

# The Role of Social Media Marketing Activity in Influencing User Engagement and Brand Loyalty: Brand Ownership through Parasocial Relationships

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## ABSTRACT

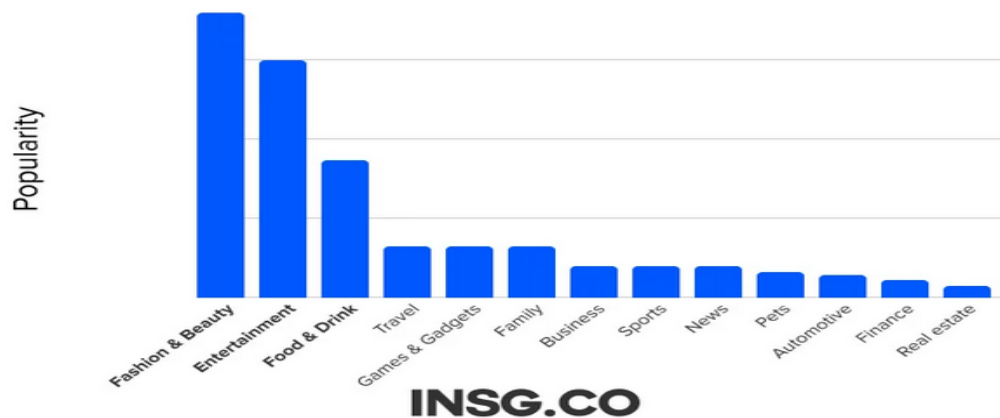
*The purpose of this study was to identify parasocial activity and social media marketing activities, user engagement, and brand loyalty, with a primary focus on understanding the extent to which parasocial activity and user engagement affect social media marketing activities and brand loyalty in a given context. The research method involves collecting data through a six-month online survey, participating respondents who are users of the product or service to be studied. Regression analysis was used to measure the relationship between variables such as Parasocial Relationship, Social Media Marketing Activity, User Engagement, and Brand Loyalty, at a significance level of 0.05. The results of the analysis showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between parasocial activities and social media marketing activities, and user engagement was positively and significantly related to parasocial activities. However, no significant relationship was found between parasocial activity or user engagement and brand loyalty, suggesting that other factors may also influence the development of brand loyalty. This research provides useful insights for marketing strategies and brand interactions with consumers in the age of social media, emphasizing the importance of understanding how parasocial activity and user engagement can affect certain aspects of brand and consumer relationships.*

## INTRODUCTION

Social Media has become an important element in our personal and social lives (Mack et al., 2017). The medium is used to approach customers and as a strategic business tool to improve customer engagement, business performance, and competitiveness (Kumar et al., 2022). Life in this world can change rapidly, with downloads and uploads, posting and searching, sending and receiving messages, listening and streaming countless happening every minute on the global Internet. The digital world of social networking sites (SNS), such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, reflects a unique case of rapid development and unpredictable business change (Valeri & Baggio, 2020). Moreover, with the significant increase in the use of social media, businesses have utilized social media as a modern form of marketing (Kumar & Gupta, 2016). Due to their high popularity and wide reach, businesses employ these social media influencers as product advocates to gain access to their target customer segments (Upadhyay & Khemka, 2019).

The shift to social media, and the mix of popular culture and digital platforms, has encouraged companies to use social media effectively (Freire et al., 2018). Influencer marketing can be interpreted as a communication process that involves individuals in the form of exploration, identification and support for products or services, an influencer will develop and send advertising messages with the aim of influencing someone's opinion so that brand awareness will be formed and will ultimately encourage purchasing decisions (Wang & Liu, 2023). In this way, Instagram celebrities can be more effective in attracting audience attention because they are considered more similar to ordinary audiences, have a greater possibility of communication with fans, and are easier to connect with (Jin et al., 2019). Recently, more and more local fashion brands are unable to compete with international fashion brands that are

developing throughout the world. There are a number of famous clothing brands in Indonesia that are the most popular and widely used by people, namely, Erigo, The Executive, 3Second (Oktyandito, 2023). By engaging in social media marketing, brands can create a “social media presence” that can increase customer trust, loyalty, satisfaction and engagement. Then influencers or content creators have an advantage because they are able to convince their followers and win customer trust better than other online marketing strategies (Casaló et al., 2020).



**Picture 1. Most Popular Influencer Content by Industry in Indonesia**

In deciding to use influencers, there are several considerations that must also be considered, such as whether or not they are suitable for the products offered, and whether the influencer has credibility that makes consumers trust and become interested in being able to buy the products offered (Handayani, 2023). The fashion industry's focus on lifestyle, aesthetics and culture provides many opportunities for marketers to leverage social media to drive growth, increase brand loyalty and increase traffic to their mobile apps. In addition, various leading fashion brands have proven the power of marketing through cross-channel social media (Wetzler, 2020). In addition to managing your social media accounts, influencer marketing also needs to be an important part of your overall strategy. Budgets for influencer marketing are increasing year on year and 17 percent of companies plan to spend more than half of their budget on this marketing method (Wetzler, 2020). The data above shows that the number of influencers who promote fashion brands in competing for user attention makes it difficult for a brand to build a strong parasocial relationship.

Therefore, the purpose of this work is to analyze the problem of the role of social media marketing activities. In Influencing User Engagement and Brand Loyalty: Brand Formation Through Parasocial Relationships and Related Theories, Followed by the formulation of hypotheses and conceptual frameworks. Then, the proposed methodology for this study is discussed. Afterwards, the theoretical, managerial, and social/ecological implications are explained, as well as opportunities for future research. The paper concludes with a conclusion.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **SMMA (*Social Media Marketing Activity*)**

A tool used in SMM that offers a company's strategy to engage with customers and encourage them to interact with various initiatives through SNS (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2023). They researched SMMA in the context of luxury fashion and found that SMMA provides opportunities to increase brand value by creating SNS to exchange opinions and information among members of the brand's online community. Experts have discussed how SMMA can impact customer-brand relationships in various contexts, such as banking and airlines (Seo, E.J. and Park, 2018).

### Parasocial relationships Relationship concept

Parasocial was first introduced in pioneering works (Horton & Wohl, 1956) in relation to conventional media such as television, radio, and film. Parasocial relationships are defined as the sense of long-term friendship and intimacy that the audience feels with the characters of the media (Horton & Wohl, 1956). One of the defining elements that distinguishes parasocial relationships from actual interpersonal relationships is that parasocial relationships are illusory and imaginary in the sense that audiences perceive a seemingly mutually beneficial relationship while media characters are unaware of the audience's emotional participation and involvement (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

### Brand Loyalty

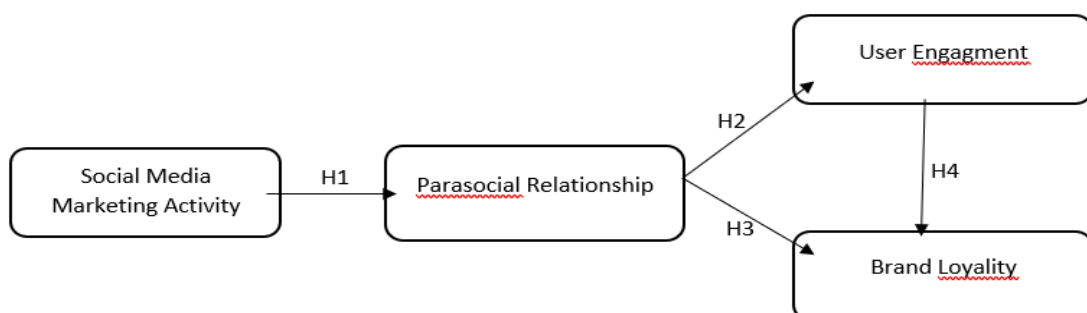
Brand loyalty can be defined as a biased (non-random) behavioral response expressed by several decision-making units over time towards one or more alternative brands from among brands and is a function of psychological processes. In general, creating a positive and strong brand makes the brand the brand of choice for customers, which in turn increases brand loyalty. Loyalty consists of a high-level relationship between customers and brands. Therefore, loyal customers do not want to switch to other brands and want to continue buying products from brands whose customers feel satisfied and comfortable. Loyal customers are also less sensitive to price changes and are willing to pay more for these brands than other brands with cheaper products. This may be due to the unique brand value perceived by loyal customers. Therefore, having loyal customers is a marketing advantage (Kwan so Shin, 2019).

### Costumer Engagement

Customer *engagement* is a customer's mental state that creates a company's experience with a specific service relationship (Gao, 2022) Based on relational marketing, it is characterized as a multifaceted construct and has been shown to influence value in relation to expression, engagement, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty (Kritzing, R., & Petzer, 2020). User engagement is a quality of user experience that emphasizes the positive aspects of interaction, especially the phenomenon related to motivation to be interested in and use web applications (Srivastava, M., & Sivaramakrishnan, 2021). Customers invest time, money, and energy in the form of thoughts, emotions, and emotions related to behavioral brands (Srivastava, M., & Sivaramakrishnan, 2021).

### Hypothesis Development

PThis research is a combination of previous research conducted by (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2023) and (Zhong et al., 2021) with the following conceptual framework:



**Picture 2. Conceptual Framework**

Source : (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2023) , (Zhong et al., 2021)

From the *conceptual framework* above, the Hypothesis can be formulated:

Previous research has shown that perceived interactivity in general has a positive impact on consumer attitudes toward social media and relationship quality, although the findings are inconsistent.

For example, (Wang et al., 2020) concluded that all three dimensions of perceived interactivity (i.e., control, responsiveness, and two-way communication) positively influenced attitudes towards the use of Facebook brand fan pages, and subsequently influenced relationships with brands, while (Yoon & Youn, 2016) found responsiveness did not significantly affect users' brand experience and relationship quality. In addition, (Lou & Kim, 2019) explained that parasocial relationships occur when the relationship between the audience and the media is characterized by a sense of closeness between the audience and the media, is polite and like ordinary people in general. This is supported by (Chung & Cho, 2017) the view that even though parasocial relationships are one-way, they still feel real like face-to-face relationships in general. In addition, friendship and mutual understanding also appear in parasocial relationships. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1 : Social media marketing has a positive effect on parasocial relationships

H2 : Parasocial relationships have a positive effect on user engagement.

As consumers become more connected to a brand, they tend to maintain a closeness to the brand, as the presence of an attachment object offers a feeling of comfort, happiness, and security (Nuraeni & K Huda, 2023) Thus, it is assumed that consumers who have a higher level of emotional attachment to a brand are willing to commit to establishing a long-term relationship with the brand (Batra et al., 2022). Therefore, this study proposes that emotional attachment is most likely to increase consumer loyalty to brands. Previous research on emotional attachment has shown that consumers who have a strong emotional attachment to a brand report greater brand loyalty, which promotes a long-term, consumer-brand relationship. Therefore, based on this explanation, the hypothesis below is proposed as the third research hypothesis.

H3: Parasocial relationships have a positive effect on *brand loyalty*.

That when combined with previous research it can be said that (So et al., 2016) states that customer brand engagement affects consumer outcomes such as brand perception and attitudes, this can affect brand loyalty when the individuals involved tend to develop more favorable attitudes towards the product, company, or brand that leads to loyalty. Customer commitment to a brand that includes adequate cognitive experience can affect brand loyalty (Aljuhmani et al., 2022) so when combined with previous research it can be said that:

H4: User engagement has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research is descriptive because it has a clear statement about the research problem, certain hypotheses and detailed information needed (Radjab, 2017). This research is a study that explains the phenomenon in the form of relationships between variables. The relationship between two or more variables is correlational, comparative, and causal. The hypothesis is developed based on theory and tested based on the data collected (Radjab, 2017).

### Population & Sampling

The materials used in this study were primary data from questionnaires distributed to respondents and secondary data from reference sources and various articles from various sources. The base population and sample of this survey include all consumers who purchased from Brand Fasion during the survey period. The sampling technique is random sampling. Every buyer met by Brand Fasion researchers who made a purchase during the study period became a respondent.

The collection technique is a questionnaire using Google Form media. The measurement scale used in this study uses a Liker scale with 5 response levels. The aim of this study was to examine the impact of social media marketing activities on user engagement and brand loyalty: brand fashion through parasocial relationships. Data analysis was carried out using SEM (Structural Equation Model). Data processing is carried out using AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structure) software to test validity, reliability, fit and hypothesis.

**Table 1. Demografis Profile of Respondents**

Category	Description	Frequency	Presentase (%)
Gender	Male	93	39%
	Female	148	61%
Ages	<18 Years	4	2%
	>40 Years	2	1%
	18-23 Years	94	39%
	23-30 Years	117	49%
	31-40Years	24	10%
Latest Education	High school	106	44%
	Bachelor	98	41%
	Master (S2)	14	6%
	Diploma	23	10%
Online purchasing frequency	>10	10	4,15%
	1-3	57	23,65%
	4-6	127	52,7%
	7-10	43	1,66%
Income	< Rp.1.500.000	54	22,4%
	Rp. 1.500.000 - Rp.4.000.000	73	30,3%
	Rp 4.000.001 - Rp. 7.500.000	74	30,7%
	Rp 7.500.001 - Rp 10.000.000	31	12,9%
	> Rp.10.000.001	7	2,9%

Source: Data Processed, 2024.

**Tabel 2. Product Brand**

Product Brand	Number	Percentage
The excecutive	27	11,20%
Erigo, The excecutive, 3second	2	0,83%
Eiger, Erigo	21	8,71%
The excecutive, 3second	3	1,24%
Erigo	30	12,45%
Eiger, 3second	22	9,13%
Erigo, 3second	13	5,39%
Eiger, Erigo, The excecutive	7	2,90%
Erigo, The excecutive	13	5,39%
Eiger	39	16,18%
Roughneck	1	0,41%

3second	20	8,30%
Eiger, The excecutive	17	7,05%
	4	1,66%
Eiger, Erigo, 3second	7	2,90%
Uniglo	1	0,41%
Baju	1	0,41%
Eiger, Erigo, The excecutive, 3second	3	1,24%
Eiger, The excecutive, 3second	3	1,24%
Erigo, Kenzo, Supreme, LV, Cristian Dior, Anjas Store	1	0,41%
Online shop lain	1	0,41%
Kaso metal	1	0,41%
bloods	1	0,41%
Erigo, 3second,	1	0,41%
Erigo, The excecutive,	1	0,41%
The excecutive, 3second,	1	0,41%
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Data Processed, 2024

Table 2, presenting data on product brands, illustrates the diverse consumer preferences observed from a sample of 241 respondents. Eiger emerged as the most popular brand within this sample, chosen by 16.18% of the respondents. Following Eiger, The Executive was preferred by 11.20%, and Erigo by 12.45%. Furthermore, the data reveals variations in combined brand selections, such as the Eiger, Erigo, and The Executive combination, which was favored by 2.90% of the respondents. Preferences for the 3second brand and its combinations with other brands like Kenzo, Supreme, LV, Cristian Dior, and Anjas Store were also noted, although with smaller percentages. This data provides insights into the popularity of product brands among the respondents, as well as the variations in single and combined brand choices. This analysis can serve as a foundation for businesses to understand consumer preferences and develop more effective marketing strategies.

**Table 3. Social Media Platform Data**

<b>Social Media</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Instagram	84	34,85%
Tiktok	122	50,62%
Facebook	11	4,56%
Shopee	5	2,07%
Whatsapp	9	3,73%
	1	0,41%
Tokopedia	1	0,41%
Shoope	1	0,41%
Ig,, fb,, shoope	1	0,41%

shopee	5	2,07%
Shoppe	1	0,41%
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Data Processed, 2024

Table 3, presents data on social media usage, reflecting the respondents' tendencies in utilizing online platforms from a total sample of 241 individuals. The majority of respondents, accounting for 50.62%, indicated TikTok as their primary social media platform. Instagram also demonstrates significant popularity with 34.85% usage. Additionally, the data reveals variations in the use of other platforms such as Facebook (4.56%), Shopee (2.07%), and WhatsApp (3.73%). While some respondents reported using more than one platform, the percentages for these combinations are relatively small, such as the simultaneous use of Instagram, Facebook, and Shopee by 0.41% of the total respondents. This data illustrates the dominance of TikTok and the substantial usage of Instagram as the most prevalent social media platforms among the respondents. This analysis can assist stakeholders in developing more effective and relevant marketing strategies aligned with the social media preferences of this sample.

## RESULTS

### Validity Test

**Table 4. Validity Test**

Indicators		Estimate
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→	Parasocial_Activity 1.113
Parasocial_Relationship	→	User_Engagement .983
Parasocial_Relationship	→	Brand_Loyalty .432
User_Engagement	→	Brand_Loyalty .572
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→	SMMA11 .543
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→	SMMA10 .406
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→	SMMA9 .385
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→	SMMA8 .375
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→	SMMA7 .399
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→	SMMA6 .366
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→	SMMA5 .383
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→	SMMA4 .477
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→	SMMA3 .341
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→	SMMA2 .385
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→	SMMA1 .416
Parasocial_Relationship	→	PR1 .594
Parasocial_Relationship	→	PR2 .557
Parasocial_Relationship	→	PR3 .482
Parasocial_Relationship	→	PR4 .592
User_Engagement	→	UG1 .641
User_Engagement	→	UG2 .416
User_Engagement	→	UG3 .465
User_Engagement	→	UG4 .465
User_Engagement	→	UG5 .525
Brand_Loyalty	→	BL6 .531

Indicators			Estimate
Brand_Loyalty	→	BL5	.596
Brand_Loyalty	→	BL4	.510
Brand_Loyalty	→	BL3	.522
Brand_Loyalty	→	BL2	.555
Brand_Loyalty	→	BL1	.536

*Source: Data Processed, 2024*

In table 4, the data reflects the estimated relationship between various variables related to social media marketing activities and consumer response. The following is an explanation of the estimated relationship:

1. Social\_Media\_Marketing\_Activity > Parasocial\_Relationship (1,113): Parasocial activities have a strong positive estimate of social media marketing activities. This means that the higher the parasocial activity, the higher the social media marketing activity.
2. Parasocial\_Relationship > User\_Engagement (0.983): User engagement has a strong positive estimate of parasocial activity. This suggests that the higher the level of user engagement, the higher the parasocial activity.
3. Parasocial\_Relationship > Brand\_Loyalty (0.432): Brand loyalty levels have a positive estimate of parasocial activity, albeit with lower strength. This means that the higher the parasocial activity, the higher the level of brand loyalty.
4. User\_Engagement > Brand\_Loyalty (0.572): Brand loyalty also has a strong positive estimate of user engagement rates. This shows that the higher the user engagement rate, the higher the brand loyalty rate.
5. Social\_Media\_Marketing\_Activity > SMMA1 to SMMA11 (0.341 to 0.543): Various variables of SMMA (Social Media Marketing Activity) have positive estimates of social media marketing activities. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between social media marketing activities and these variables.
6. Parasocial\_Relationship > PR1 to PR4 (0.482 to 0.594): Various variables of PR (Parasocial Relationship) have a positive estimate of parasocial activity. This shows that there is a positive relationship between parasocial activity and these variables.
7. User\_Engagement > UG1 to UG5 (0.416 to 0.641): Various UG (User Engagement) variables have a positive estimate of user engagement levels. This indicates a positive relationship between user engagement levels and these variables.
8. Brand\_Loyalty > BL1 to BL6 (0.510 to 0.596): Various BL (Brand Loyalty) variables have a positive estimate of the level of brand loyalty. This shows that there is a positive relationship between brand loyalty levels and these variables.

## Reliability Test

**Table 5. Reliability Test Results**



	Average Varian Extracted	Construct Reliability	Standart Value	Keterangan
Social Media Marketing Activity	1.000	0.903778	0.500	High Reliability
Parasocial Relationship	1.000	0.571756	0.500	Reliability
User Engagement	1.000	0.63246	0.500	Reliability
Brand Loyalty	1.000	0.995852	0.500	High Reliability

Source: Data Processed, 2024

In table 5, the data provides information about the reliability of several construct variables measured in a study. The following is an explanation related to the reliability of the variables SMMA (Social Media Marketing Activity), PR (Parasocial Relationship), UG (User Engagement), and BL (Brand Loyalty):

**SMMA (Social Media Marketing Activity):**

The SMMA variable has a high level of reliability with a Construct Reliability value of 0.903778. This value is close to 1, indicating that the SMMA variable is consistent and reliable in measuring social media marketing activity.

**PA (Parasocial Relationship):**

The PA variable has a sufficient level of reliability with a Construct Reliability value of 0.571756. This value shows that the PA variable has moderate consistency in measuring parasocial activity.

**UG (User Engagement):**

the UG variable is quite good with a Construct Reliability value of 0.63246. This value shows that the UG variable has moderate consistency in measuring the level of user engagement.

**BL (Brand Loyalty):**

BL is very high with a reliability of 0.995852. This value shows that the BL variable has very good consistency in measuring brand loyalty levels

In this context, the reliability construct provides an idea of the extent to which the measurement instrument or question in the study is reliable and consistent. The higher the Construct Reliability value, the better the reliability of the measurement instrument. A VE value close to 1 also indicates that these variables are able to measure the variance in them well.

**Influence Test: Path Analysis**

**Table 6. Analysis Path Results**

Model		$\beta$ beta	t-count	p-value	Information
Social_Media_Marketing_Activity	→ Parasocial_Relationship	.332	<b>10.083</b>	<b>.000</b>	Significant Positives
Parasocial_Relationship	→ User_Engagement	1.156	<b>8.059</b>	<b>.000</b>	Significant Positives
Parasocial_Relationship	→ Brand_Loyalty	54.228	<b>.013</b>	<b>.990</b>	Insignificant Positives
User_Engagement	→ Brand_Loyalty	61.023	<b>.012</b>	<b>.990</b>	Insignificant Positives

Source: Data Processed, 2024.

In summary, the findings of this research indicate a significant positive relationship between social media marketing activity and parasocial relationships. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was also observed between parasocial relationships and user engagement. Specifically, higher levels of parasocial activity correlate with increased social media marketing activity and greater user engagement. However, the study did not find a significant relationship between parasocial relationships and brand loyalty, nor between brand loyalty and user engagement. The high p-values for these relationships suggest that any observed correlation may be coincidental and not statistically significant within the context of this study. Therefore, while fostering parasocial relationships through social media marketing appears to be an effective strategy for enhancing user engagement, its direct impact on building brand loyalty was not supported by the data. Similarly, brand loyalty did not demonstrate a significant influence on user engagement in this research. These findings suggest that different mechanisms may drive brand loyalty and user engagement, and that parasocial relationships primarily play a role in the latter within this examined context.

### Model Fit Test (GOODNESS OF FIT)

**Table 8. Model Fit Test Results**

Indeks	Cut-off Value	Hasil	Evaluasi Model
Chi-Square	341,11	381,28	Marginal Fit
RMSEA	$\leq 0.08$	0,037	Good Fit
CMIN/DF	$\leq 2.00$	1.29	Good Fit
GFI	$> 0.90$	0.79	Marginal Fit

Source: Data Processed, 2024.

The results of the SEM model fit test showed that of the 4 test criteria, 2 criteria gave a good fit conclusion, namely the RMSEA and CIMN/DF criteria, 1 criterion gave a marginal fit model conclusion, namely GFI, and 1 other criterion, namely p. - Chisquare value, providing a marginal conformity conclusion. For more details see table 2. The results of the fit model testing resulted in the conclusion that most of the fit model criteria were met, so that the theoretical hypothesis testing could be continued.

## DISCUSSION

**Hypothesis 1**, in the table above, we want to test the **Social Media Marketing Activity** variable that has a positive effect on the **Parasocial Relationship** variable. Based on the results of hypothesis 1 test above, it can be seen that the p value is  $0.000 < \alpha 0.05$  and the t-value is **10.083**  $> 1.95$ . With these results, it can be said that hypothesis 1 is accepted. The results of the study are in line with (Chung & Cho, 2017) Concentration on the Influence of Social Media Relationships on Parasocial Relationships. Interpretation: This suggests that the higher the parasocial activity of a brand, the higher the social media marketing activity carried out. This can be interpreted that the existence of parasocials can increase the effectiveness of social media marketing campaigns.

**Hypothesis 2**, in the table above, wants to test the **Parasocial Relationship** variable that has a positive effect on the **User Engagement** variable. Based on the results of hypothesis 1 test above, it can be seen that the p value is  $0.000 < \alpha 0.05$  and the t-value is **8.059**  $> 1.95$ . With these results, it can be said that hypothesis 2 is accepted. Interpretation: This means that the higher the parasocial activity of a brand, the higher the user engagement rate. Parasocial activities, such as content that engages users, can have a positive impact on user participation.

**Hypothesis 3**, in the table above, wants to test the **Parasocial Relationship** variable that has a positive effect on the **Brand Loyalty** variable. Based on the results of hypothesis 3 testing above, it can be seen that the p value is  $0.990 > \alpha 0.05$  and the t-value is **.013**  $< 1.95$ . With these results, it can be said that hypothesis 3 is not supported. Interpretation: Although parasocial activity can affect social media

marketing activities and user engagement, it turns out that there is no significant relationship with brand loyalty. This may indicate that other factors outside of parasocial activity are more dominant in influencing brand loyalty.

**Hypothesis 4**, in the table above, wants to test the **User Engagement** variable that has a positive effect on the **Brand Loyalty** variable. Based on the results of testing hypothesis 4 above, it can be seen that the p value is  $0.990 > \alpha 0.05$  and the t value is  $0.12 < 1.95$ . Based on these results, it can be said that hypothesis 4 is not supported. Interpretation: While there is a positive relationship between parasocial activity and user engagement, there is no significant correlation between user engagement and brand loyalty. This suggests that other factors may play a bigger role in brand loyalty

## CONCLUSION

There is a significant positive relationship between parasocial activity and social media marketing activity, as well as between parasocial activity and user engagement. However, there was no significant relationship between parasocial activity or user engagement and brand loyalty. A high P-value in relation to brand loyalty indicates that these results may not be statistically reliable. Parasocial activities have a positive impact on social media marketing activities and user engagement. However, there is no significant evidence that parasocial activity or user engagement is directly related to brand loyalty. It is necessary to consider additional variables or other factors that may affect brand loyalty, as the results do not show a significant relationship on this model.

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