

# Construction of Meaning in the Parasocial Interactions of Polca Fandom Members with Polcasan on Social Media X

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e-ISSN: 2964-0962

SEIKAT: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik dan Hukum

<https://ejournal.45mataram.ac.id/index.php/seikat>

Vol. 5, No. 4, Agustus 2026

Page: 2593 - 2611

Available at:

<https://ejournal.45mataram.ac.id/index.php/seikat/article/view/3600>

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.55681/seikat.v5i4.3600>

Article History:

Received: 22-07-2026

Revised: 18-08-2026

Accepted: 19-08-2026

**Abstract:** *This study aims to analyze fans' parasocial interactions with Polcasan within the TayNew fandom. A qualitative approach with a constructivist paradigm was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with three active members of the Polca fandom and online observation of interactions on the social media platform X. Data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) model, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings identified four main themes: the construction of Polcasan's identity as a social figure, fans' parasocial interactions with Polcasan, the manifestation of parasocial interactions in fan behavior, and the symbolic meaning of Polcasan within the TayNew fandom. Polcasan is perceived as a social figure through personification, which fosters emotional attachment and encourages various forms of fan participation. The study concludes that Polcasan functions not only as a mascot but also as a medium that strengthens the emotional bond between TayNew and their fan community.*

**Keywords :** *Fandom, Parasocial Interaction, Polcasan, TayNew, X Social Media.*

**Abstrak :** Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis interaksi parasosial penggemar terhadap Polcasan dalam fandom TayNew. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan paradigma konstruktivisme. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap tiga anggota aktif fandom Polca dan observasi online pada media sosial X. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan model Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana (2014) melalui tahapan kondensasi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan empat tema utama, yaitu konstruksi identitas Polcasan sebagai figur sosial, interaksi parasosial penggemar terhadap Polcasan, manifestasi interaksi parasosial dalam perilaku penggemar, serta makna simbolik Polcasan dalam relasi fandom TayNew. Polcasan dimaknai sebagai figur yang memiliki identitas sosial melalui proses personifikasi, sehingga mendorong terbentuknya kedekatan emosional yang diwujudkan dalam berbagai bentuk partisipasi fandom. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Polcasan tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai maskot, tetapi juga sebagai medium yang memperkuat hubungan emosional antara TayNew dan komunitas penggemarnya.

**Kata Kunci :** Fandom, Interaksi Parasosial, Media Sosial X, Polcasan, TayNew.

## PENDAHULUAN

According to data from Indonesiana.id by Tempo, the number of users of the X platform (formerly Twitter) in Indonesia stands at around 22.9 million people (Faturahman, 2026). With a range of features such as tweets, replies, retweets, quote tweets, hashtags and threads, X has become

one of the social media platforms most widely used by fan communities to share information, engage in discussions and build communities. Through fanbase and fan accounts, fans foster solidarity, a sense of group identity and a culture of communication known as ‘stan culture’ on X (Savitri, 2025). This development shows that social media no longer serves merely as a means of disseminating information, but has also become a space for fans to build a sense of closeness with the figures they admire. This closeness fosters the formation of parasocial interaction that is one way relationships that make fans feel they have an emotional bond with media figures even though they do not interact with them directly. Ghaniyy (2025) Communication within the fandom community on the X platform does not only take place between fans and their idols, but also actively occurs amongst fans themselves through the exchange of information and ongoing conversations. These interactions strengthen the emotional bond within the community whilst also fostering the formation of parasocial relationships with the figures they idolise (Ghaniyy, 2025).



**Figure 1.** Polcasan

The phenomenon of digital fandom is a fascinating area of study within communication studies as it highlights the evolving relationship between fans and media figures. One such phenomenon is Polcasan, the digital mascot belonging to the Thai acting couple Tay Tawan and New Thitipoom, which was unveiled at the PEBACA WHAT A CONCERT on March 22<sup>th</sup>, 2025 (Chandrawati, 2026). Polcasan’s design is a fusion of Tay’s favourite animal like the orca and New’s favourite the polar bear. As such, Polcasan is portrayed as the ‘child’ of TayNew which he can speak, calls Tay ‘Papa’ and New ‘Phor-Phor’, and has a cheerful personality just like a little child. (Asnurida, 2025; Boonlert, 2025). Its presence generated over 102 million engagements on social media, won the ‘Most Loved Mascot Stickers of the Year’ award at the 2025 LINE Stickers Awards, and was designated as the official mascot of GMMTV (Asnurida, 2025; Chandrawati, 2026). This popularity has grown even further following the release of the song ‘I am POLCASAN’, which has been viewed more than 176,000 times on YouTube and has made the hashtag #IamPOLCASAN\_MV one of the most talked-about topics on social media (Chandrawati, 2026).

The phenomenon that is the focus of this study is the shift in parasocial interactions within the Indonesian Polca fandom, which initially centred on Tay Tawan and New Thitipoom, and subsequently expanded to include Polcasan as a non-human character. Through the process of brand anthropomorphism, non-human characters imbued with human-like traits can foster emotional closeness and strengthen parasocial relationships (Liang et al., 2025). This is evident from the way fans refer to Polcasan on the social media platform X using terms such as ‘adek’, ‘jeje’, ‘unyai’ and ‘sandut’, regarding her as TayNew’s ‘child’, defending her when she receives negative comments, and organising various activities such as birthday projects, donations and charitable initiatives in Polcasan’s name as a form of participatory fandom culture (Jenkins, 2006). This phenomenon demonstrates that parasocial interactions can be formed not only with human figures,

but also with non-human characters that are consistently anthropomorphised, thereby enabling them to forge strong emotional bonds with their fans.

Several studies suggest that non-human characters can also be the subject of parasocial relationships. Based on Smutradontri & Gadavanij (2020) introduces the concept of the 'para-kin relationship', namely an emotional bond that leads to non-human objects or characters being treated as if they were members of the family. Research by Fauziyyah et al. (2025) regarding the formation of the Polca fandom's identity, it also shows that members of the community have a strong group identity based on their love for Tay and New, which is built upon shared values such as mutual support, creativity and a sense of belonging (Fauziyyah et al., 2025). Meanwhile, research by Fitrah & Pribadi (2026) A study on the parasocial interactions of fans of the K-Pop boy band NCT Dream on the X platform found that parasocial relationships develop across three dimensions: cognitive, affective and behavioural. The study also showed that the X platform is capable of strengthening parasocial closeness through continuous exposure to information and coordinated fandom activities (Fitrah & Pribadi, 2026). These three studies form an important foundation as they demonstrate that emotional bonds can be formed with both non-human characters and media figures, and highlight the role of social media in strengthening such bonds.

Nevertheless, there are still some gaps in the research. Firstly, research into parasocial interaction is still dominated by studies of the relationship between fans and human idols or fictional characters, whilst research into parasocial relationships with digital mascots that actively interact on social media remains very limited. Secondly, research by Fauziyyah et al. (2025) have discussed the Polca fandom, but have focused primarily on the formation of community identity and have not yet examined how fans' parasocial interactions with the Polcasan mascot take shape. Thirdly, most research on digital mascots tends to view them from the producers' perspective such as marketing strategies and character design rather than from the perspective of fans who build and maintain emotional relationships with these mascots. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the Polca fandom's parasocial interactions with the Polcasan mascot from the fans' perspective, using naturalistic data from the social media platform X and in-depth interviews.

Specifically, this study identifies the patterns of parasocial interaction that have developed between members of the Polca fandom and the Polcasan mascot, and analyses how the cognitive, affective and conative dimensions are reflected in fans' communication practices on social media platform X. Based on these objectives, the research question is: "How do Polca fandom members engage in parasocial interaction with the Polcasan mascot on social media platform X?" This study is expected to provide academic benefits by enriching the study of parasocial interaction through evidence that such relationships can be formed not only with human figures but also with non-human characters. Furthermore, this study is also expected to broaden the scope of research on Thai BL fandoms, which remains limited in Indonesia. In practical terms, the findings of this study can serve as input for the entertainment industry, demonstrating that mascots do not merely function as promotional tools but can also serve as a means of building emotional bonds and strengthening the dynamics of the fan community.

To answer these research questions, this study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with three active members of the Polca fandom and supplemented by online observations on the social media platform X. The research findings were analysed using the Parasocial Interaction Theory developed by Schramm and Hartmann (2008) across three dimensions: cognitive (thoughts and judgements regarding the media figure), affective (feelings and emotions that arise), and conative (behaviour directed towards the media figure). This approach was used to identify how members of the Polca fandom build emotional

closeness with the Polcasan mascot through various communication practices and fan activities on the social media platform X.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach based on the constructivist paradigm. The constructivist paradigm was chosen because this study focuses on understanding the process of meaning construction undertaken by members of the Polca fandom in interpreting the Polcasan mascot through interactions on social media platform X. In the context of digital fandom, meaning construction occurs not only at the individual level, but also through collective interactions on social media platform X, where fans jointly construct and maintain their interpretation of Polcasan. Creswell & Poth (2018) explains that the constructivist paradigm seeks to develop subjective meanings derived from an individual's experiences, interactions and interpretations of a particular object or phenomenon (Haryoko et al., 2020)

The research informants comprised four active members of the Polca fandom, selected using purposive sampling. This technique was used to select informants based on specific considerations or criteria deemed capable of providing the information required in line with the research objectives (Haryoko et al., 2020). Informants were selected based on the following criteria: having followed TayNew and Polcasan for at least one year, actively using the social media platform X, having previously interacted with Polcasan content, and being willing to act as research informants. Data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and online observation of the activities of the @polcasan\_official account, as well as posts using the hashtag #Polcasan on the social media platform X. Data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and online observation of the activities of the @polcasan\_official account and posts using the hashtag #Polcasan on social media platform X. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they provide informants with the flexibility to convey their experiences and views in greater depth, thereby enabling the researcher to obtain more comprehensive information in line with the research focus (Creswell & Poth, 2018 dalam (Putu et al., 2026).

**Tabel 1.** Research Informant Profile

| Kode | Nama (Inisial) | Usia     | Pekerjaan/Status | Lama Menjadi Anggota Fandom Polca |
|------|----------------|----------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| I-01 | Nai            | 25 tahun | Karyawan Swasta  | ± 2,5 tahun                       |
| I-02 | Lia            | 19 tahun | Belum bekerja    | ± 1 tahun lebih                   |
| I-03 | Zahra          | 21 tahun | Mahasiswa        | ± 2 tahun                         |
| I-04 | Olivia         | 19 tahun | Mahasiswa        | ± 1 tahun 5 bulan                 |

**Source:** Data processed (2026)

Data analysis was carried out using a model by Miles et al. (2014) which comprises three stages, namely data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data condensation stage, the researcher carried out open coding on the interview transcripts and observational data, resulting in 48 initial codes. These codes were then grouped through a process of axial coding into six categories. Subsequently, through a process of selective coding, these six categories were synthesised into four main themes, which formed the basis for the analysis and discussion of the research findings. These three stages of analysis took place interactively,

enabling the researcher to arrive at interpretations consistent with the research data (Bilang et al., 2024; Miles et al., 2014).

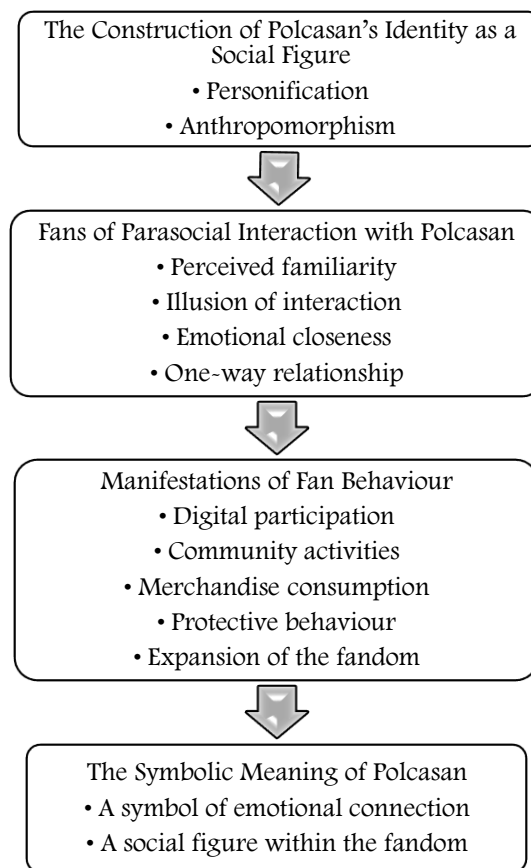
The validity of the data was tested using source triangulation by comparing the interview findings from the four informants with observational data from social media platform X. Triangulation was used to test the credibility of the data by cross-checking information against various sources, techniques and timeframes, thereby ensuring the reliability and consistency of the data (Mekarisce, 2020). The analysis was carried out repeatedly until an interpretation was obtained that was consistent with the research focus on fans' parasocial interactions with Polcasan (Prameswari & Tanjung, 2025).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of interview data and observations on social media platform X, this study identifies four main themes that illustrate the process by which parasocial interactions between members of the Polca fandom and the Polcasan mascot are formed. These four themes include: (1) the construction of Polcasan's identity as a social figure, (2) fans of parasocial interactions with Polcasan, (3) the manifestation of parasocial interactions in fan behaviour, and (4) the symbolic meaning of Polcasan within the TayNew fandom.

These four themes are interrelated in explaining the process by which parasocial interactions are formed. The research findings indicate that fans first interpret Polcasan as a social figure through processes of personification and anthropomorphism. This construction appears to be followed by the development of parasocial interaction, which encompasses the perception of familiarity, the illusion of interaction, emotional closeness, and an awareness of a one-way relationship. These experiences are then manifested through various forms of participation in fandom activities, ultimately resulting in the interpretation of Polcasan as a symbol of the emotional bond between TayNew and their fan community. The relationships between the research themes are visualised in the thematic map in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Thematic Map



Source: Data processed (2026)

### Fans Construct Polcasan's Identity as a Social Figure

The first theme emerging from the selective coding indicates that fans perceive Polcasan as a social figure possessing a human-like identity. This perception is constructed through the establishment of kinship ties and the attribution of character traits associated with Tay and New. This construction of identity serves as the initial foundation enabling fans to develop a psychological attachment to the digital mascot.

The analysis reveals that fans consistently position Polcasan as part of the TayNew family. Terms such as 'child', 'grandchild', 'younger sibling' and 'baby' recur frequently in the interviews. These terms indicate that Polcasan is understood as a figure holding a social position within the community. This interpretation shifts Polcasan's function from that of a mere mascot to a figure involved in the fans' social relationships. Thus, Polcasan's identity is shaped not only by visual characteristics but also by the recurring communication practices within the fandom. One informant stated:

"Polcasan is not just a mascot representing the TayNew fandom, but the child of TayNew."  
(I-02)

The informant's statement suggests that fans no longer view Polcasan as merely a visual representation. Polcasan is understood as a figure who has social connections within the fandom community. The attribution of the identity of 'child' means that Polcasan is treated as a figure who holds a social position within the community. This interpretation encourages fans to develop an emotional attachment that was not previously directed towards a mascot. It demonstrates that



Polcasan has been positioned as a figure possessing a social identity within the community. This position forms the basis for the development of psychological attachment in the subsequent stage.

A similar pattern was also found in the observations of the X account. The consistent use of kinship terms across various posts indicates that the interpretation of Polcasan has become a shared understanding within the community. This consistency suggests that Polcasan's identity is not merely understood by specific individuals, but has become a shared representation maintained through interactions amongst fans. Fans consistently use terms of address such as “Sandut”, “San”, “Yaisan”, “child” and “grandchild” when interacting with Polcasan. Several posts feature birthday messages that treat Polcasan as a member of the family.

**Figure 3.** The Use of Kinship Terms



Source: X, data processed (2026)

Several of these comments show that Polcasan is not only referred to as a child, but is also treated in the same way as other family members, receiving congratulations on important occasions such as birthdays. The consistent use of kinship terms across various comments indicates that Polcasan's identity is not formed individually, but is produced through repeated communicative practices, thereby becoming accepted as a shared meaning within the community. It is this shared understanding of meaning that enables all members of the fandom to treat Polcasan as a social figure without needing to re-explain the character's position.

This construction of identity is a prerequisite for the emergence of parasocial relationships. According to Schramm & Hartmann (2008) Parasocial relationships begin with the perception that the audience recognises media figures as individuals possessing specific characters and identities. The findings of this study indicate that this process began when fans positioned Polcasan as a member of the TayNew family. This perception of recognition forms the basis for the development of cognitive and affective dimensions in parasocial interactions at the subsequent stage.

In addition to familial ties, fans also associate Polcasan's character with the personalities of Tay and New. Polcasan is portrayed as an active, talkative, cheerful, spoilt and careless figure—characteristics consistently associated with Tay and New. These character attributions indicate that fans use their knowledge of Tay and New's traits as a framework for understanding Polcasan's behaviour. This character alignment reinforces the consistency of Polcasan's identity, making it easier for fans to accept the character as part of TayNew.

These findings indicate the presence of a process of anthropomorphism, namely the attribution of human characteristics to non-human objects (Epley et al., 2007). Fans associate Tay and New's characteristics with Polcasan, leading them to perceive the mascot as having an identity and personality. This process strengthens fans' emotional attachment to Polcasan. In this study, anthropomorphism is understood as a facilitating process that enables the formation of parasocial relationships.

These findings expand the scope of research of Liang et al. (2025) which explains that the sense of connection to a mascot is influenced by the attribution of human characteristics through visual design. The findings of this study indicate that this process does not stop at character design. The meaning of Polcasan continues to be negotiated through community interactions on social media, such that the mascot's identity is maintained by fans' communicative practices. Thus, the community factor plays a role that is just as important as character design in shaping anthropomorphism.

This study also offers a new perspective on previous research that explained The use of distinctive symbols, language and terminology within fandom communities serves to reinforce collective identity, with a primary focus on language as a marker of group membership (Smutradontri & Gadavani, 2020). Fandom's collective identity is built through the use of language and symbols that are mutually understood by members of the community (Smutradontri & Gadavani, 2020). The findings of this study indicate that this process develops further through the personification of mascots. Thus, collective identity is constructed not only through language, but also through non-human characters who are assigned a social position and maintained through the community's communication practices.

Based on the research findings, it is evident that the construction of Polcasan's identity represents an initial stage in the formation of parasocial relationships. This identity is not constructed by the mascot character alone, but is produced through communication practices that occur repeatedly within the fan community. When Polcasan is perceived as a member of the TayNew family possessing a specific identity and character, fans begin to develop the perception that they know the figure personally. This perception then becomes the initial foundation for the development of parasocial relationships, which are discussed in the following sub-section through cognitive and affective dimensions according to Schramm & Hartmann (2008).

### **The Process of the Formation of Fans' Parasocial Interactions with Polcasan**

The second theme emerging from the selective coding indicates that the parasocial relationship between fans and Polcasan develops through four interrelated stages: the perception of familiarity with Polcasan, the illusion of interaction (paracommunication), emotional closeness, and awareness of a one-way relationship.

#### **Step 1: Fans Develop a Perception of Familiarity with Polcasan**

The first stage of parasocial interaction is characterised by the formation of a perception of familiarity with Polcasan. The analysis revealed that all informants accessed Polcasan's content almost daily with high frequency, ranging from five to ten times a day. This repeated exposure was one of the factors enabling the formation of a perception of familiarity with Polcasan. One informant stated:

"Almost every day. I usually see it on X and Instagram. Polcasan often appears because it takes part in various GMMTV programmes."

(I-01)

This statement suggests that Polcasan content has become part of fans' daily media consumption. Based on the informants' experiences, Polcasan content frequently appears on social



media homepages, meaning fans remain exposed to it even if they do not always seek it out specifically. This repeated exposure allows fans to become increasingly familiar with the Polcasan character, thereby forming the perception that they know the figure.

This finding is also reinforced by observations of the X account. The @polcasan account consistently displays a stable personality in every post. The Polcasan character is always portrayed as a cheerful, chatty figure who is full of affection towards both TayNew and the fans. This consistency in character allows fans to form a relatively stable picture of who Polcasan is. This situation enables the formation of a perception that the character possesses an identity that is recognisable over time. These findings indicate the formation of a cognitive dimension as described by Schramm & Hartmann (2008) when fans develop a perception of media figures through repeated exposure.

Unlike statement from Giles (2002) Whilst previous research has emphasised exposure frequency as the primary factor in the formation of parasocial relationships with figures in conventional media, the findings of this study indicate the existence of different exposure patterns. Based on the informants' experiences, Polcasan content is not always actively sought out, but frequently appears on social media feeds.

Based on these findings, the perception of 'knowing' Polcasan is formed through consistent exposure to its content and serves as the foundation for subsequent stages of parasocial interaction. When fans feel they 'know' Polcasan, they begin to develop a level of engagement that goes beyond mere passive media consumption.

#### Step 2: Fans Experience the Illusion of Interaction (Paracommunication)

Once this perception had taken hold, fans developed the illusion that they were interacting with Polcasan. The results of the analysis show that fans actively respond to Polcasan's posts through comments, likes and by sharing the content. One informant stated:

"When Polcasan interacts with other mascots, I join in and reply to their interactions. I feel that it's not just a matter of exchanging comments with a mascot, but actually chatting directly with little children."

(I-02)

This statement indicates that fans do not merely observe the content passively, but actively participate in conversations involving Polcasan. Fans feel as though they are communicating directly with Polcasan. The use of informal forms of address and a consistent communication style reinforces the perception that interactions with Polcasan are personal. This finding is also supported by observations on the X account. When Polcasan posted a message urging fans to look after their health, fans responded with interpersonal greetings like:

#### Figure 4. Respon interpersonal penggemar



Source: X, data processed (2026)

These responses show that fans are not merely leaving comments, but are positioning themselves as if they were communicating directly with Polcasan. The use of informal forms of address ("Adek") and the language of love ("sayanggg") suggests that fans regard Polcasan as someone they can talk to on a personal level.

Schramm & Hartmann (2008) This phenomenon is referred to as 'paracommunication', which is the experience whereby individuals feel they are interacting with a media figure, even though the interaction is one-way. In this study, paracommunication arises because the characters, language and narratives constructed enable fans to feel an emotional connection whilst consuming the content. Horton & Wohl (1956) explains the illusion of interaction with human media figures. The findings of this study indicate that similar experiences also arise with digital mascots that are personified through community narratives. Thus, the perception of interaction does not stop at the experience of communication alone, but develops into an affective engagement that fosters emotional closeness and constitutes the next stage in the formation of parasocial relationships.

#### Step 3: Fans Develop an Emotional Bond

The illusion of ongoing interaction fosters a sense of emotional closeness between fans and Polcasan. The results of the analysis show that fans are not only cognitively engaged, but also experience emotions associated with the character. Polcasan is perceived as a source of entertainment and emotional support capable of lifting one's spirits. One informant stated:

"When I'm tired or in a bad mood, watching Polcasan's videos can lift my spirits. Even just hearing the sound of her baby chattering away makes me happy."

(I-03)

This statement suggests that Polcasan is perceived as a figure capable of providing emotional support. Informants linked the experience of watching Polcasan to an improvement in their mood, indicating that parasocial relationships serve an affective function. Emotional closeness also emerged during key moments in Polcasan's journey, such as when Polcasan expressed gratitude at the Polca Fam Meeting or when facing online abuse on social media. These findings were further supported by observations on the X account. When Polcasan faced online abuse, fans displayed emotional responses:

Figure 5. Respon Emosional Penggemar



Source: X, data processed (2026)

This response shows that when Polcasan was subjected to abuse, fans expressed their sadness and came to Polcasan's defence. Schramm & Hartmann (2008) identifies the affective dimension in parasocial interaction as emotional engagement with media figures. The findings of this study indicate that this affective dimension is reflected in fans' emotional responses to various events experienced by Polcasan.

Research by Wardani & Kusuma (2021) found that fans develop emotional responses to media figures via social media. In contrast to the findings of Wardani and Kusuma, which focused on human public figures, this study shows that similar emotional responses can also arise towards digital mascots that are consistently personified. This emotional closeness is subsequently expressed through various concrete actions as manifestations of a parasocial relationship.

#### Step 4: Fans Realise the One-Way Nature of the Relationship

Although they experienced a deep emotional connection, fans were aware that their relationship with Polcasan was one-sided and imaginary. The results of the analysis showed that all informants were aware that Polcasan was not a real being and could distinguish between reality and fandom activities. One informant stated:

"I don't really see Polcasan as a child, but rather as a funny and adorable character. I can still tell the difference between reality and fangirling."

(I-01)

This statement indicates that the informant is fully aware that Polcasan is a character, not a real person. This awareness does not diminish the intensity of the relationship; rather, it forms part of a genuine parasocial experience. Fans continue to enjoy a parasocial relationship with Polcasan because the character provides entertainment and a positive emotional experience. Schramm & Hartmann (2008) refers to this awareness as an aspect of reality in parasocial interaction. Individuals may be aware of the imaginary nature of such relationships without this diminishing the satisfaction they derive from them. This awareness enables fans to enjoy parasocial relationships without disregarding reality.

In contrast to earlier research by Horton & Wohl (1956) yang cenderung memandang hubungan parasosial sebagai bentuk ilusi yang menggantikan In terms of real-world social relationships, the findings of this study indicate that fans possess a mature awareness of the imaginary nature of parasocial relationships. This awareness does not diminish the intensity of the

relationship; rather, it enables fans to enjoy parasocial relationships in a balanced manner. In this study, awareness of the imaginary nature of Polcasan did not prevent the emergence of emotional involvement.

Based on the overall findings, the four stages of perception—familiarity, the illusion of interaction, emotional closeness, and awareness of the one-way nature of the relationship—indicate that fans’ parasocial relationships are not formed instantaneously, but rather develop through a gradual and interrelated process. The perception of Polcasan serves as the foundation for the illusion of interaction, which in turn triggers emotional closeness, and ultimately leads to an awareness of the one-way nature of the relationship. The emotional closeness that has been established is subsequently manifested in various concrete actions as expressions of the parasocial relationship, which will be discussed in the next section.

### Fans Manifest Parasocial Relationships in Their Behaviour

The third theme emerging from the selective coding analysis shows that the emotional closeness formed through parasocial interaction is reflected in various forms of fan behaviour. Schramm & Hartmann (2008) explains that the conative dimension in parasocial interaction encompasses actual behaviour directed towards media figures. Based on the results of the analysis, the informants’ parasocial closeness to Polcasan is evident through various forms of behaviour, namely digital participation, community participation, consumption behaviour, protective behaviour, and fandom expansion.

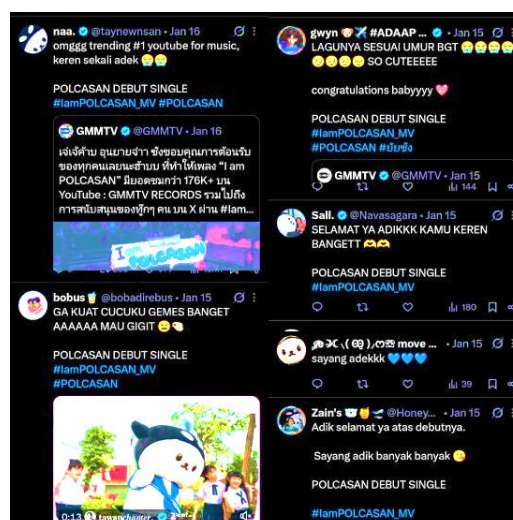
Digital participation is the most basic form of parasocial relationship and the one most frequently engaged in by fans. The analysis revealed that all informants routinely ‘like’, comment on, and share posts about Polcasan. One informant stated:

“I usually post about Polcasan on X. I also comment, ‘like’, and share their content.”

(I-02)

These findings indicate that fans not only consume Polcasan’s content but also actively post, comment on, like and share content relating to Polcasan. This is further supported by observations of the X account. When Polcasan releases a song, fans show their support through various comments:

Figure 6. Fan participation



Source: X, data processed (2026)

Fans also joined in the conversation on social media using hashtags such as #IamPOLCASAN\_MV and #OurPOLCASANTurns2. The use of hashtags is one way in which fans participate in fuelling the conversation about Polcasan.

These various forms of participation reflect the concrete actions that accompany parasocial interaction, as described in the conative dimension (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). Prameswari & Tanjung (2025) It also shows that interaction via comments is a form of fans' conative behaviour on social media. This finding is consistent with the results of the study, in which the digital participation of Polcasan fans reflects the conative dimension of parasocial interaction. Thus, digital participation demonstrates that parasocial relationships are not merely internal in nature, but are also expressed through actions in the digital space.

Fans also form parasocial relationships through participation in communities. The results of the analysis show that all informants have taken part in fandom activities related to Polcasan. One informant stated:

"I've also organised two charity projects on behalf of Polcasan and raised funds together with other fans."

(I-01)

This statement shows that fan participation is not limited to social media activity, but is also evident in community activities. Another informant added:

"I have a WhatsApp group with fellow TayNew and Polcasan fans. In that group, we often share information about TayNew and Polcasan, discuss things, and send each other the latest content."

(I-04)

The existence of these communities provides a space for fans to share information, discuss, and exchange content regarding both TayNew and Polcasan. These findings indicate that fans participate not only through social media, but also through various activities carried out together within the fandom community.

**Figure 7.** The Fandom Polca Indonesia's Fan Community Project



**Source:** Social Media, data processed (2026)



Observational data shows that the Polca Indonesia fandom has organised various community projects. These projects include the GLASS INSIDE LIFT PROJECT at the GMMTV building (1–15 March 2026), a donation of 60 packed meals to the homeless on behalf of Polcasan, a donation project for children with cancer in Malang under the theme ‘POLCASAN LITTLE HEROES’, the LED ADS PROJECT at Graha Mandiri in Jakarta, and photo frames in 23 cities across Indonesia.

These findings indicate that fan engagement with Polcasan is strong, both through social media activity and through various activities carried out with the fan community. This is consistent with research by Jenkins (2006) on participatory culture, in which fans are not merely passive consumers but also active producers. In the context of this study, this form of participatory culture is evident through fans’ involvement in community projects and collective activities related to Polcasan. The study by Fauziyyah et al. (2025) A study on the Polca fandom found that community members have a strong sense of identity based on their love for Tay and New, with shared values such as mutual support, creativity and a sense of belonging. Thus, community participation demonstrates that fan engagement takes place not only in digital spaces, but also through community activities.

Emotional closeness is also manifested through consumer behaviour. The results of the analysis show that all informants exhibited consumer behaviour linked to Polcasan. One informant stated:

“The greatest influence is on consumption decisions. When Polcasan becomes a brand ambassador for a product such as a mobile phone case or a beauty product. I become more interested in buying that product.”

(I-01)

The research findings indicate that some informants purchase products and merchandise related to Polcasan as a form of support for her. Another informant added:

“I’ve started buying official TayNew and Polcasan merchandise more often as a form of support. Besides that, I’ve developed a new habit of always carrying a Polcasan keychain when I go out.”

(I-04)

Fans also display protective behaviour towards Polcasan. The results of the analysis show that all informants displayed protective behaviour when Polcasan was subjected to abuse on social media. One informant stated:

“If anyone abuses Polcasan, I usually block or report their account straight away. I just can’t bear to see Polcasan being treated badly.”

(I-02)

This statement indicates that the informant responded to the abuse directed at Polcasan by taking protective measures to block and report the accounts that had posted the insults. Another informant added:

“I also help to clarify the situation whenever there are posts deemed to be harmful to Polcasan or TayNew.”

(I-01)

Observations on the social media platform X reveal a similar pattern. When there are posts or comments with a negative tone regarding Polcasan, fans respond with defensive remarks, as shown in Figure 5. These responses indicate that fans seek to protect and defend Polcasan when faced with negative comments. This finding is consistent with research by Qu & Zhong (2025) which states that emotional closeness in parasocial relationships can encourage positive behaviour,

including offering support and protection to the idolised figure. In the context of digital fandom, such protective behaviour is evident in the support that fans actively express on social media (Qu & Zhong, 2025).

The research findings also show that some informants began to learn about and follow TayNew after first becoming familiar with Polcasan. One informant stated:

“I actually got to know Polcasan before I knew about TayNew. After seeing Polcasan, I became curious and started finding out who the ‘creator’ of that mascot was. That’s how I eventually got to know TayNew and started following them.”

(I-04)

According to the informants’ experiences, Polcasan was their starting point for getting to know TayNew. Another informant added:

“Before I found out about Polcasan, I didn’t really follow TayNew. Once I found out, I became more interested in finding out about TayNew’s activities. So Polcasan helped me get to know TayNew better.

(I-02)

Observations on the social media platform X suggest that many fans from outside the Thai fandom are starting to take a liking to Polcasan:

**Figure 8.** Polcasan as a Gateway for Non-fans



Source: X, data processed (2026)

Baudinette (2022) This indicates that mascots or supporting characters can serve as a gateway for fans to get to know the main character. This finding is consistent with the research results, in which Polcasan served as the starting point for the informants’ introduction to TayNew.

Overall, the findings on this theme indicate that parasocial relationships with Polcasan are not only evident in fans’ cognitive and affective experiences, but are also manifested in the actions fans take when interacting with Polcasan and the fandom community. This indicates that parasocial relationships, in the context of this study, are not merely understood as psychological experiences but are also evident in fans’ everyday practices. These findings form the basis for understanding the symbolic significance of Polcasan in the relationship between TayNew and its fan community, which is discussed in the next theme.

### The Symbolic Meaning of Polcasan in the TayNew Fandom Community

Based on the overall findings from the previous themes, the research results indicate that Polcasan’s symbolic meaning was not inherent in the mascot from the outset. Polcasan’s symbolic meaning appears to have been formed through a series of processes identified in the research data,

including identity construction, parasocial interaction, behavioural manifestations, and collective interpretation.

Firstly, in the informants' experience, Polcasan's social identity was constructed through a process of anthropomorphism that took place via exposure to content on social media platform X. Fans attributed human characteristics to Polcasan, referring to it as a 'child', 'grandchild' or 'younger sibling', and associating its character with the traits of Tay and New. Data analysis indicates that the process of anthropomorphism, manifested through personification, plays a significant role in how informants perceive Polcasan as a social figure. This perspective appears to align with the emergence of psychological engagement with Polcasan. Consequently, this identity construction forms part of the process whereby informants position Polcasan not merely as a mascot, but as a social figure with meaningful connections within the fandom community.

Secondly, based on the informants' experiences, this construction of identity is linked to the development of parasocial relationships, as described by Schramm & Hartmann (2008). The relationship, which began with a cognitive perception namely the feeling of knowing Polcasan, appeared to develop into an illusion of interaction (paracommunication) when the informants actively responded to posts and felt they were communicating with a real person. As the interaction progressed, the informants also demonstrated an emotional closeness to Polcasan, whereby fans were not only cognitively engaged but also experienced emotions such as happiness, being moved, pride and sadness associated with this figure. These findings demonstrate that the informants' experiences do not stop at the cognitive level, but also encompass affective engagement with Polcasan.

Thirdly, the emotional closeness that develops is subsequently manifested through various forms of participation and real-world behaviour. Fans not only feel an emotional bond internally but also express it through digital participation (likes, comments, posts), community participation (donation projects, birthday celebrations), consumption behaviour (purchasing merchandise), protective behaviour (defending against abuse), and the expansion of the fandom (introducing TayNew through Polcasan). These findings demonstrate that the parasocial relationship among the informants is reflected not only in psychological experiences but also in various forms of participation in fandom activities.

Fourthly, this sequence of processes ranging from identity construction and parasocial interaction to behavioural manifestations results in a shared understanding amongst fandom members that Polcasan is no longer perceived merely as a mascot, but rather as a symbol of the emotional bond between TayNew and their fan community. For some informants, negative comments about Polcasan are viewed not only as criticism of the mascot, but also of the meaning attached to Polcasan within the fandom community.

The findings of this study indicate that the concept of parasocial interaction, as described by Schramm & Hartmann (2008), is relevant for understanding fans' relationships with personified non-human characters. In contrast to the study by Smutradontri & Gadavani (2020), which focused primarily on the use of language and collective identity on Twitter as symbols of fandom, this study demonstrates that such symbols can also be embodied through mascot characters constructed as social figures. In the context of this study, Polcasan appears to serve as a medium representing the emotional bond between TayNew and its fan community, whilst also forming part of the communicative practices that shape symbolic meaning within the fandom.

Based on the research findings, these stages of parasocial relationships were also evident in the informants' experiences when interacting with personified non-human characters (Giles, 2002; Horton & Wohl, 1956). In the context of this study, anthropomorphism is a key element in

the formation of these relationships. Through the consistent practice of personification in the fandom community's communication, the digital mascot is perceived as a figure possessing an identity, emotions and social relationships.

Overall, the interpretation of Polcasan in this study appears to have been shaped by ongoing communication practices within the fandom community. The processes of anthropomorphism and personification form part of the informants' experience in viewing Polcasan as a social figure, establishing parasocial relationships, and interpreting Polcasan as a symbol within the TayNew fandom. Thus, Polcasan can be understood as a symbol that derives its meaning through the process of social interaction and the collective experiences of the fans.

## CONCLUSSION

This study demonstrates that fans' parasocial interactions with Polcasan are formed through an interrelated process, beginning with the construction of the mascot's identity as a social figure through anthropomorphism and personification, developing into a parasocial relationship that encompasses cognitive and affective engagement, and subsequently manifesting in various forms of fan participation within the fandom community. This sequence of processes shapes the symbolic meaning attributed to Polcasan as a symbol of the emotional bond between TayNew and its fan community. The findings of this study also indicate that the concept of parasocial interaction, as described by Schramm & Hartmann (2008), is relevant for understanding fans' relationships with personified non-human characters. In the context of this study, the symbolic meaning of Polcasan is not automatically inherent in the mascot itself, but is shaped through the fans' communication practices, social interactions and collective experiences within the TayNew fandom community.

This study has several limitations. Firstly, only four informants were involved, meaning that the findings are limited to the experiences of the informants studied. Secondly, this study focused solely on social media platform X and therefore does not yet illustrate the dynamics of parasocial interaction on other social media platforms. Nevertheless, this study provides an insight into the process by which parasocial interactions with non-human characters develop within the context of digital fandom. Future research is recommended to involve a more diverse group of informants and to examine parasocial interactions across various social media platforms in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, the use of a mixed-methods approach or longitudinal research could serve as an alternative to enrich our understanding of the dynamics of parasocial relationships with non-human characters within fandom communities.

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