Impacts of Tiktok Influencer Attributes on Filipino Purchase Intentions in Social Media Influencer Marketing: Mediating Roles of Perceived Characterizations

Eunizer Aldrich A. Roño[1] and Jean Paolo G. Lacap[2]

[1]College of Business Administration – Polytechnic University of the Philippines – Sta. Mesa Campus
[2]City College of Angeles and Polytechnic University of the Philippines – Sta. Mesa Campus

Corresponding email: eaarono@iskolarngbayan.pup.edu.ph

Abstract. This study examined the mediating effect of the perceived characterizations, (trustworthiness and parasocial relationship) between TikTok influencer attributes (attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, and social attractiveness) and purchase intention. Also, the direct effects of TikTok influencer attributes (attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, and social attractiveness) toward perceived characterizations (trustworthiness and parasocial relationship) and the direct effect of perceived characterizations (trustworthiness and parasocial relationship) toward purchase intention were also explored. The approach used in this study was quantitative research and predictive-causal approach while the partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to estimate the relationships of the proposed model. The results showed that attitude homophily cannot be an indicator to determine the level of an influencer's trustworthiness, however, attitude homophily greatly impacts how influencers interact with their followers leading to a parasocial relationship. Moreover, physical attractiveness is a significant factor to be perceived as trustworthy but may not trigger a parasocial relationship between influencers and their followers. Further, social attractiveness is a significant attribute to be viewed by their followers as trustworthy and can be considered an important influencer attribute in establishing a parasocial relationship among followers. Also, the results revealed that trustworthiness plays a role in determining the purchase intention of a follower. In regard to parasocial relationship, a significant relationship with purchase intention was observed. Trustworthiness, as a perceived characterization, failed to be a mediator between TikTok influencer attributes (attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, and social attractiveness) and the follower's purchase intention. While parasocial relationship unsuccessfully mediated the connection between two TikTok influencer attributes (physical attractiveness and social attractiveness) and the follower's purchase intention. Surprisingly, parasocial relationship successfully mediated the relationship between the attitude homophily and purchase intention. The present study generally focused on active TikTok users residing in the Philippines' National Capital Region (NCR). Correspondingly, this study used the variables; attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, social attractiveness, trustworthiness, parasocial relationship (PSR), and purchase intention. Moreover, it was founded on the theory of persuasion to determine the relationship between influencer attributes and the followers' perceived

characterization leading to purchase intention. At last, the participants were active TikTok users, aged 18 and above, who swore to answer the survey honestly. This study will serve as a good source of insights for social media influencers, marketing professionals, social media managers, and individuals who aspire to be social media influencers. Moreover, this study will help them determine the attributes that are beneficial and must be exhibited by a social media influencer to attract and persuade followers to buy the endorsed products. Also, social media influencers may use the current study's findings to guide them formulate their marketing strategies and stand out from other influencers. This study contributes to the new point of view on the mediating effect of the perceived characterizations, (trustworthiness and parasocial relationship) between TikTok influencer attributes (attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, and social attractiveness) and purchase intention. A key theoretical contribution of this study establishes the importance of the study's findings supported the adapted theory of persuasion of Masuda et al. (2022), where the model proves that it can be used to determine the connection between influencer attributes, perceived characterization, and behavioral intention.

Keywords: *TikTok**, trustworthiness, parasocial relationship, attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, social attractiveness, purchase intention, Adapted theory of persuasion, PLS-SEM*

INTRODUCTION

The undeniable prominence of social media as a way for companies to communicate and promote their brands to customers is prevalent (Ahmad et al., 2016; Balakrishnan et al., 2014; Godey et al., 2016). As social media users increase, the proliferation of social media influencers does as well (Freberg et al., 2011). Social media influencers (SMIs) are online personalities with a massive number of followers across a single or different platform (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, or personal blogs) (Agrawal, 2016; Haenlein et al., 2020; Varsamis, 2018). Moreover, the rapid growth of social media influencers further increases their followers by creating user-generated content (e.g., product reviews, product usage descriptions, blogs, homemade advertising, and other consumer-initiated contributions) on their social media accounts, such as TikTok (Delbaere et al., 2021; Fader & Winer, 2012; Hudders et al., 2021).

In addition, social media influencers are using TikTok to effectively endorse products and use it as a marketing tool to create brand awareness toward specific consumers, this kind of marketing strategy is called social media influencer marketing (Gillin, 2007; Haenlein et al., 2020; Kay et al., 2020). In response to social media influencer marketing, influencer attributes affect how audiences perceive the influencer's character. This perceived characterization of influencers can be used to persuade audiences to trigger purchase intention.

Further, parasocial relationship (PSR) is a phenomenon in which people develop closeness toward media personalities through repeated exposure (Alperstein, 1991; Auter, 1992; Stephens et al., 1996) and forms a one-sided relationship (Närvänen et al., 2020). In connection to social media, the parasocial relationship is also observed between social media

influencers and their followers (Aw & Chuah, 2021; Cheung et al., 2022; Reinikainen et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019; Yuan & Lou, 2020).

Additionally, social media disrupts the traditional one-sided communication between the influencers and the followers by communicating through comments and responses. However, this two-way communication can still be considered a parasocial relationship considering that the form of interaction is limited compared to a real social relationship (Belanche et al., 2020). Through PSR, followers can be easily persuaded by influencers. This persuasion process could be explained through the use of the adapted theory of persuasion (Masuda et al., 2022).

Prior studies have used parasocial relationship (PSR) as a determinant of followers' purchase intention (Augustine, 2019; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Ki & Kim, 2019; Lim et al., 2017; Lou & Kim, 2019; Woodroof et al., 2020) so as trustworthiness (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Reichelt et al., 2014; Schouten et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). However, in the literature mentioned, it can be observed that the utilization of PSR and trustworthiness as an effective mediator still needs further investigation.

Therefore, this study will focus on the importance of parasocial relationship as a mediator between social media influencer attributes (attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, and social attractiveness) and the purchase intention of its followers. In adjacent to parasocial relationship, trustworthiness will be compared to determine which perceived characterization is a significant mediator. Also, this study will aim to provide theoretical contributions through the adapted theory of persuasion.

Further, literature regarding parasocial relationships in social media influencer marketing is scarce in the Philippine context. Moreover, there is no literature yet in the Philippine setting where TikTok is used to conduct research regarding the significance of the parasocial relationship between social media influencer attributes and its followers' purchase intention. Hence, the present study was conducted to address these gaps in literature.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is anchored in the theory of persuasion which determines the relationship between influencer attributes, perceived characterization, and behavioral intention. According to Masuda et al., (2022), the adapted theory of persuasion, from the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), is an accepted model for social media influencers. Also, it will explain how the relationship between influencer attributes and the followers' perceived characterization will lead to purchase intention. Figure 1 presents the framework for the adapted theory of persuasion.
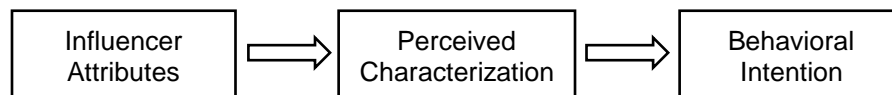
Figure 1. *Adapted Theory of Persuasion Framework (Masuda et al., 2022)*

Influencer Attributes, Perceived characterization, and TikTok

TikTok's connection to social media influencer attributes and perceived characterization is distinguishable from prior studies. For instance, the study of Xu et al. (2021) focused on Chinese TikTok vloggers in the health and sustainable sector and their respondents are Chinese Millennial TikTok users. The results showed that health-related homophily was related to greater audience participation and parasocial interaction (PSI), sequentially, was related to higher purchase intention of sustainable food. Moreover, they also found out that there are positive indirect effects of health-related homophily on purchase intention through audience participation. Additionally, PSI decreases as the advertising recognition increases, however, PSI increases as the product-vlogger congruence increases.

While Yang and Ha (2021) explored how young Chinese TikTok users' purchase intentions are affected by social media influencers and TikTok. Through a national online survey among college students in China, the results revealed that entertainment gratification is the primary motivation for their TikTok consumption. Moreover, higher purchase intention for the recommended products was seen to users with socialization gratification motives, they also had high persuasion knowledge and high parasocial relationships with the influencer.

Attitude Homophily

The idea that people with similar characteristics tend to be attracted to each other is called homophily. This similarity builds a connection and may be based on their age, class, ethnicity, attitude, values, gender, and/or organizational roles (Festinger, 1957; Rubinstein-Avila & Sartori, 2018). Particularly, similarity in attitude is connected to interpersonal liking (Byrne, 1961). In psychology, attitude is a significant factor used to guide and anticipate behavior (Fazio, 1990). Through similarities in attitude, homophily can be achieved (Dellande et al., 2004). Combined, attitude homophily is created when a person perceives another person as similar to theirs through attitudes, beliefs, or values (Andersen & Todd de Mancillas, 1978).

Physical Attractiveness

People judge others in a biased manner through their physical traits, for example, appearance (Gangestad & Scheyd, 2005). Physical traits may include but are not limited to, face, weight, height, muscularity, eye shapes, eye color, hair color and length, and skin tone (Berry, 2016; Hersch, 2011; Jacobi, & Cash,1994). Moreover, an individual's physical appearance receives great attention from the general population, which determines value, which may lead to physical attractiveness (Parker, 2000).

Social Attractiveness

A speaker that is considered socially attractive is perceived by others as a charming person (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Social attractiveness is the degree to which a person has the potential to influence the state of mind of other people and be socially accepted by society (Serman & Sims, 2020). In the context of social media, social attractiveness and physical attractiveness must be analyzed separately (Rubin & Perse, 1987; Rubin & Step, 2000).

Trustworthiness

The source credibility theory emphasized the elements of source credibility on perceived trust in influencer marketing. These elements are expertise, similarity, attractiveness, and trustworthiness (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Munnukka et al., 2016; Teng et al., 2014). In particular, trustworthiness plays a critical role in social media influencer marketing (Masuda et al., 2022). Bunnett (2020) defined trustworthiness as the degree to which the trustworthy person displays the ability and integrity to complete an action that is beneficial to others or the trustor.

Parasocial Relationship (PSR)

A parasocial relationship (PSR) is a phenomenon where a user perceives the performer as a familiar conversational partner. Before a PSR is formed, a parasocial interaction (PSI) immediately occurs when a person is exposed to the performer through traditional media (television, radio, and movies; Horton & Wohl, 1956). According to the theory of parasocial interaction (PSI), the spectator creates an illusion of intimacy towards the performer and takes it as a real interpersonal relationship (Dibble et al., 2016; Horton & Wohl, 1956). Kelman (1958) also added that the relationship formed by the spectator toward the performer is self-established or may also be unconsciously accepted.

Hypotheses Development

Influencer Attributes and Perceived Characterizations

Prior studies have shown the connection between attitude homophily and trustworthiness. Housholder and LaMarre's (2014) review of related literature affirms that attitude homophily can influence one's perception of trustworthiness. While Winter and Kataria (2020) studied the existence of homophily concerning trustworthiness. They revealed the connection between homophily and trustworthiness using a simple model of Bayesian learning in trust games. In addition, Chih et al. (2020) applied the cognition-affection-behavior (CAB) model in their study and it showed that homophily has a significant and positive effect on the strength and source trustworthiness. Thus, it is proposed that,

H1a. Attitude homophily significantly and directly influences trustworthiness.

Furthermore, studies have shown mixed results between attitude homophily and parasocial relationship (PSR), and its antecedent, parasocial interaction (PSI). Schmid and Klimmt

(2011) used attitude and value homophily to explore the parasocial relationships (PSR) developed in different cultures between Harry Potter fans and the fictional character, Harry Potter. However, results showed that social attraction is the most important determinant of PSRs with Harry Potter, while homophily (attitude and value) ranked lowest.

In contrast, Turner (1993) reported that attitude homophily is a strong predictor of parasocial interaction in a study between three groups of television performers. Concurrently, Powell et al. (2012) measured attitude homophily using a drinking-buddy scale and was found to predict the ratings of PSR perception among politicians. Apparently, a further evaluation must be investigated into the relationship between attitude homophily and PSR. Therefore, it is proposed that,

H1b. Attitude homophily significantly and directly influences PSR.

As discussed, an influencer's physical attractiveness is an important attribute in increasing the number of their followers. While physical attractiveness alone failed to influence consumers' purchase intention, however, physical attractiveness associated with trustworthiness can lead to different results. For instance, Onu et al. (2019) used the physical attractiveness of celebrities alongside trustworthiness to determine its effect on consumers' purchase intention. They concluded that both celebrity's physical attractiveness and trustworthiness positively and significantly affect consumers' purchase intention of selected telecommunication companies in Nigeria. Also, Chekima et al. (2020) investigated the use of social media influencers' attractiveness and trustworthiness in advertising effectiveness (purchase intention) in Malaysia. The results showed that attractiveness and trustworthiness demonstrated a positive relationship toward purchase intention of a cosmetic product. Hence, it is hypothesized that,

H2a. Physical attractiveness significantly and directly influences trustworthiness.

Further, the relevance of physical attractiveness of social media influencers is also important in building parasocial relationships (PSRs) among their followers. To cite, Su et al. (2021) unveiled that the physical attractiveness of social media influencers significantly affects the parasocial relationship between their followers. While Sokolova and Perez (2021) used the physical attractiveness of YouTube fitness influencers to determine their effect on followers. The results showed that attractiveness has a strong effect on PSR prediction. Accordingly, it is proposed that,

H2b. Physical attractiveness significantly and directly influences PSR.

Several studies have shown that social attractiveness is related to trustworthiness. In the study by Toma (2014) on personal profiles on social network sites, they found that social attractiveness was a predominant cue influencing Facebook users' perceived trustworthiness. Whereas the study of Lee (2010) in anthropomorphic speaker interfaces revealed that social attractiveness actively encourages users' social responses to computers, indicating a higher level of trustworthiness. Hence, it is proposed that,

H3a. Social attractiveness significantly and directly influences trustworthiness.

On top of that, prior studies linked social attractiveness and parasocial relationship (PSR). Sokolova and Kefi (2019) published that social attractiveness was positively related to parasocial interaction (PSI) on four fashion bloggers on Instagram and YouTube. They added that the influence was rejected if the respondent was part of Generation Z (born after 1995). In an online survey conducted by Lee and Watkins (2016), they found that the social attractiveness of social media fashion bloggers positively affected the PSR of female respondents. Thus, it is proposed that,

H3b. Social attractiveness significantly and directly influences PSR.

Perceived Characterizations and Purchase intention

In line with social media influencer marketing, studies have shown the relevance of trustworthiness and purchase intention. Mention, Wiedmann & von Mettenheim (2021) conducted an online survey evaluating the profiles of influencers using three influencer requirements (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness). The results revealed that the most important influencer requirement that has an impact on followers' purchase intention is trustworthiness, followed by attractiveness; remarkably, the significance of expertise is virtually zero.

In addition, Lou and Kim's (2019) study showed that there is a positive relationship between influencers' trustworthiness and perceived PSR among adolescent followers (aged 10–19 years) and their favorite influencers, which was successively associated with purchase intention. Furthermore, trustworthiness is the most important electronic word of mouth (eWOM) credibility dimension which provides helpful product information that is not available to manufacturer-controlled sources (Reichelt et al., 2013) and eWOM can trigger purchase intention to consumers (Plummer, 2007). Therefore, it is hypothesized that,

H4. Trustworthiness significantly and directly influences purchase intention.

Numerous studies have shown the importance and connection of parasocial relationship (PSR) with social media followers' purchase intention (Chung & Cho, 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lee & Watkins, 2016; McCormick, 2016). Bi and Zhang (2022) revealed that influencer credibility mediates PSR and purchase intention. The connection between the influencers' credibility and PSR leading to purchase intention depends on whether the individual has low or high self-esteem. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to purchase the endorsed products if they have a stronger PSR with the influencers. The effect is the opposite if the individual has high self-esteem.

This is also true of the findings of Aw et al. (2022), who uncovered that content attributes (i.e., prestige and expertise) and interaction strategies (i.e., interactivity and self-disclosure) positively influence parasocial relationships, and in turn, lead to high purchase intention. Whereas Fazli-Salehi et al. (2022) presented that both channel interactivity and vloggers' self-disclosure displayed a positive impact on consumers' parasocial interaction with

vloggers, which eventually led to followers' purchase intention toward the suggested products and eagerness to pay a premium price for extra services. Furthermore, social network service (SNS) users' parasocial relationships with celebrities are positively related. This parasocial relationship between SNS users and celebrities leads to consumers' purchase intention (Kim et al., 2015). Thus, it is hypothesized that parasocial relationship (PSR) significantly and directly influences purchase intention.

H5. PSR significantly and directly influences purchase intention.

Mediating Role of Trustworthiness

As mentioned, the connection of trustworthiness between attitude homophily (Chih et al., 2020; Housholder & LaMarre, 2014; Winter & Kataria, 2020) is evident, so in to purchase intention (Lou & Kim, 2019; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020). In addition, Saima and Khan (2020) revealed how the role of credibility (trustworthiness) mediates the credibility of influencers as well as significant indirect effects on consumers' purchase intention. Hence, it is proposed that,

H6a. Trustworthiness mediates the significant relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention.

Moreover, the relevance of trustworthiness and physical attractiveness in inducing followers' purchase intention is also apparent (Chekima et al., 2020; Onu et al., 2019). Also, trustworthiness and physical attractiveness are always associated with each other through the source credibility model (Ohanian, 1990). Therefore, it is safe to hypothesize that,

H6b. Trustworthiness mediates the significant relationship between physical attractiveness and purchase intention.

On top of that, it is also mentioned the relationship between trustworthiness and social attractiveness (Lee, 2010; Toma, 2014). Myers et al. (2018) also used trustworthiness and social attraction as a derivative of students' impressions of their instructors' credibility, attraction, and homophily. Despite the literature mentioned, there is still scarcity regarding the connection of trustworthiness and social attractiveness leading to consumers' purchase intention. To further investigate this matter, it is proposed that,

H6c. Trustworthiness mediates the significant relationship between social attractiveness and purchase intention.

Mediating Role of Parasocial relationship (PSR)

Manaf (2020) findings suggest that parasocial interaction partially mediates the relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intentions. Moreover, Wen (2017) discovered that parasocial interaction mediates the relationship between exposure to celebrities and fans' attitudes toward cosmetic plastic surgery among Singaporean youths. Although the literature cited is about parasocial interaction (PSI), it can be still considered because PSI is an antecedent of parasocial relationship (PSR). Hence, it is hypothesized that,

> **H7a.** PSR mediates the significant relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention.

Further, the connection between physical attractiveness and parasocial relationship (PSR) has been established (Sokolova & Perez, 2021; Su et al., 2021). Moreover, the application of PSR as an effective mediator leading to purchase intention has also been used by earlier studies (Chung & Cho, 2017; Liu et al., 2019). Thus, it is hypothesized that,

> **H7b.** PSR mediates the significant relationship between physical attractiveness and purchase intention.

Furthermore, the prevailing evidence of how social attractiveness and parasocial relationship (PSR) are related to purchase intention has also been presented (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Liu et. al (2019) demonstrated the effectiveness of parasocial interaction as a mediator between video bloggers (vloggers) social attractiveness and their audience. Therefore, it is hypothesized that,

> **H7c.** PSR mediates the significant relationship between social attractiveness and purchase intention.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 2 presents the proposed conceptual framework on the mediating role of the perceived characterization (trustworthiness and parasocial relationship) between influencer attributes (attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, and social attractiveness) and behavioral intention (purchase intention). Also, the conceptual framework will show the suggested direct relationship between influencer attributes and the perceived characterization of its followers. While the direct relationship of the follower's perceived characterization to influencers leading to purchase intention is also presented.
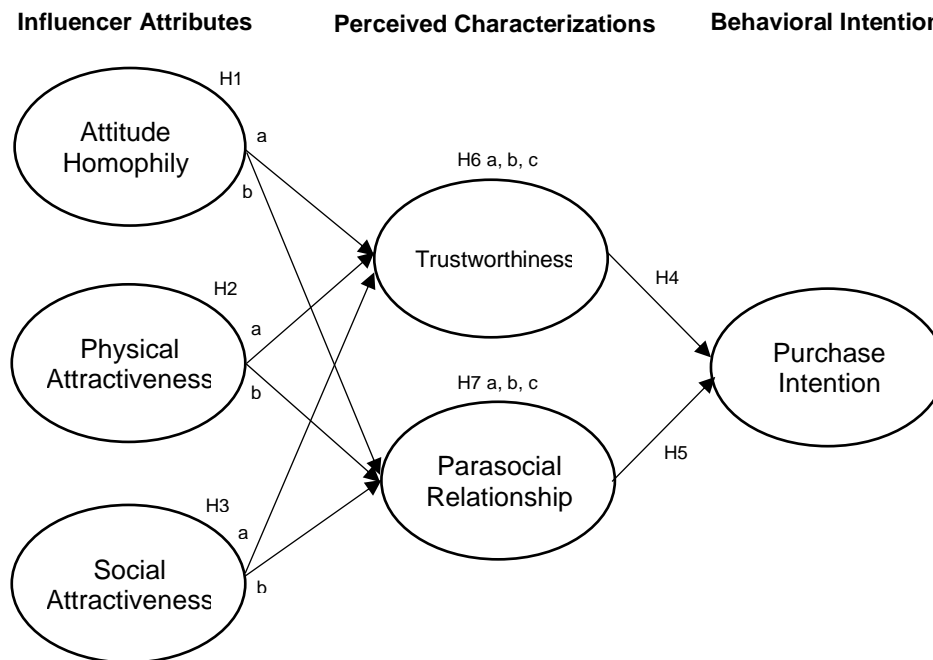
Figure 2. *Conceptual Framework*

METHODS

Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Technique

The respondents of the current study are selected by applying the purposive sampling technique. To gauge the sufficiency of the sample size, partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used. The gathering of data was conducted through online surveys that started in September 2022 and ended in December 2022.

Description of Respondents

The researcher considered all active Filipino TikTok users, of legal age, within the National Capital Region (NCR) that is subscribed to at least one TikTok influencer.

Research Instrument

This study utilized a self-administered online survey questionnaire generated through a Google form. It consists of four parts—declaration of consent, screening questions, demographic factors, and the constructs of the study. Screening questions were asked at the beginning of the survey to verify if they are of legal age, residing in the National Capital Region (NCR), an active TikTok user, and subscribed to at least one TikTok influencer.

Moreover, the demographic characteristics included the respondent's age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, occupation, location, and TikTok average time spent. On the other hand, questions regarding the constructs of the study were adopted from prior studies, which consisted of attitude homophily (Lou & Kim, 2019), physical attractiveness (Duran & Kelly, 1988), social attractiveness (Duran & Kelly, 1988), trustworthiness (Lou & Kim, 2019), parasocial relationship (PSR) (Rubin & Perse, 1987), and purchase intention (Rubin & Perse, 1987). All items in the five constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale where 5 means strongly agree and 1, strongly disagree.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher collated, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted the responses of the respondents. The survey questionnaires were distributed among social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, etc.,).

Statistical Treatment of Data

A predictive-causal research design was used in the present study to assess the interrelationships of the six constructs— attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, social attractiveness, trustworthiness, parasocial relationship (PSR), and purchase intention. To estimate the relationships of the proposed model with latent variables, the partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using WarpPLS 7.0 software was applied. Hair et al. (2014) described PLS-SEM as a statistical test that follows multi-stages. Additionally, the present study will apply mediation analysis to quantify how mediator/s absorb the effects of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable in PLS-SEM.

RESULTS

As part of the evaluation of the measurement model, the internal consistency of the items for each construct was measured, also known as the reliability test. These reliability tests allow for the evaluation of the research instrument's quality. A trustworthy research tool provides measurements or items for each latent construct that is equally acknowledged by all participants (Kock, 2017). According to Kock (2014), the composite reliability (CR) coefficient must be at least 0.70 in order to declare the latent construct to be reliable. Based on the results in Table 1, attitude homophily (CR = 0.852), physical attractiveness (CR = 0.747), social attractiveness (CR = 0.798), trustworthiness (CR = 0.767), parasocial relationship (CR = 0.783), and purchase intention (CR = 0.918) are reliable.

Additionally, convergent validity and discriminant validity were used to gauge the validity of the latent constructs. Convergent validity is a measure of the totality of features and characteristics of a measurement instrument. If the questions associated with each latent construct are understood by the respondents in the same way as they were intended by the designer/s of the question statements, then it indicates that convergent validity is evident in the measurement instrument (Kock, 2017).

For convergent validity, factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) were measured. Where the AVE of each construct must be 0.50 to claim that discriminant validity exists among variables. Moreover, each factor loading must be 0.50 and be significant ($p < 0.05$) (Amora, 2021; Kock, 2014). When each item's loading is less than 0.50, the aforementioned factor must be removed because it is deemed to be an offending item (Kock, 2022).

As seen in Table 1, PA3, PA4 of physical attractiveness variable, SA1 of social attractiveness, and TR1 of trustworthiness were omitted due to low factor loadings. After deleting the offending items, the results showed that attitude homophily (AVE = 0.592), physical attractiveness (AVE = 0.596), social attractiveness (AVE = 0.569), trustworthiness (AVE = 0.622), parasocial relationship (AVE = 0.511), and purchase intention (AVE = 0.849) passed the requirements for convergent validity.

Table 1. *Convergent Validity and Reliability Measures*

Construct	Item	Factor loading	Average variance extracted	Composite reliability
Attitude homophily			0.592	0.852
	AH1	0.786		
	AH2	0.808		
	AH3	0.680		
	AH4	0.795		
Physical attractiveness			0.596	0.747
	PA1	0.772		
	PA2	0.772		
	PA3	D		
	PA4	D		
Social attractiveness			0.569	0.798
	SA1	D		
	SA2	0.776		
	SA3	0.719		
	SA4	0.766		
Trustworthiness			0.622	0.767
	TR1	D		
	TR2	0.789		
	TR3	0.789		
Parasocial relationship			0.511	0.783
	PSR1			
	PSR2	0.531		
	PSR3	0.576		
	PSR4	0.529		
	PSR5	0.533		
	PSR6	0.640		
	PSR7	0.537		

PSR8	0.575		
PSR9	0.532		
PSR10	0.531		
Purchase intention		0.849	0.918
PI1	0.921		
PI2	0.921		

Note: *All factor loadings are significant (p < 0.001).*

To assess the discriminant validity, the heterotrait-monotrait correlations (HTMT) were calculated. Discriminant validity is evident when the items or measures of each latent construct have a clear meaning and respondents take it as understandable (Kock, 2017). According to Henseler et al. (2015), the threshold for HTMT ratios is 0.90. Based on the findings in Table 2, all latent constructs loaded HTMT below 0.90, therefore, discriminant validity is established.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity of the Latent Constructs

	AH	PA	SA	TR	PSR	PI
AH						
PA	0.298					
SA	0.436	0.349				
TR	0.155	0.263	0.355			
PSR	0.306	0.225	0.272	0.389		
PI	0.245	0.125	0.065	0.188	0.517	

Note: *AH – attitude homophily, PA – physical attractiveness, SA – social attractiveness, TR – trustworthiness, PSR – parasocial relationship, PI – purchase intention.*

Evaluation of the Structural Model

Figure 3 displays the structural model together with parameter estimates, while Table 3 summarizes the findings of the hypothesis testing. Analysis of the data revealed that attitude homophily has no significant effect on trustworthiness (β = 0.043; p = 0.207). On the other hand, attitude homophily was found to be significantly related to parasocial relationship (β = 0.173; p < 0.001), with a small effect size (f2 = 0.038). Thus, H1a is not supported, while H1b is supported.

It was also found that physical attractiveness has a significant and negative influence on trustworthiness (β = -0.092; p = 0.041), with a small effect size (f2 = 0.041). Whereas physical attractiveness was found to have no significant effect on parasocial relationship (β = -0.052; p = 0.163). Therefore, H2a is supported while H2b is not.

Furthermore, the findings showed that social attractiveness is significant and positively related to trustworthiness (β = 0.208; p < 0.001; f2 = 0.042) and parasocial relationship (β = 0.131; p = 0.006; f2 = 0.026) with small effect sizes. Hence, H3a and H3b are both supported.

In terms of the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention, the results revealed that these two variables are significantly and positively related (β = 0.141; p = 0.004)

with a small effect size (f^2 = 0.033). Further, parasocial relationship was likewise found to have a significant and positive effect on purchase intention (β = 0.391; p < 0.001) with a medium effect size (f^2 = 0.166). Therefore, H4 and H5 are both supported.
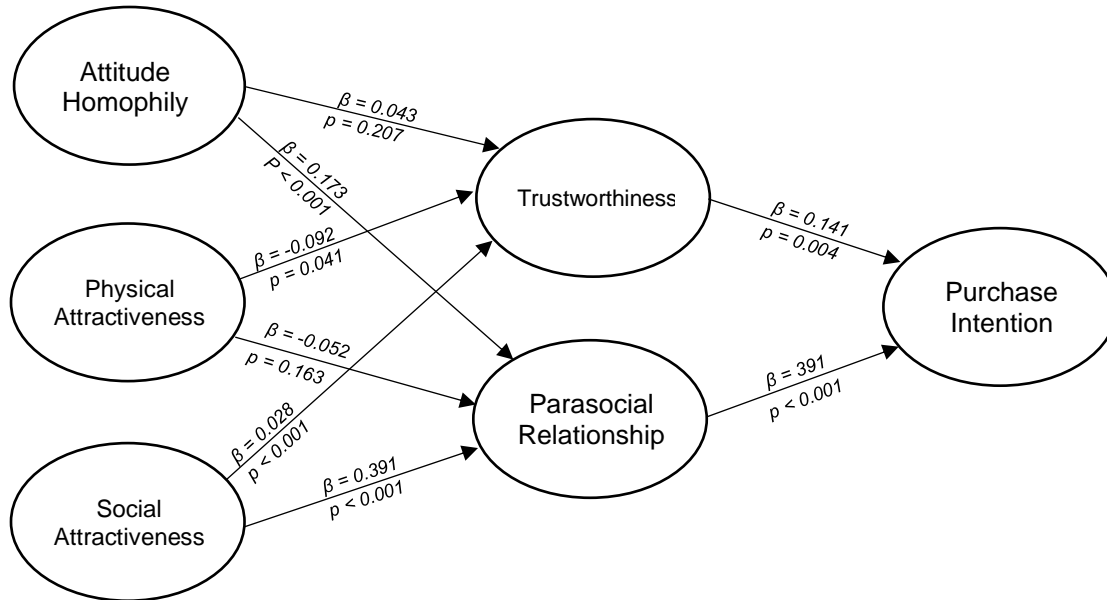

Figure 3. *The Study's Structural Model*

Mediation analysis was further conducted to measure the indirect effects of trustworthiness and parasocial relationships of the hypothesized direct relationships. The results revealed that trustworthiness has no mediating effect (β = 0.006; p = 0.436) between attitude homophily and purchase intention. Also, trustworthiness shows no mediating effect on physical attractiveness and purchase intention (β = -0.013; p = 0.366). This is also the case with social attractiveness, where trustworthiness does not affect the relationship between social attractiveness and purchase intention (β = 0.029; p = 0.218). Thus, H6a, H6b, and H6c are not supported.

Comparatively, the results also showed that parasocial relationship has no mediating effect between physical attractiveness and purchase intention (β = -0.020; p = 0.294). While the mediating effect of parasocial relationship between social attractiveness and purchase intention (β = 0.050; p = 0.086) is also not supported. Notably, the link between attitude homophily and purchase intention where parasocial relationship showed a mediating effect (β = 0.068; p = 0.035) with a small effect size (f2 = 0.013). Thus, H7a is supported while H7b, and H7c is not.

Table 3. *Direct and Mediating Effects*

Hypothesis	Path coefficient	p-value	Standard error	Effect size	Decision
Direct effects					
H1a. AH → TR	0.043	0.207	0.053	0.003	NS
H1b. AH → PSR	0.173	<0.001	0.052	0.038	S
H2a. PA → TR	-0.092	0.041	0.053	0.041	S
H2b. PA → PSR	-0.052	0.163	0.053	0.005	NS
H3a. SA → TR	0.208	<0.001	0.052	0.042	S
H3b. SA → PSR	0.131	0.006	0.052	0.026	S
H4. TR → PI	0.141	0.004	0.052	0.033	S
H5. PSR → PI	0.391	<0.001	0.050	0.166	S
Mediating effects					
H6a. AH → TR → PI	0.006	0.436	0.038	0.001	NS
H6b. PA → TR → PI	-0.013	0.366	0.038	0.000	NS
H6c. SA → TR → PI	0.029	0.218	0.038	0.001	NS
H7a. AH → PSR → PI	0.068	0.035	0.037	0.013	S
H7b. PA → PSR → PI	-0.020	0.294	0.038	0.001	NS
H7c. SA → PSR → PI	0.050	0.086	0.037	0.002	NS

Note: *S – significant, NS – not significant, AH – attitude homophily, PA – physical attractiveness, SA – social attractiveness, TR – trustworthiness, PSR – parasocial relationship, PI – purchase intention. Effect sizes interpretation (according to Cohen, 1988): 0.02 – small; 0.15 – medium; 0.35 – large.*

DISCUSSION

Influencer Attributes and Perceived Characterizations

Analysis of the result revealed that an influencer's attitude homophily has a negative influence on trustworthiness. The results signify that an influencer's attitude homophily has no connection to viewers' perceived trustworthiness toward influencers. Also, viewers do not see influencers as trustworthy even if they have similar characteristics. According to Dumas and Stough (2022), consumers will be significantly less likely to trust an influencer that advertises products that are not fit for them. Although prior studies have connected the positive relationship between attitude homophily and trustworthiness (Chih et al., 2020; Housholder & LaMarre's, 2014; Winter & Kataria, 2020), the insignificant relationship between attitude homophily and trustworthiness of this study implies that the influencer's similarities with their followers do not equate that their followers will view them as trustworthy. Hence, the result illustrates that attitude homophily cannot be an indicator to determine the level of an influencer's trustworthiness.

In contrast, the result between attitude homophily and parasocial relationship showed that there is a positive influence. The result indicates that there is a connection between influencers' attitude similarities and their online relationship with their followers. Turner (1993) supported this result, stating that attitude homophily is a strong predictor of parasocial interaction, a precursor of parasocial relationships. Moreover, Sokolova and Kefi (2019) stated that influencers that share attitude homophily with their followers are perceived as

more authentic. They also emphasized that attitude homophily is a significant factor to persuade followers, creating shared values, and forming a parasocial relationship. Therefore, attitude homophily greatly impacts how influencers interact with their followers leading to a parasocial relationship.

Further, the results also uncovered that there is a significant relationship between physical attractiveness and trustworthiness. The result suggests that an influencer's physical attractiveness toward their followers affects their image to be trustworthy. Also, it supports the idea that physical attractiveness and trustworthiness may cause advertising effectiveness (Chekima et al., 2020). Moreover, the impact of followers' perceived trust, caused by the influencer's physical characteristics, may also lead to a greater number of followers (Kim & Kim, 2022). Thus, physical attractiveness is a significant factor to be perceived as trustworthy.

However, the results revealed that physical attractiveness did not significantly affect parasocial relationship. The lack of connection between physical attractiveness and parasocial relationship connotes that physical trait do not affect the creation of online relationships among their followers. Additionally, the current study's result contradicts prior studies' findings (Sokolova & Perez, 2021; Su et al., 2021). Yet, the findings of C et al. (2023) showed the insignificant effect of an influencer's physical attractiveness in forming a parasocial interaction among followers. Therefore, physical attractiveness may not trigger a parasocial relationship between influencers and their followers.

Furthermore, the findings also validated the significance of social attractiveness concerning trustworthiness. It is inferred that the link between social attractiveness and trustworthiness proves that influencers are perceived by their followers as socially charming (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). As reported by Serman and Sims (2020), socially attractive persons may influence the thinking and behavior of other individuals. Moreover, Toma (2014) supported the idea that social attractiveness can lead to influence followers' perceived trust. Hence, social attractiveness is a significant attribute to be viewed by their followers as trustworthy.

On top of that, the positive influence of social attractiveness on the parasocial relationship was also verified in the findings. Presumably, a socially attractive influencer may cause the manifestation of a pseudo-relationship among followers. From the follower's perspective, this manifestation will make them view the influencers as close companions. Additionally, prior studies have strengthened the significant findings between social attractiveness and parasocial relationship (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). With that remark, social attractiveness can be considered an important influencer attribute in establishing a parasocial relationship among followers.

Perceived Characterizations and Purchase Intention

Correspondingly, the findings also accepted the positive relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention. Supposedly, if an influencer is perceived as trustworthy, then the idea of purchasing the product endorsed by the influencer will be triggered. Wiedmann and von Mettenheim (2020) state that trustworthiness is the most significant influencer attribute that impacts followers' purchase intention. This is also the case with Lou and Kim (2019), where

influencers' trustworthiness was successively related to followers' purchase intention. Thereby, it is safe to say that trustworthiness plays a role in determining the purchase intention of a follower.

In regard to parasocial relationship, the findings revealed a significant relationship with purchase intention. Apparently, if a parasocial relationship is formed between the influencer and the follower, then the purpose of buying a product may happen. Also, the connection and influence of parasocial relationship initiating followers' purchase intention have been accepted by numerous studies (Chung & Cho, 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lee & Watkins, 2016; McCormick, 2016). By that means, the development of parasocial relationship between an influencer and a follower may open the possibility of a purchase intention.

Mediating Role of Trustworthiness

In this section, the mediating role of trustworthiness will be discussed. The results showed that the mediating effect of trustworthiness has no significant effect between attitude homophily and purchase intention. The lack of interdependence implies that the follower's perceived trust has no effect between the influencers' attitude similarities and the follower's intention to buy products endorsed by the social media influencer. Moreover, the findings of Masuda et al. (2022) supported that trustworthiness has no significant effect on followers' purchase intention. In consequence, the role of trustworthiness as a mediator between attitude homophily and purchase intention is insignificant.

Further, trustworthiness also failed to mediate the connection between physical attractiveness and purchase intention. Implicitly, the findings suggest that a perceived trustworthy social media influencer fails to intervene between the influencer's physical attractiveness and the follower's willingness to purchase endorsed products. Also, even if physical attractiveness and trustworthiness are part of the source credibility model (Ohanian, 1990), trustworthiness still did not mediate the relationship between physical attractiveness and purchase intention. Thus, the mediating role of trustworthiness is not sufficient to amplify the influencer's physical attractiveness to induce followers' purchase intention.

Similarly, trustworthiness also falls short of linking the relationship between social attractiveness and purchase intention. The result signifies that trustworthiness fails to interfere with the relationship between a socially attractive influencer and the desire of a follower to purchase an endorsed product. According to the literature review of the current study, there are studies that established the importance of trustworthiness toward social attractiveness (Lee, 2010; Toma, 2014), however, there is still a scarcity regarding the mediating role of trustworthiness between social attractiveness and purchase intention. Therefore, the findings add to the evidence that the role of trustworthiness as a mediator between social attractiveness and purchase intention is insignificant.

Mediating Role of Parasocial Relationship (PSR)

In this section, the mediating role of parasocial relationship (PSR) will be scrutinized. Surprisingly, the findings revealed that parasocial relationship (PSR) has a notable effect

between attitude homophily and purchase intention. The connection implies that the follower's perceived mutual understanding with the influencer has an effect between the influencer's attitude similarities and the follower's intention to buy products endorsed by the social media influencer. The findings of the current study aligned with the results of Manaf (2020), revealing that parasocial interaction, a prerequisite of parasocial relationship, partially mediates the connection between attitude homophily and purchase intention. Hence, the mediating role of parasocial relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention can be considered significant.

In contrast, parasocial relationship failed to mediate the connection between physical attractiveness and purchase intention. Inherently, the findings suggest that an existing one-sided relationship does not intervene between the influencer's physical attractiveness and the follower's willingness to purchase products approved by an influencer. Moreover, the current study contradicts the findings of previous studies showing that parasocial relationship mediates the connection between physical attractiveness and purchase intention (Chung & Cho, 2017; Liu et al, 2019; Sokolova & Perez, 2021; Su et al., 2021). Thus, parasocial relationship unsuccessfully mediates the relationship between physical attractiveness and purchase intention.

Additionally, parasocial relationship is also an ineffective mediator between social attractiveness and purchase intention. The finding expresses that the follower's psychological relationship toward the influencer does not intercede with the relationship between a socially attractive influencer and the desire of a follower to purchase an endorsed product. Besides, the current study contradicts the findings of previous studies showing that parasocial relationship mediates the connection between social attractiveness and purchase intention (Liu et al., 2019; Lee & Watkins, 2016; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). With that, parasocial relationship failed to be a mediator between the relationship of social attractiveness and purchase intention.

Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Research Directions

The present study highlights the importance of TikTok influencers' physical attractiveness and social attractiveness to form trustworthiness. To gain the trust of their followers, social media influencers should focus on improving their attributes, such as their physical attractiveness and social attractiveness. The present study affirms that the influencer's physical attractiveness can be an asset to be viewed by their followers as a trustworthy person. While social attractiveness can also leverage their presence in TikTok by making them a person that can be relied on. Therefore, it entails that physical attractiveness and social attractiveness are effective influencer attributes to be perceived as trustworthy.

Also, the current study also highlights the importance of TikTok influencers' attitude homophily, and social attractiveness to form a parasocial relationship (PSR) with their followers. To create a perceived one-sided relationship, TikTok influencers should prioritize enhancing their attitude similarities and social attractiveness toward their followers. The present study supports that the shared attitude and values that influencers possess can trigger a parasocial relationship. At the same time, an influencer that is accepted socially can

also form a perceived one-sided relationship with their followers. Thus, attitude homophily and social attractiveness can be used by TikTok influencers to create a bond with their followers.

In the present study, the relevance of trustworthiness affecting the follower's purchase intention was also featured. Implicitly, an influencer that is perceived as trustworthy can influence their followers to generate the idea of buying the endorsed products. Also, trustworthiness can be used by TikTok influencers to persuade their followers to acquire the products presented (O'Neill, 2018). Hence, TikTok influencers must think of strategies to increase their trustworthiness among their followers to trigger their purchase intentions.

Additionally, the relevance of parasocial relationship (PSR) molding the follower's purchase intention was also presented. Inherently, an influencer that is perceived as a companion or a friend by their followers is most likely to persuade others to acquire the endorsed products. Moreover, parasocial relationship can be utilized by TikTok influencers to create an illusion of intimacy towards their followers, perceiving it as an authentic relationship. With that, TikTok influencers should conceptualize actions to form a parasocial relationship in order to produce a purchase intention among their followers.

Furthermore, the present study highlights the mediating role of trustworthiness between TikTok influencer attributes (attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, and social attractiveness) and the follower's purchase intention. The current study concludes that trustworthiness, as a perceived characterization, failed to be the mediator between TikTok influencer attributes (attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, and social attractiveness) and the follower's purchase intention. This implies that even if the TikTok influencer possesses all the attributes needed to be perceived as trustworthy, followers will still not buy from them. However, the results suggest that trustworthiness alone can trigger a purchase intention. Meaning to say, other attributes may be affecting the trustworthiness of an influencer that is not within the scope of this study. Therefore, TikTok influencers should look for other characteristics that will make them look like a trustworthy individual.

Moreover, the current study also presented the mediating effect of parasocial relationship between TikTok influencer attributes (attitude homophily, physical attractiveness, and social attractiveness) and the follower's purchase intention. Parasocial relationship unsuccessfully mediated the connection between TikTok influencers' physical attractiveness and the follower's purchase intention. This is also true with the TikTok influencers' social attractiveness, where parasocial relationship failed to be a mediator towards purchase intention. This states that even if the TikTok influencer has a parasocial relationship formed through physical and social attractiveness, the follower's purchase intention will still not be activated.

Incredibly, parasocial relationship successfully mediated the relationship between the attitude homophily and purchase intention. This signifies that parasocial relationship formed through attitude similarities may cause a future purchase of the endorsed products among their followers. Therefore, to create a parasocial relationship that will trigger a purchase intention among followers, TikTok influencers should find similar characteristics or interests with their

followers, instead of focusing on their physical and social attractiveness.

Implications for Practice

It is also worth emphasizing that this study will serve as a good source of insights for social media influencers, marketing professionals, social media managers, and individuals who aspire to be social media influencers. Moreover, this study will help them determine the attributes that are beneficial and must be exhibited by a social media influencer to attract and persuade followers to buy the endorsed products. Also, social media influencers may use the findings of the current study to guide them formulate their marketing strategies and stand out from other influencers.

In terms of social media influencer marketing, social media influencers may utilize parasocial relationship (PSR) to increase their marketing effectiveness (Masuda et al., 2022). Additionally, advertising companies who wish to hire social media influencers need to consider the attributes presented in this study to determine if their prospective social media influencer will be successful in attracting and persuading their followers to purchase the advertised products. Therefore, the findings of the current study do not only show its importance to social media influencers but also to the social media industry.

A key theoretical contribution of this study establishes the importance of parasocial relationship (PSR) as a mediator between the TikTok influencer's attitude homophily and their follower's purchase intention. The findings of this study supported the adapted theory of persuasion of Masuda et al., (2022), where the model proves that it can be used to determine the connection between influencer attributes, perceived characterization, and behavioral intention. Moreover, the accepted model explains how the relationship between influencer attributes and the followers' perceived characterization will lead to purchase intention. Thus, this mediation of parasocial relationship between the TikTok influencer's attitude homophily and the follower's purchase intention proved that the adapted theory of persuasion (Masuda et al., 2022) is a significant model to determine if a follower may want to buy a product endorsed by a TikTok influencer that has similar characteristics with them and is perceived by the follower as a close friend.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are limitations in the present study. First, it only focuses on the National Capital Region (NCR) of the Philippines. Second, only famous TikTok influencers are used in this study. Next, only three influencer attributes are utilized to determine the perceived characterization that may affect purchase intention. Additionally, the study concentrates only on two mediators, which are trustworthiness and parasocial relationship. Lastly, only social media influencers in TikTok are employed in the current study.

Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers conduct a comprehensive study including the nearby provinces around NCR. Whereas if future researchers are foreigners, they could conduct their study in their country's capital city. Additionally, they may use TikTok influencers that are not famous but have a significant number of followers. Moreover, they

could find and add other influencer attributes that will form perceived characterizations that may affect followers' purchase intention. Also, they could also add a new mediator that will intervene in the relationship between influencer attributes and purchase intention. Finally, it is recommended that future researchers use other social media platforms to determine and compare if the findings of this study and their findings are corresponding.

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