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Understanding The Role of Attractiveness and Parasocial Interaction on Hedonics Consumption: Cognitive Assimilation as Mediating

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Abstract

In the digital era, technological advancement has provided many benefits to the public in all aspects of life, including consumption. One example is the live-streaming phenomenon practised by beauty influencers. Live streaming is a feature that allows beauty influencers to communicate in real-time with their viewers. Gorgeous people are more liked and admired by others. Attractiveness and parasocial contact can affect hedonic consumption. The study distributed questionnaires to 205 social media users familiar with TF and who have used or previously used a product from brand X, particularly those who live in the Sukoharjo area. Based on the analysis using SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) and SMART PLS (Partial Least Squares), this study found that: 1. Attractiveness is positively associated with cognitive assimilation; 2. Attractiveness is not associated with hedonic consumption; 3. Cognitive assimilation positively influences hedonic consumption; 4. Parasocial interaction is positively connected to cognitive assimilation; 5. Parasocial interaction is positively associated with hedonic consumption; 6. Cognitive assimilation fully mediates the relationship between attractiveness and hedonic consumption, and similarly, cognitive assimilation also partially mediates the effect of parasocial interaction on hedonic consumption.

Keywords: Attractiveness, Parasocial Interaction, Hedonic Consumption, Cognitive Assimilation.

JEL Classification: M42, M48

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1. Introduction

In this digital age, this is a step forward. Technology has greatly aided people in many facets of life, including material consumption. One example is the frequent use of live streaming by beauty influencers such as T.F. Live streaming is a feature that allows beauty influencers to communicate in real-time with their viewers.

T.F. is a well-known beauty influencer of Arab heritage in Indonesia. He has millions of social media followers and frequently does live streaming to propose cosmetic goods to his viewers. Through the live broadcasting feature, TF frequently promotes beauty products from Company X to his admirers. Beauty influencers' recommendations of beauty products might affect customer purchasing decisions. Consumers frequently regard beauty influencers as someone they can trust and who share their preferences.

The proximity of beauty influencers and their audiences is referred to as parasocial contact. Parasocial interaction is a connection between individuals and public figures in one direction, where the individual feels recognized and has a relationship with a public figure that, despite never meeting directly, they share. Consumers' sentiments of closeness to beauty influencers can be increased through parasocial engagement, improving consumer purchasing decisions (Kim et al., 2017).

Aside from parasocial connection, attractiveness is another factor that could affect consuming hedonists. Attractiveness is the ability to draw physical possessions from another person. Physically appealing people are more liked and admired by others. Attractiveness and parasocial contact can affect hedonic consumption. Hedonic consumption is defined as consumption done for the sake of pleasure or satisfaction. Previous studies show that attractiveness can boost hedonic consumption via cognitive assimilation. Adapting new information to previously held beliefs or ideals is known as cognitive assimilation. Through the cognitive assimilation process, attractiveness might boost hedonic consumption. This is because attractiveness can boost consumers' self-confidence and self-esteem (Nugroho and Irawan, 2023).

According to the aforementioned description, the study aims to investigate how cognitive absorption mediates the effects of beauty and parasocial contact on consuming hedonism. Cognitive assimilation is adjusting to new information gained with confidence or current trust.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The SOR (Stimulus Organism Response) theory is a psychological and communicative framework explaining the relationship between an individual's conduct and environment (Sondang P. Siagian, 2018). Well-done television advertisements highlighting the products' unique qualities and providing a strong stimulant can affect how consumers perceive them. According to Muhammad Ilham's (2022) research, social media efforts can influence public opinion. The results of this study show that social media campaigns that are both highly stimulating and tailored to people's needs can successfully affect changes in public opinion. Using the SOR theory, we may better understand how communication influences people's actions, perspectives, and attitudes. Processing can start once the recipient's brain takes the communicator's input. The communicator's knowledge, experience, and attitudes, which are internal qualities, impact the process. After processing the stimulus, the recipient produces a reaction.

According to Ohanian (1990), attractiveness measures the endorser's physical appeal. Attractiveness is a multifaceted and subjective notion encompassing a range of physical, emotional, and social elements. The study conducted by Wijaya in 2023 showed that attractiveness, trustworthiness, and celebrity endorsement expertise positively impact the intention to purchase a product. Fathurrahman

(2023) discovered that the appeal and trustworthiness of celebrity endorsers had a favourable impact on the intention to purchase and the ability to remember advertisements. According to Gusniar's 2023 study, beauty vloggers' attractiveness, dependability, and skill positively influenced consumers' propensity to buy beauty products.

Parasocial contact encompasses the interactive relationship between individuals and notable media figures, whether celebrities, influencers, or fictional characters. Parasocial interaction creates a perceived connection between viewers and online content creators via social media platforms, especially live streaming. Parasocial contact had a favourable impact on purchase intention, especially among people who have a strong dependency on social media, according to research by Xu, Q., Wang, and Chen (2022). Kim and Kang (2021) found that perceived value acts as a mediator in the favourable impact of parasocial contact on purchase intention. Lee and Lee's research (2021) discovered that parasocial contact had a favourable impact on purchase intention, particularly among people with high levels of self-confidence.

Hedonic consumption refers to techniques that explicitly communicate the benefits of a purchasing experience, such as pleasure and unique acquisitions. The reference originates from Samuel's publication in 2005. Hedonic consumption influences purchasing intention favourably, according to a 2022 study by Kim, H. Lee, and Hong. Moreover, this effect is particularly noticeable among those with an elevated self-congruity. Jang and Kim (2021) found that perceived value mediates the relationship between hedonic consumption and buying intention. Lee and Kim (2021) found that hedonic consumption positively influences purchase intention, particularly among individuals with elevated levels of self-confidence.

Cognitive assimilation is how humans adapt and incorporate new knowledge into their previous ideas and values. This process can occur in several situations, including perception, the acquisition of knowledge, and the act of making decisions. Lee and Kim (2022) found that cognitive absorption positively influences purchase intention, particularly in individuals with a strong sense of self-congruity. Cognitive absorption favoured purchase intention, especially among people familiar with the brand (Ahearne, MJ, Jones, and Mothersbaugh, 2022).

The research review demonstrates that beauty, parasocial interaction, and cognitive integration have the potential to impact hedonic consumption. Enhancing one's physical appeal can lead to greater engagement with media personalities, which in turn can heighten the enjoyment derived from consuming pleasurable goods and experiences. In addition, attractiveness can indirectly enhance hedonic consumption through parasocial interaction.

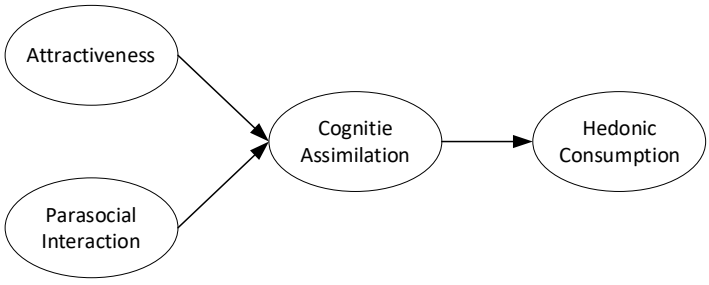

Figure 1. Modification of the Research Model (Source: Xiaoyu Xu et al., 2019)

This research was conducted based on previous research regarding the Influence of Attractiveness and Parasocial Interaction on Hedonic Consumption Mediated by Cognitive Assimilation. The hypothesis proposed in this research is as follows:

1. Hypothesis 1. Attractiveness is positively related to cognitive assimilation.
2. Hypothesis 2. Parasocial Interaction is positively related to Cognitive Assimilation.
3. Hypothesis 3. Cognitive Assimilation is positively related to Hedonic Consumption.
4. Hypothesis 4. Attractiveness is positively related to Hedonic Consumption.
5. Hypothesis 5. Parasocial Interaction is positively related to Hedonic Consumption.
6. Hypothesis 6. Attractiveness mediates a significant influence on cognitive assimilation on hedonic consumption.
7. Hypothesis 7. Parasocial Interaction mediates a significant influence on cognitive assimilation on hedonic consumption.

3. Data and Methodology

3.1. Research methods

According to Winarno (2017), research methods are scientific activities using careful and systematic techniques. In other words, a research method is a systematic and planned way to collect and analyse data to solve research problems. The importance of research methods is to ensure that research is carried out systematically and objectively and can be accounted for. Appropriate research methods will help researchers to obtain valid data that can be used to answer research questions.

3.2. Data source

The research collected primary data through the use of a questionnaire. A thorough analysis of surveys' primary data is necessary for reliable and transparent conclusions.

3.3. Data collection technique

The research employed a primary data-gathering strategy through the use of a questionnaire. The basic data-gathering method with a questionnaire involves asking respondents questions or written statements to elicit replies about a specific topic or variable.

Primary data refers to information gathered directly from original or initial sources. Researchers collect this data to address specific research questions, typically through interviews or surveys. Bahri (2018:92) defines a questionnaire as a method of gathering data in which respondents are presented with questions or written statements to react to. A survey was administered to 205 participants who were active social media users familiar with the beauty influencer TF and had knowledge or experience with products from brand X.

3.4. Data analysis technique

The study utilizes two statistical analysis methodologies: descriptive and data analysis with SEM (structural equation modelling) and SMART PLS (partial least squares). These strategies are employed to analyze conceptual or theoretical models in the research. The second approach is utilized to assess the correlation between the model variables and evaluate the hypotheses proposed in the research. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a statistical method that uses multivariate analysis to investigate the relationships between variables in a model. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) allows researchers to analyze and assess both the specific cause-and-effect relationships between variables in a model and the overall accuracy of the model. SEM allows researchers to analyze complex models with multiple variables and complicated interactions.

SMART PLS is a statistical analytic technique employed to evaluate models or theoretical notions in research. The Partial Least Squares (PLS) methodology examines the correlation between the variables in the model. SMART PLS enables researchers to analyze intricate models with numerous variables and interactions and conduct analyses with relatively small sample sizes.

These two methodologies provide distinct benefits and drawbacks, and selecting the appropriate method relies on the study objectives and the attributes of the data employed. Nevertheless, both methods can yield precise and dependable outcomes when evaluating models or theoretical notions in a study.

3.5. Variable Measurement

This research presents all measurement items used to collect data from respondents. This research used 19 research instruments presented in the table below. Attractiveness was measured with five items adapted from Handika et al. (2018). Parasocial Interaction was measured with five items adapted from Istiqomah et al. (2020). Hedonic Consumption with five items adapted from Utami et al. (2018). Meanwhile, Cognitive Assimilation with four items adapted from Nurcahyani et al. (2022). The following table displays information regarding the measurement instruments for this research.

Variables	Number of Items	Source
Attractiveness	5	Handika et al. (2018)
Parasocial Interaction	5	Istiqomah et al. (2020)
Hedonic Consumption	5	Utami et al. (2018)
Cognitive Assimilation	4	Nurcahyani, et al. (2022)

4. Results and Discussion

Data was retrieved from a questionnaire given to consumers who know TF and know or once used products from brand X, particularly the public who lives in the Sukoharjo area. Respondent requested to answer 1 9 question items related to the Influence of Attractiveness and Parasocial Interaction on Hedonic Consumption Mediated by Cognitive Assimilation. After collecting data, researchers analyze data to get a percentage of The Influence of Attractiveness and Parasocial Interaction on Hedonic Consumption Mediated by Cognitive Assimilation.

4.1. Inner Model

We tested the hypothesis using the technique of Partial Least Square (PLS) data analysis with the SmartPLS 3.2.9 program. Following schematic of the PLS program model being tested:

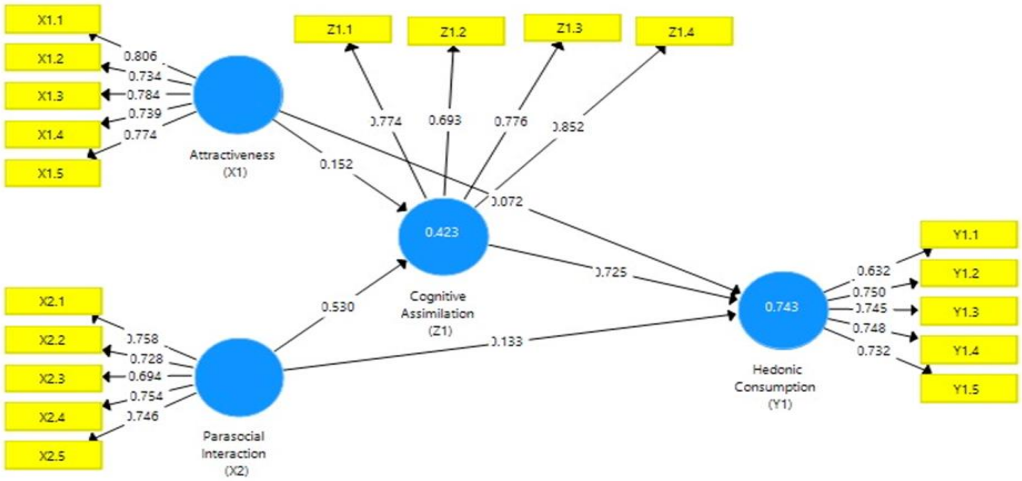

Figure 2. Outer Model

The outer model is examined to ascertain the specification link between latent variables and their indicators. This testing encompasses the assessment of validity, reliability, and multicollinearity. The analysis of the outer model includes:

Convergent Validity

An indicator exhibits satisfactory convergent validity if its outer loading value exceeds 0.7. The subsequent values represent the outer loading for each indicator on the variables under investigation. The ensuing outcomes present the results of the Outer Model Test.

Table 1
Outer Model Test Results (Instrument Test)

Variables	Cross Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Attractiveness		0.826	O,878	0.590
X1.1	0.806			
X1.2	0.734			
X1.3	0.784			
X1.4	0.739			
X1.5	0.774			
Parasocial Interaction		0.789	0.855	0.542
X2.1	0.615			
X2.2	0.605			
X2.3	0.515			
X2.4	0.503			
X2.5	0.513			
Hedonic Consumption		0.771	0.845	0.523
Y1.1	0.492			
Y1.2	0.476			
Y1.3	0.290			
Y1.4	0.471			
Y1.5	0.341			
Cognitive Assimilation		0.778	0.852	0.602
Z1.1	0.420			
Z1.2	0.379			
Z1.3	0.378			
Z1.4	0.505			
Z1.4	0.718			

Source: Processed primary data, (2023)

The presented table exhibits various study variables with external loading values surpassing 0.7. According to Chin (1998), a measurement scale is considered suitable for ensuring convergent validity if its loading values fall within the range of 0.5 to 0.6. According to the data provided, all indicators of the variables have outer loading values greater than or equal to 0.5. Thus, all indications are considered appropriate and reliable for examination, making them suitable for subsequent research. To assess its validity through convergent validity, one can analyze the outer loading value. Alternatively, verifying if

the AVE (average variance extracted) value exceeds 0.5 is possible, as Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommended.

The AVE values for all variables in the study surpass 0.5, as illustrated in the table. Each variable in the study possesses a distinct value: beauty (0.590), parasocial contact (0.542), cognitive absorption (0.602), and hedonic consumption (0.532). These results indicate that the discriminant validity of each variable in this study is considered satisfactory.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity assessments involve examining cross-loading values. To establish the discriminant validity of a measure, its cross-loading value on a particular variable should surpass that of any other variable (Chin, 1998). The table shows that each variable in the study exhibits the highest cross-loading value for its respective variable compared to the other variables. The findings from our research suggest that the indicators employed in this study possess a significant level of discriminant validity in assessing the variables under investigation.

Reliability Test

In line with Abdullah and Hartono's (2015) findings, the research instruments and measurement tools are established when consistently measuring a concept or construct. This study assessed the dependability of research measures using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. An approach to gauging the reliability of indicators within a given variable is by examining their composite dependability. If the composite reliability value for a variable exceeds 0.7, it is considered to possess composite reliability.

As per the data provided in the table, the overall dependability of the research variables surpasses 0.7. Each dimension—beauty value, parasocial interaction, hedonic consumption, and cognitive assimilation—registers a score ranging from 0.845 to 0.857. Based on these results, it can be inferred that every variable has achieved composite reliability, indicating their high level of reliability.

Cronbach's Alpha

The reliability evaluation in the subsequent analysis employs Cronbach's Alpha as its metric. Statisticians utilize Cronbach's Alpha to assess instruments' or psychometric data's internal consistency and reliability. According to Cronbach (1951), a construct is considered reliable only if its Cronbach alpha value exceeds 0.60. After this investigation's application of Cronbach's Alpha, the resulting values are as follows. All variables in the study exhibit Cronbach alpha values surpassing 0.6, as depicted in the table. Given that the construct as a whole satisfies the reliability criterion, the Cronbach alpha value provides support for its credibility.

Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity can be assessed by examining the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance value. Detection of multicollinearity involves checking the VIF value, which ideally should be below 5, or employing a threshold for the tolerance value, typically set at more than 0.1. Currently, the VIF value for the study is indicated as follows:

Table 2. Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

	Cognitive Assimilation (Z1)	**Hedonic Consumption (Y1)**
Attractiveness (X1)	2.241	2.281
Parasocial Interaction (X2)	2.241	2.728
Hedonic Consumption (Y1)		
Cognitive Assimilation (Z1)		1.734

Source: Primary data processing, (2023)

Based on the table provided, the Collinearity Statistics (VIF) findings indicate that all variables have a cutoff value of more than 0.1 or a VIF value of less than 5. This indicates that there is no violation of the multicollinearity test.

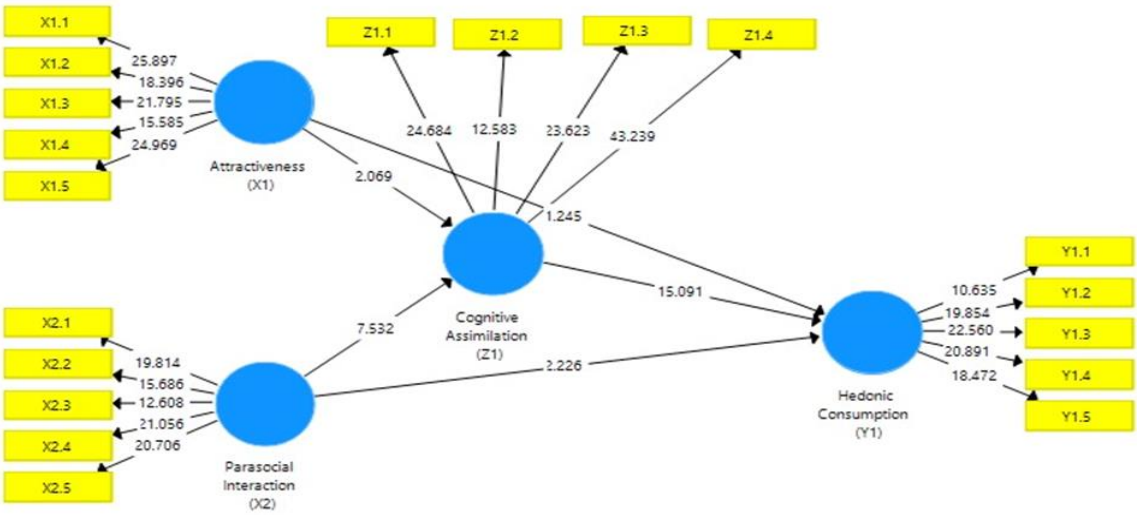

Figure 2 Inner Model

Inner models evaluate the connection between a singular latent variable and other latent variables. The inner models can be assessed through three analyses: measuring the R2 value (R-square), evaluating the Goodness of Fit (Gof), and examining the path coefficients.

4.2. Inner Model Analysis

Model goodness of fit test

The structural model analysis provides a better comprehension of the interconnectedness among the primary predictor, intermediate, and outcome variables, encompassing their observable and latent elements. The model's goodness-of-fit is assessed through two distinct tests, namely R-Square (R2) and Q-Square (Q2). Evaluating the R2 or R-Square value allows for quantifying the impact of the exogenous variable on the endogenous variable. A higher R2 value signifies a greater degree of determination. Ghozali (2015) states that models with R2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are classified as strong, moderate, and weak, respectively. Presented below are the computed coefficients of determination derived from this study.

Table 3. R-Square Value

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Cognitive Assimilation (Z1)	0.423	0.418
Hedonic Consumption (Y1)	0.743	0.740

Source: Processed primary data, (2023)

According to the table given before, the R-square is used to evaluate the degree to which the variables attractiveness and parasocial interaction affect cognitive assimilation. The R-square value is precisely 0.423, which is comparable to 42.3%. This result indicates a strong connection and a significant influence. In addition, the R-Square measures the extent to which the variables of attractiveness and parasocial interaction affect cognitive assimilation, resulting in a value of 0.743, or 74.3%. This indicates a strong correlation between the variables.

After that, the structural model analysis's Q2 value is examined using the Q-Square test to determine the predictive relevance. One measure of how well the model and its parameters produce the observed data is the Q2 value. When the Q2 value is more than 0, the model is predictively significant; when it is less than 0, it is not. Here are some examples of the calculated Q-squared value: Kindly share the results of the Q-squared test.

Q-Square = 1 – [(1 – R21) x (1 – R22)]
= 1 – [(1 – 0.423) x (1 – 0.743)]
= 1 – (0.577 x 0.257)
= 1 – 0.148289
= 0.851711

The analysis resulted in a Q-Square value of 0.851711. The study data explains 85% of the variation in the diversity value, whereas the remaining 15% is due to external factors that were not considered in the research model. Hence, the research model is constructed based on the computation of these results. This can be characterized as possessing a significant degree of congruence.

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

A more effective way to test hypotheses is to utilize the value of a table's coefficients to determine how much a certain indirect impact affects a direct effect. The bootstrapping method is used to evaluate the route coefficient by looking at the original sample values and t-statistics or p-values (critical ratio). If the p-value is less than 0.05, the variables are significantly related; otherwise, there is no significant relationship. Concerning the subject of study, A t-statistic of 1.96 indicates that this value is statistically significant at the 5% significance level. A t-statistic value higher than 1.96 indicates a statistically significant effect. We used the SmartPLS (Partial Least Square) 3.0 software to test the hypotheses. Evaluation of the value of the coefficient in relation to the outcome trajectory.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing

	Hypothesis	**Original Value**	**T-Statistics**	**P Values**	**Information**
Attractiveness _(X1) -> Cognitive Assimilation_(Z1)	H1	0.152	2.069	0.039	Supported
Attractiveness_(X1) -> Hedonic Consumption_(Y1)	H2	0.072	1.245	0.214	Not Supported
Cognitive Assimilation_(Z1) -> Hedonic Consumption _(Y1)	H3	0.725	15.091	0,000	Supported
Parasocial Interaction_(X2) -> Cognitive Assimilation_(Z1)	H4	0.530	7.532	0,000	Supported
Parasocial Interaction_(X2) -> Hedonic Consumption_(Y1)	H5	0.133	2.226	0.026	Supported

Source: Primary data processing, (2023)

Based on Table 4, the interpretation is as follows:

1. The first test postulates that attractiveness positively and significantly impacts cognitive assimilation. The table presents t-statistics of 1.872, which indicates a statistically significant effect size of 0.152, with a p-value of 0.039. With a t-statistic value over 1.96 and a p-value below 0.05, we may confidently reject the null hypothesis.
2. The second hypothesis for the test: Does physical attractiveness have a major and beneficial impact on the enjoyment of consuming goods or services? The table presents t-statistics of

1.195, which indicates a statistically significant effect of 0.072. The calculated p-value is 0.233. Given a t-statistic value exceeding 1.96 and a p-value exceeding 0.05, we may reject the second hypothesis.

3. The third test investigates whether cognitive integration positively and significantly impacts hedonic assumption. The table presents t-statistics of 15.623, which indicates a substantial impact with a coefficient of 0.725 and a p-value of 0.000. With a t-statistic value over 1.96 and a p-value below 0.05, we can certainly conclude that the third hypothesis is accepted.
4. The fourth hypothesis test investigates parasocial interaction's favourable and substantial impact on cognitive assimilation. The table presents t-statistics of 7.084, signifying a substantial impact with a magnitude of 0.530 and a p-value of 0.000. With a t-statistic value over 1.96 and a p-value below 0.05, we can certainly accept the fourth hypothesis.
5. The fifth hypothesis test investigates parasocial interaction's substantial and beneficial impact on hedonic consumption. The table presents t-statistics of 2.226, signifying a substantial effect of 0.133 with a p-value of 0.026. With a t-statistic value over 1.96 and a p-value below 0.05, we can confidently conclude that the fifth hypothesis is accepted.

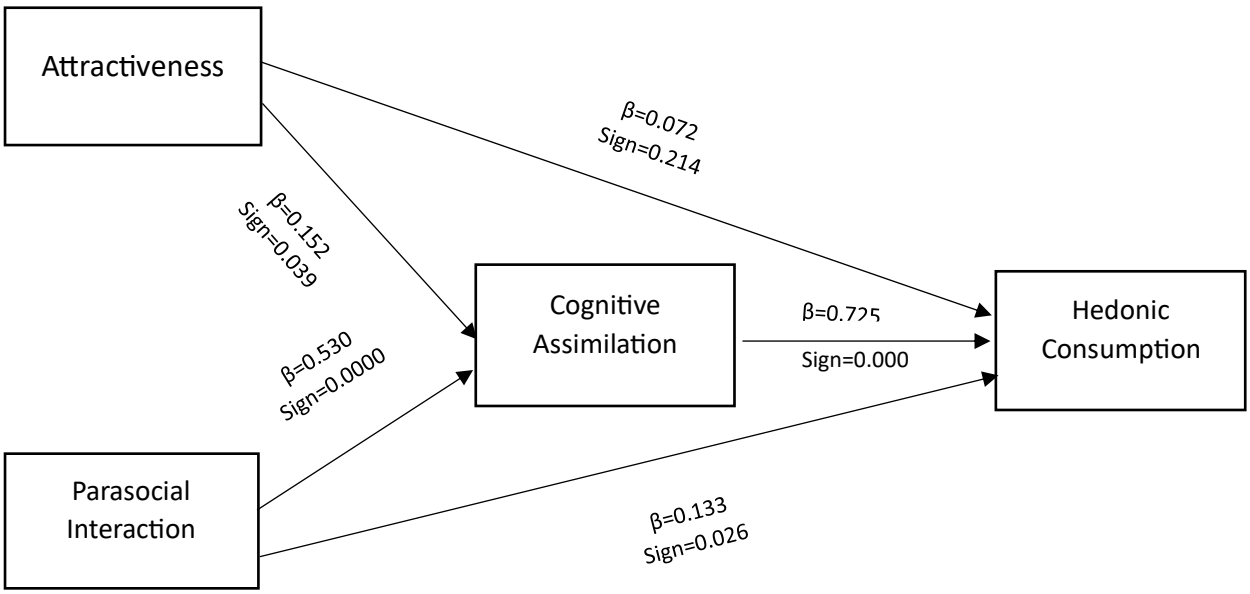

Figure 1. Mediation Diagram
Source: SmartPLS 3.2.9 Processed Data, 2023

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, this research found a positive association between Attractiveness and Cognitive Assimilation. The second hypothesis is not supported, indicating no correlation between Attractiveness and Hedonic Consumption. The study's findings confirmed the third hypothesis, proposing a significant positive relationship between Cognitive Assimilation and Hedonic Consumption. Similarly, the fourth hypothesis is substantiated, positing a significant positive link between Parasocial Interaction and Cognitive Assimilation. Likewise, the fifth hypothesis is validated, suggesting a significant positive relationship between Parasocial Interaction and Hedonic Consumption. The sixth hypothesis, proposing that Attractiveness mediates a significant positive impact on Cognitive Assimilation concerning Hedonic Consumption, is also supported. Lastly, the seventh hypothesis confirms the

study's results, indicating that Cognitive Assimilation mediates the positive effect of Parasocial Interaction on Hedonic Consumption.

Research Limitations

Research limitations arise from the conducted study and its outcomes. Firstly, the geographical scope of the research is confined to the Sukoharjo area, thus restricting the generalizability of the findings solely to Sukoharjo City. Similar results may not be applicable in different regions due to variations in consumer demographics and geographical conditions. Secondly, the research relies on a substantial sample size of 205 respondents familiar with Tasya Farasya who have either used or expressed an intention to use Make Over products.

Suggestions

The outcomes of this study, along with the identified limitations, serve as valuable insights for future research endeavours. The conceptual expansion of this research encompasses the following recommendations:

1) Recommendations for Make Over Companies:

   To enhance the appeal of Make Over products and stimulate consumer interest, it is advised that Make Over companies leverage Beauty Influencers as a compelling strategy to showcase and promote their products to consumers.

2) Recommendations for Subsequent Researchers:
   a. Future research endeavours could benefit from incorporating additional variables not explored in this study, which could significantly contribute to understanding their impact on consumer purchasing intentions.
   b. To enrich and broaden the scope of research findings, it is suggested that future studies involve a larger sample size from the general public. By examining a more diverse array of subjects, the data obtained will likely be more comprehensive and accurate.

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