

Original Article

Thai Celebrities as Brand Ambassadors and Parasocial Relationships, and Their Impact on Gen Z Fans' Purchase Decisions in Southeast Asia

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Received Date: 14 May 2026

Revised Date: 28 May 2026

Accepted Date: 01 June 2026

Published Date: 06 June 2026

Abstract: *This study investigates the influence of Thai celebrities as brand ambassadors and parasocial relationships on the purchase decisions of Gen Z fans in Southeast Asia, with fan loyalty incorporated as a mediating variable. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected via an online questionnaire administered to 278 respondents and analyzed using SEM-AMOS. The findings reveal that both brand ambassadors and parasocial relationships positively and significantly influence fan loyalty and purchase decisions. Furthermore, fan loyalty positively and significantly affects purchase decisions and successfully mediates the relationship between brand ambassadors and purchase decisions. However, fan loyalty does not mediate the relationship between parasocial relationships and purchase decisions. These findings underscore the strategic potential of Thai celebrities as influential marketing instruments in cultivating fan loyalty and stimulating purchase decisions among Gen Z consumers in Southeast Asia.*

Keywords: *Brand Ambassador, Fan Loyalty, Parasocial Relationships, Purchase Decision.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the popularity of Thai celebrities in Southeast Asia has grown significantly, particularly among Generation Z. This popularity has developed not only through dramas, music, films, and entertainment programs, but also through social media, which allows fans to follow their idols' activities more closely, intensely, and personally. According to We Are Social and Hootsuite (2023), social media users in Southeast Asia reached 482 million, with an annual growth rate of 4.6%. This indicates that social media has become a major space for Southeast Asian audiences, especially Gen Z, to access entertainment, interact with communities, and follow public figures they admire.

Generation Z is a consumer group that is highly connected to digital technology and actively engaged with social media content. According to the Deloitte Thailand Consumer Survey (2022), Gen Z is a significant consumer segment with strong involvement in digital content, including content created by celebrities and influencers. In this context, Thai celebrities have a strong opportunity to influence Gen Z's consumption behavior because they are not only seen as entertainment figures but also as representations of lifestyle, identity, and aspiration for their fans.

The closeness between fans and celebrities on social media is also related to the formation of parasocial relationships, which are one-way emotional relationships between fans and media figures, even without direct personal interaction. Data from We Are Social (2023) shows that 68% of social media users in Southeast Asia report having a strong emotional bond with celebrities they have never met in person. This relationship can be formed through repeated exposure to media, such as personal posts, interviews, promotional content, live streams, and other digital interactions. As a result, Thai celebrities are not only viewed as idols but also as influential figures who can shape fans' attitudes and consumption decisions.

This popularity and emotional connection are increasingly used by brands as a marketing strategy through Thai celebrities as brand ambassadors. Celebrities with a positive image, high popularity, attractiveness, credibility, and a good fit with the brand are considered capable of increasing consumer attention and trust. For example, Pond Naravit Lertratkosum was appointed as Versace's Fragrance Ambassador for Southeast Asia on January 21, 2025. In addition, Ulike appointed PP Krit Amnuaydechhorn as its Southeast Asia brand ambassador on May 8, 2026. Ulike is a beauty-tech brand from China. Founded in 2013, the brand specializes in optical skincare technology.

In this study, a brand ambassador is a person entrusted to represent and promote a brand or product to the public to build awareness, trust, and positive consumer perceptions (Royan, 2014; Lea-Greenwood, 2012). Brand ambassadors are generally popular figures, such as celebrities or public figures, who can support advertising activities and influence consumers' beliefs about the brand (Akramiah et al., 2021; Lailiya, 2020). This variable is relevant to the research background because brands increasingly use Thai celebrities to reach Gen Z consumers in Southeast Asia, leveraging their attractiveness, popularity,



credibility, and alignment with the brand.

Parasocial relationship refers to a one-way emotional bond between fans and celebrities, in which fans feel close to a celebrity even though the celebrity does not personally know them (Sulianti et al., 2018). Although virtual, this relationship is often perceived by fans as genuine (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Through social media, celebrities can maintain closeness with fans through posts, comments, live streams, and other digital interactions, allowing fans to build long-term emotional bonds (Bond, 2016). This variable aligns with the research background because Gen Z fans often build emotional closeness with Thai celebrities through continuous digital exposure.

Fan loyalty refers to fans' emotional attachment and repeated positive behavior toward the celebrity they admire. Fan loyalty can be shown through support, engagement, participation in campaigns, and willingness to purchase products or services related to their favorite celebrity (Kim & Kim, 2020). In this study, fan loyalty is used as a mediating variable because loyal fans may be more likely to support Thai celebrities by trusting them, engaging with them, and purchasing products associated with them.

The purchase decision is the stage at which consumers decide to buy a product after recognizing a need, searching for information, and evaluating alternatives. Consumers usually make purchase decisions based on brand preference, purchase intention, trust, and the belief that the product suits their needs (Amri & Prihandono, 2019; Hafilah et al., 2019). In the context of this study, the purchase decision is important because Gen Z fans' buying decisions may be influenced not only by product benefits but also by their emotional closeness and loyalty toward Thai celebrities who promote the product.

Although many studies have examined brand ambassadors, parasocial relationships, fan loyalty, and purchase decisions, most of them still discuss these variables separately. Previous studies have also focused more on Korean, global, or social media celebrities, while research specifically discussing Thai celebrities as brand ambassadors among Gen Z fans in Southeast Asia remains limited. In fact, Thai celebrities have unique fandom characteristics, such as strong fan service, digital interaction, and active fan participation in brand campaigns.

Furthermore, few studies have examined fan loyalty as a mediating variable in the relationships among Thai celebrities as brand ambassadors, parasocial relationships, and purchase decisions. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing how Thai celebrities, as brand ambassadors, and fans' emotional closeness through parasocial relationships can build fan loyalty and influence the purchase decisions of Gen Z fans in Southeast Asia.

Based on this phenomenon, this study analyzes the influence of Thai celebrities as brand ambassadors and parasocial relationships on the purchase decision of Gen Z fans in Southeast Asia, with fan loyalty as a mediating variable. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to digital marketing, consumer behavior, and fandom studies, as well as provide practical insights for brands in designing more effective marketing strategies through Thai celebrities.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A) Brand Ambassador

Royan (2014) defines a brand ambassador as a person entrusted to represent and promote a brand or product to the public to build product awareness. According to Lea-Greenwood (2012), companies use brand ambassadors as a communication tool to build relationships with the public and improve product understanding through advertising. Akramiah et al. (2021) also state that brand ambassadors are generally popular figures, such as celebrities or public figures, who can support product advertising activities. Furthermore, Lailiya (2020) explains that brand ambassadors can influence consumers' beliefs and perceptions of a brand from a psychological perspective. Thus, a brand ambassador not only serves as a promotional medium but also helps shape consumer perceptions, trust, attitudes, and purchase decisions toward the brand.

B) Parasocial Relationships

Parasocial relationships are a one-way relationship between a fan and a celebrity, in which the fan feels an emotional connection even though the celebrity does not know them personally (Sulianti et al., 2018). Although virtual, this relationship is often perceived by fans as genuine (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Through social media, celebrities can maintain closeness with fans through posts, comments, live streams, and other digital interactions, allowing fans to build long-term emotional bonds (Bond, 2016). This closeness allows fans to identify with celebrities, both through their attitudes and behaviors, thereby allowing celebrities to influence fans' loyalty and consumption behavior toward products associated with them (Bacile et al., 2014; Chung & Cho, 2017).

C) Fan Loyalty

A fandom is a subculture formed by individuals who share admiration for a particular celebrity or object of interest. Sandvoss, as cited in Sagita & Kadewardana (2017), explains that fandom arises from fans' active engagement, in which the relationship between fans and their admired object can create strong emotional bonds. In this context, fan loyalty refers to fans'

emotional attachment and repeated positive behavior toward the celebrity they admire. Pourian & Bakhsh (2015) state that loyalty is a consistent behavioral response influenced by psychological evaluation, while Kim & Kim (2020) explain that fan loyalty can be reflected through fans' dedication to purchasing products or services related to their favorite celebrity. Thus, fan loyalty can develop from attitudinal loyalty, such as positive feelings toward the celebrity, into behavioral loyalty, such as active support, campaign participation, and purchasing products associated with the idol.

D) Purchase Decision

The purchase decision is the stage at which consumers decide to buy a product after recognizing a need, searching for information, and evaluating alternatives. Wibowo & Karimah (2012) explain that consumers tend to choose the brand they like most during the decision-making process. Meanwhile, purchase intention is an important factor that appears before the actual purchase and can encourage consumers to buy a product (Amri & Prihandono, 2019; Angkouw et al., 2016). In line with this, Hafilah et al. (2019) state that a purchase decision occurs when consumers actually purchase a product after forming a preference and intention toward the brand they prefer.

E) Brand Ambassador on Fan Loyalty

Companies use brand ambassadors to build brand image, attract consumer attention, and strengthen emotional connections with their audience. The figures selected are generally celebrities or popular figures who possess appeal, credibility, and strong influence over their fans. Several studies indicate that brand ambassadors play a role in shaping fan loyalty (Akramiah et al., 2021; Kim & Kim, 2020; Wen & Oktavianti, 2023; Zahra Purmanto et al., 2025). This is because fans who have an emotional bond with a celebrity tend to show support, trust, and interest in products associated with their idol, thereby enabling brand ambassadors to strengthen fan loyalty toward both the celebrity and the promoted brand. In research on Thai celebrities, brand ambassadors can foster fan loyalty through their appeal, popularity, credibility, and alignment with the brand. Thai celebrities with strong influence tend to make fans feel closer, more trusting, and more loyal to both the figure and the products they represent.

F) Parasocial Relationships on Fan Loyalty

In the study of popular culture fandom, parasocial interaction can explain fans' engagement and loyalty toward their idols. Fanaticism is evident in fans' commitment, emotional attachment, enthusiasm, and active support for the figures they admire (Seregina, 2011). Through social media, activities such as liking, commenting, and watching live streams make fans feel closer to their idols (Frederick et al., 2012). Several studies also indicate that parasocial relationships influence fan loyalty (Ma et al., 2022; Meliala et al., 2024; Perbawani & Nuralin, 2021). In this study, the parasocial relationship between Gen Z fans in Southeast Asia and Thai celebrities can strengthen their loyalty to these celebrities.

G) Fan Loyalty on Purchase Decision

Fan loyalty plays a crucial role in driving fans' purchasing behavior. Several studies indicate that fan loyalty can manifest through sustained support and the purchase of albums, merchandise, or products related to idols (Fouvy et al., 2011; Khan et al., 2018; Khomsiyah & Sanaji, 2021; Kirana, 2021; Riona & Krisdinanto, 2021). This is because loyal fans view consumption activities as a form of support, identity, and emotional attachment to their idols, which can drive purchasing decisions for idol-related products. In the context of this study, fan loyalty toward Thai celebrities can strengthen the influence on purchase decisions among Gen Z in Southeast Asia.

H) Brand Ambassador on Purchase Decision

Companies use brand ambassadors to influence consumers, build communication with the public, and boost sales. The individuals selected are typically popular figures who possess appeal, charisma, and credibility, as credibility helps build consumer trust in the promoted product. Research findings indicate that brand ambassadors have a significant influence on purchase decisions (Hafilah et al., 2019; Lailiya, 2020; Natasiah & Syaefulloh, 2024; Rizky et al., 2025). This is because the positive image, trust, and emotional connection built by brand ambassadors can transfer to the brand, thereby encouraging consumers to choose and purchase the products they represent. In this study, Thai celebrities serving as brand ambassadors can influence Gen Z fans' purchase decisions in Southeast Asia through their appeal, popularity, brand fit, and credibility.

I) Parasocial Relationships on Purchase Decision

Parasocial relationships play a crucial role in shaping consumer trust and purchasing decisions. Several studies have shown that parasocial relationships influence purchase decisions (Kaka et al., 2019; Khatimah & Sobarsyah, 2025; Muna et al., 2022; Puspitasari & Mangifera, 2025). This is because the emotional closeness followers feel toward influencers or celebrities makes them more trusting, connected, and motivated to purchase the products they promote. In this study, the parasocial relationship between Gen Z fans in Southeast Asia and Thai celebrities can drive interest and purchasing decisions for the promoted product.

J) Brand Ambassador on Purchase Decision Through Fan Loyalty as Mediator

Research by Az-Zahra & Sudrajat (2019) shows that using public figures, such as K-pop idols, as brand ambassadors effectively increases sales because fan loyalty can drive purchases of products related to the idol. In this study, fan loyalty is used as a mediating variable, as it can strengthen interest and trust in the promoted products. The more loyal fans are to Thai celebrities as brand ambassadors, the more likely they are to be motivated to make a purchase decision.

K) Parasocial Relationships on Purchase Decision Through Fan Loyalty as Mediator

A parasocial relationship is a one-way relationship between fans and celebrities that fosters emotional closeness and trust and can influence purchasing behavior (Chung & Cho, 2017; Du et al., 2025; Lacap et al., 2024). (Hakim & Salehudin, 2024) also found that parasocial relationships among K-pop fans positively affect purchase intention, purchase decision, and eWOM. In this study, fan loyalty acts as a mediator: strong parasocial relationships can increase it, thereby driving purchase decisions for products promoted by Thai celebrities.

L) Research Hypothesis

Based on the literature review and the proposed research framework, the following hypotheses are developed to examine the direct and mediating relationships among the variables:

- H1: Thai celebrities as Brand Ambassadors influence fan loyalty among Thai Gen Z in Southeast Asia.
- H2: Parasocial relationships influence fan loyalty among Thai Gen Z in Southeast Asia.
- H3: Fan loyalty influences purchase decisions among Thai Gen Z in Southeast Asia
- H3: Thai celebrities as Brand Ambassadors influence the purchase decisions of Gen Z in Southeast Asia
- H4: Parasocial relationships influence the purchase decisions of Gen Z in Southeast Asia
- H5: Thai celebrity as Brand Ambassadors influence high Purchase Decisions, with Fan Loyalty acting as a mediating variable among Thai Gen Z in Southeast Asia.
- H6: Parasocial Relationships influence high Purchase Decisions, with Fan Loyalty acting as a mediating variable among Thai Gen Z in Southeast Asia.

M) Conceptual Framework

Based on these relationships, the research framework can be established as follows:

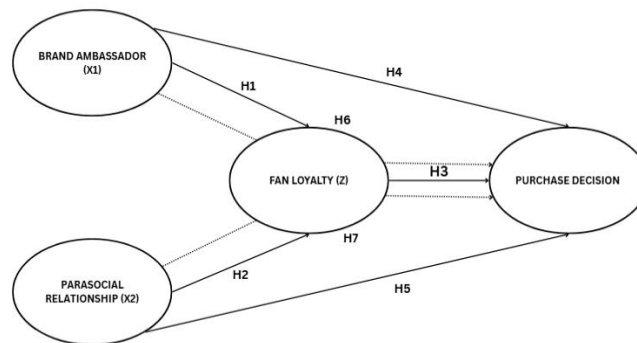


Figure 1. Research Framework

III. RESEARCH METHOD

A causal research design was chosen for this study. The study used an online questionnaire distributed to respondents who met the established criteria. The questionnaire employed a 1-to-5 Likert scale with the following categories: Strongly Agree (score 5); Agree (score 4); Neutral (score 3); Disagree (score 2); and Strongly Disagree (score 1). The population in this study consists of Generation Z individuals residing in Southeast Asia who are active social media users and fans of Thai celebrities, commonly known as "Thaienth." The sampling technique used is purposive sampling with the following criteria: 1) Gen Z; 2) Residents of Southeast Asia; 3) Have social media accounts; 4) Are fans of Thai celebrities; 5) Have purchased products from brands that use Thai celebrities as Brand Ambassadors. Based on the relationships between the variables, this study uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. The study uses a minimum sample of 200 respondents, following Hair et al. (2010), who suggest that SEM requires an adequate sample size to produce stable and reliable results.

The measurement indicators for the independent variable "Brand Ambassador" in this study consist of four indicators: Attractiveness, Popularity, Congruence, and Credibility (Ghadani et al., 2022; Hafilah et al., 2019). For the independent variable Parasocial Relationship, three indicators were used, namely: Perceptual-cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral (Schramm & Hartmann, 2019; Perbawani & Nuralin, 2021). Furthermore, four indicators of the mediating variable, Fan Loyalty, were used:

internal involvement, external involvement, desire to acquire, and interaction (Oliver, 1999; Wendyanto & Utami, 2022). Finally, to measure the dependent variable Purchase Decision, the required indicators are: recognition of needs, search, evaluation of alternatives, and purchase decision (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016; Lailiya, 2020).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A) Respondent Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 4.1, which includes 278 respondents. This study was dominated by respondents aged 23 to 26 years (52.5%) and female (80.5%). The most common highest level of education was a bachelor's degree (48.9%), and the majority were employed in the private sector (33.8%). The study was dominated by Indonesian citizens (53.2%).

Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Item	f	%
Age	15 to 18 years old	19	6.834532
	19 to 22 years old	45	16.18705
	23 to 26 years old	146	52.51799
	27 to 31 years old	68	24.46043
TOTAL		278	100
Gender	Female	224	80.57554
	Male	54	19.42446
TOTAL		278	100
Highest Level of Education	Elementary	0	0
	Junior High	3	1.079137
	High School	84	30.21583
	Diploma	46	16.54676
	Bachelor's Degree	136	48.92086
	Master's/Doctoral	9	3.23741
TOTAL		278	100
Occupation	Student	15	5.395683
	College student	73	26.25899
	Civil servants	26	9.352518
	Entrepreneurship	47	16.90647
	Private Sector Employee	94	33.81295
	Others	23	8.273381
TOTAL		278	100
Domicile	Indonesia	83	29.85612
	Malaysia	38	13.66906
	Philippines	53	19.06475
	Singapore	10	3.597122
	Thailand	55	19.78417
	Vietnam	22	7.913669
	Brunei Darussalam	0	0
	Myanmar	0	0
	Laos	6	2.158273
	Cambodia	11	3.956835
	East Timor	0	0
	TOTAL		278

B) Measurement Model

The results of the fit, validity, and reliability tests are as follows.

Table 2: Values of Standardized Loading Factors, Construct Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) in the Overall Model Fit

Variable	Item	SLF	AVE	CR
Brand Ambassador (BA)	The appeal of Thai celebrities makes me pay attention to the products they promote.	0,879	0,778	0,898
	The Thai celebrity serving as the brand ambassador is widely recognized by Gen Z fans in Southeast Asia.	0,887		
	The compatibility between the Thai celebrity and the product makes me more trusting of the promotion.	0,857		

	The Thai celebrity's credibility makes me more interested in buying the promoted product.	0,906		
Parasocial Relationship (PR)	I feel like I know my favorite Thai celebrity through the content I see on social media, media interviews, and their activities.	0,926	0,819	0,887
	I feel an emotional connection to my favorite Thai celebrity even though I don't know him personally.	0,889		
	I like, comment on, or share content related to my favorite Thai celebrity.	0,900		
Fan Loyalty (FL)	I feel that my favorite Thai celebrity is important to me.	0,917	0,801	0,899
	I often participate in activities related to my idol, such as attending concerts or events, both online and offline.	0,883		
	I feel that buying products related to my favorite Thai celebrity is a form of fan support.	0,895		
	I actively participate in fandom activities related to my favorite Thai celebrity.	0,885		
Purchase Decision (PD)	I became interested in a product because my favorite Thai celebrity became its brand ambassador.	0,897	0,823	0,909
	I looked for more information about the product promoted by my favorite Thai celebrity.	0,905		
	I am comparing the product promoted by the Thai celebrity with products from other brands.	0,926		
	I purchased after seeing a promotion featuring my favorite Thai celebrity as a brand ambassador.	0,901		

Based on Table 2, the validity and reliability test results indicate that the indicators in the developed model meet the required standards. Each indicator has a Standardized Loading Factor (SLF) greater than 0.50, indicating that all indicators are valid and suitable for measuring the overall model composition. The findings also confirm that the instruments are reliable and consistently measure the constructs within the model. This is supported by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, which are all ≥ 0.50 , and the Construct Reliability (CR) values, which exceed 0.70.

Table 3: Goodness of Fit Index

A	Cutoff Value	Results	
χ^2	Expected to be low	98.847	Goodfit
Probability	≥ 0.05	0.145	Goodfit
CMIN/DF	≤ 3.00	1.163	Goodfit
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.024	Goodfit
RMR	< 0.05	0.098	Marginalfit
NFI	≥ 0.90	0.975	Goodfit
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.996	Goodfit
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.995	Goodfit
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.996	Goodfit

The model fit test results in Table 3 indicate that the model meets the required fit criteria and can therefore be considered appropriate for the data. Referring to Hair et al. (2010), a research model can be regarded as adequate and acceptable when at least four to five fit indices demonstrate good fit or exceed the recommended cutoff values.

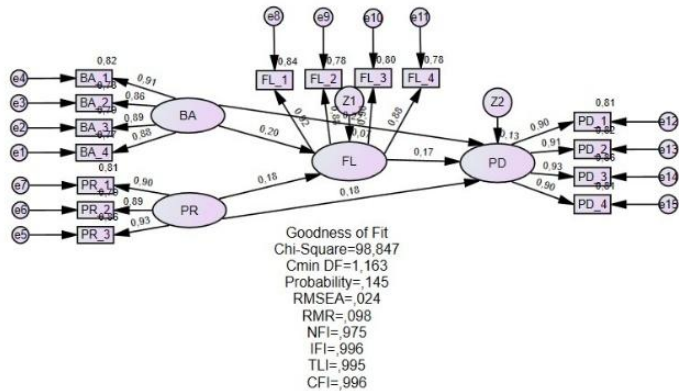


Figure 2. Full Model Testing

C) Hypothesis Testing

Based on Table 2, the validity and reliability test results indicate that the indicators in the developed model meet the required standards. Each indicator has a Standardized Loading Factor (SLF) greater than 0.50, indicating that all indicators are valid and suitable for measuring the overall model composition. The findings also confirm that the instruments are reliable and consistently measure the constructs within the model. This is supported by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, which are all ≥ 0.50 , and the Construct Reliability (CR) values, which exceed 0.70.

Table 4: Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	S.E.	CR.	P
H1	BA → FL	0,216	0,068	3,163	0,002
H2	PR → FL	0,177	0,062	2,859	0,004
H3	BA → PD	0,243	0,071	3,45	0,000
H4	FL → PD	0,173	0,065	2,648	0,008
H5	PR → PD	0,18	0,064	2,837	0,005

Based on Table 4, a hypothesis is accepted when the p-value is less than 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$). The results indicate that all nine hypotheses meet this criterion; therefore, all proposed hypotheses are accepted and considered significant.

To confirm the indirect effect of the mediating variable, we present the results of the Sobel test.

Table 5: Sobel Test

Hypothesis	Path	Sobel Test	
		t-Stat	P-value
H6	BA → FL → PD	2.040	0.041
H7	PR → FL → PD	1.946	0.051

Based on the Sobel test, the results are accepted if the p-value is less than 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$). Based on the data above, Hypothesis 6 is accepted, as it shows a significant positive result. Meanwhile, Hypothesis 7 shows a non-significant positive result.

D) Discussion

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that brand ambassadors have a positive and significant effect on fan loyalty. This is consistent with previous research (Akramiah et al., 2021; M. Kim & Kim, 2020; Wen & Oktavianti, 2023; Zahra Purmanto et al., 2025). This means that the higher the appeal, popularity, credibility, and fit of the Thai celebrity with the brand, the stronger the fans' loyalty toward both the celebrity and the product they represent. These findings indicate that Thai celebrities not only serve as promotional tools but can also foster emotional attachment and fan support for the brand.

Furthermore, parasocial relationships have a positive, significant effect on fan loyalty. This is consistent with previous research by Ma et al. (2022), Meliala et al. (2024), and Perbawani & Nuralin (2021). This indicates that the stronger the emotional bond between fans and Thai celebrities, the greater the loyalty that develops. Interactions via social media, personal content, live streaming, and promotional activities make fans feel closer to the celebrity, thereby fostering stronger engagement and support.

Research findings also indicate that fan loyalty positively and significantly influences purchase decisions (Fouvy et al., n.d.; Khan et al., 2018; Khomsiyah & Sanaji, 2021; Kirana, 2021; Riona & Krisdinanto, 2021). Loyal fans tend to view purchasing products as a form of support for their idols. Thus, fan loyalty can encourage them to seek information, consider, and purchase products related to their favorite Thai celebrities.

In addition, brand ambassadors and parasocial relationships have also been shown to have a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions (Hafilah et al., 2019; Lailiya, 2020; Natasiah & Syaefulloh, 2024; Rizky et al., 2025; Kaka et al., 2019; Khatimah & Sobarsyah, 2025; Muna et al., 2022; Puspitasari & Mangifera, 2025). Thai celebrities serving as brand ambassadors can influence purchasing decisions through their positive image, credibility, and appeal. Meanwhile, parasocial relationships drive purchasing decisions because fans feel close to, trust, and are emotionally connected with the celebrities promoting the products.

In the mediation analysis, fan loyalty was found to mediate the effect of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions (Az-Zahra & Sudrajat, 2019; Fuadi et al., 2023; Li et al., 2023; Pradani & Mangifera, 2024). This means that a strong Thai celebrity as a brand ambassador can increase fan loyalty, and that loyalty drives purchase decisions. However, fan loyalty was not found to mediate the influence of parasocial relationship on purchase decision because its significance value was slightly above the 0.05 threshold. This differs from previous studies that found fan loyalty mediates the relationship between parasocial relationships and purchase decisions (Chung & Cho, 2017; Du et al., 2025; Lacap et al., 2024).

Overall, the results of this study confirm that Thai celebrities play a significant role in marketing strategies targeting Southeast Asian Gen Z. Brand ambassadors who are attractive, popular, credible, and a good fit for the brand can foster fan loyalty and drive purchase decisions. Meanwhile, emotional closeness through parasocial relationships can also enhance loyalty and purchase decisions, although its mediating role in fan loyalty has not yet been fully established.

V. CONCLUSION

This article explores the role of Thai celebrities as brand ambassadors and the impact of parasocial relationships on the purchase decisions of Gen Z fans in Southeast Asia, with fan loyalty positioned as a mediating variable. The results show that both brand ambassadors and parasocial relationships have a positive and significant influence on fan loyalty and purchase decisions. Fan loyalty is also found to have a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. Furthermore, the mediation analysis reveals that fan loyalty mediates the relationship between brand ambassadors and purchase decisions, but does not mediate the relationship between parasocial relationships and purchase decisions. The study recommends that entertainment industries and brands carefully select Thai celebrities whose image aligns with the product, apply varied marketing strategies, actively engage with fan communities, and use social media to identify audience preferences. This research also highlights the importance of examining other potential mediating variables and conducting comparative studies across different celebrities, countries, or entertainment genres to gain a broader understanding. By recognizing the dynamics among Thai celebrities, parasocial relationships, and fan loyalty, brands can develop marketing strategies that are more effective, authentic, and sustainable in building relationships with Gen Z consumers in Southeast Asia.

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