Parasocial Relationship, Self-Disclosure, and Social Media Interaction of SB19 on Brand Loyalty of Generation Z Toward Selecta

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Abstract: SB19 continues to soar and receive various musical awards that help them gain its popularity. Provided brand endorsements, projects, and international concerts that rose after they received numerous recognitions worldwide, this study generally intends to apprehend parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, and social media interaction of SB19 on brand loyalty of generation Z toward Selecta. Employing a descriptive-correlational research design, necessary data were gathered using a modified questionnaire which was administered to qualified participants in a face-to-face manner. Generation Z participants were selected purposively, considering that they follow and engage with SB19 and are aware of its endorsements. Given the data, weighted mean, standard deviation, and correlational test were applied as statistical treatment. In keeping with the results, the study revealed that parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, and social media interaction are perceived high by the participants. That is, the participants think that they are comfortable and can be friends with SB19; see SB19 to express their emotions and opinions freely, revealing themselves; and believe that SB19 frequently interacts and exchanges comments and messages with them on social media, building a strong bond with them. Likewise, the study highlighted that the participants are loyal to the brand, telling others positive things about the brand. Meanwhile, parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, and social media interaction were all found to have significant, positive, and moderate relationship with brand loyalty. Hence, establishing a stronger relationship within a fan-driven industry through heightened engagement, true connection, and sincere conversation is vital in accelerating growth and in solidifying loyal customer-base.

Key Words: parasocial, self-disclosure, social media interaction, brand loyalty, SB19

1. INTRODUCTION

"*Gento! Gento!*" is a famous line from the song *Gento* by SB19 which was composed as an attempt to capture the group's journey. However, the members encountered harsh criticisms, specifically the bashing that the members received for being allegedly copycats of Korean pop groups. SB19 is a boy group based in the Philippines who has more than seven million followers on social media and over 100 million streams on Spotify. The group's popularity has been rising when they released their first English single, "Where You At" (Castro, Lee, & Scofield, 2023). Aside from the group's famous songs, "*Mapa*" also became the fifth most googled song in 2023 worldwide as per Esquire Philippines. The aforesaid song was used in

one of the biggest endorsements of SB19 for 2023 which is Selecta. With SB19's popularity, Selecta utilized celebrity endorsement as their marketing strategy by putting SB19's photocards on the product's packaging.

Pinoy-pop or P-pop continues to soar because it is visually appealing and trendy. With this, it catches the attention of listeners not only in the Philippines but also worldwide, affecting both music and fashion industries. Social media has accelerated the popularity of P-pop globally, making it easier for fans to engage with their idols. Just like its foreign counterparts, P-pop is a fan-driven industry that relies heavily on driving conversation and engagement online (Urutia, 2023).

The alteration of social media, together with the marriage of popular culture and digital platforms, have led companies to effectively use (Freire, Quevedo-Silva, & Scrivano, 2018) and enhance these celebrity endorsers' credibility, competence, and image, thereby establishing a much closer relationship with the consumers (Aw & Labrecque, 2020). The bond established between celebrity endorsers and the consumers is referred to as a parasocial relationship or the one-sided affection developed from a distance by consumers toward these personalities through frequent encounters (Dibble, Hartman, & Rosaen, 2016). Celebrity endorsers are constantly sharing and interacting about their experiences (Lacap, Cruz, Bayson, Molano, & Garcia, 2023) which give illusions to their followers that they know them on a deeper level (Derrick, Gabriel, & Tippin, 2008), especially with the prevalence of social media, which made communication easier with access not needing any permission (Kim & Song, 2016).

Social media allows celebrities and followers (i.e. consumers) to conveniently interact in an instant and provides an ideal platform for parasocial relationships (Burnasheva & Suh, 2021) as it is strengthened by a two-sided social media interaction between celebrities and their followers (Närvänen, Kuusela, Paavola, & Sirola, 2020). The massive influence of social media and the admiration of consumers for international celebrity endorsers can translate to brand credibility and loyalty if suitable marketing campaigns are implemented (Lacap et al., 2023).

Lacap et al. (2023) examined that social media interactions have a substantial, positive, and significant effect on self-disclosure. Moreover, self-

disclosure has a considerably significant and direct effect on parasocial relationships and was found to indirectly affect the link between social media interactions and parasocial relationships. The results further reveal that social media interactions and parasocial relationships predict source trustworthiness, leading to brand credibility and loyalty.

While rich in conceptual models and empirical studies, there is a notable gap in previous research on celebrity endorsement regarding an understanding of the factors or processes that affect how consumers perceive, understand, identify with, and build "relationships" with celebrity endorsers. There is also a lack of knowledge regarding the ways in which mediated experiences with celebrities (i.e., parasocial relationships) influence the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement (Chung & Cho, 2017). Only a few studies were conducted to show the relations of parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, and social media interaction on brand loyalty. Some studies or theories related to parasocial relationship and self-disclosure are outdated, giving the researchers a stronger need to conduct this study.

Provided the literature, this study generally aims to determine the relationship of parasocial relationships, self-disclosure, and social media interactions on brand loyalty of generation Z toward Selecta. Specifically, the study aims to obtain answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the level of parasocial relationship of the participants with SB19?

2. What is the level of self-disclosure of SB19 as perceived by the participants?

3. What is the level of social media interaction of the participants with SB19?

4. What is the level of brand loyalty of the participants?

5. Is there a significant relationship between parasocial relationship and brand loyalty?

6. Is there a significant relationship between self-disclosure and brand loyalty?

7. Is there a significant relationship between social media interaction and brand loyalty?

1.1 Theoretical Underpinning

Brand survives when consumers' commitment to patronize them continues. One way to sustain it is through celebrity endorsement. However, the challenge lies on selecting expert, trustworthy, and attractive endorsers, allowing the market to establish and strengthen their connection and engagement with the brand.

The conceptualization of the study is guided by several relevant theories, showcasing the significant association of varying characteristics of celebrity endorsers with the ever-changing attitudes and behaviors of the market such as loyalty. One notable theory is the meaning transfer model. McCracken (1989) highlighted that when a business entity becomes associated with a brand, the market assumes and behaves that the meaning related with another entity further applies to the brand. Accordingly, when endorsers promote a brand, it transfers meaning to the public, further creating value and significance. Altman and Taylor (1973) also argued, through their social penetration theory, that human connections and relationships are generally formed through providing personal information about oneself, such as feeling and beliefs, with another voluntarily. Further, match-up hypothesis theory supports the objective of the study as this implies that possessing attractive and likeable qualities, endorsers will be capable of improving the assessment of products and services, most especially if the qualities or characteristics "match-up" with the image that is portrayed by the endorser (Kamins, 1990).

Considering the literature, relevant points are made, highlighting the importance of evaluating endorsers' qualities and personalities in appraising the evaluation of products and services. Therefore, with the given theories, the researchers were able to postulate and hypothesize the following: (Ho1) parasocial relationship has significant relationship with brand loyalty; (Ho2) self-disclosure has significant relationship with brand loyalty; and (Ho3) social media interaction has significant relationship with brand loyalty.

1.2 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Lacap et al. (2023) conducted a study exploring the connection among parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, social media interaction, source trustworthiness, brand credibility, and brand loyalty. Considering the literature and the identified gap, the researchers consider the same, selecting parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, and social media interaction as predictor variables, further examining its relationship with the outcome variable, brand loyalty. These connections provide a direct link from the predictors to the outcome, giving a more straightforward insight. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study. These variables were evaluated in consideration of SB19 as the celebrity endorser and Selecta as the brand.
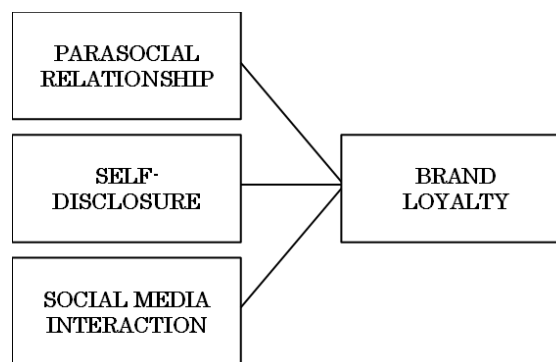

Fig 1. Conceptual framework of the study

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Sample and Data Collection

In keeping with the research questions, this study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. Descriptive approach was applied to assess the following level as perceived by the participants: parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, and social media interaction of SB19, and brand loyalty of the participants. Meanwhile, correlational approach was used, assessing the relationship between the variables.

Moreover, the perceptions of generation Z in Biñan City, Laguna were measured, considering SB19 and its Selecta endorsement. Other brands where SB19 are associated with were not considered. In connection with the sample size, a quota sample of 90 participants were set. Accordingly, the participants of the study only included generation Z who are between the ages of 18 and 26 years old, ensuring that they are of legal age and have the purchasing power. Utilizing purposive sampling technique, the participants must be aware of the Selecta endorsement of SB19 and

must have purchased the products of the brand, irrespective of its size, price, and flavor. They must also follow and engage with SB19 on social media platforms, including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. These platforms showcase advertisements of Selecta and where SB19 has accounts for posting and engagements. This ensures a more appropriate measure to evaluate parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, social media interaction, and brand loyalty.

Relative to gathering of data, the researchers collected information from the participants using an adapted survey questionnaire. The instrument is created using suitable questions, modified from a related study. The collection of data was conducted face-to-face to make sure the authenticity of the responses. The researchers provided a printed copy of the questionnaire and personally asked possible participants the gatekeeper questions, ensuring that qualifications are followed. The questions particularly pertain to their awareness of the Selecta brand and SB19 as its endorser. Once identified and their consent to participate was secured, the participants were asked to answer the statements with full honesty and based on their personal take and insights. After gathering the data, the researchers tallied and checked the responses. These were then treated with utmost confidentiality and were only used for the purpose of fulfilling the study.

2.2 Research Instrument

In providing answers to the research questions, a modified questionnaire from the study of Lacap et al. (2023) was used, measuring parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, social media interaction, and brand loyalty. The original study covered BTS as the endorser of a telecommunication company. For ethical consideration, the researchers obtained approval to utilize and modify the source questionnaire from the original researchers. In particular, the research instrument is composed of six parts. The first part is the informed consent, where potential risks or discomfort, benefits, and utilization of the study were discussed, followed by the second part which is the gatekeeper questions, guaranteeing that the participants are qualified to participate. The third part is composed of nine statements which intend to determine the level of parasocial relationship of SB19 as perceived by the participants. The fourth part presents three statements which intend to measure the self-disclosure of SB19. The

fifth part is composed of three statements to measure the level of social media interaction of SB19. Lastly, the sixth part is composed of four statements which are intended to measure the brand loyalty of the participants. A four-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of responses of the participants. Correspondingly, the scale of one (1) to four (4) represents: one (1) for strongly disagree; two (2) for disagree; three (3) for agree; and four (4) for strongly agree. The research instrument also underwent reliability testing with acceptable Cronbach alpha values (from 0.914 to 0.929).

2.3 Statistical Treatment of Data

This study utilized statistical tools for analysis and interpretation of data, such as weighted mean and standard deviation, Shapiro-Wilk test, and correlational test.

Weighted mean and standard deviation were utilized to determine the level of parasocial relationship of SB19, the level of self-disclosure of SB19, the level of social media interaction of SB19, and the level of brand loyalty of the participants.

Shapiro-Wilk test was employed to guarantee appropriate application of correlational test. This assesses the normality of the data distribution. According to Mishra *et al.* (2019), the test is a suitable approach for small sample sizes, which usually range from 50 to 2000. Likewise, this is considered a popular method, which is extensively used in evaluating normality. Particularly, when the test P-value is greater than 0.05, there is normal distribution of data; when the value is less than or equal to 0.05, the data is considered not normally distributed. Given the gathered data, the variables undertook normality test using Shapiro-Wilk and each variable resulted to a P-value of less than 0.001, suggesting that the attained data are not normally distributed.

Given the abnormal distribution of data, Spearman Rho correlational test was utilized to examine the significant relationship between the variables under investigation. In addition, this was also applied to assess the strength of the relationship of the variables: if the value is positive 1, it indicates a perfect positive correlation and if the value is negative 1, perfect negative correlation exists.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Parasocial Relationship, Self-Disclosure, and Social Media Interaction of SB19

Table 1 presents the level of parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, and social media interaction of SB19 as perceived by the participants.

Table 1
Parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, and social media interaction of SB19

VARIABLE	WEIGHTED MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	REMARKS
Parasocial Relationship	3.08	0.63	Agree High
Self-Disclosure	3.24	0.54	Agree High
Social Media Interaction	2.84	0.74	Agree High

Parasocial relationship. The result shows that the level of parasocial relationship with SB19 as perceived by the participants is interpreted as high (agree) with a weighted mean score of 3.08 and a standard deviation of 0.63. This conveys that the participants demonstrate a high level of parasocial relationship, making the participants feel comfortable, resulting to understanding the group well. The interpretation is intensified by the participants' responses to the statements, indicating that there is comfort and identification in a parasocial relationship wherein fans can understand the behavior of the celebrity and feel that the celebrity can understand the situation of the fans. The result of this study is aligned with the study of Kim and Song (2016) wherein it revealed that parasocial relationships positively affect the fans as it makes them comfortable and give the fans a perception as if they know the celebrities. Similarly, the study of Kim and Song (2016) highlighted that an endorser signifies a direct influence on the parasocial relations with their fans and consumers. In essence, high level of parasocial relationship is made when there is comfort and understanding in the side of the fan. That is, it is important to make fans feel that the celebrity can be their friend by being relatable and by serving as a reminder of the fans oneself.

Self-disclosure. As per the result, self-disclosure gains a weighted mean of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 0.54, showing a high level of self-disclosure of SB19 as perceived by the participants. Similarly, the present study agrees with the study of Kim and Song (2016), indicating that SB19 members reveal themselves by sharing their life and directly communicating about their experiences. In addition, the study of Lacap et al. (2023) shares the same insights that celebrity endorsers tend to share more professional life updates and personal experiences when interactions become more personal, intimate, and inviting. Considering everything, the researchers view self-disclosure as a tool for consumers to create or build relationship with their idols wherein the endorsers can reveal themselves by sharing feelings and emotions with their fans.

Social media interaction. Accordingly, the level of social media interaction of SB19 with their participants garnered a 2.84 weighted mean and 0.74 standard deviation, implies that the participants perceive that their social media interaction related to SB19 is high as the members engage and connect with them on social media. The present study is similarly discussed in the study of Lacap et al. (2023) as it highlighted that celebrity endorsers gain more trust and confidence among their followers when they constantly interact with them through social media. The responses to the statements proved that social media interactions of SB19 is high as the participants took part in liking, commenting, or sharing the posts of SB19 on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok.

3.2 Brand Loyalty

Table 2 presents the level of brand loyalty of the participants considering SB19 and its endorsement of Selecta products.

Table 2
Brand loyalty

VARIABLE	WEIGHTED MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	REMARKS
Brand Loyalty	3.12	0.57	Agree High

From the result collected, the researchers found out that the level of brand loyalty of the participants is high with a mean score of 3.12 and a standard deviation of 0.57. The participants' reactions to the statements revealed that they intend to repurchase Selecta products repeatedly and will encourage others through saying positive things about the brand, pushing them to purchase the products

endorsed by their favorite celebrity. This also signifies that they are willing to make extra effort to search for the brand to fill their needs. The present study is aligned with the study of Lacap et al. (2023) in which it highlighted that companies and products endorsed by Korean celebrities increase the brand appeal loyalty, wherein people are more likely to recommend a brand when they believe in it (Lacap et al., 2023). Generally, the current study similarly revealed that famous celebrities create brand loyalty with fans towards the product being endorsed by the said celebrity.

3.3 Relationship of Parasocial Relationship, Self-Disclosure, and Social Media Interaction of SB19 on Brand Loyalty

Table 3 presents the relationship of parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, and social media interaction of SB19 on brand loyalty of the participants.

Table 3
Relationship of parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, and social media interaction of SB19 on brand loyalty

VARIABLE	P-VALUE	SPEARMAN RHO VALUE	REMARKS
Parasocial Relationship and Brand Loyalty	0.001 *Significant	0.59	Moderate Positive
Self-Disclosure and Brand Loyalty	0.002 *Significant	0.46	Moderate Positive
Social Media Interaction and Brand Loyalty	0.001 *Significant	0.57	Moderate Positive

*Significance Level = 0.05

Parasocial relationship and brand loyalty. Based on the results, the relation between parasocial relationship and brand loyalty has a moderate correlation remark of which it garnered 0.59 correlation value and 0.001 P-value. The said variables have a direct relationship whereas as parasocial relationship increases, brand loyalty also increases. In addition, there is a significant connection between parasocial relationship and brand loyalty, leaving the researchers to see that there is sufficient evidence to support the hypothesis (Ho1). Accordingly, when comfort and understanding are established by the fans, their loyalty to the endorsers and the brand it promotes arises. The discussion of the present study is similarly revealed in the study of Thu (2022) whereas consumer brand engagement and brand loyalty are correlated with parasocial relationship. Moreover, the current study proved the argument presented by Lacap et al. (2023) that parasocial relationship is a factor that predicts source trustworthiness, leading to brand loyalty. All in all, parasocial relationship has a significant connection to brand loyalty in which as the consumer find the endorser relatable and comfortable, brand engagement is established, resulting in brand loyalty.

Self-disclosure and brand loyalty. As per the result, self-disclosure and brand loyalty have a moderate correlation wherein it has 0.46 correlation value and 0.002 P-value. Moreover, the said variables have a direct relationship in which as SB19's self-disclosure increases, the brand loyalty of the participants towards Selecta also increases. This signifies that when endorsers are seen to be more personal, genuine, and sincere with the things they share with their fans, the constancy and devotion to support the endorsers and its brand arises, leading to increased brand loyalty. With this, a significant relationship is evident, supporting the hypothesis (Ho2). The same results were obtained from the study of Hassan, Mydock, and Pervan (2016) which highlighted the correlation of self-disclosure and brand loyalty; whereas, the latter gives strategic advantages to the brand. With the direct relationship and significant correlation of the two variables, celebrities who share information with fans help the brand to be more effective and to gain popularity. As the celebrity endorser self-discloses, brand loyalty can be established according to the results of the study.

Social media interaction and brand loyalty. Considering the data presented, social media interaction has a moderate correlation with brand loyalty of which the relationship of the two variables has a 0.57 correlation value and 0.001 P-value. The relation of social media interaction on brand loyalty has a direct relationship wherein as SB19 increases their social media interaction with the consumers, brand loyalty also increases. In relation, there is a significant relationship between the two variables resulting to support the hypothesis (Ho3). The present study agrees to the discussions of Lacap et al. (2023) that social media interaction is a predictor of source trustworthiness that leads to brand loyalty. In

addition, the study of Bilgin (2018) also proved that social media marketing activities have been found as effective factors on brand image and brand loyalty. Generally, as the celebrity interacts with the fans on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, brand loyalty can be created.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, the study concluded high remarks for all the variables measured in the study. The participants positively reacted to the statements resulting to a high (agree) level of parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, social media interaction, and brand loyalty. All in all, the participants felt comfortable and understand the SB19 members quite well as they tend to build parasocial relationship with their favorite celebrities. The participants also believe that SB19 members express their feelings well and share opinions and emotions, also known as self-disclosure. Furthermore, this study highlighted that celebrities who have grown closer to their followers on various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram, can build emotional connections and attachments. Finally, as fans or consumers find a product being endorsed by their favorite celebrity, it establishes brand loyalty wherein customers recommend the product and encourage others to purchase the product being endorsed. Moreover, the connections presented in this study garnered moderate-positive remark wherein as the participants get the comfort and understanding that they feel from the celebrity endorser, it gives them the idea to purchase the product being endorsed by the celebrity and eventually create brand loyalty. Being relatable as perceived by the fans can build brand loyalty toward the product being endorsed by their favorite celebrity. In addition, sharing of personal information and affections including emotions, feelings, and opinions with the fans can also create brand loyalty toward the brand being endorsed by the celebrity. Another variable that can increase brand loyalty is social media interaction. That is, fans will frequently purchase products being endorsed by their favorite celebrity when the said endorser interacts with them on various social media platforms.

Given the conclusion, this study anticipates to provide relevant insights about parasocial relationship, self-disclosure, social media interaction, and their connection to brand loyalty. However, the researchers encountered difficulties in areas that need improvement. For research sample, the researchers vouch for a larger sample size, a wider age range, or a new generation to analyze a broader and more diverse data. The researchers also suggest to use a more popular endorser or a more affordable product to measure the brand loyalty of the participants by providing a specific number of purchases made by them. The participants of the study can also be improved by setting distinct limitations to make sure that the data collected are bona fide and utilitarian. With the said recommendations, the researchers aspire to help the marketers and academicians obtain useful information, and assist future researchers to measure the similarities, analyze the dissimilarities, and improve their study.

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