that audiences form with media performers. this study explain that television, radio, and movies create an illusion of face-to-face interaction with performers, leading audiences to believe they are part of a primary group with the performer. A Study from explain that Parasocial interaction is the process of forming a parasocial relationship and an essential attribute and strength to parasocial relationship. Parasocial relationship is defined as a deeper, more enduring connection between

an individual and a media figure, often characterized by a sense of intimacy and familiarity (Dibble, Hartmann and Rosaen 2016). Recent studies have explored the concept of parasocial relationships in the context of social media influencer marketing, revealing that these one-sided connections between influencers and their followers positively influence consumer brand relationships and customer engagement behaviors (Koh, Burnasheva and Suh 2022); (Koay, Cheah and Goon 2023) ; (Yang and Ha 2021); (Conde and Casais 2023). These studies indicates that the emotional bonds fans form with influencers can enhance persuasive power, brand loyalty, increase trust, and drive purchasing decisions, thereby demonstrating the significant impact of parasocial relationships on marketing effectiveness and consumer behavior.

(Nordlund 1978) suggested that individuals who lack satisfaction in friendships or interpersonal interactions in their social lives may seek to fulfill these needs through alternative means, such as forming parasocial relationships with media characters. This behavior is rationalized by the idea that individuals use the same cognitive processes to evaluate media characters as they do with real people in everyday life.

(Katz, et al. 1974) proposed a process in which media viewers first evaluate the personalities of media characters and then consider them as surrogates for social relationships. This process may be driven by a desire to compensate for loneliness and dependence on media use. (Giles and John 2004) further elaborate on how the motive to reduce loneliness and dependence on media can lead to one-sided parasocial identification with media characters.

#### ***Credibility theory***

The main dimensions of source credibility are perceived expertise/competence and perceived trustworthiness (Ismagilova, et al. 2020); (Lou and Yuan 2019); (Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget 2019). Therefore, source credibility indicates the extent to which a source is perceived as trustworthy and competent (Bhattacharjee and Sanford 2006).

However, individuals not only imagine future situations, but also, for example, other perspectives, distant locations, and counterfactual alternatives. The reference point for the interpreted imagination is always the self in the here and now, and the greater the distance to a situation (i.e., in time, in space, in social distance, and hypothetically), the more abstract the interpreted imagination (Trope and Liberman, Construal-level theory of psychological distance 2010). Thus, the smaller the psychologically perceived distance, the more reliable and trustworthy the associated (Trope, Yaacov; Liberman, Nira; Wakslak, Cheryl 2007) Since perceptions of both types of self-congruity reduce perceived psychological distance, it can be argued that perceptions of both actual and ideal self-congruity increase perceptions of trustworthiness. This argument finds support from (Choi and Reid 2016) who analyzed the effect of self-congruence on claim trustworthiness (i.e., perceived trustworthiness of information). In doing so, they treated self-congruence as two dimensions (i.e., actual and ideal self-congruence)

#### ***Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) theory***

E-WOM is a process by which potential customers continually and dynamically exchange messages, evaluations, and comments regarding a product,

service, or brand offering. These reviews are persistent and can be seen and acknowledged by many people or companies on the Internet (Ismagilova, et al. 2020). Furthermore, it is asserted that E-WOM is a pivotal element in shaping consumer purchasing behavior, as researchers posit that information provided by consumers on online platforms can exert influence on others, particularly prospective customers (Henning-Thurau, et al. 2004); (Farzin and Fattahi 2018).

Positive electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has become a pivotal element in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in the context of digital marketing. e-WOM refers to the process where consumers share their experiences, opinions, and recommendations about products or services through online platforms. As highlighted by Changreani (2023) effective digital marketing can enhance consumer engagement and encourage the sharing of positive experiences online (Wang & Hu, 2021). Companies that utilize a comprehensive marketing mix, including social media campaigns, targeted advertisements, and influencer partnerships, can create an environment conducive to positive e-WOM. Jualiana (2023) emphasizes that modern consumers often base their purchasing decisions on the reviews and recommendations shared by others online (Rezza, 2018). Positive experiences lead to favorable e-WOM, which can influence potential customers' perceptions and behaviors. Ngarmwongnoi et., al (2020) assert that consumers increasingly rely on e-WOM throughout their customer journey, from pre-purchase to post-purchase stages (Hosany & Martin, 2012). The perceived credibility of the information shared, along with its quality, significantly influences consumer trust and decision-making.

Influencers play a vital role in shaping positive e-WOM, particularly in the context of social media marketing. influencers act as third parties who market products through e-WOM, making potential buyers aware of products before they consider making a purchase (Nyman & Daugherty, 2001). The endorsement of products by trusted influencers can significantly enhance the credibility of e-WOM and encourage positive consumer engagement. In conclusion, positive e-WOM is significantly influenced by various preceding sequence variables, including digital marketing strategies, customer experience, credibility and quality of e-WOM and influencer endorsements.

#### ***Self-influencer congruence and parasocial relationship***

Findings from (Montoya, Horton and Kirchner 2008) suggest that people tend to form connections with others who share similar characteristics, values, and behaviors, even if they are not actually similar. This perceived similarity can be based on shared interests, attitudes, or behaviors, and can lead to increased trust, intimacy, and familiarity between the individual and the influencer. Both the theory of self-influencer congruence and parasocial relationship hold significant implications for social media influencer marketing (Koay, Cheah and Goon 2023); (Chung and Cho, Parasocial relationship via reality TV and social media: Its implications for celebrity endorsement 2014); (Labrecque 2014); (Xiao, et al. 2021). When influencers present themselves in a manner that aligns with their followers' values and lifestyles, it fosters increased trust, intimacy, and familiarity, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of their marketing efforts.

This can ultimately enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns by fostering stronger connections between influencers and their followers. Research has consistently shown that when social media influencers present themselves in a way that aligns with their followers' values, lifestyles, and interests, it can increase the likelihood of forming a parasocial relationship (Xiao, et al. 2021); (Wang, et al. 2021); (Zogaj, Tscheulin and Olk 2021). This congruence can lead to increased trust, intimacy, and familiarity between the influencer and their followers, ultimately strengthening the parasocial relationship, we hypothesize as follows:

*H1 : Self-influencer congruence has a significant positive impact on parasocial relationship*

***Parasocial relationship and credibility***

When followers form a parasocial relationship with an influencer, they tend to perceive the influencer as more trustworthy and credible. Study by (Chung and Cho 2017) indicated that by leveraging social media to build parasocial relationships with consumers, celebrities can become even more effective brand endorsers. This is because parasocial relationships are built on a sense of intimacy and familiarity, which can increase the perceived similarity between the influencer and the follower. A study by (Yuan and Lou 2020) indicates that when celebrities are perceived as credible, they are more likely to establish strong connections with their audience. A study by (Chung and Cho 2014) found that parasocial relationships enhance endorsement effectiveness.

When viewers have a parasocial connection with a celebrity, they perceive the celebrity as more credible and trustworthy. This increased perception of credibility and trustworthiness makes viewers more likely to believe the celebrity's endorsements and consider purchasing the endorsed products. Influencers with high credibility are perceived as trustworthy and reliable, which can lead to increased brand awareness, positive brand associations, and improved consumer perception (Su, et al. 2021). Conversely, influencers with low credibility may be seen as untrustworthy or unreliable, which can negatively impact the effectiveness of endorsement. Credibility also plays a crucial role in fostering parasocial relationships. Studies has consistently shown that parasocial relationships positively influence credibility, we hypothesize as follows:

*H2 : Parasocial relationship has a significant positive impact on credibility.*

***Credibility and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM)***

The research conducted by (Reimer and Benkenstein 2018) compared the effectiveness of incentive programs for generating e-WOM from altruistic sources with those based on monetary rewards. Using a scenario-based experiment, the study aimed to assess the impact of incentives on eWOM generation and reader confidence. Message credibility refers to the extent to which internet users perceive reviews in a message as factual, credible, and truthful (Cheung and Thadani 2012). Online customers tend to trust reviews based on their perceived expertise and knowledge (Sussman and Siegal 2003). Consumers are expected to evaluate review credibility based on their interpretation of the message (Sweeney, Soutar and Mazzarol 2012). In social media contexts, e-WOM messages differ from messages with identifiable sources, as e-WOM messages are often authored by anonymous

individuals who provide limited details (Lim and Heide 2014); (Jensen, et al. 2013). This places the burden on consumers to assess message reliability independently of its source credibility (Jensen, et al. 2013). Source credibility refers to the perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and credibility of a source (Ohanian 1990). Source credibility (SC) is a key determinant of online reviewer confidence, as consumers frequently use cues to evaluate the credibility of e-WOM (Ballantine and Yeung 2015). Trust in the information provided largely determines consumers' satisfaction with social media platforms and their tendency to generate positive e-WOM (Ha, et al. 2012). Internet reviews are based on users' previous experiences with goods or services, we hypothesize as follows:

*H3 : Credibility mediates effect of self-influencer congruence on e-wom.*

***The sequential mediating model effects***

When parasocial identification is formed with a social media influencer, consumers tend to find the influencer credible. Simply put, any information provided by social media influencers tends to be perceived as authentic and reliable. Subsequently, consumers tend to purchase products advertised by highly credible social media influencers. Previous research has shown that credibility is an important determinant of purchase intention (Masuda, Han and Lee 2022). From previous research, we conclude that when consumers see a strong alignment between their own image and the image of the social media influencer they follow, they are more likely to develop parasocial identification with that influencer. This feeling of connection leads to an increased perception of the influencer's self-perceived trustworthiness, which in turn encourages consumers to be more willing to purchase products endorsed by the influencer. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H4 : The relationship between self-influencer congruence and e-wom is sequentially mediated by parasocial relationship and credibility*

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Instrumentation**

The measurement tools used in this study were adapted from previous research. Specifically, the scale for assessing self-influencer congruence was measured according to (Belanche, et al. 2021) we measured self-influencer congruence into 3 items: 1. The influencer congruence with my value; 2. The influencer matches my personality; and 3. I feel Identified with the influencer, while the scale for measuring parasocial relationship was derived from (Rungruangjit 2022) we measured parasocial relationship into 5 items: 1. You feel comfortable about the famous influencer words on Tiktok; 2. You want to have a cordial conversation with the famous influencer; 3. You can identify the personality of the famous influencer; 4. You like to talk about the famous influencer with other people; and 5. When something bad about the influencer appears in the media, You feel bad. Credibility were measured according from (McCroskey and Teven 1999) we measured credibility into 5 items: 1. I find this tiktok influencer expert in her/his domain; 2. I find this tiktok influencer efficient in her job; 3. I find the tiktok influencer trustworthy; 4. I find this tiktok influencer cares about her/his followers;

and 5. This tiktok influencer updates regularly her/his content. Next, e-WOM were assessed using a scale from (Farivar and Wang 2022) we measured electronic word of mouth into 4 items; 1. i would click “like” to some of the influencer postings; 2. I would share the beauty video postings with my friends; 3. I would pass along the beauty video postings to my contact on other social media sites; and 4. i would recommend the beauty video postings to my friends. Respondents indicated their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale, the answers ranged from point 1= strongly disagree to point 5= strongly agree. Demographic variables such as gender and age were controlled for due to their potential influence on electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) in social media influencer marketing, as noted in previous studies (Kumar, et al. 2022); (Radwan, et al. 2021); (Vrontis, et al. 2021).

### ***Sampling***

An online survey was created using Google Forms and distributed to our target respondents, who had to meet specific criteria. They needed to have an Instagram account, follow at least one social media influencer (SMI) on Instagram, and provide the name of one SMI they followed to reference in answering the questionnaire. The survey link was distributed via social media platforms, resulting in the collection of 170 usable responses. Of these respondents, 93 (55%) were female and 77 (45%) were male. Subsequently, the majority of participants (50.3%) fell within the age bracket of 26 to 35 years, with an additional (40.3%) age of 17 to 25 years, while the remaining respondents were either below 17 or above 35 years old. In terms of educational level, the highest proportion of respondents held Bachelor's degrees and college certificates (66.5%), followed by Master's or Doctorate degrees (11%), with high school certificates accounting for (20.9%) and other qualifications representing (1.6%). Regarding monthly income, a significant portion of respondents (43.5%) reported an average income ranging from Rp. 5,000,000 to 10,000,000, while (31.9%) reported earning below Rp. 5,000,000. The primary occupations reported by respondents included civil servant (22%), office worker (27.7%), and student (30.4%). In terms of social media usage, the majority of respondents indicated spending 1 to 2 hours on TikTok daily (47.1%), followed by 2 to 3 hours (20.4%), 31 to 60 minutes (17.8%), above 3 hours (10.5%), and below 31 minutes (4.2%).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This study examined the proposed hypotheses using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS v.4 software. PLS-SEM was selected for its effectiveness in examining links between latent variables and its suitability for theory development rather than theory confirmation (Sarstedt, Ringle and Hair 2021). The study aimed to explore the effect of self-influencer congruence on purchase intentions through parasocial relationships and credibility, which is exploratory in nature. PLS-SEM was chosen for three primary reasons: it offers superior flexibility in analyzing complex models involving mediators and moderators and it imposes fewer strict requirements regarding data assumptions such as sample size and normal distribution. Thus, PLS-SEM was the appropriate analytical tool for this investigation.

### ***Measurement model***

At the beginning of the study, we assessed common method bias by conducting a collinearity test to examine the VIF values for each indicator (Kock and Lynn 2012), and all VIF values were found to be below 3.3, indicating that common method bias was not a concern. Subsequently, we performed reliability, convergent validity assessments, and concluded with examination of discriminant validity. Result from Table 1 shown that Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt 2015); (Tavakol and Dennick 2011); (Sarstedt, Ringle and Hair 2021), indicating no reliability issues. Convergent validity was confirmed by factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) values, which were all above 0.5. Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criteria. Table 2 shows that each construct's square root of its AVE was higher than its maximum correlation with any other construct, and Table 2 also shown that the result of all Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values placed above the diagonal are below 0.9, aligning with the statement by (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt 2015) that the maximum acceptable value for HTMT is 0.90. These results demonstrate that discriminant validity was not an issue in this study.

### ***Structural model***

The study examined potential multicollinearity among the research variables by examining the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, and found no concerns to this study. The complete structural findings are shown in Table 3. Using bootstrapping with 5000 re-samples, the results indicated that self-influencer congruence significantly and positively influence parasocial relationships ( $\beta = 0.619$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thus supporting H1. Furthermore, parasocial relationships were found to positively influence credibility ( $\beta = 0.771$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H2. Credibility, in turn, positively influence electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) ( $\beta = 0.684$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming H3. Sequential mediating effects were also assessed, and the results presented in Table 4 supported H4, with bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effect (LB = 0.197, UB = 0.449) indicating that neither the lower (LB) nor upper (UB) straddled a value of zero.

**Table 1.** Measurement model statistics

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_C)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Self-influencer congruence	The influencer congruence with my value	0.868	0.869	0.920	0.792
	The influencer matches my personality	0.903			
	I feel Identified with the influencer	0.899			
Parasocial relationship	You feel comfortable about the famous influencer words on Tiktok	0.856	0.880	0.912	0.676
	You want to have a cordial conversation with the famous influencer	0.846			
	You can identify the personality of the famous influencer	0.845			
	You like to talk about the famous influencer with other people	0.743			
	When something bad about the influencer appears in the media, You feel bad	0.817			
Credibility	I find this tiktok influencer expert in her/his domain	0.865	0.875	0.909	0.667
	I find this tiktok influencer efficient in her job	0.850			
	I find the tiktok influencer trustworthy	0.799			
	I find this tiktok influencer cares about her/his followers	0.756			
	This tiktok influencer updates regularly her/his content	0.809			
e-WOM	i would click "like" to some of the influencer postings	0.841	0.893	0.926	0.757
	I would share the video postings with my friends	0.889			
	I would pass along the video postings to my contact on other social media sites	0.866			
	i would recommend the video postings to my friends	0.884			

Source(s): Author's own illustration

**Table 2.** Correlations and heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio Of correlations

Constructs	Self-Influencer_Congruence	Parasocial_Relationship	Credibility	e-WOM
Self-Influencer_Congruence	<i>0.890</i>	0.774	0.786	0.599
Parasocial_Relationship	0.684	<i>0.822</i>	0.872	0.653
Credibility	0.687	0.771	<i>0.817</i>	0.693
e-WOM	0.534	0.583	0.619	<i>0.870</i>

**Note(s):** Italicized values are correlations. Non-italicized values are heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) values

Source(s): Author's own illustration

**Table 3.** Structural model statistics

Relationships	CIB C 2.5 %	CIB C 97.5 %	Path coefficient	Standard deviation	T statistics ( O/STD EV )	P values	Outcome
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Influencer Marketing : Assessing The Effect of Self-Influencer Congruence, Parasocial Relationships, Credibility and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-Wom) on Social Media Tiktok

				(STD EV)			
<b>Credibility -&gt; e- WOM</b>	0.48 6	0.74 9	0.619	0.067	9.249	0.00 0	Accep ted
<b>Parasocial_Relat ionship -&gt; Credibility</b>	0.64 7	0.87 0	0.771	0.059	12.982	0.00 0	Accep ted
<b>Self- Influencer_Cong ruence -&gt; Parasocial_Relat ionship</b>	0.58 7	0.76 7	0.684	0.046	14.824	0.00 0	Accep ted

Source(s): Author's own illustration

**Table 4.** Mediating effect statistics

<b>Relationships</b>	<b>CIB C 2.5 %</b>	<b>CIB C 97.5 %</b>	<b>Indir ect Effec t</b>	<b>Stand ard deviati on (STD EV)</b>	<b>T statistics ( O/STD EV )</b>	<b>P valu es</b>	<b>Outco me</b>
<b>Self- influencer_Congr uence-&gt; Parasocial_Relati onship- &gt;Credibility-&gt;e- WOM</b>	0.19 7	0.44 9	0.326	0.065	5.038	0.00 0	Accept ed

Source(s): Author's own illustration

## Discussion

### *Theoretical implications*

This study discovered theoretical implications, offering that self-influencer congruence has a significant positive effect on parasocial relationship into the dynamics between Social Media Influencers (SMI)s. their followers on social media Tiktok and the resulting e-WOM. Through an in-depth exploration. The implications of our findings are enumerated as follows. This finding aligns with the similarity theory which states to individuals people who are similar themselves. Previous research has also demonstrated about how self-influencer congruence has a significant positive effect on parasocial relationship (Kwon and Kim 2020).

Secondly, it was discovered that parasocial relationship variable have a significant positive effect impact influence on credibility, how influencer suggesting that when consumers have developed strong parasocial relationships with the social media influencer. They are more likely to perceive the influencer that has credibility (Bi and Zhang 2022).

Thirdly, the credibility of social media influencer on Tiktok plays crucial part in affecting consumers to purchase the influencer's products. This is because the credibility of the influencer will affect the brands and products that they promote. Subsequently consumers are more likely to establish because electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) from consumers one to another consumer will increase in their intent to buy the products and promote the brands to one another. The findings comparable to those of (Koay, Cheah and Goon 2023). Who found that the attractiveness and credibility of social media influencer have a significant influencer on electronic word of mouth (e-WOM).

Finally, our study helps bridge of the gap between concerning the impact of credibility on electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Theoretically, influencer with strong credibility should be more inclined to get more attention through electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). This suggest that regardless of the level of self-influencer congruence between the consumer and the product, or between the influencer and the product, purchase decisions are not determined by the strength of parasocial relationships with social media influencers (SMI)s on social media Tiktok. Instead our study reveals that these self-influencer congruence hold a significant direct influence on electronic word of mouth (e-WOM).

#### ***Managerial implications***

The findings of this study can be utilized by companies to identify social media influencers on Tiktok that suitable for promote products and brands. Before engaging the followers on social media Tiktok, influencers to promote a product or a brand, companies or brand managers must ensure that the influencer are well-known in the perspective niche and have a strong credibility on their field, also their followers share comparable interest with the influencer on social media Tiktok. Furthermore companies must choose social media influencers who have a strong credibility and competence in building intimate relationships through parasocial relationships and self-influencer congruence with consumers. Additionally, companies must select social media that have a users and impact with influencers who adept at fostering interpersonal relationships with the consumers.

Moreover, social media influencers can improve their contact with consumers by responding to questions regarding the endorsed brands or products that influencers promote through their social media. (Reinikainen, et al. 2020). If consumers feel confident that the social media influencer actually understands their needs and the products or brand being advocated, their intent to purchase will increase.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study successfully demonstrated that the influencer on social media Tiktok of self-influencer congruence on electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is no straightforward, in reality, parasocial relationships and credibility sequentially mediate the relationship. In other words, self-influencer congruence alone is

insufficient to drive consumers to purchase the influencer products or brands that has been promote through their social media without having parasocial relationships and credibility. When a consumer's self-concept is compatible with an influencer's self image, it can motivare the consumer to form strong parasocial relationships with the influencer on social media Tiktok. This can result in consumers perceiving the influencers as highly credible, which in turn positively influences their needs because electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) to purchase products or brands promoted by the influencer on social media Tiktok.

It is important to note that our study has some limitations. Firstly, our study maybe not findings the generalizeable to the entire consumer population since the data were exclusively collected from user that only using social media Tiktok. It is recommended that future research acquire data from another user on social media not only on Tiktok and also our user only focused in Indonesia, so the future research can including users from other countries not only Indonesia. Another limitations on our study is that the cross-sectional nature of the data limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the variables examined. Lastly, our study did not differentiate between the different types of media influencers when it requested to provide the name of a social media influencer on their social media accounts as a reference to answer the questionnaire's question.

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