

## **ABSTRACT**

*The rapid growth of TikTok has significantly transformed consumer behavior, particularly among university students who actively interact with digital content creators. In the current digital marketing environment, recommendations delivered by content creators have become an important source of information and influence in shaping consumer decisions. This study aims to analyze the effect of content creator recommendations on purchase decisions by considering the mediating role of parasocial interaction and creator trust. The research focuses on university students in Semarang, representing Generation Z who are highly exposed to social media content and influencer-based marketing.*

*This study adopts a quantitative research approach and applies Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the relationships among the proposed variables. The conceptual model is developed based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory and the Source Credibility Model to explain how external marketing stimuli can influence internal psychological processes and eventually lead to behavioral responses. Through this framework, content creator recommendations function as stimuli that trigger parasocial interaction and build trust toward the creator, which subsequently influence consumers' purchasing decisions.*

*Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to university students in Semarang who actively use TikTok and have previously been exposed to product recommendations from content creators. The results indicate that content creator recommendations significantly influence parasocial interaction, while parasocial interaction positively affects creator trust and purchase decisions. Creator trust also plays a mediating role in strengthening the relationship between recommendations and purchase decisions. These findings suggest that emotional closeness and perceived authenticity of creators play a more dominant role than formal expertise in influencing purchasing behavior on TikTok. This study contributes to marketing literature by emphasizing actual purchase decisions rather than purchase intention and provides practical insights for brands and content creators in designing more effective influencer marketing strategies among university students.*

**Keywords:** *content creator recommendation, parasocial interaction, creator trust, purchase decision, TikTok marketing.*