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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER REPUTATION ON ONLINE PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: THE SEQUENTIAL MEDIATING ROLES OF PARASOCIAL INTERACTION AND PERCEIVED HOMOPHILY

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SUMMARY

This study investigates how the reputation of social media influencers affects online prosocial behaviour, focusing on the sequential mediating roles of parasocial interaction and perceived homophily. Grounded in Source Credibility Theory, Parasocial Interaction Theory, the Similarity-Attraction Paradigm, and Social Cognitive Theory, the research addresses a critical gap in understanding the psychological pathways linking influencer traits to socially beneficial outcomes. The study specifically explores male followers of fashion and grooming influencers on platforms such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. A cross-sectional design was employed using purposive sampling. Data were collected from 459 male social media users who follow at least one male fashion/grooming influencer. Validated scales were used to measure influencer reputation, parasocial interaction, perceived homophily, and online prosocial behaviour. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied to test the hypothesized sequential mediation model. Findings reveal that influencer reputation positively predicts both parasocial interaction and perceived homophily, which, in turn, significantly influence online prosocial behavior. The strongest mediator was perceived homophily, followed by parasocial interaction. Notably, the sequential mediation path from influencer reputation to prosocial behavior via parasocial interaction and perceived homophily was statistically significant, underscoring the dual affective and cognitive mechanisms at play. The statistical results indicated that perceived homophily is positively influenced by the influencer's reputation ($\beta = 0.998$, $t = 58.393$, $p < .001$) and prosocial behavior ($\beta = 0.574$, $t = 2.381$, $p = .017$). This study contributes to influencer marketing literature by shifting the focus from commercial outcomes to prosocial digital behaviors. Practical implications suggest that brands should collaborate with reputable influencers who evoke emotional bonds and perceived similarity with their followers to foster socially responsible engagement online.

Key words*: social media, influencer reputation, prosocial behaviour, parasocial interaction, perceived homophily.*

INTRODUCTION

The digital ecosystem has transformed how people interact, relate to one another, and consume content. The emergence of social media influencers, who act as the opinion leaders of the modern era, shaping beliefs, behaviors, and social discourse, is among the numerous aspects of this transformation. Social networks like Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts have become fertile ground for short-form digital storytelling, where influencers are developing personal brands, building communities, and promoting prosocial narratives to adolescents and young adults. Although the consumerist premise and brand metrics have dominated early research on influencer marketing, there is an increasing appreciation that influencers can also create online prosocial behavioural acts of kindness, support, advocacy, or cooperation in a digital environment. Perceived influencers who are reputable and trusted by followers can greatly influence the audience's social behavior by setting an example of empathy, altruism, and social responsibility. In this regard, parasocial interaction (PSI), a perceived emotional attachment to an influencer, and homophily, the feeling of the similarity between a follower and an influencer, are very significant psychological channels that can determine how and why people become involved in such behaviors. Nonetheless, even though the social meaning of digital prosociality has been gradually increasing, the scientific interest in the processes that this research is attempting to cover is a serious gap in the research by studying how influencer reputation leads to online prosocial behavior, especially among male consumers who subscribe to male fashion and grooming influencers. Male online users are underrepresented in influencer studies and behavioural psychology, particularly in identity, social norms, and online behaviors, which seem more or less neglected [4]. The change in the marketing trend towards relational and socially embedded digital interaction has broadened the role of influencers. It has ceased to be brand ambassadors but have turned into cultural agents who have the ability to promote civic awareness, peer support, and online collaboration. In spite of this change, empirical research still primarily positions the influencers in consumerist paradigms, ignoring the possibility of influencers to produce positive online social behavior.

Although constructs such as parasocial relationships and perceived homophily have been individually recognized in explaining influencer effectiveness, it has rarely been integrated into a comprehensive theoretical model that captures the underlying psychological pathways through which influencer traits translate into social behavior. Addressing these critical gaps, the present study introduces a novel framework that (i) reorients the focus from commercial to prosocial digital behaviour, (ii) foregrounds male audiences in the context of fashion and grooming influencers, (iii) employs a sequential mediation model to delineate the cognitive-affective mechanisms via parasocial interaction and perceived homophily, which links influencer reputation to online prosocial behaviour, and (iv) contextualises these dynamics within the rapidly evolving domain of short-form storytelling content (for example, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts). These contributions frame the core research questions of this study, which seek to investigate how influencer reputation shapes online prosocial conduct and how parasocial bonds and perceived similarity operate as sequential mediators in this relationship. This study combines psychological theories with digital media practices to deliver important insights for scholars and practical advice for brands, content creators, and policymakers who aim to foster more ethical and socially responsible online spaces. Additionally, the emergence of engaging short-form content calls for a reassessment of traditional theoretical models to better fit the current algorithm-driven, rapid media environment. To establish genuine engagement and positive e-citizenship, brands can use trusted influencers of high parasocial attractiveness and have a homophilous perception. The optimal use of short-form storytelling can also be used as a strategically planned intervention to increase the message output and resonance in an audience. This adds to reconsideration with the line of thinking of how concise and engaging information may lead to the development of emotional and social coordination, ultimately, leading to socially beneficial net behavior.

Research Objectives

The aim of this research is to analyze the expected effect of social media influencer reputation on online prosocial behavior, centering on how parasocial interaction and perceived homophily mediate its effect. The research paper is intended to learn how influencers, especially in the field of fashion and grooming, can help develop positive social behaviors among their followers. This study attempts to give useful

information on how influencer attributes could result in prosocial online behaviors by examining the emotional and cognitive processes that make influencer reputation play a significant role in prosocial behaviors. Other gaps included in the study are the absence of influencer marketing literature on the shift to socially positive digital practices, especially among male audiences who consume short-form publication content.

The paper has been structured as follows: it starts with the Introduction section 1, which has a description of the research purpose and theoretical basis. Section 2, Theoretical Background, explains the most important theories underlying the study, including the Source Credibility Theory and the Parasocial Interaction Theory. The Hypothesis Development and Conceptual Framework sections 3 and 4 show the research hypotheses and the proposed sequential mediation model. Section 5 Methodology, which explains the research design, data collection, and analysis procedures. Section 6 Results is followed by the Discussion Section 7 and Conclusion sections 8 that present the findings, interpretations, and practical implications, respectively.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background of the research combines Source Credibility Theory, Parasocial Interaction Theory, the Similarity-Attraction Paradigm, and Social Cognitive Theory so that the impact of the reputation of an influencer on prosocial online behavior, especially the male population of users of short-form digital content platforms, could be explained. The Source Credibility Theory stipulates that the persuasiveness of a communicator is embedded in the perspectives of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. High reputational capital can therefore give influencers better chances of inducing behavioural modeling on their own subjects, a phenomenon that is enhanced by intimacy and the high-speed nature of content delivery in formats like Instagram Reels or YouTube Shorts [6]. Parasocial Interaction Theory extends this understanding by framing the emotionally rich, one-sided relationship audiences form with influencers as conduits for internalizing attitudes and behaviors, especially when influencers engage in frequent authentic self-disclosure [2][9][13]. These interactions not only foster emotional attachment but also function as affective mechanisms that translate perceived credibility into follower action. The Similarity-Attraction Paradigm and the construct of homophily further explain how perceived similarity, whether in values, lifestyle, or appearance, enhances message receptivity and strengthens parasocial bonds, particularly in male audiences engaging with fashion and grooming influencers [15]. These theoretical underpinnings converge with Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that individuals emulate observed behaviors when the model is perceived as competent, relatable, and morally aligned.

Online prosocial behavior, such as supporting peers, advocating kindness, and disseminating constructive content, can thus be understood as a product of observational learning. Recent developments, such as the Theory of Digital Social Influence, further contextualize these processes by emphasizing how algorithmically curated environments and peer interactions amplify behavioural mimicry and value internalization in digital ecosystems. The proposed sequential mediation model of influencer reputation influences parasocial interaction, which in turn affects perceived homophily, culminating in online prosocial behavior that maps onto this multi-theoretical framework, offering a novel lens for understanding the socially constructive outcomes of influencer engagement.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Influencer Reputation and Parasocial Interaction

The reputation of a social media influencer is described as the perception of trust, knowledge, and authenticity of social media content creators by their audience [6]. Influencers with high reputations tend to gain credibility and trustworthiness in instilling information, and this can lead to a sincere attachment of the senses to their followers, who develop a lasting association with them. Studies in digital communication found that credibility increases the perceived authenticity and results in deeper parasocial connections, a one-sided, emotionally dependent form of relationships established by fans towards media stars [14][20]. The parasocial relationship specially creates a strong connection in any

platform, including Instagram and YouTube, where the followers regularly get to know the person behind the influencer, which creates an intimate and trusting connection [1][2]. The earlier studies reason that the perceived reputation of a person who holds influence makes a significant contribution to followers identifying with this individual, which is a significant antecedent to parasocial interaction [3]. Based on these observations, it is theoretically valid to propose that the higher the followers are inclined to think positively about the reputation of an influencer, the greater will be the chances that it establishes parasocial relationships that are emotional in nature. In this way, the hypothesis below is suggested.

H 1: ***Social Media Influencer Reputation Positively Influences Parasocial Interaction.***

Parasocial Interaction and Perceived Homophily

Parasocial interaction (PSI) makes followers feel similar and socially close to the person it is following, thus intensifying the perceived homophily and feeling of sharing similar values, beliefs, or lifestyles [22]. Research has revealed that those who have strong parasocial relationships are likely to see media figures as being much like themselves, even in cases where there are minimal objective similarities. PSI can be described as the cognitive-affective gateway that improves the attraction of people to each other and mirroring between them, particularly when an influencer reveals personal narratives or emotions. The previous study reported that the perception of homophily could be enhanced using parasocial proximity that, in its turn, enhanced consumer identification and trust [16]. As such, the more emotionally connected the followers are, as a result of the parasocial interaction, the more cognitively inclined it are to question increased degrees of similarity and commonality with the influence; therefore, the second hypothesis is proposed on the basis of the literature support.

H2: ***Parasocial Interaction Positively Influences Perceived Homophily.***

Perceived Homophily and Online Prosocial Behavior

Social influence and conforming behavior have always been attributed to homophily or perceived similarity between people. Perceived homophily with influencers in digital settings enhances trust and emotional fit, which has the potential to enhance the likelihood of adopting the behaviors promoted by the influencer, including prosocial behaviors. Online prosocial behavior denotes voluntary behaviors that aim to help others in the online community, including providing support, sharing useful information, or advancing some because that is ethically desirable [5]. It has been shown that people tend to follow the behaviors of the perceived in-group members or individuals with whom it shares the feeling of belonging to a group. Both depicted that perceived homophily among fashion influencers amplifies message receptivity and imitation of behavior in the context of social media [15]. Therefore, the closer the perceived resemblance to the influencer, the higher the probability of them adapting to their values and reflecting their prosocial behaviors. So, the following hypothesis is proposed in the given research.

H3: ***Perceived Homophily Positively Influences Prosocial Online Behaviour.***

Sequential Mediation of Parasocial Interaction and Perceived Homophily

Combining the above associations, a stepwise mechanism arises whereby the reputability of the influencers induces parasocial interaction, which consequently increases perceived homophily, which finally leads to prosocial online behavior. This pathway aligns with Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes observational learning and psychological identification as mechanisms through which modelled behavior is internalized. Moreover, recent studies in influencer psychology suggest that both parasocial interaction and homophily function as mediators in understanding how influencer traits shape follower attitudes and behaviors [17][21]. For instance, the study found that trust and relational closeness precede behavioural responses, and these are often mediated by perceived interpersonal similarities [13]. The affective bond formed through parasocial interaction enables cognitive assimilation of similarity (homophily), which in turn influences behavioural dispositions, such as engagement and helping behavior. By synthesizing these findings, this study proposes a sequential mediation model that offers a

more nuanced and theory-informed understanding of how influencer reputation can result in prosocial digital actions. Accordingly, a sequential-mediated hypothesis was postulated.

H4: ***The Relationship Between Influencer Reputation AND Online Prosocial Behaviour is Sequentially Mediated by Parasocial Interaction and Perceived Homophily.***

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework of the proposed study is characterized by applying an integrative theoretical perspective that tries to clarify the psychological processes through which the reputation of social media influencing can influence online prosocial behavior among male offspring of compact digital content. Based on Source Credibility Theory, Parasocial Interaction Theory, Similarity-Attraction Paradigm, and Social Cognitive Theory, the model suggests there is a sequence of mediation.

The independent variable at the center of the framework is a reputation influencer, which indicates whether people trust an influencer of social media as an expert and genuine. Such a reputation is theorized to create parasocial interaction, a one-sided emotional connection that is created by the followers due to the continuous interaction with the content it produces. Parasocial interaction, in turn, enhances the sense of homophily as followers have a perception that it shares something with the influencer, either in terms of properties or values. It is believed that this increased sense of similarity and identification would have a positive impact on the dependent variable, which is online prosocial behavior, such as giving support, encouraging kindness, or spreading positive knowledge within online conditions of the Internet. It made use of the application of a sequential mediation, which examined the sequential relationship that existed between the parasocial interaction and the perceived homophily as an intermediary of the relationship that existed between the influencer's reputation and the prosocial results.

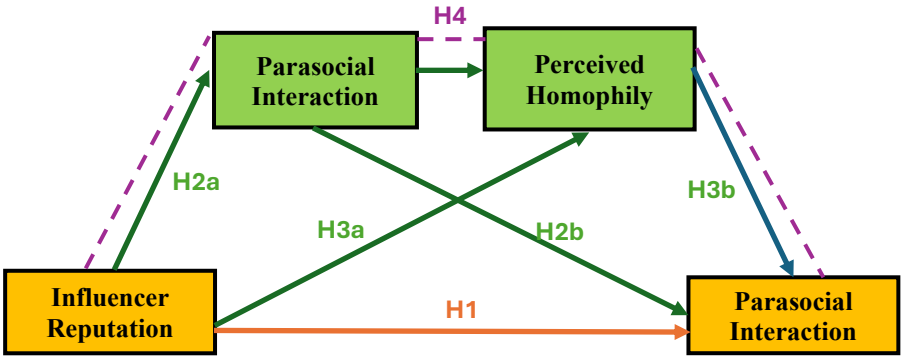

Figure 1. Conceptual framework illustrating sequential mediation model

This set-up not only explains the deeper processes of affective-cognition, but it also presents a more in-depth picture of the influence of the influencer in other senses beyond commercial behavior, and highlights the socially or even meaningfully productive digital interaction. The relationships among these variables are depicted in figure 1, which visually represents the hypothesized sequential mediation model.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling Procedure

This research design was a cross-sectional research design that would be appropriate to capture responses at one point in time, which was the purpose of analyzing the current behavioural trends in consuming digital content. The study target population is represented by male consumers who follow at least one of the digital influencers on social media platforms, including Instagram, YouTube Shorts, or other reel-based applications. Such respondents need to have been exposed to content by male fashion and grooming influencers and must be familiar with short-form storytelling content (e.g., reels and

shorts). The first message contained the screening criteria in order to narrow down to eligible participants. The following were the key screening conditions: (a) at least one male fashion/grooming influencer. (b) Consumed them before (e.g., liked, commented, shared, or purchased influencer-generated content). (c) Omnichannel Strategy: The understanding of short-form content formats, including Reels, Shorts, or Moj videos. Considering the specific inclusion criteria, the purposive sampling technique was used so that one could recruit only those respondents who met the specific inclusion criteria. A questionnaire was created in a structured form, the use of which was based on validated scales obtained from previous literature, and the distribution of the questionnaire was conducted online by using Google Forms incorporated in social media and discussion forums related to fashion and lifestyle. The given method of administration is in line with the study's interest towards digitally active consumers and enhances the reach to the target sample. A total of 500 questionnaires were given to the target sample. Out of them, 478 were received, which is 95.6% response rate. After severe data cleaning (e.g., missing responses, patterned responding, and unmindful responding), the ultimately useful sample size was 459 respondents. This is enough to conduct structural equation modeling (SEM), which, according to this study, should have at least 300 plus in the sample in an attempt to gain sufficient statistical power to obtain a model estimate [7].

Measures

Social Media Influencer Reputation

To measure the construct of social media influencer reputation, the study use the multidimensional measurement scale in this study that consists of 27 items and 4 major dimensions that are communication skills, influence, authenticity, and expertise with 7-point Likert scale options that rate the respondent on the following scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) [18]. Sample item includes "This influencer seems genuinely motivated".

Parasocial Relationship

This study used the six-item measurement developed in this work [10]. This scale was validated in most digital influencer studies. This measure grabs the extent to which the followers will be psychologically attached and connected to the posts and online personas of an influencer. The six items were assessed on a 7-point Likert scale of 1-7 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) based on the degree of agreement with the statements that characterized the nature of the relationship between follower and influencer. The sample items include "I consider this influencer to be like a friend, even though we've never met.

Perceived Homophily

In order to evaluate the perceived homophily, the current paper used the instrument that was validated by a number of psychometric studies in various populations. The items reflected in the scale are 16 in number and have four strong dimensions of attitude, morality, background, and appearance measured on a 7-point bipolar semantic difference plan, whereby the anchors are opposite in nature. The sample items include "Thinks like me – Doesn't think like me,"

Online Prosocial Behavior

Online Prosocial Behavior (OPB) will be measured in terms of the Online Prosocial Behavior Scale (OPBS) provided and confirmed in this study [5]. The OPBS is an instrument that is psychometrically reliable to measure the performance as well as reception of prosocial behaviors in online situations, and like all psychometric instruments, this has 10 items per online setting and thus has a total of 20 items. It measures the frequency of such supportive, empathetic, and altruistic behaviors among people towards other people through electronic media like smartphones, computers, and tablets. Each of the items was graded on a 5-point frequency scale that includes 1- Never and 5-Every day.

Data Preparation

According to the suggestion of this work, the missing values in the dataset are screened. Any response having the missing data over 15% was not included in the analysis [7]. Also, the observations displaying a high proportion of missing values in a single construct- e.g., influencer reputation, parasocial interaction, perceived homophily, or online prosocial behavior- were discarded. All the still valid cases were replaced with their means in SmartPLS 4.1.0, since such a method of study has been identified as a means of increasing reliability and consistency of the data. SPSS 25.0 was used to create the descriptive statistics to profile the demographic makeup of the respondents who were mainly followers of fashion influencers on Instagram, YouTube, and the like. In order to evaluate multivariate normality, the Web Power online tool (https://webpower.psychstat.org/models/ kurtosis/) was utilized in the calculation of Mardia multivariate skewness and kurtosis. According to a previous study, it will be assumed that the value of standardized coefficients is less than 5, and the p-value exceeds 0.05 to have multivariate normality. These conditions were not satisfied with the present data (skewness = 9.15, $p < 0.001$; kurtosis = 36.71, $p < 0.001$), which proved that the multivariate normality was absent in this data. In this respect, it used the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique to verify the proposed serial mediation model. This is a non-parametric test that is useful with non-normal data and is suitable in situations where one wants to test a complex path model with multiple mediators, as in the current study.

Common Method Bias

A variety of tests of diagnosis were carried out to make sure the common method bias (CMB) did not influence the results. First, the test by Harman, involving single factor, which was conducted through SPSS 24, was carried out. The results of the analysis showed the initial unrotated factor explained 35.26% of the overall variance, which falls far short of 40% threshold; this shows that there was no significant single factor. Secondly, the inter-construct correlations were investigated by means of the correlation matrix process. The maximum correlation observed between constructs of the combination of influencer reputation (IR), parasocial interaction (PSI), perceived homophily (PH), and prosocial behaviour (PSB) was 0.755 which confirms that there is no multicollinearity or common method bias based on the threshold value of 0.90. Third a complete collinearity test of smartPLS 4.1.9 was followed in previous studies. Each of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values against the latent constructs was well under the suggested cut off point of 3.3 with the maximum VIF score being 2.074 attributed to PSI1. All of these diagnostic tests together show that the common method bias is not likely to jeopardize the validity of the results in this research on the serial mediation effects of the parasocial interaction and the perceived homophily in the circumstances of fashion influencers.

RESULTS

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)

The sample in the study comprised 459 male social media users, who subscribe to male fashion/grooming influencers, but the data were gathered in purposive sampling. To test the hypothesized serial mediation model, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used and the constructs showed significant relationships. In a bid to determine the hypothesized serial mediation model which comprises of influencer reputation (IR), parasocial interaction (PSI), perceived homophily (PH), and online prosocial behaviour (PSB), the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method was used. A decision in favor of PLS-SEM and against covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) was made due to the less appropriate application of covariance-based SEM to the non-normal distribution of data, which proved to be the case in the present study as the current data indicated by Mardia test were not normally distributed. It also provides more flexibility when it comes to modeling more complex mediation paths, including the one used in this work, i.e., serial mediation [7]. To perform the PLS-SEM analysis the study used the two-step procedure proposed in earlier research according to which the measurement model is proposed to be tested in the first step to verify reliability and validity of constructs and in the second step the structural model is tested to decide about existing relationships. All the calculations were performed with the help of SmartPLS 3.2.9.

Measurement Model

Through the recommendations of the study measured indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity to guarantee strength in the measurement model [7]. The majority of indicator loadings, within the four latent constructs, measure Influencer Reputation (IR), Parasocial Interaction (PSI), Perceived Homophily (PH), and Online Prosocial Behaviour (PSB), were higher than the recommended value of 0.708 that shows the previous result as more indicators reflect high reliability in the items. Significant indicators were dropped to enhance the overall validity of the measurements whereby, indicators with loadings of less than 0.40 were discarded. All the items having coefficient loadings of 0.40-0.70 were maintained provided the inclusion yielded constructive impact on the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) of the construct involved. All constructs had a CR value higher than 0.7 and AVE higher than 0.5 after the refinement process meets the requirements of the minimum to obtain internal consistency reliability and convergent validity. In order to better verify the discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was computed [8]. Each construct was empirically discriminated successfully as all the values of HTMT were less than the langhard threshold of 0.90. These findings support the reliability and validity of the measurement model, since the constructs adopted to measure the influencer reputation, parasocial interaction, perceived homophily and prosocial behaviour among the followers of fashion influencers were found to be reliable and valid. The table 1 presents the results of measurement model.

Table 1. Measurement model

Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
IR1	0.830	0.980	0.980	0.981	0.660
IR2	0.815				
IR3	0.798				
IR4	0.818				
IR5	0.829				
IR6	0.828				
IR7	0.819				
IR8	0.835				
IR9	0.806				
IR10	0.829				
IR11	0.788				
IR12	0.786				
IR13	0.821				
IR14	0.811				
IR15	0.826				
IR16	0.820				
IR17	0.790				
IR18	0.813				
IR19	0.806				
IR20	0.814				
IR21	0.813				
IR22	0.821				
IR23	0.825				
IR24	0.801				
IR25	0.784				
IR26	0.807				
IR27	0.809				
PH1	0.830	0.968	0.968	0.971	0.676
PH2	0.828				
PH3	0.818				
PH4	0.813				

PH5	0.822				
PH6	0.832				
PH7	0.836				
PH8	0.829				
PH9	0.820				
PH10	0.830				
PH11	0.784				
PH12	0.821				
PH13	0.818				
PH14	0.840				
PH15	0.854				
PH16	0.776				
PSB1	0.768	0.935	0.935	0.945	0.631
PSB2	0.789				
PSB3	0.823				
PSB4	0.819				
PSB5	0.788				
PSB6	0.809				
PSB7	0.754				
PSB8	0.793				
PSB9	0.809				
PSB10	0.787				
PSI1	0.761	0.844	0.845	0.885	0.562
PSI2	0.755				
PSI3	0.767				
PSI4	0.741				
PSI5	0.732				
PSI6	0.743				

Note: IR- Influencer Reputation, PH- Perceived Homophily, PSI- Parasocial Interaction, PSB- Prosocial Behaviour.

There were four constructs, namely Influencer Reputation (IR), Perceived Homophily (PH), Parasocial Interaction (PSI), and Prosocial Behaviour (PSB), in the measurement model with reviews of indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity. The factor loadings of all items were very high based on the threshold value of 0.70 advocated, and above 0.80 in most of the cases (see table 1). This implies close relationship between the observed indicators and the related latent constructs.

Cronbachs alpha, rho_A and composite reliability (CR) were used to measure internal consistency reliability. All the values were above the desired limit of 0.70 out of which Cronbach alpha was 0.844 (PSI) and 0.980 (IR), indicating high internal consistency [7]. Values of Composite reliability (rho c) also ranged between 0.885 to 0.981 which further contributes to the stability and reliability of the constructs.

Ave Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to examine Convergent validity. The minimum required value of 0.50 was being exceeded by all AVE values, which means that more than 50% of the variance in the indicators is explained by the latent variables. In particular, the IR, PH, PSB and PSI AVEs equaled 0.660, 0.676, 0.631, and 0.562, respectively. These findings show that the items are sufficient to converge on respective constructs.

Overall, the measurement model is of the utmost psychometric quality as measured against the list provided in the literature to verify that the construct of reputable influencer, parasocial contact, perceived homophily and prosocial behaviour have reached satisfactory indicators of reliability and validity and can be further used in the approach of the structural research based on the PLS-SEM. The table 2 encapsulates the discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 2. Discriminant validity

Constructs	**IR**	**PH**	**PSB**	**PSI**
HTMT Criterion				
IR				
PH	0.780			
PSB	0.628	0.668		
PSI	0.681	0.606	0.692	
Fornell Larcker Criterion				
	IR	**PH**	**PSB**	**PSI**
IR	0.813			
PH	0.755	0.822		
PSB	0.601	0.636	0.794	
PSI	0.620	0.549	0.619	0.750

Note: IR- Influencer Reputation, PH- Perceived Homophily, PSI- Parasocial Interaction, PSB- Prosocial Behaviour.

Discriminant Validity

Two complementary methods were used to test the discriminant validity, namely the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which proved that the constructs in the model are empirically separated to the others. The previous studies allege that a construct is supposed to share additional variance with its indicators over the variance of other constructs in the model. It is also supported by the square root of the measure of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of every latent variable (elements along the diagonal) to be larger than their associations with other constructs (off-diagonal answers). The values of square roots of the AVEs in the present analysis are IR (0.813), PH (0.822), PSB (0.794), and PSI (0.750). All these values exceed the corresponding inter-construct correlation values indicating discriminant validity. HTMT values were tested as well, since this method is viewed to be more credible and sensitive to identifying the issues in the discriminant validity of variance-based SEM [8]. The HTMTs of all the studies included in the present study were and are far below the conservative cut off point of 0.85, and definitely lower than the liberal cut off point of 0.90 (the highest values being 0.780 and 0.606 respectively). This is further evidence that the constructs namely, influencer reputation (IR), parasocial interaction (PSI), perceived homophily (PH), prosocial behaviour (PSB) are conceptually, as well as, statistically different. The fact that Fornell Larcker criterion and HTMT analysis both confirm that the discriminant validity has been achieved confirms that the use of these constructs as part of the structural model in the serial mediation analysis between the reputation of the influencer and prosocial behaviour through parasocial interaction and perceived homophily is adequate.

Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), and all hypothesized direct paths were found to be statistically significant, supporting the underlying theoretical framework. The results show that Influencer Reputation (IR) has a strong and significant positive effect on Perceived Homophily (PH) ($\beta = 0.998$, $t = 58.393$, $p < .001$), indicating that a credible and well-regarded influencer is likely to be perceived as more similar or relatable by followers, particularly in the domain of fashion a relationship widely supported in the literature [2][12]. The table 3 summarizes the hypothesis testing of the structural model.

Additionally, IR significantly predicts Parasocial Interaction (PSI) ($\beta = 0.620$, $t = 25.287$, $p < .001$), suggesting that influencers with higher reputational capital foster stronger one-sided emotional bonds with their followers, consistent with parasocial theory [21]. IR also directly affects Prosocial Behaviour (PSB) ($\beta = 0.574$, $t = 2.381$, $p = .017$), implying that followers of reputable influencers are more inclined to engage in socially beneficial online behaviors such as sharing, recommending, or supporting fashion-related causes.

Meanwhile, PH exerts a strong positive influence on PSB (β = 0.928, $t = 3.993$, $p < .001$), demonstrating that perceived similarity in fashion preferences significantly drives prosocial engagement, aligning with findings [15]. Furthermore, PSI significantly predicts PH (β = 0.070, $t = 2.381$, $p = .017$), indicating that emotional connections with influencers contribute to perceived similarity—supporting the serial mediation mechanism. Finally, PSI also has a significant direct effect on PSB (β = 0.465, $t = 7.433$, $p < .001$), suggesting that the emotional intensity of the parasocial relationship independently fosters prosocial tendencies. Taken together, these results confirm that all hypothesized direct effects in the model are statistically supported, providing empirical validation for the serial mediation framework linking influencer reputation to online prosocial behaviour via parasocial interaction and perceived homophily.

Table 3. Hypothesis testing results

Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
IR -> PH	0.998	0.999	0.017	58.393	<0.001**
IR -> PSB	0.574	0.585	0.241	2.381	0.017*
IR -> PSI	0.620	0.622	0.025	25.287	<0.001**
PH -> PSB	0.928	0.936	0.233	3.993	<0.001**
PSI -> PH	0.070	0.070	0.029	2.381	0.017*
PSI -> PSB	0.465	0.472	0.063	7.433	<0.001**

Note: ** and * denotes significant at 1% and 5% level.

Note: IR- Influencer Reputation, PH- Perceived Homophily, PSI- Parasocial Interaction, PSB- Prosocial Behaviour.

Table 4. Total direct effects

Total Direct Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
IR -> PH	0.143	0.144	0.019	7.526	<0.001**
IR -> PSB	1.175	1.187	0.231	5.086	<0.001**
PSI -> PSB	0.165	0.168	0.036	4.583	<0.001**

Note: IR- Influencer Reputation, PH- Perceived Homophily, PSI- Parasocial Interaction, PSB- Prosocial Behaviour.

The figure 2 is the structural model applied in the research to determine the relationship between Influencer Reputation (IR), Parasocial Interaction (PSI), Perceived Homophily (PH), and Online Prosocial Behavior (PSB). The model is graphically used to show the relationship between the constructs and the arrows which show direction of the relationship between the variables and the strength of both relationships. The arrows indicate the path coefficients with the numbers indicating the magnitude of the effect between any pair of constructs. The model is meant to test the hypothesized sequential mediation in which Influencer Reputation (IR) has an effect on Parasocial Interaction (PSI), which in turn has effects on Perceived Homophily (PH) which in turn affects Online Prosocial Behavior (PSB).

The table 4 shows the total direct effects of the structural model. The overall direct effects in the structural model indicate how much the important constructs affect the outcome variable, Online Prosocial Behaviour (PSB), in a scenario that includes the relation of fashion influencer-followers. The findings show that Influencer Reputation (IR) possess a strong and significant overall impact on Prosocial Behaviour (β = 1.175, t = 5.086, p <. 001). It shows that the reputation and trust of influencers serve as an essential antecedent of engaging their followers into socially preferable behavior online, including supporting fashion causes or encouraging their users to consume ethically; this conclusion correlates with the literature, which indicates the potency of reputable influencers in modeling the behavior of users online [17].

Likewise, Parasocial Interaction (PSI) significant with TFQ, but not TTP, shows a considerable overall impact on PSB (β = 0.165, t = 4.583, p < .001), which indicates that emotionally based one-sided associations of admiration developers have a meaningful contribution to the intentions of the followers to choose prosocial behaviors. This confirms the belief that emotional involvement among followers and influencers make them adopt the values and behaviors of the people when it meet online [21]. Also, there are significant overall direct effects of IR on the Perceived Homophily (PH) (β = 0.143, t = 7.526, p < .001) which confirms the fact that people find it more similar to those influencers who are reputable or have a good reputation. Such homophily could be a prelude to trust, identity identification and imitative actions, especially within interactions revolving around style in which style and lifestyle congruence are central to the taste [2]. Altogether, the results highlight the complex role of influencer reputation as the dimension interacting with parasocial connections on prosocial online behavior with perceived similarity as a linking dimension between the emotional engagement and behavioral intention.

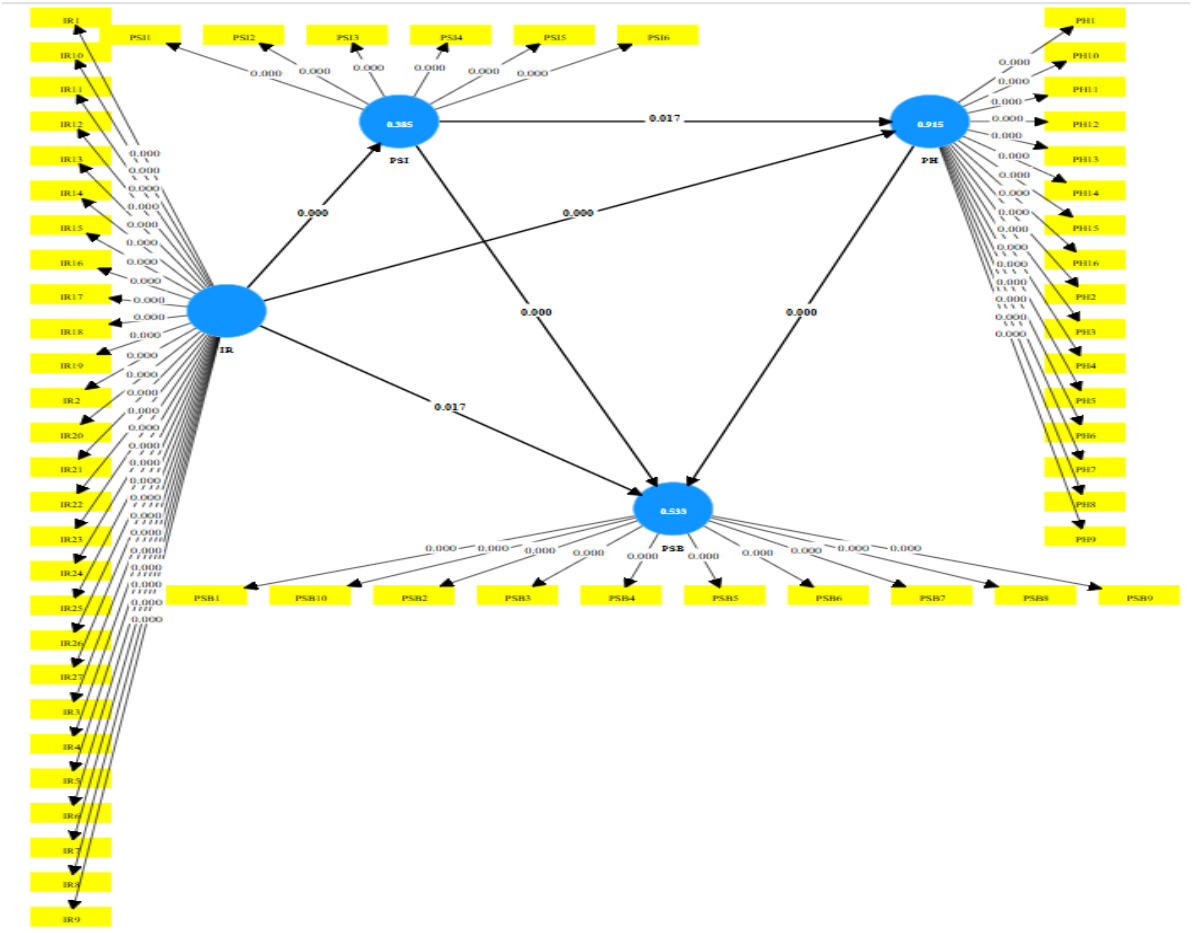

Figure 2. Structural model

Specific Indirect Effects

The table 5 condenses the specific indirect effects of the structural model. The discussion of the identified specific indirect effects has valuable implications regarding the mediating steps in the associations between the Influencer Reputation (IR) and Online Prosocial Behaviour (PSB). The findings show a number of substantive indirect effects in there being an association to be proved by parallel and serial mediation model hypothesis.

The highest strong indirect effect was found between the two paths of IR-PH-PSB (β = 0.927, t = 3.894, p < .001), and the mediation power of perceived homophily is very high. This is an indicator of the fact that followers tend to engage more frequently in prosocial behaviors in line with the influencers when it feel that there is a shared value, style or other characteristics (such as fashion) between the two parties

[15].

Table 5. Specific indirect effects

Indirect Effects	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
IR - PH - PSB	0.927	0.937	0.238	3.894	<0.001**
PSI - PH - PSB	0.165	0.168	0.036	4.583	<0.001**
IR - PSI - PH - PSB	0.104	0.142	0.023	4.521	<0.001**
IR - PSI - PH	0.143	0.144	0.019	7.526	<0.001**
IR - PSI - PSB	0.289	0.293	0.041	7.048	<0.001**

Note: IR- Influencer Reputation, PH- Perceived Homophily, PSI- Parasocial Interaction, PSB- Prosocial Behaviour.

Very similar results were found with the PSI as a mediator between the meaning of perceived homophily and prosocial behaviour; the relationship is consequently significant. This indicates the point that when an individual experiences emotional intimacy, it are prone to develop a sense of common identity, and when such a sense of common identity develops, it encourages them to act responsibly in society [2]. An interesting difference is the large serial mediation regarding the IR pathway of the IR - PSI – PH - PSB ($\beta = 0.104$, $t = 4.521$, $p < .001$). This proves that the reputation of the influencer instigates the act of parasocial reconnection that elevates the perception of homophily which culminates in prosocial behaviour. This layered mechanism highlights how both emotional connection (PSI) and cognitive similarity (PH) operate in sequence to influence follower actions. Additionally, the indirect effect of IR on PH via PSI ($\beta = 0.143$, $t = 7.526$, $p < .001$) is significant, reinforcing the role of parasocial interaction in shaping perceptions of similarity. The path IR - PSI - PSB also yielded a statistically significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.289$, $t = 7.048$, $p < .001$), emphasizing that emotional attachment alone is a strong driver of online prosocial behaviour. Collectively, these findings validate the conceptual model, showing that both parasocial interaction and perceived homophily serve as important mediators, functioning independently and sequentially, in translating influencer reputation into meaningful prosocial outcomes within the digital fashion space.

DISCUSSIONS

The present study investigated the relationship between social media influencer reputation and online prosocial behaviour, with a particular focus on the serial mediation roles of parasocial interaction (PSI) and perceived homophily (PH) in the context of fashion product endorsements. The results provide robust support for the hypothesized model, yielding both theoretical and practical implications. To begin with, the direct estimates indicated that the reputation of influencer (IR) had a significant effect on parasocial interaction ($\beta = 0.620$) and perceived homophily ($\beta = 0.998$). These results confirm that followers will tend to be emotionally bonded with the influencers whom it regards as reputable, credible, and trustworthy. This is in line with an earlier study where perceptions of credibility by the influencer through the perceived expertise and trustworthiness build-up bolder psychological ties [10][11]. The strong correlation of the variable combinations of IR and PH can also be referred to as the supporting assertions of the social identity theory and the similarity-attraction theory that argues that people are expected to be automatically attracted to people that it considers as reflecting similarity to them. The research also revealed that the positive effect of parasocial interaction (PSI) on the perceived homophily ($\beta = 0.070$) and prosocial behaviour ($\beta = 0.465$) is high. Such conclusions support the idea at hand that parasocial bonding is not only an emotionally involving experience but also a cognitively decisive one, as it informs the users about mutual values and identity [10][21]. The more the followers were in a strong parasocial relationship, the more probable the influencer appears as a familiar figure, therefore, more probable to imitate him or to support his prosocial activities. Perceived homophily (PH) was found to be the most powerful predictor of online prosocial behaviour (0.928) revealing the outstanding role of this element in this framework. This is aligned with previous studies that discovered that homophily was a strong indicator of consumer reactions within online communities, especially those that positioned fashion and lifestyle activities as primary equities [15]. When some of the followers feel that it is the same as the influencers, it will tend to exhibit socially responsible behaviors following the message of

the influencer, like promoting sustainable clothing or charity. The certain indirect impacts are informative as well. It is important to point out that the strongest indirect effect occurred through the path IR - PH - PSB (β = 0.927), highlighting that the homophily played the mediating role. In the meantime, the serial mediation model IR - PSI - PH - PSB (β = 0.104) significance was also visible but weaker because it indicated the presence of the multilayered mechanism in that the emotional connection (PSI) would be used to convert to cognitive alignment (PH) which could subsequently guide the prosocial behaviour. This is in line with sequential processing that had been argued by the dual-process theories such that the affective and cognitive paths jointly influence behavioral decisions. Interestingly, the other pathway, IR - PSI - PSB (β = 0.289), was also significant, which implies that the connection between reputation and prosocial behaviour is mediated with parasocial interaction as well, regardless of its connection to influencer reputation. It corresponds with the results of prior studies that even when viewed through the lens of the lack of similarity, emotionally evocative works of influencers can directly stimulate socially responsible behavior [2][19]. Collectively, the findings can be used in the literature of influencer marketing to demonstrate that reputation of influencers is not adequate to promote any online prosocial behaviour. Rather, feeling emotional similarity with the influencers (PSI) and thinking alike (PH) are important mediating factors with regard to followers. This is consistent with the emerging understanding in social media studies that affective and relational dynamics is at the center of digital influence [14].

The present research also adds value to the literature on influencer marketing on social media, parasociality, and prosocial consumer behavior by developing a number of theoretical implications. It increases the contribution of parasocial interaction (PSI), showing its direct and indirect impacts on prosocial behavior (PSB) online, specifically, perceived homophily (PH). The study emphasizes the fact that influencer reputation (IR) is not a mere status symbol, but a relationship trigger, and it appeals to both emotional (PSI) and cognitive-perceptual (PH) routes, which drive socially desirable consequences. The research also helps to comprehend the concept of homophily in online scenarios, which proves that the perceived similarity to influencers is one of the main mediating factors that contribute to prosocial behavior. Also, through the combination of parallel and serial mediation effects, the research enhances the mediation modeling theory in the PLS-SEM, as to show that digital influence is mediated by emotion-based and cognition-based mechanisms. From a managerial perspective, the findings provide useful knowledge to the marketers and brand managers. It can team up with reliable, credible influencers who advance socially responsible social processes such as sustainability and ethical fashion. The influencers are expected to connect emotionally with the followers, building more emotional connections by posting genuine content. Micro-influencers that share values relevant to the target audience can also be used by the brands. Finally, the brands must follow the social impact indicators, including the number of content shares and activities that drive a cause, to measure the actual coverage and success of the influencer campaigns.

CONCLUSION

This paper embraced the impact of social media influencer reputation (IR) on online prosocial behavior (PSB), moderated by the communication of parasocial interaction (PSI) and perceived homophily (PH) in a group of 459 male social media users who consume fashion influencers. The results of the statistical analysis showed that the reputation of influencers had a significant influence on perceived homophily (β=0.998, t = 58.393, p< .001) or prosocial behavior (β=0.574, t = 2.381, p =.017). Perceived homophily was found to be the most influential as it implied that followers tend to follow influencers who it thinks are like them in terms of style, values, and identity. The serial chain of mediation between the influencer reputation and the prosocial behavior through parasocial interaction and perceived homophily was found to be statistically significant, which supports the dual affective and cognitive processes of the influencer-mediated prosocial behavior. The present research is useful in the context of the literature on influencer marketing as it changes the emphasis to prosocial online behaviors instead of commercial performance. It offers good insights into the psychological processes behind digital engagement, with the focus on emotional (PSI) and cognitive (PH) processes contributing to prosocial behavior. The results highlight the need to work with recognized influencers who develop emotional feelings and perceived similarity to their followers in order to promote the socially responsible attitudes. Researchers in future can overcome the shortcomings of this cross-sectional research by using longitudinal designs

to monitor changes in the future. The results of the study would be generalized better were the range of influencers (such as health, technology), as well as the sample groupings, to be expanded to cover other, more varied groups of people. Furthermore, the investigation of the moderating variables, including the type of the influencer, the trustworthiness of the message, and the features of platforms, would allow gaining more in-depth understanding of the role of the characteristics of the influencers in stimulating prosocial behavior.

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