

QATAR UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

“THE EFFECT OF THE PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF INSTAGRAM BEAUTY  
INFLUENCER ON THE ATTITUDE AND PURCHASING INTENTION OF YOUNG  
FEMALES”

CASE OF QATAR

BY

KUMMAM MOHAMMED ALMAADEED

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## **COMMITTEE PAGE**

The members of the Committee approve the Project of Kummam Al-Maadeed  
defended on 07/01/2018.

Rana Sobh  
Thesis/Dissertation Supervisor

Belaid Aouni  
Committee Member

## ABSTRACT

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Title: “The Effect of the Perceived Usefulness of Instagram Beauty Influencer on the Attitudes and Purchasing Intentions of Young Females in Qatar”

Supervisor of project: Dr Rana, Sobh.

There is an increasing interest about the topic of eWOM among marketing scholars. However, most of the studies focused on western contexts and there is a lack of studies about the impact of eWOM on consumers’ attitude and intentions in the Gulf region and Qatar specifically. Hence, this study aims to focus on a specific social media channel; Instagram, and examine the effect of influencers’ recommendations on women consumption of cosmetics products in Qatar. Two hundred and seven women completed an online questionnaire. PROCESS has been used to analyze data. Results indicate that, unlike what has been established in other contexts, the perceived usefulness of influencers and trust did not have a significant effect on brand attitude and only positively affected Purchase Intention. Therefore, this study adds the to the existing body of knowledge in this area and could guide social media managers use of Instagram influencers and help marketing professionals develop more efficient online advertising strategies.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Influencers, Instagram, Marketing, Brand Attitude, Purchase Intention, Trust, Perceived Usefulness, Reputation

## **DEDICATION**

*This project is dedicated to three of my colleagues who I would not have survived this program without;*

*Manal Kasem*

*Salha Al-Mohannadi*

*Shaima Ibrahim*

*Thank you for being my rock!*

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background and Research Motivation**

Social media has infiltrated every aspect of society these days. What began as a means for personal networking has morphed into an overarching medium of communication, which is being used by businesses and multiple non-traditional entities alike. Significantly, one of the very interesting properties of social media is the capability to provide convergence to people of all demographics and identities across the world. Social media provides the users a proprietary platform to brand themselves as authorities on various factors, something which has culminated into the trend of influencers in the social media platforms (Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang, 2013). This leads to the question of how much impact these platforms and the influencers they hold on the general public?

This fact leads to the next portion of this study; social media has ceased being a personal affair. Presently, organizations exploit social media for both marketing and public relations (Xifra & Huertas, 2008), because social media is an interactive platform. This way, the customers of the origination can report their issues straight to the source, and therefore, provide a platform for the organization to solve their problems accordingly.

The responses on social media are therefore more instantaneous than they would be in other modes of communicating issues, such as suggestion boxes and mail. Furthermore, the superiority of social media is also enhanced by the fact that social media facilitates the pooling of interactive public relations. In other words, the customers can raise their issues in the digital space, and then have their colleagues answer their questions

from their experience, or even report a similar experience to the one that the reporting party is facing. Accordingly, social media enables the customers to tap into consumer-to-consumer assistance (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom, 2015) on a scale that cannot be replicated in the traditional communication models. In addition, marketing and public relations therefore, social media can be used by the customers to seek guidance or redress from the organization in a public medium. Moreover, social media has further proven to be a portal of transmission electronic word of mouth because the customers can use it as a means of providing some reviews (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom, 2015). Traditional word of mouth (WOM) refers to the referrals of products that consumers share amongst themselves, yet electronic word of mouth is the digital version of traditional WOM. A satisfied customer is likely to recommend their product to their immediate and extensive social circle. This is what East, Hammond & Lomax (2008) call positive word of mouth. Moreover, as a means of getting revenge for poor service, the customers may engage negative word of mouth as one of the methods of customer rage behavior. In other words, when customers feel cheated by the organization because of poor service or product, then they might display their rage against the company in a multitude of ways. Decampaigning the organization among friends and family might be one of them. Accordingly, the repercussions of digital negative word of mouth are likely to be more serious than those of the traditional counterpart.

Since there is no need for accreditation on social media, the proprietors of the social media channels make their own credibility from their followers, especially if their actual objective is to have a public following. Noteworthy, the public following from social media

is the type of influencer, which the public relations and marketing personnel are looking for from social media. (Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang, 2013).

The marketing departments and public relations personnel of companies have become alerted to a new trend, which is that of social media influencers. Influencers are defined according to Liu, Jiang et al. (2013), as “novel information contributors who have the ability to affect the behavior or attitudes of others”. The aforementioned social media influencers typically have large followings on their social media accounts or blogs (Chatterjee, 2011). The large following therefore, is what the social media marketers tap into. Typically, the bloggers who are recruited by these organizations are expected to review the organization’s product and then disseminate the review to their followers, for a fee of course. This study therefore examines the social media influencer impact on the brand attitude and purchasing intentions of the buyers in the state of Qatar.

According to the “2014 Qatar ICT Landscape”, done by the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQatar), Qatar has a high internet penetration percentage, as 85% of the overall population in Qatar uses a laptop and 71% a smartphone to connect to the internet. This shows that there is a direct and heavy access to social media channels. The “Emerging ICT Trend in Qatar” of the same year and institution, also support this through the findings that the use of social media and the reliance on user generator content are future ICT trends in the social field. Qatar as well holds the number one spot of the highest GDP per capita across the globe and according to Greenfield (2012) in her article in Forbes magazine, “adjusted for purchasing power, Qatar booked an estimated gross domestic product per capita of more than \$88,000 for 2010.” Nevertheless, there is a

lack of studies about the impact of social media on consumer behavior in Qatar, that is the effect of electronic word of mouth on the population's attitude and intentions. Therefore, this study is intended to focus on a specific social media channel; Instagram, and examine the effect of the influencers' eWOM in this channel on the young female consumption of cosmetics products. The global cosmetics industry is currently a multi-billion-dollar industry and it is growing at a rate of 5% per annum (Euromonitor, 2017). In the nations encompassing the Gulf Cooperative Council, the market is valued at \$9.3 billion in 2016 and it is expected to grow to \$13.6 billion by 2020. (Euromonitor, 2017). According to Trade Arabia (2015), consumers in Qatar are the top in the region in purchasing beauty products.

## **1.2. Research Objectives**

The objectives of this research are to:

- Examine the effect of perceived usefulness of Instagram influencers' recommendation on the brand attitude and purchase intention to purchase cosmetics among females in Qatar.
- Examine the perceived usefulness of Instagram influencers' recommendation correlation with females' trust in Instagram influencers.
- Examine the effect of Instagram influencers reputation on the overall relationship between the perceived usefulness, trust, brand attitude and purchase intention.

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

EWOM and the factors impacting brand attitudes and purchasing intentions is drawing increasing attention among marketing scholars. However, most of this research has been conducted in Western conducts. Given the unique cultural context in Qatar and the increasing popularity of social media influencers, there is a vital need to understand the nature and degree of their influence on customers in this region.

Therefore, this study sheds a light on an important topic that could add to the existing body of knowledge in this area but also inform the planning of marketing and advertising campaigns in the country. The results of the study can guide social media managers use of Instagram influencers and help marketing professionals develop more efficient online advertising strategies.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

There is an extensive literature about social media and purchase intention. Accordingly, this section examines prior research that looked at the impact of influencers on purchase intentions in the context of electronic word of mouth (eWOM).

### **2.1. Influencers and Social Media Marketing**

Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang (2013) argue that the perceived usefulness of the recommendations of the bloggers are positively correlated with the blog user's perceptions about online shopping. Online shopping comes with a complex ecosystem of influencers and inhibitors. However according to Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang (2013), the element of trust is one of the primary influencers of the customer's willingness to engage in electronic commerce. Without the individual being able to trust the ecommerce process, then they might be reluctant to engage in the same. However, they believe that the usefulness of the recommendations as perceived by the customer, might induce the client to engage in electronic commerce. Accordingly, it appears that the customer must have some extensive trust in their blogger, if they are to associate their recommendation with ecommerce trustworthiness and consequently, an intention to purchase. Furthermore, Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang (2013) argue that the readers' intentions to shop online are influenced positively by the perceived usefulness of the blogger's recommendations.

Alternatively, Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom (2015) argue that the involvement of the consumers in the social media activities of the organization is positively correlated with the perception of the corporate perception of the organization. In other words, the

consumer who actively follows the social media activities and presence of the organization might have a more favorable perception of the business than their counterparts who are not as involved. In fact, this theory is consistent with Kim, Sung & Kang's (2014) findings in their study on 315 Korean consumers. They found that the customers, who often viewed and retweeted the companies' information on Twitter and were more active on Twitter, were more likely to recommend the organization to their peers and family, than their counterparts who did not. As the consumer gets more involved in the activities of the organization, they get a more complete and well-rounded understanding of the marketing mix of the organization. Accordingly, the organization has an audience in such a person, so that when they are engaging in their decision-making process, the information about the organization would already inhabit their mind. Accordingly, these consumers might forego the variety of options that they would have considered in their decision-making process. Moreover, Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom (2015) clarify that these customers are not independently pursuing social media presence in order to follow the communications of the company. They found that the number of consumers, who were very heavily exposed to the social media pages of the companies, was positively correlated with the amount of time that they spend on social media. It appears therefore that the extent, to which the customers spend on any company's social media page, is highly contingent on their social media behavior independently of the content on social media. What this means for organizations, is that companies must find the right target of users, if their social media marketing and public relations drive is going to be successful. At the same time, Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang, (2013) found that there were differences in the social media

usage of different demographics. The usage of social media, they found, is affected by age, gender, education, and experience in the use of blogs. Furthermore, Curtis et al. (2010) found that while females found social media and blog information to be useful, they were more on the receiving end rather than the influential part of social media and digital communications designing. Finally, Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom (2015) argue that the relationship between the perception of an organization's social media activities and the perception of corporate reputation seemed to be stronger on prospective, rather than actual customers.

As explained prior, bloggers have become strong influencers of consumer behavior according to Smith (2010). Public relations departments and marketing departments would therefore turn to bloggers with large followings, to get their message across. However, besides the following in numbers, credibility is one of the issues, which must be considered. As mentioned by Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang (2013), bloggers with little credibility induce less intention to buy. This is especially true in the event of a high involvement purchase. Moreover, they warn that if the reviews of a product or various products are all positive, then the blogger loses credibility. Whereas it is true that organizations are incrementally monetizing blogs for their publicity, there is a question of what the blog owners think about availing their blog space to corporations for marketing purposes. In other words, these bloggers are being followed by people who may genuinely believe in their capabilities to offer unbiased information (Smith, 2010). In addition, the aforementioned information must be relevant to the audience, which the blogger is targeting. Consequently, Smith (2010) points out that the individuality of the blogger may



play a role in how much the content of the blogger is to suit the agenda of the external stakeholders, such as the clients and the suppliers. It is essential though, that the blogger does not lose the kind of individuality, which has driven the readers to their blog, while trying to publish content which, will favor the advertisers. On this score, Smith (2010) warns about the loss of individuality through the quality of information that they share. If it appears like the blogger is not objective, and consistently publishes only positive reviews, then there is a great possibility that they might lose their credibility.

The strength of the social bond between the recipient and the disseminator of information influence the behavior of the recipient of eWOM, according to De Bruyn & Lilien (2008). Where the ties were strong, there was a possibility that the content of the organization or about the product would reach more people through word of mouth, and therefore, influence the extent of WOM. In other words, people were more likely to offer WOM to the people to whom they were closest. However, the question of whether the recipients act on the WOM is influenced by a variety of factors. First, the need must exist or else someone would have no incentive to purchase the product or service anyway. Second, the person who is delivering the WOM must appear credible to the recipient or else the lack of credibility might disincentive the recipient from responding to the WOM (Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang, 2013). Regarding credibility, Bao & Chang (2014) divide the opinions, which divide credibility into two parts namely experience-based, and expertise-based. Expertise based opinions are further divided into monomorphic and polymorphic categories. The polymorphic bloggers or influencers have multiple areas of experience and expertise, unlike the monomorphic ones. With experience, the consumers

might take WOM advice from the influencer who has used the product themselves. These people are therefore believed to have firsthand information about the product, and with that, they gain the credibility of the buyers. On the other hand, the influencer might gain credibility as a means of skill or profession, according to Bao & Chang (2014). For example, someone who has studied medicine might have credibility as a result of their training, and their WOM about the efficacy of a given product to service might be based on their professional knowledge. Furthermore, there are people on the internet who have gained credibility through reverence. If various people trust their opinion, then their WOM must be valuable to the users, as argued by Cramer (2015). In fact, she highlights the paradox of unexperienced influences whose only source of credibility is their crowd following by saying that for highly specialized topics, one is likely to find the information scarcer on social media channels (Cramer, 2015). The scarcity of information, which requires highly specialized knowledge, indicates that knowledge is not a very dominant source of credibility and consequently, influence in the current social media environment.

Related to the above, Gvili et al. (2016) argue that the attitude of the recipient of the message changes with the changes in the mode of delivery of the eWOM. Each channel of communication bears a different attitude from the recipients of the message, and according to Dehghani et al. (2016), this may differ with the age of the message recipient. Accordingly, if a message is offered to the millennials on a platform, which they consider outdated, their negative attitude towards the same, might deflect from their capability to access and therefore, internalize the message that is being offered on the aforementioned platform. Moreover, Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang (2013) also argues that credibility also

influences eWOM value. Regardless of however the message is delivered, if it is not credible to the recipient, then it shall have been wasted. The theories of Gvili et al. (2016) are therefore consistent with Dehghani's (2016) findings that the users of the social media channels do not expect a plain advertisement interrupting their social media experience. They therefore call for strategic message delivery. Messages, which were simply irrelevant, were perceived as annoying, yet the customers' interest was captured by the messages that were more entertaining.

Singh, Veron-Jackson & Cullinane (2008), on the other hand, perceive eWOM through the lens of relationship marketing. Relationship marketing refers to the engagement of the customer in the marketing process to the extent that the aforementioned customer is involved actively in the marketing mix. Hence, relationship marketing does not just look at how the organization passively designs a promotional mix to create customer awareness, but rather, targets long-term relationships with the customers. Singh, Veron-Jackson & Cullinane (2008) found that relationship marketing is more effective if the customers and the organization have consistent interaction between them. This is where the Web 2.0 technologies come in. The Web 2.0 technologies such as social media enable the customers to communicate in real time with their companies. From this information, the company can gain insight about what the customers expect, and therefore strive to deliver on these expectations. Moreover, the customers can find support from their companies on Web 2.0 technologies, while at the same time offering information about the company (eWOM) among themselves on the common organizational platform. Noteworthy, there is no guarantee that when companies communicate with them through

their digital platforms, their brand community members will be friendly. In fact, Padgett (2016) argues that people use the digital space selfishly, and expect everyone to agree with them, so that they perceive those who do not, as wrong. Customers who have been less than satisfied with the services of the organization might therefore end up displaying their dissatisfaction publicly online. Obviously, this would culminate into negative eWOM for the organization. Equally though, the satisfied customers provide both positive eWOM and metrics for the organization to benchmark itself against. However, it is not recommendable for organizations to prohibit people from expressing themselves freely. According to Uzunoglu & Kip (2014), the freedom of expression generates more trust for the organization, yet the reverse is also true.

Uzunoglu & Kip (2014) argue that owing to the interactive nature of the blogs, they are the appropriate place for the informal influence of the consumers. It has prior been stated that they also argue that interactive digital channels where there is no limit on the freedom of speech attract and satisfy the customers more than those which moderate the dialogue through which the customers are allowed to engage in. Consequently, some of the recommendations, which these scholars make, are for the organization to insist on open interaction in its digital communications. However, as the organizations grapple with fuller comprehension in the changes in market communications, they recommend that they should seek out the help of the new influencers, who are the bloggers. However, like Li, Lai & Chen (2011), they also recommend that organizations should endeavor to understand the blogosphere before they venture into it. They believe that the success of the organization is contingent on that very factor. Moreover, the understanding of the

blogosphere would facilitate the organization in understanding how to react to occurrences in the digital marketing space.

Marketing and public relations are an investment and they are therefore expected to yield some results for the organization. Accordingly, Li, Lai & Chen (2011) propose a model, which organizations can use to identify the digital influencers who might have the highest return on investment. As mentioned prior, there are various factors, which influence the impact, which the influencers have on the consumers' buying intentions. To successfully align the message and channel of the organization with the audience of the blog, the organization must identify the right marketing and public relations partners.

Chatterjee (2011) discovered a trend that indicated that despite being non-users of a social network site, if the individual was referred to the social networking site, the individual is likely to generate a visit through this referral. This implies that WOM does not have boundaries in the digital platform. Individuals will still follow through even if they are not users. However, he clarifies that when it comes to the aforementioned relationship with the social network, the consumer ads are more likely to be effective than the marketer ads, because individuals are more selective if they are not users of the site. His finding consolidates the argument that social media influencers' informal relationships have more value to the customers than those of the marketers do.

Noteworthy, word of mouth is a multi-layer endeavor, according to Hornik et al. (2015). In fact, they argue that there is primary word of mouth and secondary word of mouth. Primary word of mouth is the recommendation, which comes directly from the

person who has experienced the product or service first hand. The secondary word of mouth is the type of word of mouth, which comes from the recipients of primary word of mouth. It appears therefore, that when a consumer hears something about a product that is worth sharing, they are likely to extend it across multiple layers, thereby influencing various opinions. If the aforementioned word of mouth is positive, then the organization is likely to benefit from the resulting trials, yet the reverse is also true. This information perfectly morphs into Chatterjee's (2011) research. In this research, Chatterjee categorized electronic communications into consumer ads and marketer ads. The consumer ads, he found, were significantly more likely to be passed on in secondary eWOM, than the marketer ads. Regardless of that, the marketer ads were more apt at generating sales conversions.

Such a predicament is perhaps based on the fact that the consumers are not as experienced as the marketers are, at understanding consumer psychology. Moreover, the consumers might also not understand that the importance of involving attractive advertising copy in their message. Chatterjee (2011) gives this possibility some consideration, but then he acknowledges that more research needs to be conducted on the same. Interestingly, Dehghani et al. (2016) might have the answer to Chatterjee's (2011) recommendation in their findings. Upon conducting research on 315 respondents, they discovered that the respondents had differing responses to YouTube advertisements. The participants responded positively to the videos, which were more informative, witty, and customized to what they might be looking for. However, the respondents also included that they found the YouTube advertisements relatively annoying, unless they bore all of the above

parameters. The marketers are more likely to understand that, because they occasionally conduct market research, which would expose the aforementioned trend. Therefore, the marketers understand the importance of outsourcing the influencing of the customers to the people to whom they actually want to watch and listen. This explains why marketers are incrementally relying on social media celebrities and bloggers to influence the perceptions of their consumers.

Meanwhile, to highlight the importance of influencers other than the organizational representatives, Habib, Laroche & Richard, (2016) engaged in a research about the impact of social media-based brand communities on eWOM. They found that the consumers or members of the brand communities were more likely to influence each other, than the administrators of the organization were likely to do the same. They attribute this to the fact that the group members are usually a greater number than the company representatives, so indeed most of the communication between these people takes place between themselves, thereby relegating the company representatives to a moderating role. This finding is not in vain though, because the exchange between the brand family members can provide the organization some insight about what the customers expect from the brand, and each other.

## **2.2. Word of Mouth, Mode of Delivery, and Consumer Brand Perceptions**

Hornik et al. (2015) found that negative information could be rather harmful, because people tend to remember the negative information for longer than they remember the positive information. Moreover, they also discovered that negative word of mouth spreads at a much faster rate than positive word of mouth. Furthermore, it appears that the

consumers are more passionate about negative information. They respond to the negative information with more passion than they respond to the positive information. This study found as well, that the respondents were more prone to believing negative commercial information than they were prone to believing positive information. Accordingly, they recommend that organizations should be swifter in their reactions to negative eWOM because the consumers tend to have a negativity bias. Interestingly though, East, Hammond & Lomax (2008) found that the customers are likely to resist positive word of mouth in the brands which they are unlikely to find useful, and yet they resist negative word of mouth from the brands which they are likely to find useful.

Cheung & Thadani (2012) argue that the usefulness of the information is positively correlated with the rates of adopting the same. In other words, information, which was perceived to be of greater usefulness, was adopted much faster, yet the opposite is also true. Their findings lend even more credibility to the finding of Dehghani et al. (2016) that customers prefer messages that are informative and customized. Moreover, they also found that the perceived usefulness of a message is also based on the relevance, timeliness, and accuracy of the same message to the target.

Punji et al. (2015) argue that there are five main uses of Instagram, which include social interaction, peeking, self-expression, archiving, and escapism. These very uses therefore explain why the marketers and public relations professionals might want to market through social media. The social interaction is great breeding ground for eWOM. To supplement the above deduction, Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden (2011) highlight the possibility of gaining more returns by consolidating the different social media systems in



a blog environment, in a way, which would ensure that the information on one is complemented by that on another channel. They posit that all social media channels are interconnected.

### **2.3. Determinants of Bloggers' Decisions to Engage in Social Media Marketing**

A substantial amount of literature focuses on the impact that the influencers have on buying intentions. However, Smith (2010) deviates from the above literature in order to look at the reasons which the bloggers may consider when deciding whether to run sponsored content. It is not an automatic given that the bloggers will want to put up sponsored content, because in most cases, they built their blogs for other reasons than advertising. When the bloggers are faced with the opportunity to engage in public relations, they consider their autonomy. If the readers dictate their content, there is a great possibility that they might be skeptic about including sponsored content. They also consider what value the content would add to their audience, in relation to what they would otherwise have published. Moreover, the terms and conditions of the agreement are also considered by the bloggers. If the terms and conditions are more rigid than the bloggers can accommodate, then the bloggers are likely to opt out of the deal. However, a great deal of the bloggers seems to believe that once someone begins putting sponsored content on their blog, then their credibility wanes. That is a tricky decision, which these bloggers face, so it is understandable why most bloggers might have a customized approach to the handling of sponsored content.

## 2.4. Theoretical Framework

According to the literature review in this chapter, many studies have identified credibility, as one of the important qualities in a blogger or an influencer in order to have an impact on customers' brand attitude and purchasing intention (Smith, 2010). Credibility can be measured by many elements; however, according to the findings of Dehghani et al. (2016) customers prefer messages that are informative and customized. This can be accomplished by developing perceived usefulness of a message that is relevant, timeliness, and accurate. In addition, Cramer (2015) states that if customers trust the influencer's opinion, then the influencer's recommendation is valuable to them. Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang (2013) findings agree with the aforementioned and identify that a blogger's perceived usefulness of recommendations and trust as elements effecting the brand attitude and purchasing intentions.

Therefore, this study adapts the framework and model developed by Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang, (2013) in the article, "The effects of blogger recommendations on customers' online shopping intentions". The framework however is modified to implement it on the social media platform "Instagram" influencers, instead of the general online blogging community, and it targets young females living in Qatar. The study focuses on the cosmetic and beauty market. As such and based on the work of Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang (2013), the following hypotheses are advanced:

**H1:** The perceived usefulness of Instagram influencer's recommendation positively affects the follower's purchase intention towards the product recommended.

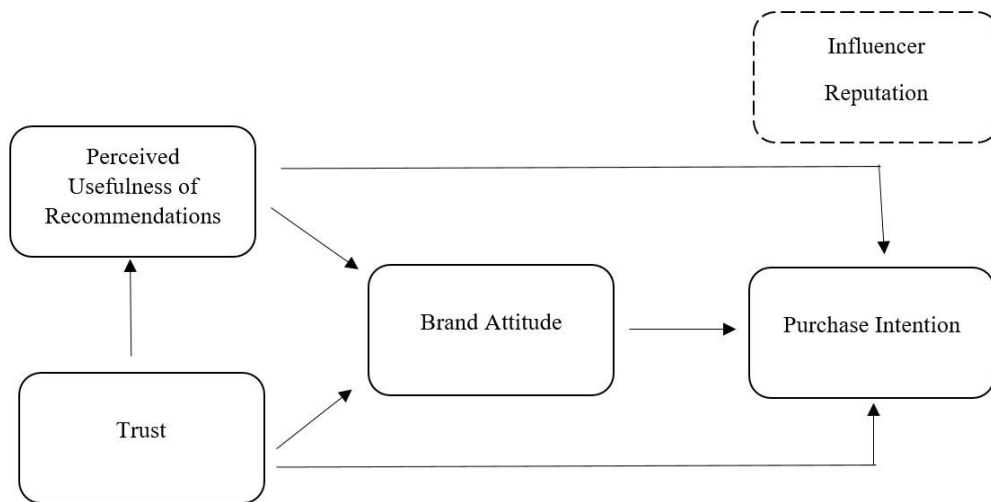
**H2:** Trust toward Instagram influencers positively affects the influencer’s follower’s purchase intention towards the product recommended.

**H3:** Trust positively affects Instagram influencer perceived usefulness of recommendations.

**H4a:** The attitude toward the brand mediate the relationship between perceived usefulness of recommendation and intention to purchase.

**H4b:** The attitude toward the brand mediate the relationship between trust and intention to purchase.

**H5:** The influencer reputation moderates the proposed relationship in H1, H2 and H4.



*Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework*

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Research Design

A survey design is used to collect data. A questionnaire is developed and included 17 questions and was structured in three sections:

- 1- Usage of Instagram: In this part, the questionnaire started with the question, “do you use Instagram?” and if the respondent chose “no”, the questionnaire would end for her, as the study focuses sole on Instagram users. This part also questions the respondents if they follow an Instagram beauty influencers or not. If the answer was yes, the section requests the respondent with an open-end question to name the influencer they follow in order to note a recurring name.
- 2- Measuring Variables: In this part, each variable is measured by a ten-point Likert scale where the respondents are asked to rank a total of 10 statement from 0 (extremely disagree) to 10 (extremely agree) to describe their opinion. Specific measurements for each variable had been applied in these statements. The variables and their measurements are more discussed in section “3.1. Research Measurement”.
- 3- Demographics: As the gender in this study is specific to only females, the demographics questions included questions about Education, Age, Occupation, Material Statue and Nationality.

The questionnaire was uploaded in English and Arabic onto a digital software called Qualtrics and a link of the questionnaire's page was sent through various channels that include, Instagram, email, WhatsApp and iMessage to collect the data. The full questionnaire is available in Appendix A.

### **3.2. Sample**

The target population includes females (citizens and residences) living in the state of Qatar between the ages of 16 and 35. Snowballing has been used to reach participants. Data was collected through Qualtrics.

### **3.3. Constructs Operationalisation**

To test the advanced theoretical framework, five variables ought to be measured: Perceived Usefulness of Instagram Influencers' Recommendation, Trust, Brand Attitude and Purchasing Intention. In addition to Influencer's Reputation that acts as an overall moderator of the framework.

As shown in Table (1), pre-established and validated measurement scales are used. Two items are used to assess each variable and were tested through the statements in the second section of the questionnaire. The statements, "The Instagram beauty influencer I follow provides me with useful information on beauty products" and "The Instagram beauty influencer I follow improves my beauty product shopping effectiveness" measure the independent variable, Perceived Usefulness of Instagram Influencers' Recommendation. On the other hand, the statements, "I believe the Instagram beauty

influencers' product recommendations are honest" and "The Instagram beauty influencers I follow are trustworthy" measure the other independent variable, which is Trust. Furthermore, for the mediating variable, Brand Attitude, the statements, "I like the brands used by the Instagram beauty influencer I follow" and "I think positively of the brands used by the Instagram beauty influencer I follow", while, "I am willing to try products used by the Instagram beauty influencer I follow" and "I intend to purchase the products used by the Instagram beauty influencer I follow" measure the dependent variable, the Purchasing Intention. For the moderating variable, Influencer's Reputation, two statements are included in the questionnaire; "The Instagram beauty influencers have positive reputations" and "The Instagram beauty influencers have a reputation of being honest."

Table 1

*Summarized Variables and Measurements*

Variable	Definition	Measurement
Perceived Usefulness of Recommendations	The degree to which an Instagram user believes that adopting an influencer recommendation would enhance his or her shopping performance. (Adapted from Davis, 1989)	Useful / Not Useful Effective / Not Effective (Davis, 1989)
Trust	Perceived credibility and benevolence of a target of trust. (Doney and Cannon, 1997)	Honest / Not Honest Trustworthy / Not Trustworthy (Lim et al., 2006)
Brand Attitude	The degree of influencer's followers' positive feelings about brand. (Adapted from Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975)	Like / Dislike Think Positive / Think Negative (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975)
Intention to Purchase	The degree of influencer's followers believe that they will shop the brands the influencer recommended. (Adapted from Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975)	Willing/Unwilling Intend / Not Intend (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975)
Influencer's Reputation	The degree to which an influencer's followers believe in the influencers' honesty and concern toward them. (Adapted from Koufaris and Hampton-Sosa, 2004)	Positive/ Negative (Fischbein and Ajzen, 1975) Honest/Not Honest (Lim et al., 2006)

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze the data.

### **4.1. Demographic Profile**

A total of 252 respondents were received with only 213 completed. From them, 6 respondents did not use Instagram and had their questionnaire terminated, hence the final number analyzed in this study is 207. The sample consisted of 45 (21.7%) in the ages between 16 and 21, 69 (33.3%) in the ages between 22 and 26 and 93 (44.9%) respondents were in the ages between 27 and 35. For the education level, 56.5% of the respondents obtained a bachelor's degree, 19.3% of them obtained a high school degree, while 14.5% obtained Masters degrees or above. Almost half of the respondents are employed (54.6%) and 30.4% of them are still student, while the rest chose the option "other" to describe their occupation. Furthermore, 114 (55.1%) of the respondent are single and 93 (44.9%) are married. Noteworthy, 76.3% of the respondents are Qatari nationals while only 23.7% come from other nationalities. The full demographic profile is illustrated in Table (2).



Table 2

*Demographic Profile Of Respondents (N=207)*

<b>Demographic</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Education</b>	Bachelor's Degree	117	56.5
	Diploma	16	7.7
	High Diploma	4	1.9
	High school	40	19.3
	Masters or above	30	14.5
<b>Age</b>	16 - 21	45	21.7
	22 - 26	69	33.3
	27 - 35	93	44.9
<b>Occupation</b>	Employee	113	54.6
	Other	31	15.0
	Student	63	30.4
<b>Marital Statues</b>	Married	93	44.9
	Single	114	55.1
<b>Nationality</b>	None Qatari	49	23.7
	Qatari	158	76.3

## 4.2. Descriptive Statistics

The Cronbach  $\alpha$  value for all variables is higher than the conventional level of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1987), which mean that all the variables have an acceptable level of reliability. Table (3) lists the means and standard deviations of all the variables, along with the Cronbach alpha.

Table 3  
*Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach $\alpha$
Perceived Usefulness of Influencer's Recommendations	6.09	2.320	0.821
Trust	5.01	2.347	0.841
Brand Attitude	6.03	2.063	0.818
Purchase Intention	5.36	2.325	0.880
Influencer's Reputation	5.595	2.2571	0.882

In addition, the independents variables, Perceived Usefulness of Influencer's Recommendations and Trust, were tested using the Loading Factor test in SPSS for validity and according to Table (4), which illustrates the rotated component matrix, both variables are valid. This means that the statements (1 and 2 measuring Perceived Usefulness and 3 and 4 measuring Trust) in the questionnaires measures the variables intended in this research.

Table 4

*Rotated Component Matrix*

	Variables	
	Usefulness of Influencer's Recommendations	Trust
Statement 1	0.889	0.290
Statement 2	0.809	0.400
Statement 3	0.547	0.733
Statement 4	0.285	0.923

**4.3. Hypotheses Testing**

The model is tested by using the model 8 in the PROCESS macro tool in SPSS. According to Table (5), the results show that there is a significant direct effect between Perceived Usefulness and Purchase Intention ( $p= 0.0001, p<0.05$ ). The table shows that there is a significant direct effect between Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention ( $p= 0.0000, p<0.05$ ) and also a significant direct effect between Trust and Purchase Intention ( $p=0.0029, p<0.05$ ). These findings provide enough evidence to support *H1* and *H2*.

Table 5

*PROCESS results for Purchase Intention*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: Purchase							
Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
	0.7257	0.5267	2.6211	55.919	4.0000	201.000	.0000
				2		0	
Model							
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	-0.5897	0.6002	-0.9825	0.3271	-1.7731	0.5938	
Usefulness	0.4240	0.1086	3.9041	0.0001	0.2099	0.6382	
BrandAtt	0.4174	0.0743	5.6191	0.0000	0.2709	0.5638	
Trust	0.4269	0.1416	3.0143	0.0029	0.1476	0.7062	
Int_1	-0.0373	0.0191	-1.9566	0.0518	-0.0750	0.0003	

Noteworthy, Perceived Usefulness and Trust do not have a significant direct or indirect effect over Brand Attitude, as according to Table (6), the p-value of both variables are above 0.05, with Perceived Usefulness at 0.2177 and Trust at 0.1800. Therefore, there is not enough evidence to support *H4a* and *H4b*.

Table 6

*PROCESS results for Brand Attitude*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:							
Brandt							
Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
	0.6769	0.4582	2.3519	56.9453	3.0000	202.00	.0000
						00	
Model							
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	3.2916	0.5192	6.3394	0.0000	2.2678	4.3154	
Usefulne	0.1267	0.1025	1.2364	0.2177	-0.0754	0.3288	
ss							
Trust	0.1797	0.1336	1.3454	0.1800	-0.0837	0.4431	
Int_1	0.0309	0.0179	-1.7212	0.0867	-0.0045	0.0663	

In addition, there is not enough evidence to support  $H3$ , as the test shows, through the index of moderated mediation Table (7), that Trust has no effect on the Perceived Usefulness relationship with the other variables.

Table 7

*Index of moderated mediation*

	Index	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Trust	0.0129	0.0102	-0.0067	0.0333

To test the moderator effect of Influencer’s Reputation, data was divided into two groups; respondents who regard the influencers with high reputation and another group who regard the influencers with low reputation. Both of the groups were run through the same PROCESS macro text done in the structural analysis.

Influencers with High Reputation:

This group included 110 respondents from the sample and according to Table (8), the results show that the direct effect between Perceived Usefulness and Purchase Intention is insignificant as the p-value is over 0.05 ( $p= 0.0561$ ). Trust and Purchase Intention’s direct effect is also insignificant ( $p=0.3629$ ). However, Brand attitude effect on Purchasing intention is still significant ( $p= 0.0000, p<0.05$ ).

Table 8

*PROCESS results for Purchase Intention for High Reputation Influencers*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: Purchase							
Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
	0.7263	0.5275	2.3340	29.0316	4.0000	104.0000	.0000
Model							
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	-0.9537	1.1293	-0.8445	0.4003	-3.1932	1.2857	
Usefulne	0.3436	0.1778	1.9321	0.0561	-0.0091	0.6962	
ss							
BrandAt	0.6096	0.1031	5.9113	0.0000	0.4051	0.8141	
t							
Trust	0.2282	0.2498	0.9138	0.3629	-0.2671	0.7235	
Int_1	-0.0188	0.0299	-0.6281	0.5313	-0.0781	0.0405	

Noteworthy, for the data with the high reputations level, Perceived Usefulness has a significant effect on Brand Attitude ( $p= 0.0227, p<0.05$ ). Yet, the Trust variable remain insignificant ( $p= 0.4441, p<0.05$ ).

Table 9

*PROCESS results for Brand Attitude for High Reputation Influencers*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:							
BrandAtt							
Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
	0.631	0.398	2.090	23.18	3.000	105.00	.0000
	2	4	3	11	0	00	
Model							
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	2.596	1.038	2.501	0.0139	0.538	4.655	
	8	2	2		2	4	
Usefulne	0.379	0.	2.311	0.022	0.054	0.705	
ss	5	1642	7	7	0	0	
Trust	0.181	0.235	0.768	0.444	-	0.648	
	1	7	3	1	0.286	4	
					3		
Int_1	0.007	0.028	-	0.783	-	0.063	
	8	3	0.275	8	0.048	9	
			1		3		

Trust impact over Perceived Usefulness is still insignificant, according to Table (10).

Table 10

*Index of moderated mediation for High Reputation Influencers*

	Index	Boots	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Trust	0.0047	0.0212	-0.0235	0.0617

Influencers with Low Reputation:

To look into the data provided by the Low Reputation group (97 respondent), Table (11) shows that, unlike the High Reputation group, the direct effect between Perceived Usefulness and Purchase Intention is significant ( $p= 0.0014, p<0.05$ ). Trust and Purchase Intention’s direct effect is also significant ( $p=0.0008$ ). Brand attitude effect on Purchasing intention is still significant ( $p= 0. 0186, p<0.05$ ).



Table 11

*PROCESS results for Purchase Intention for Low Reputation Influencers*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:							
Purchase							
Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
	0.622	0.387	2.799	14.52	4.000	92.000	.0000
	2	1	6	81	0	0	
Model							
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	-	0.820	-	0.628	-	1.231	
	0.398	4	0.485	5	2.027	1	
	3		5		8		
Usefulne	0.529	0.161	3.286	0.001	-	0.850	
ss	9	2	4	4	0.209	1	
					6		
BrandAt	0.260	0.108	2.397	0.018	0.044	0.476	
t	5	7	0	6	7	3	
Trust	0.660	0.189	3.482	0.000	0.283	1.037	
	5	7	7	8	8	2	
Int_1	-	0.034	-	0.025	-	-	
	0.077	0	2.269	6	0.144	0.009	
	2		4		8	6	

For the Brand Attitude, Perceived Usefulness does not have a significant effect on it ( $p= 0.3139, p<0.05$ ), as well as, the Trust which is constantly insignificant in both groups ( $p= 0.6470, p<0.05$ ).

Table 12

*PROCESS results for Purchase Intention for Low Reputation Influencers*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:							
BrandAtt							
Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
	0.578	0.335	2.548	15.61	3.000	93.000	.0000
	8	0	8	89	0	0	
Model							
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	4.042	0.661	6.114	0.0000	2.729	5.355	
	5	1	3		6	4	
Usefulne	-	0.153	-	0.313	-	0.148	
ss	0.154	0	1.012	9	0.458	9	
	9		6		7		
Trust	0.083	0.180	0.459	0.647	-	0.442	
	0	8	4	0	0.275	0	
					9		
Int_1	0.074	0.031	2.372	0.019	0.012	0.137	
	8	5	9	7	2	4	

Trust impact over Perceived Usefulness remains insignificant, according to Table (13).

Table 13

*Index of moderated mediation for Low Reputation Influencers*

	Index	Boots	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Trust	0.0195	0.0152	-0.0052	0.0556

From the data above, the two groups are significantly different, thus *H5* is supported.

Table 14

*Summary of Hypothesis Testing*

Hypothesis	Result
<b>H1:</b> The perceived usefulness of Instagram influencer's recommendation positively affects the follower's purchase intention towards the product recommended.	Supported
<b>H2:</b> Trust toward Instagram influencers positively affects the influencer's follower's purchase intention towards the product recommended.	Supported
<b>H3:</b> Trust positively affects Instagram influencer perceived usefulness of recommendations.	Not Supported
<b>H4a:</b> The attitude toward the brand mediate the relationship between perceived usefulness of recommendation and intention to purchase.	Not Supported
<b>H4b:</b> The attitude toward the brand mediate the relationship between trust and intention to purchase.	Not Supported
<b>H5:</b> The influencer reputation moderates the proposed relationship in H1, H2 and H4.	Supported

#### **4.4. Discussion and Avenues for Future Research**

The results of this study is somehow different from that is done by Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang (2013), whose study resulted in Perceived Usefulness having significant influence over Brand Attitude, while having insignificant influence over Purchase Intention. In this study, opposite findings are revealed. More specifically, Perceived Usefulness has not been found to have a significant effect on Brand Attitude, but has a significant influence on Purchase Intention. This could be a sign that customers in Qatar do not need to like the brand in order to buy the product recommended. Therefore, the marketing angle should focus on the products and their qualities, rather than the name of the brand.

On the other hand, the results concerning Trust's influence over Perceived Usefulness agrees with what Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang (2013) found. Both studies reveal there is a significant influence between these two variables.

In addition, results reveal that Trust has no effect on Perceived Usefulness, which contradicts findings from Hsu, Chuan-Chuan & Chiang (2013) and also the study by Cramer (2015), who states that customers value the opinion of those whom they trust.

The results continue with the Influencer's Reputation groups, as the results of the group with the high reputation show that the direct effect between Perceived Usefulness and Purchase Intention is insignificant, while it is significant with the low reputation group. Noteworthy, for the data with the high reputations level, Perceived Usefulness has a significant effect on Brand Attitude, yet it is insignificant with the low reputation group.

These results indicate that in the context of Qatar, some established relationships in Western contexts do not hold. The fact that trust did not have an impact on perceived usefulness implies that marketing and public relations professionals should keep in mind how a very known and popular influencer can leverage a product or service without the need to establish trust with the customer. Furthermore, perceived usefulness is an important element to consider, especially when developing content with the influencers. Even though the customer does not have to trust or like an influencer, a useful recommendation can have a huge impact according to the results of this study. In addition, the results of this study provided an initial insight of who are the most followed influencers in Qatar. The list includes, Ahoud AlEnazi, Dalal AlDoub, Fatima AlMomen, Huda Kattan, Mariam Mohammed, Nikki Tutorials, Shosho Makeup, Bibi Abdulmohsin, Jamal Al-Najada, Dana Twairish, Sondus AlKattan and Noha Nabil, with Fouz AlFahad as the most named influencer by the respondents of this study.

Results indicated that 76.3% of the respondents are Qatari nationals while only 23.7% come from other nationalities. There are many different communities in the state of Qatar and each has its own cultural background. Therefore, there is a need to expand any future research to include sample from each community in order to generalize the findings over the whole country.

It is recommended that further studies are done in this unexplored field. There are many dimensions for the online sphere that can be tapped into and used to enhance the marketing and public relations efforts.

Future studies in the country should explore other topics related to using influencers in advertising campaigns. For example, there is a need to develop a mechanism on how to identify the appropriate influencers for different organizational goals. Furthermore, what are the factors that lead the influencers to gain followers and have better engagement rates.

There is other interesting topics related to this field, such as, creating content; what are the method of developing relevant and interesting messages and how to create it? Other studies could tackle the subject of what are the relevant online platforms to different segments. In addition, it is important to understand Brand Attitude better and to figure out the factors that could make a customer in Qatar like a brand and develop loyalty towards it.

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## APPENDEX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

<b>First Section:</b> Usage of Instagram Please tick (✓) one box for each question:	<b>الجزء الأول:</b> استخدام شبكة التواصل الاجتماعية انستقرام يرجى وضع علامة (✓) أمام الإجابة:
<b>A. Do you use Instagram?</b> (1) Yes ( ) ( ) (2) No ( ) ( ) *If yes, please proceed. *If no, the survey has ended for you. Thank you for your time and participation.	<b>A. هل تستخدمين إنستقرام؟</b> (1) نعم ( ) ( ) (2) لا ( ) ( ) *إذا كانت إجابتك بنعم يرجى إكمال الاستبيان. *إذا كانت إجابتك بلا فقد انتهى الاستبيان. شكرًا لوقتك وتعاونك معنا.
<b>B. Do you follow a beauty social media influencer (ex. Fouz, Dalal AlDoub, etc.)?</b> (1) Yes ( ) ( ) (2) No ( ) ( ) *If yes, please name one you follow the most ----- -----	<b>B. هل تتابعين أحد المؤثرين المختصين في الجمال في شبكة التواصل الاجتماعي إنستقرام (مثلًا، فوز، دلال الدوب وغيرهم)؟</b> (1) نعم ( ) ( ) (2) لا ( ) ( ) *إذا كانت إجابتك بنعم، الرجاء ذكر أحد المؤثرين المفضلين لديك ----- -----

<b>Second Section:</b> Please tick (✓) one box for each question which best describes your opinion.	Strongly	Agree	Somewhat	Neutral	Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>الجزء الثاني:</b> يرجى وضع علامة (✓) في مربع الخيار الذي يمثل رأيك. اختصار	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	أوافق إلى حد ما	محايد	لا أوافق	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة
1. The Instagram beauty influencer I follow provides me with useful information on beauty products. يوفر لي المؤثر المختص في الجمال الذي أتابعه في إنستقرام بمعلومات مفيدة عن منتجات الجمال.							

<p>2. The Instagram beauty influencer I follow improves my beauty product shopping effectiveness.</p> <p>المؤثر المختص في الجمال الذي أتابعه في إنستقرام يساهم في تحسين فعالية شرائي لمنتجات الجمال.</p>							
<p>3. I believe the Instagram beauty influencers' product recommendations are honest.</p> <p>أعتقد بأن توصيات المؤثر المختص في الجمال الذي أتابعه في إنستقرام صادقة.</p>							
<p>4. The Instagram beauty influencers I follow are trustworthy.</p> <p>المؤثرين الذين أتابعهم في شبكة التواصل إنستقرام جديرين بالثقة.</p>							
<p>5. I like the brands used by the Instagram beauty influencer I follow.</p> <p>تعجبني العلامات التجارية التي يستخدمها المؤثر المختص في الجمال الذي أتابعه في إنستقرام.</p>							
<p>6. I think positively of the brands used by the Instagram beauty influencer I follow</p> <p>أفكر بإيجابية تجاه العلامات التجارية المستخدمة من قبل المؤثر المختص في الجمال الذي أتابعه في إنستقرام.</p>							
<p>7. I am willing to try products used by the Instagram beauty influencer I follow.</p> <p>أنا على استعداد على محاولة المنتجات المستخدمة من قبل المؤثر المختص في الجمال الذي أتابعه في إنستقرام.</p>							
<p>8. I intend to purchase the products used by the Instagram beauty influencer I follow.</p> <p>أنوي على شراء المنتجات المستخدمة من قبل المؤثر المختص في الجمال الذي أتابعه في إنستقرام.</p>							
<p>9. The Instagram beauty influencers have positive reputations.</p> <p>المؤثرين المختصين في الجمال في إنستقرام لديهم سمعة إيجابية.</p>							
<p>10. The Instagram beauty influencers have a reputation of being honest.</p> <p>المؤثرين المختصين في الجمال في إنستقرام لديهم سمعة صادقة.</p>							

<b>Third Section: Demographics</b> Please tick (✓) one box for each question:	<b>الجزء الثالث: معلومات عامة (ديموغرافيا)</b> يرجى وضع علامة (✓) أمام الإجابة:	
<b>Education:</b> High school ( ) Diploma ( ) Bachelor Degree ( ) High Diploma ( ) Masters or above ( )	( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )	<b>المرحلة التعليمية:</b> الشهادة الثانوية دبلوم بكالوريوس الدبلوم العالي الماجستير أو أعلى
<b>Age:</b> 16 - 21 ( ) 22 - 26 ( ) 27 - 35 ( )	( ) ( ) ( )	<b>العمر:</b> ٢١ - ١٦ ٢٦ - ٢٢ ٣٥-٢٧
<b>Occupation:</b> Student ( ) Employee ( ) Other ( )	( ) ( ) ( )	<b>المهنة:</b> طالبة موظفة أخرى
<b>Marital Status:</b> Single ( ) Married ( ) Other ( )	( ) ( ) ( )	<b>الحالة الاجتماعية:</b> عزباء متزوجة أخرى
<b>Nationality:</b> Qatari National ( ) Non-Qatari National ( ) *If other, please state your nationality -----	( ) ( )	<b>الجنسية</b> قطرية غير قطرية * عند الإجابة بغير قطري، يرجى تحديد الجنسية -----

**Thank you very much for your time to complete this survey**

شكرا جزيلا على وقتكم في إكمال هذا الاستبيان