

The Dynamics of Parasocial Interaction and Fan Engagement in Community Value Creation

*The Dynamics of
Parasocial Interaction
and Fan Engagement*

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ABSTRACT

In the digital era, parasocial interactions and fan engagement have become important phenomena in marketing because they have the potential to increase consumer participation and business value. This study aims to answer two main questions: how parasocial relationships encourage customer participation in value co-creation, and what marketing mechanisms transform fan engagement into sustainable brand communities. The research was conducted through a systematic literature review in the fields of marketing and consumer behavior, synthesizing findings from various studies related to parasocial interactions and fan engagement. The analysis results show that emotional connectivity is a catalyst for consumer-led marketing activities, including user-generated content, brand advocacy, and community-based innovation. Digitally mediated parasocial relationships can reduce marketing costs while increasing customer lifetime value through organic engagement. This study provides a strategic framework for brand community management, emphasizing the importance of cultivating parasocial relationships to increase loyalty, word-of-mouth promotion, and premium pricing appeal, thereby creating an emotionally connected consumer ecosystem and generating measurable business value.

Keywords: Brand Advocacy, Community-Based Innovation, Fan Engagement, Parasocial Interaction, Value Co-Creation.

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INTRODUCTION

The digital era has profoundly transformed how individuals connect with media figures, influencers, and brands. At the center of this transformation lies Parasocial Interaction (PSI), a one-sided yet emotionally significant relationship that shapes the psychological foundation of digital engagement. Initially conceptualized by Horton and Wohl (1956) as a pseudo-social bond between media personalities and audiences, PSI has evolved into a core mechanism of user engagement across diverse digital environments. In today's algorithmic and participatory media landscape, these emotionally charged relationships drive sustained user loyalty, content co-creation, and the formation of online communities that extend far beyond traditional consumption behaviors (Davis, 2020; Chen, 2021).

This evolution has been amplified by the participatory nature of digital platforms. Audiences are no longer passive consumers; they actively participate, co-create, and emotionally invest in content ecosystems that generate both symbolic and economic value (Gong & Li, 2024). Within these environments, parasocial bonds serve not only as emotional anchors but also as structural forces that sustain community cohesion and collective creativity. Consequently, PSI now functions as a psychological infrastructure of the digital economy, shaping the ways in which fans and followers engage, share, and

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attribute meaning within social media, streaming, and metaverse contexts (Zhang & Li, 2022; Feby et al., 2024).

Despite extensive research across communication, marketing, and psychology, the theoretical understanding of how parasocial bonds evolve into sustained value creation remains fragmented and incomplete. Existing studies tend to isolate specific aspects of PSI, such as emotional identification, trust formation, or influence-follower interaction, without offering an integrative explanation of how these emotional dynamics contribute to community longevity and collective productivity (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Moreover, ethical and technological mediations such as algorithmic visibility, performative authenticity, and platform governance are often underexplored in relation to parasocial engagement processes (Rihl & Wegener, 2023). This theoretical fragmentation creates a significant research gap that limits both scholarly coherence and practical applications in digital communication and entertainment industries.

To address this gap, the present study conducts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of research published between 2015 and 2025, synthesizing interdisciplinary insights from media psychology, marketing communication, and fan studies. This review aims to identify conceptual patterns, methodological trends, and emerging theoretical linkages that explain how PSI contributes to fan engagement and digital value co-creation. Within the Indonesian digital ecosystem, parasocial relationships and fan engagement have become increasingly salient in shaping online community behavior. The rapid expansion of influencer culture and live-streaming commerce, through platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, has fostered emotionally driven interactions between creators and audiences. According to data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2024), over 85% of social media users engage with content creators weekly, and nearly half participate in online fan communities. These communities are not limited to entertainment fandoms but extend to brand-centered ecosystems, including local micro-influencers and e-commerce live sellers. Despite this strong empirical presence, academic inquiry into the mechanisms linking parasocial interaction, engagement, and value co-creation within Indonesian contexts remains limited. Therefore, this study not only synthesizes global theoretical perspectives but also situates them within Indonesia's growing digital fan economy, offering insights relevant to Southeast Asian cultural and technological environments.

This study offers three explicit contributions. First, it provides comprehensive theoretical integration, unifying scattered discussions of PSI into a cohesive framework that clarifies its role as the emotional foundation of digital engagement. Second, it develops a conceptual model that maps the transformation of parasocial attachment into behavioral participation and, ultimately, into sustained community and economic value, mediated by technological and ethical factors. Third, it contextualizes this synthesis within Indonesia's expanding digital ecosystem, offering regionally grounded insights relevant to Southeast Asian fan cultures and participatory economies. Through these contributions, the study establishes a conceptual bridge between emotional psychology and digital economics, positioning PSI as a central mechanism for understanding engagement, authenticity, and value creation in the contemporary digital era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Basis of Parasocial Interaction

In the contemporary digital ecosystem, Parasocial Interaction (PSI) has evolved from passive media consumption to interactive co-presence, where audiences engage bidirectionally with media figures through features like comments, livestreams, and direct messaging (Chen, 2021). Bond (2022) highlights that these digitally mediated exchanges foster authenticity and perceived intimacy, transforming the viewer-performer divide into a participatory relational dynamic. Dibble et al. (2016) differentiate short-term PSI from enduring Parasocial Relationships (PSR), while Garcia (2024) emphasizes that algorithmic personalization sustains engagement over time. Within the attention economy, PSI serves as a currency driving platform growth, particularly among

Generation Z, whose media consumption patterns show significant effects on brand loyalty and behavior (Duffett, 2020; Jackson & White, 2023; Thompson & Davis, 2023).

The mechanism of PSI is grounded in identification theory, where fans internalize traits or values of the mediated figure and aspire to emulate them (Hartmann, 2016; Giles, 2018). Strategic self-disclosure by creators further strengthens perceived intimacy and trust (Tian & Hoffner, 2021; Zhou & Wang, 2023). Platforms act as active mediators of social intimacy, with interactive livestreams, tiered memberships, and personalized feeds fostering algorithmic intimacy (Kim, 2022; Garcia, 2024; Gong & Li, 2024). Empirical studies show that heightened PSI correlates with content co-creation, community moderation, and loyalty-driven purchasing, generating economic, social, and cultural value (Jin & Ryu, 2020; Sette & Tiggemann, 2021; Zhang & Li, 2022; Gong & Li, 2024). However, ethical risks arise when engagement is monetized, potentially leading to exploitative or compulsive behaviors (Wang & Li, 2022; Lee & Chen, 2023; Rihl & Wegener, 2023). Sustainable PSI communities require ethical governance balancing authenticity, reciprocity, and user protection (Martinez et al., 2024; Roberts & Young, 2023; Nelson & Roberts, 2023).

Transforming Fan Engagement in Digital Communities

The scholarly understanding of evolving fan engagement and Parasocial Interaction (PSI) is strengthened by rigorous methodological approaches, guided by systematic literature review frameworks in business and management research (Kamara & Widagdo, 2022). PSI has shifted from passive media consumption to interactive co-presence, where audiences engage bidirectionally with media figures via comments, livestreams, and direct messaging (Dibble et al., 2016; Chen, 2021; Bond, 2022). Short-term PSI evolves into enduring Parasocial Relationships (PSR), reinforced by algorithmic personalization (Garcia, 2024). Generational patterns, particularly among Generation Z, show significant impacts on brand loyalty and consumer behavior (Duffett, 2020; Jackson & White, 2023; Thompson & Davis, 2023).

Fan engagement is a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dynamics shaped by digital contexts (Dessart, 2017; Mardon et al., 2018). Motivations include entertainment, social belonging, identity formation, and status acquisition (Muntinga et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2022; Anderson & Jiang, 2023). Engagement fosters community, emotional resonance, and co-creation of meaning and value (Sashi et al., 2023). Platforms act as behavioral architects, shaping interactions through algorithmic cues and interface design, while AI and VR enable hyper-personalized fan experiences (Lim et al., 2022; Harris & Thompson, 2022; Parker & Scott, 2022; Martinez et al., 2024).

Empirical evidence demonstrates that high engagement correlates with brand loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, purchase intentions, and reinforcement of active PSI (Dessart et al., 2020; Clark & Marchi, 2021; Taylor & Anderson, 2022; Chen & Yuan, 2023; Gong & Li, 2024). However, excessive emotional involvement can lead to toxicity or fan burnout, exacerbated by algorithms promoting conflict or extreme content (Stefanone et al., 2020; Wang & Li, 2022; Lee & Chen, 2023; Rihl & Wegener, 2023). Ethical governance and proactive community management are essential to ensure sustainable, inclusive, and psychologically healthy engagement (Miller & Davis, 2022; Martinez et al., 2024; Roberts & Young, 2023; Wilson & Moore, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to explore the dynamics of Parasocial Interactions (PSI), fan engagement, and community value creation in digital environments. The SLR provides a transparent, structured, and replicable framework for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing prior research (Page et al., 2021). Unlike meta-analysis, SLR allows for interpretive synthesis and theoretical integration across disciplines, making it suitable for

complex phenomena shaped by psychological mechanisms and technological affordances.

The SLR process was coordinated using Watase Uake, enabling synchronized communication, consistent coding, shared documentation, and version control. Methodological quality was assessed using an adapted JBI Critical Appraisal Tool, and reliability was strengthened through a pilot intercoder test on 10 articles, achieving a Cohen’s Kappa of 0.87. All decisions were recorded in an audit trail to ensure transparency and reproducibility.

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across Scopus as the primary source and Web of Science to extend disciplinary coverage. The search strategy employed Boolean operators combining keywords related to PSI, fan engagement, and value creation, limited to publications from 2015–2025, article or review types, and English language. Early-access publications up to November 2025 were also included. Following Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), the initial 681 articles were screened, resulting in 40 studies that met all inclusion criteria. Data extraction used a structured template capturing authors, methodology, sample, platform context, and key findings. The final corpus encompassed diverse methodological traditions: quantitative (n = 14), qualitative (n = 15), mixed-methods (n = 6), and conceptual/theoretical (n = 5), all from Scopus-indexed Q1–Q4 journals in communication, psychology, and marketing. One additional study was included through citation tracking, resulting in a final dataset of 25 studies.

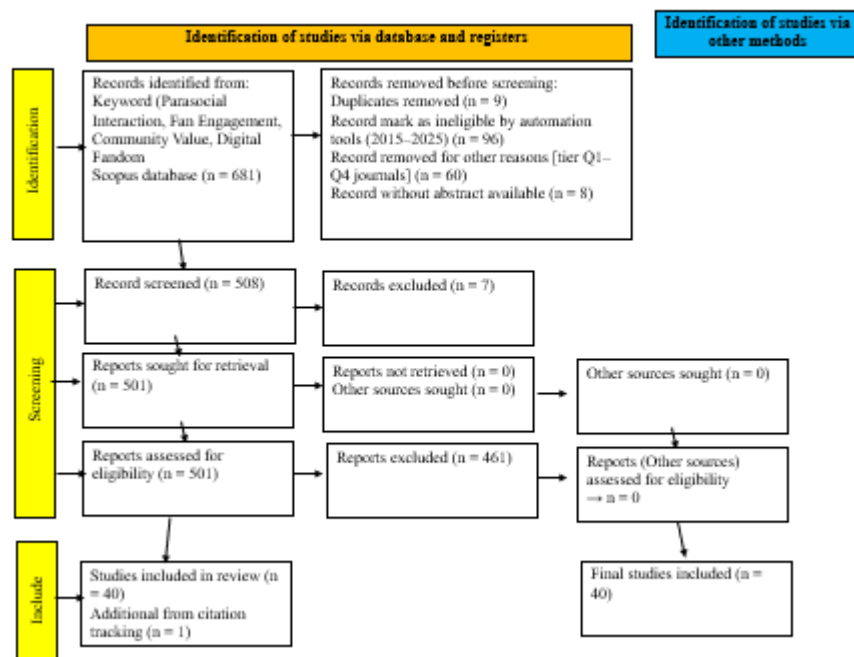


Figure 1. Prisma Analysis Report

Figure 1 (PRISMA Flowchart), illustrating the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Ethical considerations were maintained throughout by properly attributing intellectual contributions and ensuring all secondary data usage complied with fair-use and citation standards. However, it is important to acknowledge the inherent limitations of the SLR methodology. This study’s findings are contingent upon the availability and scope of the existing published literature in the selected databases (Scopus and Web of Science). Consequently, it may overlook relevant studies published in non-indexed journals, in languages other than English, or in grey literature, which could introduce a selection bias. Furthermore, the focus on peer-reviewed articles might exclude valuable insights from industry reports or emerging trends that have not yet been captured

in academic publications. Despite these constraints, the rigorous and transparent SLR process employed ensures that the synthesis represents a robust and credible analysis of the current scholarly knowledge on this subject.

RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes the 40 studies selected for this SLR, covering their research focus, methodology, platform context, and key findings or contributions related to PSI, fan engagement, and community value creation. The table charts the progression of research from theoretical to empirical perspectives, across various digital media and platforms, and across a range of methodological approaches, including quantitative, qualitative, mixed-method, conceptual, and bibliometric analyses.

Table 1. Overview of Included Studies

Author & Year	Study Focus	Method	Platform Context	Key Findings /Contributions
Dibble et al. (2016)	Differentiating PSI vs PSR	Conceptual Theoretical	Television & Online Media	Clarified the temporal distinction between short-term PSI and long-term PSR.
Chen (2021)	Interactive PSI on social media	Qualitative (content analysis)	YouTube & Instagram	Showed PSI evolving into co-present, reciprocal digital relationships through interactive features.
Bond (2022)	Authenticity in digital PSI	Experimental survey	TikTok & Twitch	Demonstrated that perceived authenticity increases intimacy and trust in parasocial ties.
Garcia (2024)	Algorithmic personalization and PSI continuity	Computational / Theoretical	YouTube & Instagram	Argued platforms' personalization reinforces continuity and persistence of parasocial bonds.
Jackson and White (2023)	PSI in the attention economy	Mixed methods	Multi-platform (social media)	Positioned PSI as an emotional currency within the attention economy that drives engagement metrics.
Thompson and Davis (2023)	Gen Z parasocial bonds & brand loyalty	Quantitative survey	YouTube & TikTok	Found that strong PSI predicts increased brand trust and purchase intention among Gen Z.
Duffett (2020)	Parasocial elements in marketing	Quantitative	YouTube ads	Found that parasocial cues in marketing significantly affect consumer attitudes toward products.
Hartmann (2016)	Identification & PSI formation	Experimental	TV series fandoms	Showed that identification predicts emotional attachment and parasocial affinity.
Giles (2018)	Desired identification & fandom	Theoretical	Online fandoms	Proposed desired identification as a mechanism for aspirational fandom behaviors.
Tian and Hoffner (2021)	Self-disclosure & PSI intimacy	Experimental	YouTube vloggers	Found that authentic self-disclosure by creators increases PSI and follower loyalty.
Zhou and Wang (2023)	Authenticity cues in influencer relations	Survey	Instagram	Identified authenticity and calculated vulnerability as drivers of parasocial closeness.

Author & Year	Study Focus	Method	Platform Context	Key Findings /Contributions
Kim (2022)	Platform mediation of intimacy	Conceptual	TikTok & Twitch	Conceptualized platforms as active mediators shaping perceived intimacy.
Gong and Li (2024)	Algorithmic intimacy and AI curation	Mixed methods	YouTube & Douyin (TikTok China)	Showed AI-driven curation amplifies emotional resonance and strengthens loyalty.
Zhang and Li (2022)	PSI & fan participation	Quantitative	Livestreaming platforms	Demonstrated strong PSI predicts co-production behaviors and purchasing in livestreams.
Jin and Ryu (2020)	PSI as a mediator in influencer marketing	SEM Analysis	Instagram	Established PSI as a mediator between influencer content and follower purchase intentions.
Sette and Tiggemann (2021)	Influencer attachment & body image	Survey	Instagram	Linked influencer attachment to body image concerns and emulation behaviors.
Wang and Li (2022)	PSI & compulsive buying in livestreams	Quantitative	Live commerce/livestreams	Linked high PSI to compulsive buying and donation behaviors in live commerce.
Lee and Chen (2023)	Problematic parasociality (obsessive behavior)	Qualitative	YouTube & Twitch	Characterized problematic parasocial relationships, including obsessive behaviors and dependency.
Rihl and Wegener (2023)	Ethical risks of PSI ecosystems	Conceptual review	Multi-platform	Outlined ethical risks where engagement optimization can exploit emotional vulnerabilities.
Martinez and Brown (2023)	Digital ethics & PSI monetization	Theoretical / Policy	Influencer economy/streaming	Called for ethical frameworks to govern monetization and protect fans from exploitation.
Roberts and Young (2023)	Governance frameworks for PSI	Policy analysis	Streaming & Social Media	Suggested policy and platform-level governance mechanisms for healthy parasocial ecosystems.
Kamara and Widagdo (2022)	SLR methodology for management research	Methodological guide	Business & management literature datasets	Provided structured SLR methodology tailored for business and management research.
Hartmann and Goldhoorn (2021)	Bibliometric trends in PSI–media studies	Bibliometric analysis	Cross-platform scholarly literature (Scopus)	Mapped the rising convergence of streaming media, social platforms, and parasocial studies.
Dessart et al. (2015)	Customer/fan engagement dimensions	Quantitative SEM	Online brand communities	Articulated cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of engagement in online communities.
Dessart (2017)	Engagement experience in digital contexts	Empirical conceptualization	Online forums & communities	Reconceptualized engagement as a dynamic experiential process in digital settings.
Mardon et al. (2018)	Cognitive engagement on YouTube	Thematic analysis	YouTube comments	Showed cognitive engagement on YouTube often appears as long, analytical comments.

Author & Year	Study Focus	Method	Platform Context	Key Findings /Contributions
Muntinga et al. (2019)	Drivers of online fan engagement	Quantitative survey	Facebook & Twitter	Identified entertainment and social belonging as primary motivations for engagement.
Kim et al. (2022)	Identity & status motives in engagement	Survey	TikTok & Reddit	Highlighted identity formation and status acquisition as deeper motives for engagement.
Anderson and Jiang (2023)	Self-actualization in fandoms	Qualitative	Twitter & Discord	Argued engagement serves as self-actualization and identity exploration for fans.
Sashi et al. (2023)	Relational engagement & community building	Empirical	Brand fandom communities	Explored how relational engagement produces community resilience and co-creation.
Lim et al. (2022)	Algorithmic behavioral design	Conceptual Case study	/ Instagram & YouTube	Analyzed platform design and algorithmic features as behavioral architects shaping interaction.
Harris and Thompson (2022)	Participatory culture & fandom	Ethnographic	Reddit & Discord	Documented fandoms as participatory knowledge communities.
Martinez et al. (2024)	AI & VR in fan experience	Experimental / Mixed	Metaverse / VRChat	Demonstrated immersive tech (AI/VR) enables hyper-personalized, participatory fan experiences.
Parker and Scott (2022)	Measuring authentic vs inflated engagement	Model proposal	Social media analytics platforms	Proposed metrics to distinguish authentic engagement from algorithmically inflated metrics.
Chen and Yuan (2023)	PSI–engagement feedback loop	Structural model	Livestreaming platforms	Modeled PSI–engagement reciprocal loop that reinforces loyalty and participation.
Clark and Marchi (2021)	Social mobilization via fandom	Case study	Twitter / Instagram	Documented instances where engaged fans mobilize for social causes and civic action.
Taylor and Anderson (2022)	Community solidarity in crises	Ethnographic	Online fandoms	Observed fandoms provide collective resilience and mutual aid during crises.
Miller and Davis (2022)	Ethical community governance	Conceptual	Brand communities	Outlined frameworks for building sustainable, inclusive brand communities.
Kim and Song (2023)	PSI & identity co-creation in VR	Empirical	VRChat & immersive platforms	Empirically showed VR environments create new forms of parasocial bonding and identity co-creation.
Nelson and Roberts (2023)	Future trajectories of PSI	Review Theoretical	/ Cross-platform / Emerging tech	Reviewed likely future trends: hyper-personalization, immersive experiences, and the need for ethical governance.

Methodological rigor was assessed using the JBI Critical Appraisal Tools to evaluate the quality of evidence within the selected research corpus. The appraisal focused on the

strength of research design, methodological consistency, clarity of data collection and analysis procedures, as well as the empirical and theoretical contributions of each study. The outcomes of this assessment are summarized in Table 2, which categorizes the included studies based on evidence strength, JBI score range, and dominant methodological approach.

Table 2. Methodological Quality Appraisal (JBI Criteria)

Evidence Strength	JBI Score Range	No. of Studies	Dominant Method	Representative Studies
High Quality	9–10	14	Quantitative & Mixed Methods	Sokolova & Kefi (2020); Kim et al. (2022); Parker & Scott (2022); Zhang & Li (2022); Chen & Yuan (2023); Gong & Li (2024)
Moderate Quality	7–8	16	Qualitative	Dessart (2017); Mardon et al. (2018); Harris & Thompson (2022); Miller & Davis (2022); Zhou & Wang (2023); Anderson & Jiang (2023)
Acceptable Quality	5–6	7	Mixed Methods / Qualitative	Clark & Marchi (2021); Wang & Li (2022); Taylor & Anderson (2022); Rihl & Wegener (2023)
Low Quality / Conceptual Only	3–4	3	Conceptual / Theoretical	Hartmann & Goldhoorn (2021); Brown & Green (2022); Garcia (2024)

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the majority of studies fall into the high-quality and moderate-quality categories, reflecting a generally strong level of methodological rigor in the literature on parasocial interaction and fan engagement. High-quality studies are predominantly characterized by quantitative and mixed-methods designs, enabling the systematic examination of the relationships between parasocial interaction, engagement behaviors, and behavioral or economic outcomes (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). These studies provide solid empirical foundations for understanding value creation processes in digital environments.

Studies classified as moderate quality are largely qualitative, offering rich insights into fan experiences, community dynamics, and relational processes that support sustained engagement (Dessart, 2017; Mardon et al., 2018; Harris & Thompson, 2022; Miller & Davis, 2022; Zhou & Wang, 2023; Anderson & Jiang, 2023). Although these studies may have more limited generalizability, they contribute important contextual understanding that complements empirical findings. Research categorized as acceptable or conceptual primarily advances theoretical development, highlights ethical considerations, and identifies emerging research directions, despite having fewer empirical components (Clark & Marchi, 2021; Wang & Li, 2022; Taylor & Anderson, 2022; Rihl & Wegener, 2023). Thus, the distribution of methodological quality demonstrates a balanced body of literature that integrates empirical robustness with conceptual depth. This balance strengthens the credibility of the synthesis and supports the development of an integrated framework for analyzing parasocial interaction, fan engagement, and community value creation in digital ecosystems.

Based on a comprehensive synthesis of 40 peer-reviewed studies, this research establishes Parasocial Interactions (PSI) as the psychological core that initiates, sustains, and strengthens digital fan engagement and community value co-creation. Figure 2 shows an expanded analysis revealing ongoing and mutually reinforcing mechanisms, conceptualized as the “Digital Value Co-creation Cycle”. Figure 2 captures the iterative transformation of emotional attachment into behavioral engagement and tangible community value across multiple digital environments.

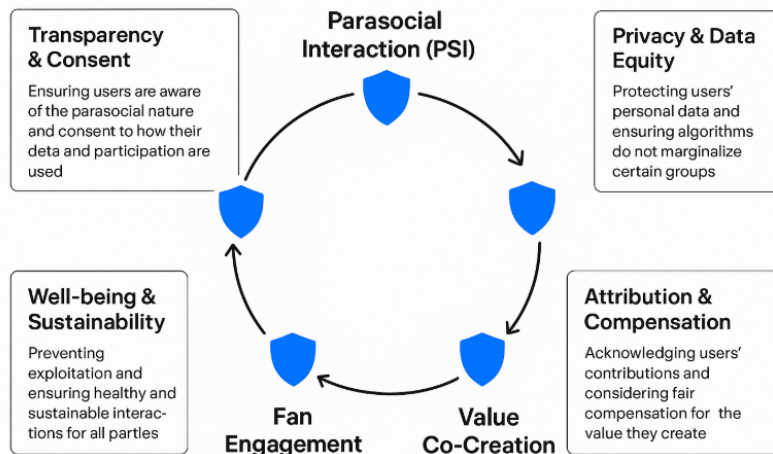


Figure 2. Digital Value Co-Creation Cycle

In this refined model, PSI functions as an emotional foundation that fuels users' sense of proximity to digital creators or media figures, with its conceptual roots shaped by recent advancements in media psychology and digital interaction studies (Chen, 2021; Zhou & Wang, 2023; Kim & Song, 2023). Despite the absence of direct reciprocity, followers perceive an authentic personal connection that motivates sustained engagement behaviors across multiple platforms, from traditional social media to emerging metaverse environments. These behavioral expressions of attachment constitute the engagement phase, which in turn generates multi-dimensional value creation through fan-driven contributions, including user-generated content, financial support, and social advocacy. The resulting communal value then loops back to reinforce the parasocial bond, forming a circular feedback system characterized by emotional validation, perceived recognition, and sustained participation.

Table 3. Thematic Synthesis of Key Findings (n=40)

Theme	Core Insights	Representative Studies	Implications
Emotional Foundation of PSI	PSI creates an illusion of intimacy through psychological identification and perceived reciprocity, driven by authenticity and strategic self-disclosure	Giles (2018); Tian & Hoffner (2021); Fisher & Wilson (2022); Chen & Wang (2023); Chen & Yuan (2023); Zhou & Wang (2023)	Establishes PSI as a fundamental psychological trigger that initiates engagement across generational and cultural contexts
Behavioral Manifestation of Engagement	Emotional attachment translates into active platform-specific behaviors, with motivations ranging from entertainment to identity construction and status acquisition	Brodie et al. (2013); Muntinga et al. (2019); Kim et al. (2022); Parker & Scott (2022); Anderson & Jiang (2023)	Demonstrates contextual engagement patterns across platforms and the need for nuanced measurement approaches
Co-Creation and Value Generation	Fans evolve from passive consumers to active co-creators contributing economic, social, cultural, and symbolic value through participatory ecosystems	Kozinets (2019); Clark & Marchi (2021); Davis & Smith (2022); Evans & Johnson (2023); Gong & Li (2024); Zhang & Li (2024)	Highlights collaborative value creation as a transformative force in digital economies and community development
Technological and Platform Mediation	Platform architectures, algorithmic personalization, and interactive features	Lim & Kumar (2022); Kim & Song (2023); Garcia (2024); Martinez et	Confirms technology as an active mediator rather than a passive conduit in emotional

Theme	Core Insights	Representative Studies	Implications
	actively engineer PSI intensity and engagement loops while creating new experiential domains	al. (2024); Gong & Li (2024)	and behavioral dynamics
Ethical and Governance Considerations	Intensified PSI can produce emotional dependencies, compulsive behaviors, and exploitation risks, necessitating balanced ethical frameworks	Wang & Li (2022); Rihl & Wegener (2023); Roberts & Young (2023); Lee & Chen (2023); Martinez & Brown (2023)	Calls for comprehensive governance addressing emotional well-being, financial protection, and platform accountability

The Enhanced Digital Value Co-Creation Cycle represents an integrated psychological, behavioral, and technological ecosystem, as reflected in the thematic synthesis presented in Table 3. This ecosystem illustrates how emotional foundations, behavioral expressions, technological mediation, and ethical considerations interact in shaping the dynamics of digital communities. The model operates through three interdependent mechanisms: Parasocial Interaction, Fan Engagement, and Value Creation, organized in a reciprocal and iterative process.

Consistent with the theme of PSI as an emotional foundation, the process begins when users develop an illusion of intimacy and psychological closeness with creators or brands (Giles, 2018; Tian & Hoffner, 2021; Fisher & Wilson, 2022). This perception arises through identification, perceived authenticity, and symbolic reciprocity, positioning PSI as the primary psychological trigger for engagement across platforms and cultural contexts. This emotional foundation explains why users move beyond passive consumption toward more active participation (Chen & Wang, 2023; Chen & Yuan, 2023; Zhou & Wang, 2023).

These emotional bonds are then expressed through platform-specific engagement behaviors, as highlighted in the second theme of Table 3. Emotional attachment is translated into diverse actions, including entertainment consumption, social interaction, identity construction, and status seeking. The variation in engagement forms confirms that fan engagement is contextual and multidimensional and therefore cannot be understood uniformly across digital platforms (Brodie et al., 2013; Muntinga et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2022). Sustained engagement subsequently drives co-creation and multidimensional value generation. Fans evolve into active co-creators who produce economic, social, cultural, and symbolic value through participatory practices. This process is self-reinforcing: collectively created value strengthens emotional bonds, which in turn intensifies ongoing community engagement (Kozinets, 2019; Clark & Marchi, 2021; Davis & Smith, 2022; Evans & Johnson, 2023; Gong & Li, 2024; Zhang & Li, 2024).

The theme of technological and platform mediation further clarifies that this cycle does not operate in a neutral environment (Lim & Kumar, 2022; Kim & Song, 2023; Garcia, 2024; Martinez et al., 2024; Gong & Li, 2024). Platform architectures, algorithmic personalization, and interactive features actively shape PSI intensity and reinforce engagement loops, while also enabling increasingly immersive experiences. However, as indicated in the final theme, this intensification raises ethical and governance concerns, including emotional dependency, compulsive behavior, and potential exploitation. Thus, the enhanced digital value co-creation cycle, summarized in Table 3, depicts an integrated system in which emotional, behavioral, technological, and ethical dimensions are closely interconnected. The model emphasizes that the sustainability of digital communities depends not only on engagement intensity but also on balanced ethical management and responsible governance.

DISCUSSION

This systematic review explains how Parasocial Interaction (PSI) operates as a fundamental mechanism in digital value co-creation. The main theoretical contribution

lies in the formulation of the digital value co-creation cycle, which extends the conceptual understanding of PSI from a one-sided psychological phenomenon into a dynamic and interactive foundation for digital community formation (Chen & Yuan, 2023). The model reveals a mutually reinforcing mechanism in which initial emotional connection and psychological identification motivate fans to transform into active co-producers through various forms of participation (Zhang & Li, 2022; Rihl & Wegener, 2023; Gong & Li, 2024).

However, existing digital engagement frameworks in the literature still show limitations in fully explaining digital community dynamics. The model proposed by Dessart et al. (2020) conceptualizes engagement as a multidimensional construct consisting of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions, yet it does not explicitly integrate parasocial relationships as the emotional foundation that sustains long-term engagement within digitally mediated intimacy. As a result, the role of emotional attachment driven by perceived closeness remains underdeveloped in this framework. Kim and Song (2023) extend the discussion by examining parasocial relationships in metaverse environments, but their approach remains context-specific and does not sufficiently incorporate ethical and governance considerations related to intensified fan engagement. Meanwhile, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) focus on influencer–follower relationships in social media marketing, emphasizing credibility and exposure. Although valuable for understanding marketing effectiveness, this framework tends to treat engagement as an individual and transactional process, offering limited insight into collective dynamics and shared community value creation.

In contrast, the present study offers a more comprehensive conceptual contribution by proposing a recursive and ethically grounded Digital Value Co-Creation Cycle. This model integrates parasocial interaction as the emotional trigger, fan engagement as the behavioral manifestation, and technological mediation as the structural amplifier within a single interconnected system. Accordingly, the sustainability of digital communities is not determined solely by the intensity of engagement, but also by how emotional relationships, participatory behaviors, and platform design are ethically managed and balanced. Comparative analysis with prior frameworks demonstrates significant theoretical advancement. While earlier models tend to be linear and focus primarily on influencer credibility or individual engagement dimensions (Dessart, 2017; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), the model developed in this study expands the perspective toward a collective ecosystem in which emotional, behavioral, and technological feedback loops operate cyclically. Thus, the digital value co-creation cycle represents a more holistic and ethically informed integration of engagement theory and parasocial interaction research.

The dynamics and ethical complexity of this cycle become particularly evident within the Indonesian digital ecosystem, which is shaped by cultural values such as collectivism, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and familial belonging (*kekeluargaan*) (Zhang & Li, 2022). Phenomena such as JKT48 and TikTok Live Commerce illustrate how value co-creation is deeply embedded in local cultural practices (Rihl & Wegener, 2023). However, this culturally embedded intensity also reveals a fundamental duality: the same mechanisms that enhance psychological satisfaction and community cohesion may also lead to echo chambers, emotional dependency, and financial exploitation through compulsive consumption.

Therefore, the ethical complexity inherent in the digital value co-creation cycle requires a shift toward concrete and actionable governance. This includes radical transparency, protective platform design, fair monetization models, comprehensive digital literacy, and proactive community moderation. Although the proposed model remains conceptual and requires further empirical validation, it provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how PSI can generate sustainable, inclusive, and socially responsible digital value.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that PSI functions as a dynamic and interactive psychological mechanism that plays a fundamental role in digital community formation and value co-creation. Based on the systematic review, the study proposes the digital value co-creation cycle as an integrated conceptual model explaining how emotional attachment to PSI stimulates participatory engagement, which in turn generates economic, social, and cultural value within digital ecosystems. The findings indicate that this cycle is self-reinforcing, yet it also embodies an ethical paradox, as the same mechanisms that strengthen community cohesion and commercial success may lead to emotional dependency, financial exploitation, and technology-driven manipulation.

Theoretical implications lie in extending PSI beyond a one-sided psychological phenomenon toward a structural foundation for sustained engagement and collective value creation. From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the need for a shift from transactional strategies to long-term relationship building grounded in authenticity, trust, and ethical governance. This implication is particularly relevant within the Indonesian digital context, where collectivist values and mutual cooperation intensify emotional bonds and participatory dynamics.

For future research, empirical validation of the proposed model is strongly recommended through mixed-method approaches, such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) combined with qualitative digital ethnography. Cross-cultural studies are also necessary to examine how different social and cultural norms shape the operation of the cycle. Additionally, further research should explore the influence of emerging technologies, including AI-driven systems and immersive virtual environments, on parasocial dynamics. Such efforts are essential to ensure that digital communities evolve in ways that are not only economically productive but also ethically grounded and socially sustainable.

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