QATAR UNIVERSITY

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EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF PARASOCIAL INTERACTION AND

IDENTIFICATION WITH SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON COLLABORATING

BRANDS

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Title: Examining the Effects of Parasocial Interaction and Identification with Social Media Influencers on Collaborating Brands

Supervisor of Thesis: Tamer, H, Elsharnouby.

The thesis explores the phenomenon of social media influencers, reveal their distinctive features, explain how followers develop relationships with them and clarify how and why a cooperation with influencers could be effective. Based on parasocial interaction theory and social influence theory, the study examines the associations between parasocial interaction and identification with a social media influencer along with the effect it carries towards the collaborating brand; in terms of advocacy, purchase intention and brand image. Antecedents of parasocial interaction with social media influencers have been investigated in terms of awareness, credibility, and physical attractiveness. The data were collected using an online questionnaire from 252 respondents. The findings suggest that the three predictor variables; awareness, credibility physical attractiveness significantly influence parasocial interaction. Parasocial interaction affects identification which in turn exert significant impact on advocacy, purchase intention and perceived image. The findings have essential managerial implications, as such most importantly it proves that identification with social media influencer has a different level of effect on collaborating brands, depending on the fore sought marketing outcome.

Keywords: social media influencer, collaborating brand, credibility, parasocial interaction, identification, parasocial interaction theory, social influence theory, purchase intention.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Social media has become an important part of the life of most modern people, with the number of social media users growing at a rate of 13% year-on-year to reach 3.196 billion in 2018 (Chaffey, 2018). Individuals from different corners of the globe use social media to learn about recent news, share information with their friends, get in touch with their acquaintances, track recent updates from interesting people, and discuss various topical issues with others. Social media is also widely used by most corporations for marketing purposes. Indeed, there are numerous ways in which they can utilize this platform. Companies can employ targeted advertisements to launch campaigns in social networks among relevant members of the target audience. They can also maintain popular official pages of the brand on social media in an attempt to sustain company growth. Yet despite the countless marketing strategies and instruments, the use of influencers is considered to be the most beneficial and effective marketing strategy on social media (Ward, 2017). In fact, social media influencers, also known as bloggers, refer to "independent third-party endorser who shape[s] audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media" (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011, p. 1). Social media influencers typically possess a significant and growing power due to their large follower base and influence they exert on this base, which results in creating advocacy, changing preferences, and stimulating purchase intentions, among many others. Therefore, this marketing phenomenon and strategy that are widely used on social media warrants further research. Hereafter, the current study analyzes of the antecedents of parasocial interaction and the identification with a social media influencer along with the effect of that

identification on the collaborating brand(s). Parasocial interaction is a term used to describe the one-sided relationship between a media figure and his/her audience (Kirvesmies, 2018). Identification refers to "a persuasion process that occurs when an individual adopts the behavior or attitudes of another individual or group based on a self-defining relationship" (Kelman, 1961, p. 63). A collaborating brand describes a brand that partners with a social media influencer to promote itself.

This thesis aims to explore the effects of parasocial interaction with social media influencers on identification with the related influencers. The study also aims to investigate the effect of identification with social media influencers on the collaborating brand(s) in terms of advocacy, purchase intention, and perceived brand image. Furthermore, it aims to examine the antecedents of parasocial interaction with social media influencers, including awareness, credibility, and physical attractiveness. To achieve these aims, the researcher utilized two theories—namely, the parasocial interaction theory and the social influence theory—to elucidate the overall model and demonstrate how concepts relate to each other.

1.2 Research Problem

The arguments laid out thus far indicate that social media influencers are becoming an important marketing instrument that helps brands increase awareness, enhances perceived brand image, creates advocacy, stimulates purchase intention, and maintains growth. For example, during the launch of its new mobile phone, Note 7, Samsung collaborated with the social media influencer CyreneQ to promote it to followers in 2016 (Cook, 2019). The collaboration involved the influencer posting snaps and videos while using the mobile phone as well as displaying the mobile phone's unique features. Through this collaboration, Samsung not only gained tremendous exposure, but also achieved its other objective of

addressing steering purchase intentions. Another example is the collaboration between the skincare brand Murad and the social media influencer Lucie Fink, who shares tips and tactics for pursuing a stylish lifestyle with her followers (Glucksman, 2017). The brand aimed to reach a new customer segment: young females. The collaboration between Murad and Fink seemed to be perfect. This is true due to Fink's large base of followers that predominantly met Murad's needed demographics, Fink's ability to influence her followers, and because she operated in a similar domain as the Murad brand. Fink shot videos of herself applying Murad skincare products in a funny and informative way, thereby exposing the brand to a large number of targeted followers and attracting the desired new segment (Glucksman, 2017). Despite such evidence of social media influencers' effectiveness, still little is known about how social media influencers are able to develop relationships with followers and in what way such relationships could affect collaborating brands. This thesis aims to address this gap by demonstrating how identification with social media influencers affects the outcomes of social media marketing campaigns, including creating advocacy, stimulating purchase intention, and enhancing brand perceived image. It also investigates the effect of parasocial interaction on identification. The study considers a number of factors that influence the parasocial interaction phenomenon, including awareness, credibility, and physical attractiveness of social media influencers. The research also introduces a conceptual model that defines the antecedents of parasocial interaction, discloses how identification is developed, and demonstrates the effectiveness of social media influencers in steering different marketing campaign outcomes.

1.3 Research Objectives

This thesis addresses the gaps of identifying the effect of social media influencers on partnering brand(s). The thesis mainly examines the associations among the different relationships existing between followers and social media influencers. Such relationships are denoted as parasocial interactions and identification. In addition, the thesis investigates the impacts of an influencer's identification on followers' attitude and behavior toward a collaborating brand in terms of (a) brand advocacy, (b) purchase intention, and (c) perceived brand image. Antecedents of parasocial interaction with a social media influencer will also be studied in terms of an influencer's awareness, credibility, and physical attractiveness.

1.4 Research Contributions

This study can be considered as an innovative research given its contributions to the existing literature. The topic of social media influencers is still emerging, and research in the field has been expanding in the past years given its growing impact (e.g., Freberg et al., 2011; Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2016; Lim, Radzol, Cheah, & Wong, 2017; Marwick, 2015). Such studies have either elaborated on the emerging concept of social media influencers in general, comparing the influence of social media influencers and other celebrities, or discussed the outcomes of social media influencers. However, these studies have not thoroughly tackled how the relationship between a social media influencer and related followers could affect the collaborating brands, or how such relationships develop in the first place. Hence, the current thesis aims to address this gap.

This study explores some important variables that have been investigated separately in social media marketing literature in other contexts. In particular, the study

examines the concepts of parasocial interaction and identification with social media influencers in the context of social media. Many studies have considered parasocial interaction with media figures (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Kirvesmies, 2018; Perse & Rubin, 1989); however, most focus on celebrities or media personas. Moreover, most findings related to social media influencers in this field are derived from qualitative studies and have limited practical applicability (Bond, 2016). This thesis employs a quantitative approach toward investigating the parasocial interaction with social media influencers and shows how this variable, along with identification with a social media influencer, could alter the outcomes of marketing campaigns.

This research also examines a variety of different factors that predetermine the nature of parasocial interaction and identification with social media influencers. As such, the researcher considers different variables, including awareness, credibility, and physical attractiveness of social media influencers.

Another important contribution of this thesis its inspection of the different outcomes resulting from employing social media influencers in marketing campaigns. Most studies on social media influencers have employed a single indicator of their effectiveness for brands, which does not provide a premise to compare between the various other effects of social media influencers on collaborating brands. In contrast, this study depicts the effectiveness of social media influencers in affecting different parameters that are traditionally perceived as indicators of marketing campaigns' effectiveness, including (a) advocacy, (b) purchase intention, and (c) brand image. The study's results provide scholars, marketing managers, and other relevant practitioners with an opportunity to develop a better understanding of the role of social media

influencers on social media marketing campaigns. This thesis has practical significance as it can assist marketing managers in choosing suitable social media influencers for marketing campaigns. In fact, an understanding of the specifics of parasocial interaction with specific social media influencers and the way in which their followers identify themselves with these individuals can aid marketers in deciding whether or not certain influencers have the potential to improve the perceived image of the collaborating brand and increase customers' advocacy and purchase intentions.

1.5 Research Methodology

The researcher adopted a quantitative research methodology whereby a self-administrated survey was employed in order to collect the needed data. The questionnaires were distributed online through the Qualtrics platform. Respondents could complete the questionnaires in either Arabic or English based on their preference. In total, 355 survey were completed, but only 252 were valid and usable. Data analyses were completed using SPSS Statistics (version 25).

1.6 Thesis Structure

The thesis includes five chapters. Chapter 1 starts with an overall introduction, then presents the research problem to illustrate the problem's significance and gaps, followed by the specific research objectives, the research contributions to demonstrate how this thesis addresses the previously mentioned gaps, and finally the adopted research methodology. Chapter 2 presents a literature review of all the related constructs along with the theoretical framework that summarizes the relationships between the constructs and variables studied, as well as the rationale behind the various hypotheses development. This chapter further emphasizes the context of social media, explains who social media

influencers are and accentuates the effectiveness of social media influencers marketing. Chapter 3 presents the adopted research methodology, including the research context, research type, measurements for testing hypotheses, data collection instruments, and sampling techniques. Chapter 4 summarizes the data analysis and discusses the descriptive and inferential testing. The descriptive data analysis incorporates sample characteristics and a normality test. The inferential data analysis encompasses an exploratory factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests, a correlation test, a collinearity test, and regression analyses. In addition, this chapter includes a discussion of the results. Finally, in Chapter 5, the researcher summarizes the findings of the overall study, identifies the study's theoretical and managerial implications, and defines the research limitations along with future research areas.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical backdrop for the current study. It gives the readers snapshots of the constructs involved, providing insights into what has been discovered and written about these concepts in the literature. The chapter is divided into three subparts: (1) the definitions and background of each concept, (2) the theoretical framework that explains the overall model and demonstrates how variables relate to each other, and (3) the rationale behind the presumed hypotheses, taking into consideration the given data of the first two subparts.

2.2 Social Media

The phenomenon of social media is one of the most significant innovations brought about by scientific and technological progress. In the academic literature, social media is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan & Hanelein, 2010, p. 61). The term Web 2.0 is used to describe the innovative technique whereby software developers and users could, as of recently, use the World Wide Web as a platform as such content could be published and consistently edited in a collaborative manner by all and any participating user (Kaplan & Hanelein, 2010). In order to be a social media platform, a website should allow users to create profiles, connect with acquaintances, engage in conversations, and upload content in a real-time regime. Another definition of social media states that it is "Internet-based, disentrained and persistent channels of mass personal communication facilitating perceptions of interactions among users, deriving value primarily from user-generated

content" (Carr & Hayes, 2015, p. 49). It is evident from both definitions that the existence of features allowing people to create and exchange user-generated content is a distinctive characteristic of social media.

Specialists have developed multiple varied classifications of social media. The classification designed by Kaplan and Hanelein (2010) uses the scales of social presence and the degree of self-presentation. It is also possible to distinguish between these websites or platforms according to the nature of their operations. The most popular classification involves photo sharing, video sharing, microblogging, and social networking platforms.

Social media platforms are becoming increasingly popular in the modern world. Of the 7.593 billion individuals in the world, 4.021 billion are internet users (Chaffey, 2018). Currently, the number of social media users worldwide is 3.196 billion users, which shows an increase of 18% compared to the previous year (Chaffey, 2018). North America and Europe (except for its eastern part) have the highest levels of social media penetration. In Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, the number of social media users has been rapidly growing. Facebook remains the dominant social media platform in the world, with 2.167 billion users (Chaffey, 2018).

2.3 Social Media Influencers

Social media influencer refers to "independent third-party endorser who shape[s] audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media" (Freberg et al., 2011, p. 1). Social media influencers have effectively developed a brand for themselves by exposing their lifestyles on social media (Freberg et al., 2011). Their followers consider them to be trusted opinion leaders. Thus, when influencers diffuse a

message, it helps expose their self-brand in an effort to influence others to acknowledge and often even try to emulate these influencers' brand (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011). According to Khamis, Ang, and Welling (2016, p. 3), a human brand can be defined as "any well-known persona who is the subject of marketing communications efforts." These authors also argue that one of the biggest terms to emerge in the human brand field is self-branding, and the biggest change that has occurred to the human brand with regard to social media is that the influencer/human brand can now "bring his or her own audience into the equation" (p. 3). Khamis et al. (2016, p. 1) stated that self-branding "involves individuals developing a distinctive public image for commercial gain and/or cultural capital." A self-branded individual can be regarded as any other branded product, where he/she has a special public identity, a point of interest of a target audience, and an appealing selling factor. Self-branding has largely expanded through social media, where the brand of a famous individual becomes stronger with the increase of the influencer's current and potential follower base interactions, including likes, shares, and comments, on the page or posts of the influencer (Khamis et al., 2016).

2.4 Social Media Influencer Marketing

Social media influencers own a combination of solid coverage and significant persuasion power, thereby enabling them to deliver superior conversion rates to brands. In fact, returns on investment (ROI) from influencer marketing on social media are higher than ROI on mass advertising and celebrity endorsement campaigns. A recent marketing survey launched by Nielsen found that ROI from an influencer marketing instrument is approximately 11 times higher than ROI of digital marketing (Lim, Radzol, Cheah, & Wong, 2017). Thus, social media influencers are considered one of the most effective

marketing instruments.

Compared with celebrity endorsements, cooperation with social media influencers in most cases is not only less expensive, but also more effective. If a company uses celebrities and non-celebrity bloggers to raise in-store purchases, the likelihood that the latter will convince a follower to make a purchase will be around 10 times bigger. Approximately 92% of social media users trust influencers—more than a general advertisement or celebrity endorsements (Weinswig, 2016). This trust translates into sales in all the major social networks. For example, the data show that 40% of Twitter users make purchases as a result of influencers' tweets (Twitter & Annalect, 2016). In this situation, it seems natural that social media influencers are becoming increasingly popular in marketing.

The use of social media influencers has been growing on an annual basis. A survey conducted by Who Say found that this trend is attracting a significant amount of attention from marketers across the USA. According to this survey, 89% of agency and brand marketers in the country believe that influencer marketing has the potential to increase people's attitude toward a brand and 70% of them are confident that the majority of companies will increase their influencer marketing budgets in the next year (Wharton, 2018). At the same time, finding a suitable influencer for a brand could be a challenging process. Indeed, 71% of respondents agreed with this statement, which has also been addressed in many empirical studies. Lim, Radzol, Cheah, and Wong (2017) found that product match-up is one of the most important factors mediating the influence of marketing campaigns with social media influencers on followers' purchase intentions.

In the process of choosing a suitable social media influencer, companies should carefully consider the niche in which an influencer operates. Influencers or bloggers who try to cover various themes are usually less effective than those who focus on narrow segments. Despite the existence of a large group of followers, bloggers with a broad topic usually have a limited impact on their followers' purchase behavior as they have not established credibility in any specific niche (Freberg et al., 2011). On the other hand, social media influencers operating in narrow niches have a unique potential to persuade their followers into trying products and services relevant to these industries. Thus, when choosing social media influencers for a marketing campaign, companies should look primarily for those influencers whose niches are relevant to the products and services advertised.

2.5 Antecedents of developing relationships with social media influencer

There are multiple antecedents to forming a relationship with a social media influencer, and this research focuses on three of them: awareness, credibility, and perceived image.

2.5.1 Awareness of Social Media Influencer

Brand awareness signifies "whether consumers can recall or recognize a brand, or simply whether or not consumers know about a brand" (Keller 2001; Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014, p. 113). In research about mall equity and its sub-constructs mall awareness and mall image, Chebat, El Hedhli, and Sirgy (2009) demonstrated that mall awareness is associated with shoppers' ability to recall a mall's name easily and recognize and differentiate the mall's distinctive characteristics from other competing malls. Therefore, in a similar vein involving human brands (i.e., social media influencers), the awareness of the social media influencer can be considered as followers' ability to recall the

influencer's name, distinguish him/her from among other influencers, and the probability that the special characteristics of this specific influencer would come to mind easily.

Awareness of an influencer is facilitated through consistent exposure, by which the follower begins to recognize and make distinctions and associations of the characteristics and traits of the influencer (Fraser & Brown, 2002). Exposure to a social media influencer can be facilitated via a variety of different social media platforms, including Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Typically, the influencer utilizes one of these popular social media tools more often than the others, such as vlogging on a YouTube channel, posting highly stylized fashion and/or vacation pictures on Instagram, and/or engaging and interacting with other influencers, personalities, and followers on Twitter. According to Brown (2015), followers are more likely to recognize characteristics of the social media influencer if they have formed emotional or affectionate ties with him or her. Forming such ties with a social media influencer typically requires prolonged, repeated exposure and interactions with the target influencer. Thus, the longer the exposure and engagement, the more likely the follower will have a greater awareness of this influencer and his/her related characteristics (Tsiotsou & Alexandris, 2008).

In addition to consistent exposure, Tsiotsou and Alexandris's (2008) research showed that awareness of the social media influencer and his/her characteristics are also contingent on the follower's attitudes. The follower evaluates the image that the social media influencer is presenting and forms attitudes toward that image, including attitudes about the lifestyle of this influencer, physical looks/attractiveness, and how others may perceive the influencer of interest (Tsiotsou & Alexandris, 2008). In other words, a social media influencer increases awareness of his/her own 'brand and, once awareness is

increased, the follower is not only able to differentiate and recognize the characteristics of the influencer, but is also able to relate those characteristics to his/her own social world (Tsiotsou & Alexandris, 2008).

2.5.2 Credibility of Social Media Influencer

Credibility is crucial, especially in the social media influencer context. McGinnies and Ward (1980) argued that, when a customer perceives a source to be credible, he/she is more likely to be influenced and have a change in opinion to align with that of the source. Source credibility refers to a "communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of the message" (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). A social media influencer's credibility is basically derived from online presence and popularity that are contingent to the unique lifestyle and/or personality such influencers are presenting to the world (Khamis et al., 2016). According to Ohanian (1990), the traits that make an endorser credible and effective are often a matter of what the endorser is representing. In fact, source credibility also includes the positive characteristics demonstrated by the source that "affect the receiver's acceptance of the message" (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41).

Source credibility is derived from two key factors: expertness and trustworthiness (Ohanian, 1990). However, how an individual accepts and responds to expertness and trustworthiness varies. Expertise, per Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953, p. 21), is "the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions," whereas trustworthiness is "the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid". Trust and expertise are important due to their capability of eliminating or reducing customers' perceived uncertainty. Numerous factors contribute to an influencer's construction of trust and expertise. The first factor is being

relatable, which is attributed to social media influencers' techniques when talking or making posts on one of the social media platforms as well as being themselves and using an informal and relaxed language. As a result, the followers feel as if they are listening to peers. The second factor is influencers' content authenticity, which means that content should result from research and knowledge and not explicitly reflect what a collaborating brand requires an influencer to post or claim. The third factor is, social media influencers' expertise in their area of interest, which could be reflected by listing facts about a related product/service, acting knowledgeable, and specifying the precise usage or method of application (Forbes, 2016). A final factor is level of accuracy, which signifies the difference between an influencer's brand and/or product review compared to its actual performance. In other words, the closer a social media influencer's review of a brand is to its actual performance, the more followers perceive him/her to be trustworthy (Lee & Yuon, 2009).

Other studies have addressed additional determinants of credibility. Rasmussen's (2018) research on YouTube celebrity points out that beauty vloggers/celebrities have established credibility by developing friendships and relationships among other credible sources. Specifically, YouTube beauty celebrities such as Michelle Phan, who has nearly 9 million subscribers, also have fellow YouTube celebrities following and interacting with her account, which further strengthens her credibility among existing and potential followers.

Rasmussen (2018) suggested that, when social media influencers are sharing opinions with both existing and potential followers alongside other YouTube celebrities, they are establishing themselves as opinion leaders. Although word-of-mouth and opinion

sharing have always been important components of celebrity-making, social media has allowed for this to occur on a "grander scale, and in a more intimate setting" (Rasmussen, 2018, p. 280).

2.5.3 Physical Attractiveness of Social Media Influencer

The source attractiveness model, according to McGuire (1968), argues that the effectiveness of a message is dependent on the similarity, familiarity, and liking of the source/individual. An important reason why a media character could appeal to the public is attributed to the celebrity's physical attractiveness (Cohen, 2001). Numerous studies (Joseph 1982; Kahle & Homer 1985; Widgery & Ruch, 1981) have suggested that one of the most significant indicators contributing to an individual's initial judgment is physical attractiveness. According to Baker and Churchill (1977), consumers are more likely to form positive opinions and associate positive stereotypes with those who are more physically attractive and have a status such as celebrity, power, and wealth. Cohen (2001) argued that identifying and feeling close with the personality increases source attractiveness, yet audience members' initial responses are related to physical and/or romantic attractiveness of the personality. In fact, Caballero, Lumpkin, and Madden (1989) and DeSarbo and Harshman (1985) explained that a celebrity's attractiveness plays a significant role in being chosen as a brand's endorser. These authors further noted that celebrities' attractiveness act as a leading factor behind the increase of celebrity brand endorsements.

Khamis et al. (2016) referred to the notion of "Instafamous," in which individuals can fashion their own self-brand over social media and, in turn, establish a base of followers who essentially make them famous. Although the term refers to Instagram, it

can also be applied across other popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Snapchat (Khamis et al., 2016). Khamis et al. (2016, p. 9) argued that physical attractiveness is a vital factor in becoming Instafamous, as young people "appear convinced that good looks, good living and conspicuous consumption (through artfully composed images of outfits, make-up, meals, holiday resorts, etc.) warrant adulation and emulation." In this regard, an entire self-branded personality is developed based on how the social media influencers present themselves and their lifestyles, including their physical appearance, in the hope that others will begin to follow, interact with them, and eventually desire to be and imitate their personality or lifestyle.

2.6 Types of developed relationships between social media influencer and followers

Followers' relationship with a social media influencer can take two forms: parasocial interaction and identification.

2.6.1 Parasocial Interaction with Social Media Influencer

The term parasocial interaction is used to describe the one-sided relationship between members of the audience and the media figure (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Kirvesmies, 2018; Perse & Rubin, 1989). Such a relationship could also be considered as imaginary, as it could lack a real interpersonal communication between the media figure and audience members (Brown, 2009).The nature of this phenomenon is based on the unique psychological features of consuming the product delivered by media. During the process of media consumption, audience members often develop a one-sided relationship with media personas, such as hosts of talk shows and celebrities (Kirvesmies, 2018). Parasocial interaction with social media influencers is one of the recent well-known examples of such a process.

Horton and Wohl (1956) addressed parasocial interaction, explaining how followers interact with a public figure and develop an imaginary relationship with him/her. In fact, the study has proven that followers tend to interact with media characters on the screen in a similar way as how they interact with others in their real social life.

Parasocial interaction, according to Horton and Wohl (1956), has been primarily driven by mass media. Essentially, the more opportunities viewers have to see a media personality, the more likely they will begin to develop feelings and attitudes (negative and/or positive) about the media personality. With advancements in communication technologies, including social media, individuals have the opportunity to interact with media personalities on a real consistent basis (Brown, 2015). Speaking of television audiences, Horton and Wohl (1956, p. 189) pointed out that viewers often respond with "something more than mere running observation; it is, as it were, subtly insinuated into the program's action and internal social relationships and, by of this kind of staging, is ambiguously transformed into a group which observes and participates in the show by turns." Therefore, as Horton and Wohl observed, media personalities—whether playing a character, acting as themselves (newscasters, etc.), or representing themselves in front of followers—are able to structure their social behaviors in such a way that certain viewers will perceive the behaviors as actual interpersonal communication (Hartmann, 2016).

Marketers and brands have increasingly utilized influential individuals in social media marketing and communication in an effort to foster engagement and attachments between followers and the social media influencer and, by proxy, the collaborating brand.

Scholars and professionals agree that social media influencers play a key role in brand awareness and customer loyalty, especially among younger consumers, yet it is still not entirely clear how awareness and bond-forming are nurtured (Kirvesmies, 2018). Hudson, Roth, Madden, and Hudson (2015) researched music tourism and festival promotion, observing that social media interactions between a brand (i.e., human brand) and followers drive emotional attachments. Unlike interactions in other media forums, social media interactions involve reciprocal interactions (Brown, 2015; Hudson et al., 2015). Such interactions between a media persona and followers often involve sharing, reposting, reading others' comments, asking a question, and receiving a reply, among several other mutual interactions (Brown, 2015; Kirvesmies, 2018). This illustrates that parasocial interactions within social media are neither one-sided (Bond, 2016) nor imaginative, which is the case in most other media forums. Furthermore, parasocial interactions in such a context are stronger than interactions of counter forums.

The main driver of parasocial interactions with social media influencers is the audience's interest in their lives. According to Horton and Wohl (1956), audience members' willingness to discover new facts about some celebrity is the key determinant of parasocial interactions with this figure. The available evidence provides a premise to believe that social media is much more effective from the perspective of building parasocial interactions than other channels, such as TV or magazines. The uniqueness of social media in the field of building this type of relationship is connected with the openness of communication and interactivity (Labrecque, 2014). Thus, parasocial interaction with social media influencers usually develops in a faster and more effective way than parasocial interactions with other media personas.

Results of the empirical findings show that the implications of parasocial interactions with social media influencers strongly depend on the way in which such interaction are managed by the social media influencer. Bond (2016) found that the effectiveness of interaction increases if a social media influencer manages his/her social media profile(s) in a way that resembles real-life communication. For instance, if a popular persona publishes a post with a question to the audience, this post is likely to generate many more comments, likes, and reposts than others. Even if this person does not participate in the discussion, the initial question triggers active responses among audience members, which translates into an increased interaction. In this situation, it seems justified to conclude that the phenomenon of parasocial interaction with social media influencers is significantly influenced by the strategy chosen by a media persona.

The phenomenon of parasocial interaction or relationship is often investigated from the perspective of comparison with real-life encounters. Schmid-Petri and Klimmt (2011) determined that parasocial relationships with social media influencers resemble real-life relationships with other people. At the same time, there are several significant differences between these two phenomena. First, while interacting with a social media influencer, a person does not have power over the interaction process. A person might choose not to follow a media persona's page in social networks, yet he or she still cannot eliminate the chances of being exposed to this media figure. In contrast, an influencer may cease his/her relationship with the audience at any time by deleting a page or not writing any new posts for a significant amount of time. In other words, unlike in most real-time relationships, the higher power in a parasocial interaction is consistently on the side of a social media influencer.

Schmid-Petri et al. (2011) discussed another interesting characteristic of parasocial relationships with media persona, they are usually much more stable than real-life ones. Considering that the scope of interaction with the audience is limited, media persona can maintain the same strategy of parasocial interaction for a significant amount of time. The nature of these relationships is unlikely to change, as they require minimum effort both from influencers and from their followers. In this situation, it seems justified to conclude that, although parasocial and real-life interactions may seem similar from some perspectives, they are fundamentally different because of the ultimate power of social media influencers to break up parasocial relationships at any time.

2.6.2 Identification with Social Media Influencer

The phenomenon of identification represents a profound psychological process that imposes a significant impact on the development of individuals. This term can be defined as "a persuasion process that occurs when an individual adopts the behavior or attitudes of another individual or group based on a self-defining relationship" (Kelman, 1961, p. 63). It is important to point out that identification is a psychological process; therefore, it should be explored primarily from the perspective of an individual. This recommendation has direct implications for the issue under investigation. Identification with a media persona occurs when an individual truly shares some interests, values, or lifestyle features with the persona of interest or when an individual simply believes that he or she shares an interest with this specific persona (Fraser & Brown, 2002). In other words, if members of the target audience want to believe that they are similar to the social media influencer, they are likely to develop identification with this figure regardless of the real state of events.

It is crucial to distinguish between the concepts parasocial interaction and identification. Both phenomena represent the forms of interpersonal involvement; however, the processes implied by these terms are fundamentally different. It is impossible to develop identification with a social media influencer without engaging in a parasocial interaction with this figure (Brown, Basil, & Bocarnea, 2003). At the same time, one may interact with a media persona and not have any intention of sharing the same values, qualities, or a lifestyle with this individual. For instance, it seems justified to assume that some subscribers of travel bloggers are not actually interested in traveling across inhabited areas and discovering wildlife by themselves. This case exemplifies a situation when parasocial interaction with social media influencers does not lead to the development of identification with them. According to Brown et al. (2003) and Brown (2009), the difference between parasocial interaction and identification is mainly illustrated in two points. First, a parasocial interaction is a form of involvement with media persona, but such involvement does not incorporate the power of influence. Second, parasocial interaction does not involve adopting the media persona's values, attitude, or behavior. Indeed, adopting or mimicking the behavior of another is only an outcome of a perceived close relationship between a follower and celebrity (i.e., social media influencer), which is the case in identification. Followers subsequently adopt the values, beliefs, attitudes, and/or behaviors of those with whom they identify only. Fraser and Brown (2002) noted that an individual could identify with another and become joined to the characteristics of those with whom he/she identifies, yet remain distinct. Nevertheless, in extreme cases of identification, a follower could even merge his/her own identity with that with whom he/she identifies (Brown & Fraser, 2004).

The academic literature suggests that consumers might identify with firms and communities whose identities satisfy some of their personal self-definition needs (Mousavi, Roper, & Keeling, 2017). This is similarly the case with university identification, where scholars argue that students define themselves through association with the university (Eldegwy, Elsharnouby, & Kortam, 2018). In the case of brands, the degree of this identification may be even more significant. Many companies or entities have different brands, so their identities are not as explicitly articulated as the identities of brands. For example, Athleta is known as a unique clothing brand that encourages women to embrace who they are through the "Power of She" concept. Meanwhile, Gap Inc., the parent company of Athleta, is unlikely to generate significant levels of association among consumers.

The measurement of the degree of identification with a social media influencer is an important research area. As such, it can significantly help marketers forecast the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns. Brown and Bocarnea (2007) developed a specific scale measuring the significance of identification that consists of 20 different positions. The most important ones pertain to the degree to which a celebrity persona and his/her audience members share values and interests and the willingness of the audience to imitate the lifestyle, behavior, and thinking of a media persona.

The nature of identification with a social media influencer is in its proactive direction. People who identify themselves with a media persona carry out some practical activities in order to be more like this individual. In particular, they try to imitate specific qualities and characteristics of his/her lifestyle, such as eating early or wearing shoes of a specific brand. As a result, identification with a social media influencer is thought to be

much more beneficial for marketers than pure parasocial interactions (Brown & Bocarnea, 2007). Marketers can take advantage of this identification of the audience with an influencer, on potential customers' willingness to imitate the lifestyle of this social media influencer and eventually extend their desire to purchase the products and services of the brands advertised by this individual.

When having a strong identification with a media persona, people are likely to initiate significant changes in their behavior because of the impact of this figure (Brown & Basil, 1994; Basil, 1996). Basil (1996) found that Magic Johnson's announcement about his positive HIV test imposed an essential influence on those followers who identified themselves with this person. In particular, followers' personal concern, perceptions of HIV risks, degree of perceived risk, and planned alterations of related behavior all experienced significant change. Basil (1996) demonstrated that identification mediates the influence of media personas on their audience. Higher degrees of identification are associated with more significant and more lasting behavioral changes.

Zhou (2011, p.8) declared that "identification requires individual members to maintain an active relationship with other community members." The scholar further elaborated on the power of influence via identification and noted that identification is based on a person's ability to find acceptance within a group and, therefore, establish a feeling of belongingness. Scholars have argued that a primary reason why customers identify with a brand is the perception of belonging (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Elbedweihy, Jayawardhena, Elsharnouby, & Elsharnouby, 2016). Through this sense of belongingness, an individual begins to form attachments within the group (i.e., the social media influencer and related follower base); with increased interactions within the group,

levels of influence are also increased (Zhou, 2011).

Previous empirical studies have linked brand identification to various aspects of a brand's performance, such as brand awareness, brand association, sales, repurchases, and profits. For example, Akin (2017) found that a high level of brand identification strongly correlates with outcomes of word-of-mouth and has an indirect influence on the degree of brand loyalty. Similar conclusions were found in a study on hotel management and marketing, where the scholars deduced that identification with a brand influences the way customers perceive their service experience, leading to a direct impact on customer loyalty (So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2013).

2.7 Outcomes of developing identification with social media influencer

Social media influencer could impact his/her followers due to the relationship developed with them. Such an impact exists in terms of steering advocacy, stimulating purchase intention, and developing perceived image.

2.7.1 Brand Advocacy

The term advocacy is used in marketing to describe the way in which customers perceive brands as well as their willingness to promote this brand via the word-of-mouth method. Brand advocacy entitles all related behaviors of supporting, recommending, and pleading for the brand of interest (Eldegwy, Elsharnouby, and Kortam, 2018; Jillapalli and Jillapalli, 2014). According to Vlachos (2012), advocacy is the degree to which the consumer praises the retailer to others. Carrol and Ahuvia (2006, p. 82) defined this concept in the same way, considering it as "the degree to which the consumer praises the brand to others." In both these definitions, the comparable component plays a crucial role. If a person is willing to recommend a brand to other people, it may be explained not only

by the unique qualities of this brand, but also by the psychological features of this particular person. In contrast, by introducing the comparable component in the definition of advocacy, scholars have argued that a significant level of brand advocacy implies that a consumer values a certain brand more than rival products. In other words, the comparable basis of brand advocacy eliminates human-related biases from the concept of brands' perception.

The effectiveness of brand advocacy is rapidly growing. Coca-Cola's Happiness Machine, Make-a-Wish goes Batty, and Inception in the Real World exemplify successful brand advocacy campaigns. With the help of such instruments, companies place significant attention on their brands without spending a necessary amount of money on advertising. For example, with the help of the Happiness Machine campaign, Coca-Cola collected more than 15 million viewers of their new advertisement within one week at a cost of only $60,000 (Gehami, 2016). In this situation, it seems justified to conclude that advocacy is a powerful marketing instrument that is characterized by a superior efficiency level.

The phenomenon of brand advocacy is explored in the marketing literature from the perspectives of either employees or customers or both. According to Morhart, Herzog, and Tomczak (2009), this notion can be determined as 'employee brand-building behavior'. This phenomenon involves all the employees' efforts aimed at contributing to the company's branding strategy. These efforts consist of activities that are approved by the company as a part of employees' job responsibilities and their actions after working hours. However, this is only applicable for employees who have a positive attitude toward their brand/firm. Nonetheless, the study at hand, does not emphasize advocacy from

employees' perspective.

Brand advocacy among customers mainly implies taking practical measures to promote the brand, including engaging in word-of-mouth (Ansary & Hashim, 2017). Recently, the notion of customers' word-of-mouth, has changed significantly where consumers not only engage in one-to-one conversations about the brand of interest, but also further engage in word-of-mouth using social networks. From this notion, customers themselves not only influence other customers, but also shape their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. According to Allsop, Bassett, and Hoskins (2007) customers' word-of-mouth is considered among the most credible and effective marketing tools because information tends to originate from a less biased and more trustworthy source (Dhar & Chang, 2009).

2.7.2 Brand Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is one of the most important notions in marketing. The academic literature defines this term as a consumer's willingness to buy a specific product or service. Morwitz (2014) asserted that purchase intention derives from the degree of perceived value. Before making a final decision about a purchase, consumers consciously or unconsciously compare the expected benefits delivered by these new products with the expected costs required for their purchase. An analysis of these two issues constitutes the perceived value of a purchase, which in turn, imposes direct implications for the willingness of a consumer to purchase a specific product.

Although a purchase intention is a critical driver of customers' behavior, a high purchase intention does not automatically translate into significant sales. A number of factors may encourage consumers to refrain from making a purchase. For example, a low

quality of services delivered might demotivate customers who are considering purchasing a specific product (Morwitz, 2014). Therefore, a purchase intention may be regarded as only an indirect predictor of sales.

A purchase intention occurs as a result of some trigger or stimulus. The available evidence provides a premise to believe that the number of such factors may be gigantic. The empirical study launched by Munnukka (2008) found that the specifics of these factors and the degree to which they predetermine the significance of a purchase intention vary across different demographic groups. Gender and previous experience with a brand's products or services are some of the crucial factors that influence consumers' purchasing intentions.

Currently, no agreement exists among scholars regarding the influence of various factors on customers' purchase intention. Accordingly, it is impossible to formulate universal rules explaining how social media influencers affect consumers' purchase intention. Mirabi, Akbariyeh, and Tahmasebifard's (2015) case study demonstrated that this variable is affected by brand advertising and product quality. The authors simultaneously determined that pricing aspects and packaging are irrelevant. Calvo-Porral and Levy-Mangin's (2017) research showed the opposite conclusion. The authors argued that pricing is one of the critical determinants of purchase intentions among consumers, although they admit that perceived product quality is a more significant factor. Fundamental differences among the findings of studies on purchase intentions illustrate that the phenomenon of purchase intention should be investigated separately for each specific industry, product type, and customer group.

In addition to the factors highlighted above, a purchase intention may also be

significantly affected by other variables relevant to the external business environment. Shahbazi and Ghorbani (2016) noted that companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaigns strongly influence consumers' purchase intention toward the brand of interest. The authors recommended that marketers focus on exploring the phenomenon of self-congruity. By aligning CSR programs with customers' expectations, companies may ensure a higher level of self-congruity, which is in turn expected to impose a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention.

As stated thus far, determinants of a purchase intention remain a disputable question in the academic literature. At the same time, some aspects of this problem are known as truisms in the academic literature. In particular, all the studies reviewed within this chapter confirmed that a strong correlation exists between the perceived value of a product and customers' willingness to purchase it (Younus, Rasheed, & Zia, 2015). Therefore, the key controversy surrounding the phenomenon of purchase intention is the drivers of a product's perceived value. From the perspective of the problem under investigation, this issue is critically important. I It shows that a social media influencer's ability to affect consumers' purchase intention lies in the area of his/her capability to increase the perceived value of a product or service for the target audience.

2.7.3 Brand Perceived Image

Perceived brand image is one of the notions aiming to measure the stakeholders' perception of a brand. Brand image may be determined as a set of existing beliefs that consumers have about a brand. It is crucial to distinguish between brand image and brand identity (Neto, 2014; Roy & Banerjee, 2014). The former develops under the influence of external stakeholders whereas the latter is exclusively dependent on the organization

and reflects the system of efforts targeting the creation of a certain perception (Mindrut, Manolica, & Roman, 2015). Customers form an image of a brand based on the associations attributed to this brand (Tsiotsou & Alexandris, 2008).

The available evidence provides a premise to believe that the use of social media influencers can impose a significant impact on the perceived image of a collaborating brand. By engaging such influencers in promotion campaigns, brands receive an opportunity to overcome customers' advertising blindness and get closer to potential consumers (Glucksman, 2017). The use of social media influencers can help companies position their products as widely discussed brands. Even if a potential consumer is not convinced by an influencer to purchase a product, he or she is likely to attribute a higher perceived image to the brand after being exposed to a series of marketing influencer campaigns.

The nature of relationships between a social media influencer and a collaborating brand depends on the specifics of the brand's marketing strategy. As it is known, the use of marketing instruments depends on whether the related approaches and strategies are of a short or long-term nature (Glucksman, 2017). In most cases, short-term cooperation with a social media influencer is not likely to cause necessary changes in a brand's perceived image. In contrast, a long-term partnership agreement can lead to a significant change in this indicator. Thus, brands interested in improving their perceived image should focus exclusively on long-term cooperation with the social media influencer(s) of interest.

Among all existing marketing instruments, product promotions by social media are among the most efficient ones (Ansary & Hashim, 2017). Considering that the

overwhelming majority of people possess information about paid advertisements, a number of social media influencers choose a strategy to avow the fact that they receive money for specific advertisements. By being outright about this issue, they can use the trust of their followers or viewers to make them consider a certain product or service. Such an approach might translate into an improvement of the brand's reputation (Ansary & Hashim, 2017). Instead of being uncertain toward a specific company/brand, customers may consider a firm to be an innovative enterprise that cares about consumers' opinions and becomes, over time, more confidently positive about the brand's offerings due to its long-term cooperation with an influencer. The use of social media influencers predetermines a brand's increased exposure, which could in turn also lead to consumers' higher criticism when compared to traditional advertising or celebrity endorsement. However, if the quality of a company's products and services is high, it can face this threat and ensure a positive long-term impact on the perceived image of its brand with the help of social media influencer (s).

2.8 Theoretical Framework

2.8.1 Parasocial Interaction Theory

The concept of parasocial interaction aims to describe the way in which members of the target audience form relationships with media figures (Horton & Wohl, 1956). This term usually refers to one-sided (Kirvesmies, 2018), imaginary relationships (Brown, 2009). Regardless, of the extent to which these relationships become essential to the life of some audience members, they still lack genuine interpersonal communication between the media figure and audience members (Brown, 2009).

In recent years, parasocial interaction has become an even more topical issue due

to the rise of social media. Multiple studies have shown that this phenomenon is made much stronger by social media rather than by traditional media, such as TV or newspapers (Kim & Song, 2016). Unlike interactions in other media forums, interactions in social media are reciprocal (Brown, 2015; Hudson et al., 2015). These interactions taking place between followers and media persona could include sharing, reposting, reading comments and replying to one another among other mutual interactions (Brown, 2015; Kirvesmies, 2018). In fact, this demonstrates that parasocial interactions in the social media context are neither one-sided (Bond, 2016) nor imaginative. Thus, parasocial interactions in the social media context are stronger than those formed in other media forums.

2.8.2 Social Influence Theory

Social influence theory, first introduced by Kelman (1958), encompasses all the situations in which an individual is affected by others in some way. This theory signifies that an individual could accept change, be influenced, and/or adopt a new behavior based on one of the three different processes (Kelman, 1958). Such processes are known as the forms of social influence: internalization, compliance, and identification. Internalization implies accepting the behavior or opinion of others only if this behavior is in line with the value system of the individual accepting change. Compliance entails demonstrating an acceptance of influence regardless of the individual's disagreement with the behavior or opinion being accepted in order to receive acceptance from others or to avoid disapproval from them. Finally, identification takes place when individuals willingly embrace the behavior and opinions of a person/group whom they like due to these individuals' desire to establish and maintain a self-defining relationship with the person or group of interest

(Kelman, 1958; 1961). However, the present study focuses on the process of identification and how followers interact with a social media influencer, consequently forming a basis of identification with the influencer of interest.

Social influence is an important phenomenon in social media that is widely used by marketers (Snijders & Helms, 2014). Snijders and Helms (2014) argued that a typical planning of social influence campaigns in marketing involves establishing goals, determining clear metrics, gathering network data, choosing and using so-called seed notes, affecting the beliefs and attitudes of the target audience, and monitoring the progress of social influence. In other words, social influence theory, including identification, is exceptionally beneficial to marketers because identification is necessary for adopting new characteristics and changing behaviors, thereby resulting in outcomes of perceived close relationships between followers and media persona (i.e., social media influencers, which is the case of identification; Basil, 1996; Brown & Basil, 1994)

2.9 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework
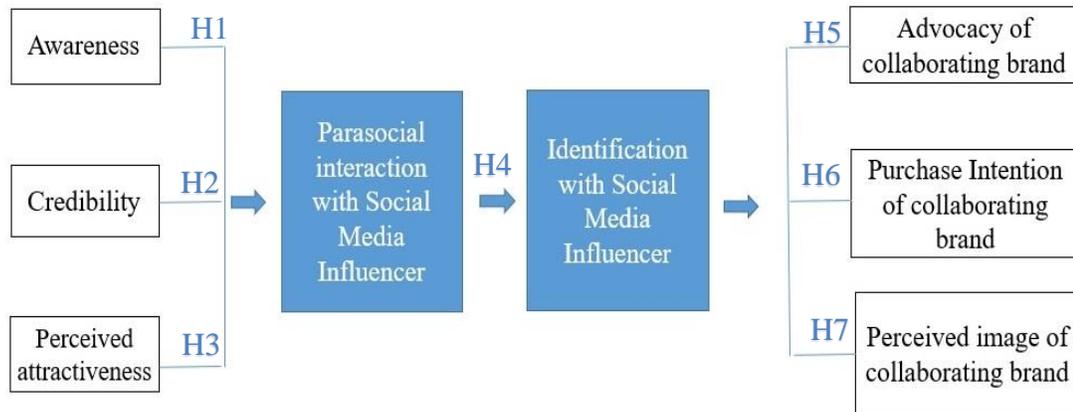
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2.10 Hypothesis development

2.10.1 Antecedents of Parasocial Interaction with Social Media Influencer

Social media is mainly designed to facilitate engagement among individuals, groups, and businesses. Social media has transformed the process of interacting and engaging with media personalities. According to Stever (2009), people who have been known mainly via mass media are currently playing a greater and more intense role in consumers' lives.

Kirvesmies's (2018) study implied that a parasocial relationship explains the phenomenon of one-sided interactions and relationships that audience members form with a public persona. However, the one-sided characteristic of a parasocial interaction is

not applicable to the social media context, as such an interaction is dyadic, where followers are capable of having a two-way conversation/interaction with the influencer (Brown, 2015). According to Bowlby (1969), who introduced the attachment theory, attachment is described as an emotionally driven and target-specific bond that an individual forms with another person or even an object. In the age of social media, followers can engage with an influencer and other media personalities via a variety of platforms. Thus, followers have more consistent exposure to these personalities through the different social media platforms. Klimmt, Hartmann, and Schramm (2006, p. 303) observed that "repeated exposure to media offerings centered around one specific persona leads to a large number of PSI processes." Developing a parasocial interaction with a media persona requires prior knowledge and could only result as an outcome of that knowledge (Brown, 2015). By applying the concept of parasocial interaction and attachment theory to social media, parasocial interaction could result as an outcome of followers' previous knowledge and consistent exposure of an influencer. Therefore, I hypothesize that:

H1: Awareness of the social media influencer is positively related to developing parasocial interaction with the influencer.

Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, and McCann (2003) noted that media credibility affects the audience's choice of involvement. In the context of credible blogs, Kang (2010) pointed out that some individuals inspect a blog's credibility before reading its articles or news. Kang (2010) elaborated that an audience's interaction with a social media source relies heavily on that source's credibility. In the past, relationships with celebrities were far less interactive and dynamic than they are today and, as Chung and

Cho (2017) pointed out, media personalities who interact with followers via social media are far more likely to share personal and intimate details about their lives. Arguably, as media personalities are more willing to share personal information, followers might feel that these personalities endow trust in them as well as consider them a part of their inside circle. This, in turn, raises followers' credibility toward such a persona, as followers would experience or at least be assumed to experience that credibility/trust is reciprocal between them and their beloved influencer. Consequently, followers would be more ready to interact with these personalities. This is true especially as social media platforms have eased access to media personalities specifically, social media influencers. Followers can read the target influencer's tweets and blogs, watch his/her vlogs and YouTube channels, send direct messages and tweets, and even interact with the influencer himself/herself, making these interactions seem more personal and dynamic (Brown, 2015). As Yang and Lim (2009, p. 348) emphasized, that "people want to interact with expert and trustworthy bloggers." Accordingly, I postulate the following:

H2: Credibility of the social media influencer is positively related to developing parasocial interaction with the influencer.

Perceived attractiveness "may be based upon either physical or non-physical attributes (i.e., social and cognitive factors, attitude similarity, etc.) of the partners involved" (Hayes, Alford, Silver, & York, 2006, p. 308). However, Hayes et al. (2006) addressed more interpersonal relationships, such as choosing a partner to complete a task (Kowner, 1995), instead of a parasocial relationship. Thus, when the interaction is between a follower and an influencer, physical attractiveness of the social media influencer may prove to be more important than emotional attractiveness and non-

physical attributes. On the other hand. Klimmt et al. (2006) pointed out that characteristics of a positive and enjoyable parasocial interaction/relationship are similar to those characteristics of a real-life interaction/relationship, in which individuals seek out others whom they perceive to be physically and socially attractive and exhibiting similarities. Regardless of the contradictory finding of both studies in terms whether the interactions between a public persona and followers have similar characteristics to those interactions that are more personal and intimate, scholars support the contention that physical attractiveness plays a role in steering interactions. Hoffner and Cantor (1991) explained that the characteristics that predict whether audience members are likely to engage in and develop a relationship with the celebrity of interest vary. Yet Hoffner and Cantor (1991) elaborated that physical attractiveness is among these characteristics. Lim, Radzol, Cheah, and Wong (2017) found a positive correlation between source attractiveness and followers' engagement. As Lim et al. (2017) stated, social media influencers who are perceived to be exceptionally attractive are more likely to capture the attention of followers. According to Rasmussen (2018, p. 283), parasocial interactions between followers and social media influencers are stimulated by the perceived attractiveness of the influencers because the viewers "deem physical and personality traits as admirable and hope to acquire similar features." Thus, I posit that:

H3: Physical attractiveness of a social media influencer is positively related to developing a parasocial interaction with the influencer.

2.10.2 Parasocial Interaction and Identification

A clear difference between parasocial interaction and identification is that the latter requires a perceived similarity between a celebrity and an audience member; however,

this is not the case with parasocial interactions (Giles, 2002). According to Tian and Yoo (2015), parasocial interaction is a necessary precondition for identification. Brown (2015) argued that identification requires a more intense involvement of audience members than parasocial interaction because it necessitates changes in values, beliefs, or behavior among many other aspects. In a parasocial interaction condition, audience members experience a social distance between them and the media character of interest; however, such a distance does not exist in the condition of identification (Cohen, 2001). Cohen (2001) observed that the nature of the parasocial interaction process involves only the criteria of interacting or engaging whereas the nature of the process in identification encompasses emotional and cognitive (among other characteristics) processing and adapting. This illustrates that a follower can only reach such processing or change in values and attitudes after he/she has engaged in an interaction with the social media influencer. For this reason, Zhou (2011) pinpointed that identification is formed based on previous interactions between a media persona and related followers. Brown (2015) further argued that, because a parasocial interaction is a simpler form of the involvement process, it acts as an antecedent to identification. Consequently, I hypothesize that:

H4: Parasocial interaction with the social media influencer is positively related to the influencer's identification.

2.10.3 Consequences of Identification with Social Media Influencer

Consumers will often form certain associations based on their brand identification (Tildesley & Coote, 2009). Tildesley and Coote (2009) pointed out that brand identification is facilitated as a means to signal to others about one's self-identity. This concept can illustrate why a social media influencer as a human brand might have such

influence on followers and their decision making. Studies on brand communities and how brand communities are formed have provided a great deal of information on and insights into how customers become advocates for brands. These studies essentially found that individuals become advocates because they wish others to perceive them in a certain way (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012; Tildesley & Coote, 2009).

One study on consumer brand identification demonstrated that customers who identify with a brand advocate it (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). As social media influencers establish an identity through their personalities and lifestyles presented via social media, and because followers form identification with the influencer of interest, followers start relating the collaborating brand with that established identity. Thus, consumers are more likely to advocate for the brand that collaborates with the social media influencer with whom they identify because consumers want to reflect and share the positive associations and attributes of the brand to others (Kemp, Childers, & Williams, 2012). Therefore, I postulate that:

H5: Identification with the social media influencer is positively related to the advocacy of the collaborating brand.

Using media personalities and influential persons to strengthen purchase intentions among customers has been a common marketing tool for decades. Fowles (1996) noted that customers are more likely to consume brand products when a beloved media character endorses them. In addition, Friedman and Friedman (1979) investigated ads using Mary Tyler Moore as an endorser and found that viewers gave the ads higher ratings and had more favorable purchase intentions toward the product.

Keh and Xie (2009) argued that identification with a brand not only has an effect

on customers' purchase intentions, but also extends further to influence the willingness of customers to pay a premium price to buy the products of the intended brand even if competing brands offer the similar products for less money. The reason behind this is attributed to customers becoming less sensitive regarding the cost of products or services sold by the brand with which they identify. Thus, it is plausible to expect that followers who identify with the social media influencer are more likely to have purchase intentions toward the collaborating brands due to their collaboration with an influencer whom the followers perceive as credible and attractive. Hence, I suggest:

H6: Identification with the social media influence is positively related to the purchase intentions of the collaborating brand

Social media influencers are often not like regular celebrities, but are instead "every day, ordinary internet users who accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in digital and physical spaces, and monetize their following by integrating 'advertorials' into their blog or social media posts" (Abidin, 2015, p. 1). Celebrity spokespersons are successful because they act as endorsers for a certain lifestyle brand, which prompts consumers to associate the lifestyle brand with positive images of the endorsers and then transfer those associations over to an endorsed product or service (Rifon, Jiang, & Kim, 2016). Brands utilize social media influencers in marketing campaigns in an effort to attract new customers and retain existing customers by associating the brand with the social media influencer's perceived image (Khamis et al., 2016).

Social media users are constantly exposed to brands, products, and services via

social media influencers' and brands' collaborations (Khamis et al., 2016). Such collaborations increase the likelihood that followers become aware of the brand and its associated characteristics (Khamis et al., 2016; Thomson, 2006). In fact, in a study of sponsorship outcomes in the sports context, Tsiotsou and Alexandris (2008) found that fans (i.e., customers) developed a brand image based on what they could associate with. These researchers demonstrated that the psychological connection between a sports team and fans stimulates the latter to form a specific image toward the sponsoring (i.e., collaborating) brand. Tsiotsou and Alexandris (2008) referred to such a psychological connection as team attachment, although they further noted that it had also been referred to as team identification in other studies. Followers who identify with the social media influencers are more likely to perceive and relate some of the influencers' appealing characteristics and traits to the collaborating brand. Consequently, I hypothesize:

H7: Identification with the social media influencer is positively related to the perceived image of the collaborating brand.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapters introduced the literature review for the incorporated concepts and the articulated arguments to build the presumed hypotheses. This chapter presents the research design along with how the fieldwork was conducted and how the results were attained. This chapter is divided into five subparts, including the research context, the questionnaire's measuring items, the research type, data collection instruments, sampling techniques, and data analysis methods.

3.2 Research Context

Statistical data show that by October 2018, there were around 2.74 million people living in Qatar (Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2018). Among them, about 99% have penetration to the internet (Bolorunduro, 2018). Similarly, 99% of individuals in Qatar utilize social media platforms, this accounts for 2.4 million social media users (Deloitte, 2018). This number illustrates that social media has become a significant part of these people's lives. Accordingly, social media appears as an essential space for marketing activities. The results of media users' penetration are 81%, 55%, 42%, 35%, 23%, and 16% for Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Google+, and LinkedIn respectively (Go-Gulf, 2018). Facebook is certainly the most popular social media in Qatar, with about 86% of its users access it on a daily basis. Interestingly, social media users in Qatar are switching from computers to tablets and smartphones. Indeed, 77% of users access Facebook through tablets and smartphones, while the same parameter for Instagram and YouTube constitutes 41% and 44% respectively (Go-Gulf, 2018). All these numbers show that the potential for influencer marketing in Qatar is significant.

3.3 Measurements for Testing Hypotheses

Based on the study's variables and hypotheses, the below table (1) maps the utilized measurements along with other necessary data related to each variable.

Table 1. Questionnaire Mapping Table

Hypothesis	Variables	Items	Source
H1: Awareness of the social media influencer is positively related to developing a parasocial interaction with the influencer.	Awareness of the social media influencer (Independent variable)	• I am aware of the social media influencer that I follow. • I can recognize the social media influencer that I follow among other competing social media influencers. • Some characteristics of the social media influencer that I follow come to mind quickly.	Items were adapted from (Chebat, El Hedhli, and Sirgy, 2008)
H2: Credibility of the Social media influencer is positively related to developing a parasocial interaction with the influencer	Credibility of the social media influencer (Independent variable)	• I think this social media influencer is fair. • I believe this social media influencer is biased. • I think this social media influencer is accurate. • I trust this social media influencer. • I believe that this social media influencer separates fact from opinions. • I believe this social media influencer is opinionated rather than factual. • I think he (she) is moral.	Items were adapted from (Gaziano and McGrath, 1986)
H3: Physical attractiveness of a social media influencer is positively related to developing a parasocial interaction with the influencer.	Physical attractiveness of the social media influencer (Independent variable)	• I think he (she) is quite handsome (pretty). • I like the way he (she) looks. • He (she) wears neat clothes. • He (she) is very good looking. • He (she) is very attractive to me.	Items were adapted from (McCroskey and McCain,1974) and (Utz, 2010).

Hypothesis	Variables	Items	Source
H4: Parasocial interaction with the social media influencer is positively related to the influencer's identification.	Parasocial interaction with the social media influencer (Mediating variable) And Identification with the social media influencer (Mediating variable)	Parasocial interaction: • I look forward to watching this social media influencer on his (her) social media platform. • When I am watching this social media influencer, I feel as if I am part of his (her) team. • I think this social media influencer is like an old friend. • I would like to meet this social media influencer in person. • If there were a story about this social media influencer in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it. • This social media influencer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.	Items of parasocial interaction were adapted from (Dibble, Hartmann, and Rosaen, 2016)

Hypothesis	Variables	Items	Source
		Identification: • When someone criticizes this social media influencer, it feels like a personal insult. • I am very interested in what others think about this social media influencer. • When I talk about this social media influencer, I usually say "we" rather than he (she). • This social media influencer success is my success. • When someone praises this social media influencer, it feels like a personal complement. • If a story in the media criticized this social media influencer, I would feel embarrassed.	Items of identification were adapted from (Gwinner and Swanson, 2003) and (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004).
H5: Identification with the social media influencer is positively related to the advocacy of the collaborating brand.	Advocacy towards the collaborating brand (Dependent variable)	• I have recommended brand A (the collaborating brand you named above) to lots of people. • I "talk up" about brand A to my friends • I try to convince my friends to buy from brand A. • I try to spread the good-word about this brand.	Items were adapted from (Vlachos, 2012) and (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006)
H6: Identification with the social media influence is positively related to the purchase	Purchase intention towards the collaborating brand	• When choosing brands, I choose those that collaborate with the social media influencer that I follow. • I would drive out of my way to buy from a brand that collaborates with the social media influencer that I follow. • When a new brand collaborates with this social media influencer; I switch my buying to support them.	

Hypothesis	Variables	Items	Source
intentions of the collaborating brand.	(Dependent variable)	- I would choose to buy from a collaborating brand with the social media influencer that I follow, even if the prices of competitors were lower. - When choosing brands, it makes little difference to me if they are collaborators with the social media influencer that I follow. - People I know think that brand A is a well-known brand.	Items were adapted from (Cornwell and Coote, 2005).
H7: Identification with the social media influencer is positively related to the perceived image of the collaborating brand.	Perceived image towards the collaborating brand (Dependent variable)	- People I know think that brand A is a respected brand. - People I know think that brand A is an admirable brand. - People I know think that brand A is a prestigious brand. - I have a positive attitude toward brand A and its products due to their collaboration with this social media influencer. - The collaboration improves my perceptions about brand A and its related products.	Items were adapted from (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, and Gruen, 2005).

3.3.1 Research Type

This research paper aims to examine the trending topic of social media influencers and their effect on collaborating brands. Multiple aspects of social media influencers were considered, including (a) awareness of the influencer, (b) credibility and (c) physical attractiveness; wherein these three aspects were regarded as independent variables. The effect of each independent variable on parasocial interaction with the influencer has been examined. The researcher also examined the effect of parasocial interaction on identification with the influencer of interest. Finally, identification with social media influencer effect on the collaborating brand has been examined in terms of (a) advocacy, (b) perceived image, and (c) purchase intention. The study aims to examine the causal relationships among predictor and dependent variables. Therefore, the research adopted a quantitative approach. Quantitative research involves a statistical study that is utilized to quantify attitudes and behaviors among other variables from a sample and then generalize the findings to a larger target population (DeFranzo, 2011; Newman and Benz, 1998)

Survey-based research has two types: exploratory and explanatory. Exploratory research is exploited to study an early stage of a phenomenon and to develop the units comprising theories (Malhotra and Grover, 1998). On the other hand, explanatory research is exploited to examine causal relationships between the variables; as such it relies on existing theory-based expectations and explains why and how these hypothesized relationships relate to each other (Malhotra and Grover, 1998). This study is explanatory in nature since the constructs under investigation as well as the scale measuring these constructs are well established in literature. In fact, the researcher used

other similar contexts to draw upon and relate it to the context at hand, social media. Furthermore, this research only examined the likely causal relationships among the presumed hypotheses.

3.3.2 Data Collection Instruments

The data collection was completed through a self-administered survey. A thorough literature review and exploration of previously developed scales were the basis for the questionnaire development. A pre-test was conducted with a sample of 24 individuals before the official launch of the questionnaire online. The pre-test used the two main common languages in Qatar, namely Arabic and English. This was to ensure that the study reaches as many individuals as possible and represents different society segments. The pre-test process has led to the modifications of some vague terms along with other language related issues and has also resulted in eliminating a measuring item that was perceived as inappropriate. The deleted item related to the physical attractiveness variable, and read as follows "He (she) is somewhat ugly". The time spent to complete the survey at the pre-test stage was between 4.76 minutes and 7.19 minutes, with the exception of one scenario where the respondent needed 8.63 minutes to complete the questionnaire. These results have enabled the researcher to outline a suggested time frame for completing the questionnaire; "about 7 minutes". Finally, the questionnaire was officially launched using the online platform, Qualtrics, and was distributed using convenience and snowball sampling methods.

The entire questionnaire was developed based on previously established and validated scales which were adapted to fit the social media context. The questionnaire comprised 6 sections encompassing a total of 44 items. The sections were preceded by an

introduction to convey to the respondents all of the following: (a) a brief of the study purpose, (b) definitions of two main concepts: (c) "who is a social media influencer" and (d) "what is a collaborating brand" along with an example to provide a better clarification, (e) the suggested time frame, and (f) a confidentiality agreement (see appendix A). The first section addressed information about social media use. The section incorporated six questions starting from whether the respondent owned an account on one of the social media platforms and was provided with two possible choices to choose from, either "Yes or "No". In case, the respondent replied with "No" he/she was immediately directed to the end of the questionnaire. On the other hand, if the respondent chose "Yes" he/she was proceeded to the following question relating to the frequency of social media usage, where the respondent had to choose among "Rarely (less than once a week)", "Once a week", "Twice a week", "Every other day" or "Daily basis". The third question, questioned a dichotomous one in nature, whether the respondent follow a particular social media influencer on one of the social media platforms. If the respondent chose "NO" as an answer he/she was directed to the end of the questionnaire. The fourth question addressed the number of social media influencer(s) the respondent follow, in which five choices were listed to choose from "1", "2-4", "5-7", "8-10" or "more than 10". Both the fifth and sixth questions were open-ended: the respondent was required to state the name of his/her favorite social media influencer and that of the main collaborating brand with the influencer of interest. Respondents were instructed to provide a single name for each of question 5 and 6.

The second section comprised 16 items addressing respondents' behavior towards the collaborating brand in terms of advocacy, perceived image, and purchase intention.

All the items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and 5 represents "strongly agree".

The third section covered three different dimensions related to social media influencer of interest, including awareness, credibility and physical attractiveness. This section incorporated 15 items to be measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The fourth section encompassed 7 items measuring parasocial interaction with social media influencer; as such all 7 items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The fifth section incorporated 6 items measuring identification with social media influencer of interest, wherein these items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The sixth section involved questions that inquired personal information about respondents, including gender, age group, educational level, monthly income, and nationality. All questions within this section were in the form of multiple choice where respondents needed to choose one of the provided alternative answers.

3.3.3 Sampling

The population is inclusive of all individuals with at least one social media account who also follow at least one social media influencer on at least one platform. The research applied a non-probability sampling strategy based on convenience and snowball techniques (Tansey, 2007). The questionnaire was distributed through an online link sent to the researcher's family members, friends, and colleagues who were asked to complete the questionnaire as well as share it with acquaintances. The researcher also went to multiple premises located at Qatar University and Qatar Foundation and asked passers-by to complete the questionnaire on site using an iPad. Furthermore, the questionnaire's link was posted on the researcher's social media account at the time of the study.

Appealing to students at different universities helped meet the required criteria for completing the questionnaire (i.e., having a social media account and following at least one social media influencer). Although individuals from different age groups could have social media account(s), those who follow influencers usually belong to younger age groups. Therefore, the researcher believed that approaching university students would be the most appropriate. This is similar, to an extent, to the reason behind posting the questionnaire's link on the researcher's social media account to ensure that the questionnaire could reach those who meet the required criteria. Finally, appealing to friends and family members was mainly driven by the time constraint for collecting the data and completing the research. Ensuring an ideal sample size for a research project has generated a great debate among scholars as there has been no consensus on a specific single number (MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999). Cattell (1978) mentioned that an appropriate sample size should not be less than 250. Comrey and Lee (1992) proposed that a sample size scale, suggesting that a sample size of 100 is considered poor, 200 is fair, 300 is good, 500 is very good, and 1000 or above is excellent. In the current study, 355 questionnaires were returned, yet only 252 were usable, as 103 questionnaires were either incomplete or unusable because the respondents did not meet the criteria used for sampling (i.e., these cases included participants who did not have a social media account, did not follow a social media influencer, or quit before completing the survey). In fact, 252 was considered an adequate sample size, as it is in accordance with the previous studies' findings.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis section (chapter four) is divided into three parts, including descriptive

data analysis, inferential data analysis, and conclusion. The descriptive data analysis involves describing sample characteristics and normality testing. While, inferential data analysis involves making inferences about the general target population using deductions made from the sample (Frost, 2018; Surbhi, 2016). Such analysis includes exploratory factor analysis, correlation, and regression analysis. The online 'Qualtrics' questionnaire platform was used to obtain the questionnaires' data. On the other hand, the Statistical Package of Social Science, SPSS, software was used to perform the data analysis. Finally, the conclusion section incorporated the researcher deductions that are based on the findings of assumed associations within the study at hand.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present the analysis, results and related discussion of the collected data. The analysis is divided into two sections; descriptive and inferential. The descriptive analysis incorporates the sample characteristics and the normality test. The inferential analysis encompasses, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), reliability test, Pearson's correlation, collinearity and regression analysis. Finally, a discussion of the study results, especially those pertaining to the study's presumed hypotheses, is presented.

4.2 Descriptive Data Analysis

All variables under investigation were measured using scales adapted from reputed sources. It is worthy to mention that these scales have been modified to be in line with the context of the study at hand. This section will describe both sample characteristics and normality testing.

4.2.1 Sample Characteristics

This section emphasizes the respondents' characteristics within this research. The descriptive analysis in this section relates to gender, age group, education level, monthly income and nationality. A total of 355 questionnaires were collected. Among all collected responses only 252 were analyzed, while 103 were filtered out as the questionnaires were incomplete. The below charts were utilized to exhibit the sample's description.

Gender
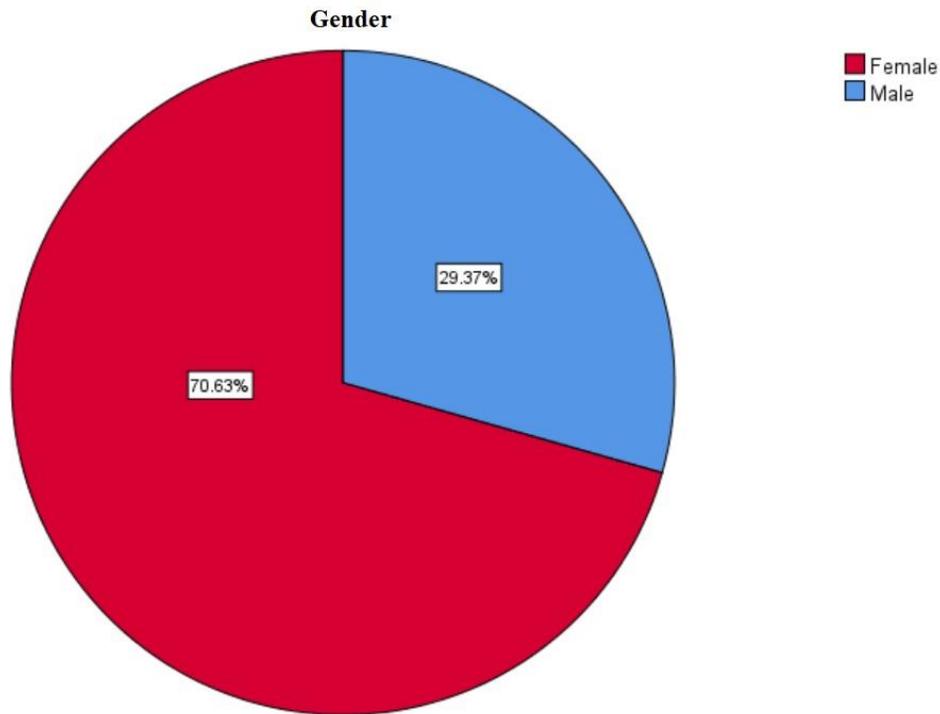
Figure 2. Graphical representation of the gender distribution

Most of the respondents are females with a percentage of 70.63%, in comparison to 29.37% of males (see figure 2). The reason behind this is attributed to the utilized sampling methods; convenience and snowball sampling. As such, the majority of responses were obtained from the university community in Qatar. The results are in line with the statistical data issued by the government of Qatar. Whereas, according to the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics (2017), the percentage of the female university students to the male university students, is 68.75% to 31.25% respectively, for the year of 2016/2017.

Age
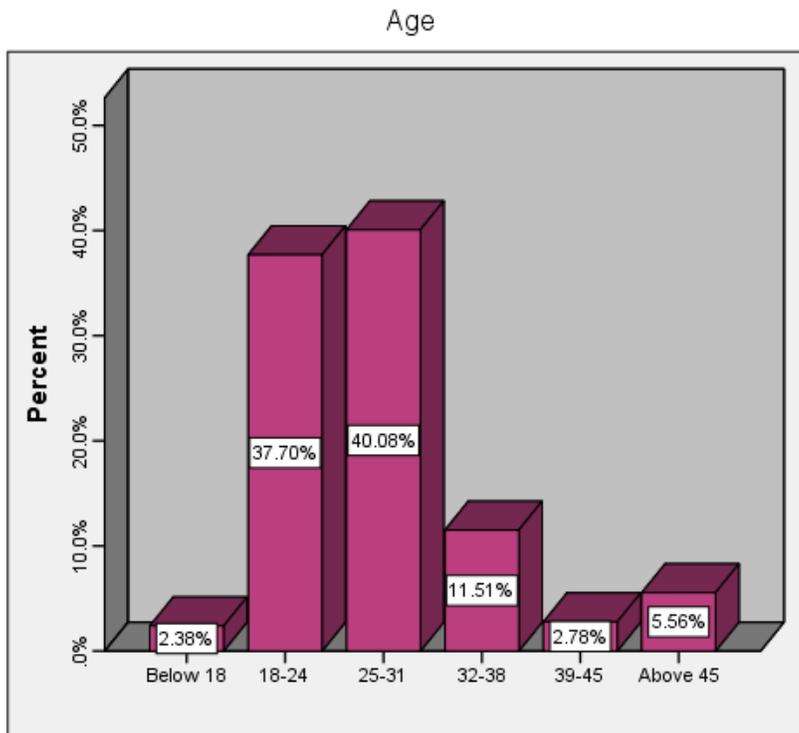
Figure 3. Graphical representation of the age distribution

In this study, the age group was distributed across 6 age groups, starting from; (below 18), (18-24), (25-31), (32-38), (39-45) and (above 45) years. The group of (25-31) years occupied the first rank with a percentage of 40.04%. Second, is the group of (18-24) years with a percentage of 37.70%. Third, is the group of (32-38) followed by the group of (above 45) with percentages of 11.51% and 5.56%, respectively. After that, is the group of (39-45) with a percentage of 2.78%. At the last rank, is the group of those who are (below 18) years with a percentage of 2.38% (figure 3).

Educational level
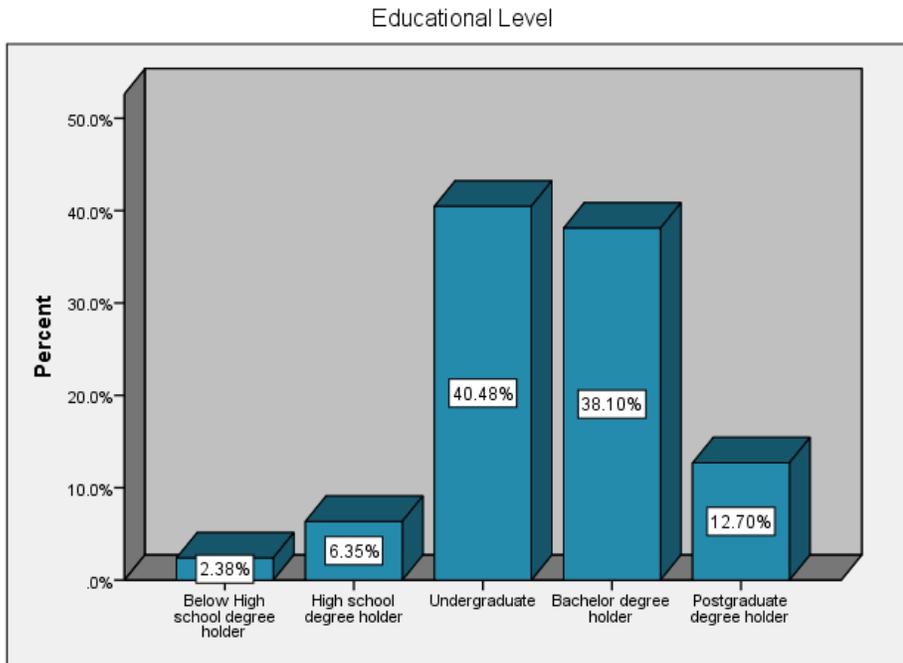
Figure 4. Graphical representation of the educational level distribution

In this study, the educational level was distributed over 5 levels, starting from; below high school degree holder, high school degree holder, undergraduate, bachelor degree holder, and postgraduate degree holder. Respondents with undergraduate levels occupied the first rank with a percentage of 40.48%. The second rank is assigned to respondents with bachelor degrees with a percentage of 33.3%. Followed by, respondents with postgraduate degrees (i.e., Master or Ph.D. program) with a percentage of 8.8%. Fourth and fifth ranks are assigned to respondents with high school degrees with a percentage of 6.35% and respondents with below high school degree holders with a percentage 2.38% (see figure 4)

Monthly Income
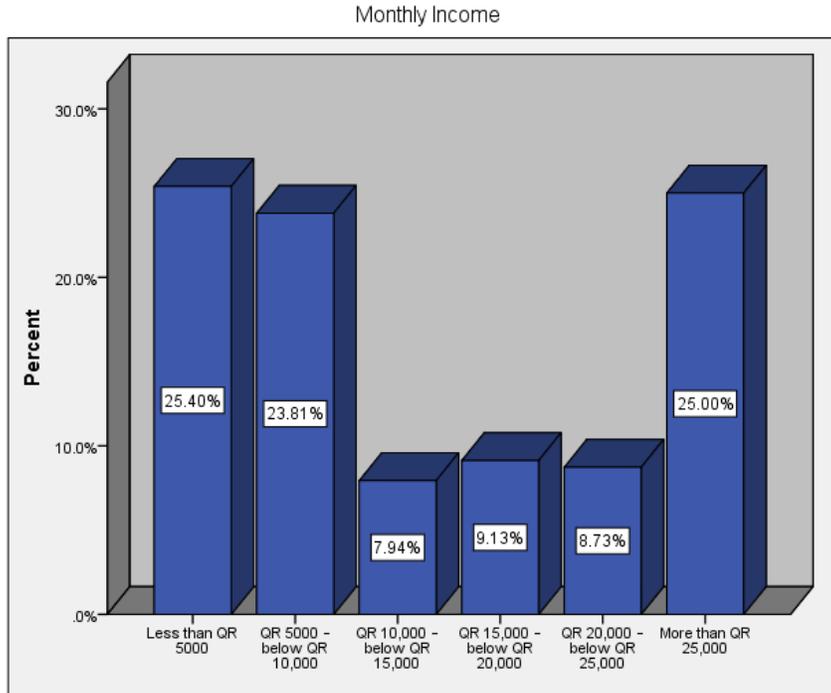
Figure 5. Graphical representation of the monthly income distribution

In the current study, the monthly income was distributed over 6 categories including, below (less than 5000 QR), (5000 QR – below 10,000 QR), (10,000 QR– below 15,000 QR), (15,000 QR– below 20,000 QR), (20,000 QR – below 25,000 QR) and (more than 25,000 QR). Respondents with a monthly income of (less than 5000 QR) occupied the first rank with a percentage of 25.40%. Second, is the group of (more than 25000 QR) with a percentage of 25%. Furthermore, 23.81% is assigned to the group of (10,000 QR – below 20,000 QR), followed by the group of (15,000 QR – below 20,000 QR) with a percentage of 9.13%. Then the group of (20,000 QR – below 25,000) with a percentage of 8.73%. Finally, the group of (10,000 QR – below 15,000 QR) occupied the last rank with a percentage of 7.94% (See figure 5).

Nationality
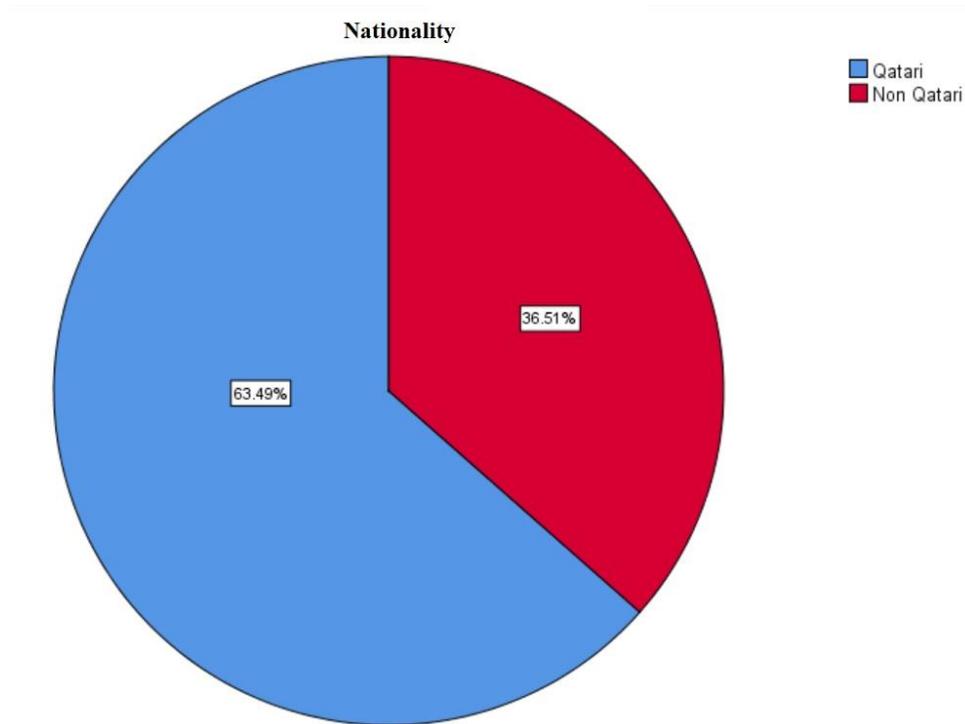
Figure 6. Graphical representation of the nationality distribution

Most of the respondents are Qataris with a percentage of 63.49%, while the rest respondents are non-Qataris with a percentage of 36.51% (see Figure 6). This is because the majority of responses were obtained from the university community in Qatar, using convenience and snowball sampling techniques. The statistical data of Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics (2017), demonstrate that the percentage of university student based on nationality is, 69.36% Qatari compared to 30.64% non-Qatari, for the year of 2016/2017. Hereafter, the results of this sample are reflective of the statistical data of Qatar's population.

4.2.2 Normality Test

Normality tests are undertaken to check if the sample data is either normally or not-normally distributed. The outcomes of normality tests are used to acknowledge whether to perform parametric or non-parametric tests. As such, in general normally distributed data reflect eligibility of performing parametric tests, and the opposite stands true for non-normal distribution with non-parametric tests. The most commonly utilized normality test is known as the 'Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS)' statistical test with Lilliefors (LF) significance level and Shapiro-Wilk (SW). Whereas, the significance value of this test is used to indicate the data type; normal or not-normal. The measured variables are considered normally distributed, only if the significance value is greater than 0.05. However, if it is less than 0.05, then that data is considered as not normally distributed.

Table 2. Normality Test

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk			Inference
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.	
Awareness	0.168	252	0.000	0.910	252	0.000	Data is not normally distributed
Credibility	0.107	252	0.000	0.953	252	0.000	Data is not normally distributed
Physical attractiveness	0.095	252	0.000	0.957	252	0.000	Data is not normally distributed
Parasocial interaction	0.082	252	0.000	0.982	252	0.003	Data is not normally distributed
Identification	0.099	252	0.000	0.963	252	0.000	Data is not normally distributed

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk			Inference
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.	
Advocacy	0.120	252	0.000	0.963	252	0.000	Data is not normally distributed
Purchase intention	0.077	252	0.001	0.982	252	0.002	Data is not normally distributed
Perceived image	0.096	252	0.000	0.956	252	0.000	Data is not normally distributed

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As shown in the table above, the significance value is below 0.05. Hereafter, it can be clearly witnessed that for all variables under investigation; the data are not normally distributed. Yet, data analysis will not be limited to non-parametric tests. As such, according to the central limit theory, large samples (i.e., 5 or 10 and above per group) approximately follow the normal distribution regardless status of original distribution (Norman, 2010). Thus, parametric tests can be used for this study since the total number of measuring items in this study is 44 and the sample size is 252. Furthermore, analysis of variance (ANOVA) test has been proven to be robust even for those highly skewed non-normal distributions, when sample size is either 4, 5, or 10 and above (Pearson, 1931). Consequently, the normality tests results will not stand as an obstacle to proceeding with parametric tests in the current study.

4.3 Inferential Data Analysis

Inferential data analysis involves making inferences about the general population using deductions from a sample (Frost, 2018). Nevertheless, it is important to point out, that it is almost impossible for a sample to identically mirror the target population, due to

what is known as sampling error. This section first entitles Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) as well as Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test. Subsequently, Reliability test. Finally, regressions analysis is presented, preceded by both Correlation and Collinearity tests.

4.3.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) identifies the underlying relationships between variables, particularly pair-wise relations (Osborne, 2015). EFA is used to refine measures, as it emphasizes which factors are latent within the group of measured variables (Conway and Huffcutt, 2003). In other words, it attests actual correlations rather than the hypothesized ones. As a result, it reduces the number of measuring items into a certain smaller set (Conway and Huffcutt, 2003). At the study at hand, EFA test with maximum likelihood model and Promax rotation was utilized to proceed with the analysis.

4.3.2 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test is conducted to assess if the study's data are suitable for factor analysis or not. As such, KMO assesses if the 'sampling is adequate' for each variable under investigation.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Construct	KMO	Bartlett's Test (Chi-Square)	Inference
Awareness			Sampling is adequate
Credibility			Sampling is adequate
Physical attractiveness			Sampling is adequate
Parasocial interaction	0.909	6795.047	Sampling is adequate
Identification			Sampling is adequate
Advocacy			Sampling is adequate
Purchase intention			Sampling is adequate
Perceived image			Sampling is adequate

From the above table, it can be witnessed that the KMO scores for all constructs are greater than 0.8, this indicates that the sampling is adequate.

4.3.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted and consequently, as it mandates, items with cross-loading or loading below 0.4 were eliminated (Macdonald and Uncles, 2007). According to the pattern matrix that resulted from the EFA encompassing the items of advocacy, perceived image, purchase intention, awareness, credibility, physical attractiveness, parasocial interaction and identification in table (4), factors were extracted.

Table 4. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Items	Factors								Factors
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
This social media influencer success is my success.	0.921								
If a story in the media criticized this social media influencer, I would feel embarrassed.	0.873								
When I talk about this social media influencer, I usually say "we" rather than he (she).	0.831								
When someone praises this social media influencer, it feels like a personal complement.	0.782								Identification
When someone criticizes this social media influencer, it feels like a personal insult.	0.760								
I am very interested in what others think about this social media influencer.	0.585								
I like the way he (she) looks.		0.910							
He (she) is very good looking.		0.857							
I think he (she) is quite handsome (pretty).		0.791							Physical attractiveness
He (she) wears neat clothes.		0.785							
He (she) is very attractive to me.		0.767							
I think this social media influencer is accurate.			0.811						
I trust this social media influencer.			0.805						
I believe that this social media influencer separates fact from opinions.			0.779						Credibility
I think this social media influencer is fair.			0.602						
I think he (she) is moral.			0.602						
People I know think that brand A is an admirable brand.				0.829					
People I know think that brand A is a respected brand.				0.825					Perceived Image
People I know think that brand A is a well-known brand				0.825					

Items	Factors								Factors
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
People I know think that brand A is a prestigious brand.				0.614					
I try to convince my friends to buy from brand A.					0.860				
I "talk up" about brand A to my friends.					0.813				Advocacy
I have recommended brand A (the collaborating brand you named above) to lots of people.					0.768				
I try to spread the good-word about this brand.					0.739				
I would drive out of my way to buy from a brand that collaborates with the social media influencer that I follow.						0.829			
I would choose to buy from a collaborating brand with the social media influencer that I follow, even if the prices of competitors were lower.						0.810			Purchase intention
When a new brand collaborates with this social media influencer; I switch my buying to support them.						0.726			
When choosing brands, I choose those that collaborate with the social media influencer that I follow.						0.661			
When I am watching this social media influencer, I feel as if I am part of his (her) team.							0.854		
I think this social media influencer is like an old friend.							0.725		
This social media influencer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.							0.715		
I would like to meet this social media influencer in person.							0.554		Parasocial interaction
I look forward to watching this social media influencer on his (her) social media platform.							0.553		
If there were a story about this social media influencer in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.							0.519		
I am aware of the social media influencer that I follow.								0.917	
I can recognize the social media influencer that I follow among other competing social media influencers.								0.827	Awareness

Items	Factors								Factors
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Some characteristics of the social media influencer that I follow come to mind quickly.								0.564	

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.[a]

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

This study involves 8 constructs and a total of 44 measuring items. Four constructs including advocacy, awareness, physical attractiveness and identification remained as they are; where the items of each construct loaded on one factor and no items of any of the appointed constructs were dropped. On the other hand, a total of 7 items were eliminated from the other four constructs including, purchase intention, perceived image, credibility and parasocial interaction. The construct of purchase intention involved eliminating one item; "When choosing brands, it makes little difference to me if they are collaborators with the social media influencer that I follow", due to cross-loading. Perceived image construct involved the highest number of items elimination; a total of 3, due to cross-loading. These 3 items entitled; "I have a positive attitude toward brand A and its products due to their collaboration with this social media influencer", "The collaboration improves my perceptions about brand A and its related products" and "Due to the particular collaboration, I like more the products of brand A". Two items were eliminated from the construct of credibility as a result to their cross-loading. The 2 eliminated items addressed; "I believe this social media influencer is biased" and "I believe this social media influencer is opinionated rather than factual". Finally, the construct of parasocial interaction involved an elimination of one item entitling "When this social media influencer shows me how he (she) feels about a brand; it helps me make up my own mind about the same brand", due to cross-loading. Hereafter, all the remaining items of the different constructs have strong loadings (i.e., above 0.4) and therefore, act as well-representatives.

It is critical to mention, that the 8 constructs model explains 66.654 % of the total variance. All communalities are above 0.3, as a proof of adequacy. Furthermore,

all loadings are above 0.5 indicating appropriate convergent validity. While, no strong cross-loadings existed signifying discriminant validity. The results of the goodness-of-fit test display Chi-square value of 662.920, df=398 with $p < 0.001$.

4.3.4 Reliability Test

Reliability test measures "the extent that independent but comparable measures of the same trait or construct of a given object agree" (Churchill, 1979, p. 65). As such it is noted that this test examines the consistency and reliability of measuring items. The reason why such a test is crucial, is that it indicates to what extent are the items measuring the same construct. Cronbach's Alpha was utilized to demonstrate the level of reliability. It is worthy to mention, that the value of Alpha falls between 0 and 1. A higher value of Alpha reflects a higher consistency or reliability across items. In fact, according to Kayış (2009); Türkyilmaz and Aydemir (2014) if the value of Cronbach's Alpha is above 0.6, then the scale is highly reliable.

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items	Analysis
Awareness	0.816	3	Highly Reliable
Credibility	0.864	5	Highly Reliable
Physical attractiveness	0.909	5	Highly Reliable
Parasocial interaction	0.895	6	Highly Reliable

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items	Analysis
Identification	0.934	6	Highly Reliable
Advocacy	0.882	4	Highly Reliable
Purchase intention	0.879	4	Highly Reliable
Perceived image	0.882	4	Highly Reliable

From the table above, it can be witnessed that the values of Cronbach's Alpha test are greater than 0.8 for all variables. This denotes that the adopted scales are highly reliable and that there is a high level of internal consistency across them (Türkyilmaz and Aydemir, 2014). Consequently, the utilized items to measure the constructs are appropriate.

4.3.5 Regression Analysis

Beneath this part, three tests were conducted including Pearson's correlation, collinearity and regression. Pearson's correlation involves investigating relationship among variables, in terms of strength and direction (Sedgwick, 2012). Collinearity test entitles whether there is a correlation among the predictor variables or not (Midi, Sarkar, and Rana, 2010). Regression test examines the hypothesized associations or relations between variables.

4.3.6 Pearson's Correlation Test

Pearson correlation coefficient examines the relationships among variables and indicates the strength and direction among them (Sedgwick, 2012). The value of

correlation falls between -1 and 1. As such, a higher absolute value of correlation signifies a stronger correlation. However, it is important to point out that, a correlation coefficient of 0 indicates that there is no correlation between the variables of interest. The sign of correlation indicates whether the relationship is positive or negative, where a positive correlation means if A increases, then so do B (Sedgwick, 2012). If the level of significance (also known as p-value) is less than 0.05; then the correlation of interest is significant.

Table 6. Pearson's Correlation Test

		Advocacy	Perceived image	Purchase intention	Awareness	Credibility	Physical attractiveness	Parasocial interaction	Identification
Advocacy	Pearson Correlation	1	0.531**	0.526**	0.249**	0.320**	0.238**	0.303**	**0.361****
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Perceived image	Pearson Correlation	0.531**	1	0.338**	0.305**	0.306**	0.415**	0.217**	**0.171****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.006
Purchase intention	Pearson Correlation	0.526**	0.338**	1	0.276**	0.367**	0.208**	0.405**	**0.573****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000
Awareness	Pearson Correlation	0.249**	0.305**	0.276**	1	0.485**	0.407**	**0.524****	0.284**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Credibility	Pearson Correlation	0.320**	0.306**	0.367**	0.485**	1	0.335**	**0.571****	0.365**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
Physical attractiveness	Pearson Correlation	0.238**	0.415**	0.208**	0.407**	0.335**	1	**0.452****	0.159*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.011
Parasocial interaction	Pearson Correlation	0.303**	0.217**	0.405**	0.524**	0.571**	0.452**	1	**0.634****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
Identification	Pearson Correlation	0.361**	0.171**	0.573**	0.284**	0.365**	0.159**	**0.634****	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.006	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.011	0.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the table above, it can be noticed that the values of Pearson correlation for all the variables are positive and significant at p-value of $p < 0.05$. It is worthy to mention, that the correlation between parasocial interaction and identification is the strongest, where r=0.634, $p < 0.01$. Followed by, the existing correlation between identification and purchase intention, as such r=0.573, $p < 0.01$. Almost a similar strength of correlation exists between credibility and parasocial interaction, where r= 0.571, $p < 0.01$.

4.3.7 Collinearity Tests

Collinearity tests investigate if a relationship between two or more explanatory (i.e., predictor) variables exists; as such if there is a correlation between these variables or not (Midi, Sarkar, and Rana, 2010). According to these authors, a perfect collinearity exists if the value of correlation between two or more predictor variables is 1 or -1. Furthermore, if the correlation coefficient between the predictor variables is 0, then there is no collinearity. Collinearity can be detected through tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF). Whereas, tolerance signifies the variability of the predictor variable of interest that cannot be explained by other predictor variables in the study. Variance inflation factor (VIF) simply indicates to reverse of tolerance value. Midi, Sarkar, and Rana (2010) note that collinearity becomes an issue; if the value of tolerance is less than 0.2 or 0.1 and if the value of VIF is 10 and above.

Table 7. Collinearity Test

		awareness	physical attractiveness	credibility	Parasocial interaction	identification
Awareness(dv)	Tolerance		0.760	0.666	0.398	0.577
	VIF		1.317	1.501	2.510	1.733
Physical attractiveness(dv)	Tolerance	0.670		0.626	0.414	0.594
	VIF	1.493		1.597	2.414	1.683
Credibility(dv)	Tolerance	0.688	0.733		0.413	0.577
	VIF	1.453	1.364		2.422	1.734
Parasocial interaction(dv)	Tolerance	0.687	0.810	0.689		0.852
	VIF	1.456	1.235	1.451		1.174
Identification(dv)	Tolerance	0.646	0.754	0.625	0.553	
	VIF	1.548	1.326	1.600	1.807	

From the results in the table above, all 5 predictor variables have tolerance values greater than 0.1 and 0.2. Simultaneously, all have VIF values less than 10. Hereafter, the 5 predictor variables; awareness, physical attractiveness, credibility, parasocial interaction, and identification do not exhibit collinearity issues.

4.3.8 Regression Test

Regression test examines the relationships between independent (predictor) and dependent (outcome) variables. Wherein, it tests if the two variables have a significant relation or association and whether this relation is negative or positive. Regression tests could be either linear or multiple. Linear regression involves using one predictor variable to explain the result of a dependent variable. Multiple regression implies using two or more predictor variables to explain the result of a dependent variable.

There are fundamental values in regression test that need to be explained. The value of R reflects the correlation between the variables; predictor(s) and dependent. The value of R^2 or R squared indicates the level of variation in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent (predictor) variable(s). The p-value denotes the level of significance, as such if the p-value is lower than 0.05; then the variables are considered as a good fit for the model. The F value implies a test where the null hypothesis is, all of the regression coefficients are equal to zero; as such the model cannot explain the variance in the dependent variable.

Furthermore, the F value must be greater than 0, so that the null hypothesis could be accepted. The β value entails the existing relationship between variables. As such, whether the relationship is negative or positive. Besides, it implies the extent of impact a predictor variable has on a dependent variable, while controlling the effect of all other predictor variables.

Regression test of parasocial interaction on awareness, physical attractiveness and credibility

The multiple regression model explains 44.7% of the variance in parasocial interaction (F value= 66.727, p-value=0.000). This means that the constructs of awareness, credibility and physical attractiveness have a relatively large effect on parasocial interaction. Credibility occupied the first rank on effecting parasocial interaction with (Beta = 0.374, t = 6.811, p-value=0.000). Second is awareness (Beta= 0.252, t= 4.450, p-value=0.000). Finally, physical attractiveness occupied the last rank, as it has the least effect on parasocial interaction (Beta= 0.225, t= 4.277, p-value=0.000).

Regression test of identification on parasocial interaction

The linear regression model, R^2=0.402, explains 40.2% of the variation in identification construct (F value= 168.206, p-value= 0.000). The construct of parasocial interaction with social media influencer has a significant impact on identification with social media influencer, Beta= 0.634, t= 12.969 and p-value=0.000.

Regression tests of advocacy, purchase intention and perceived image on identification

The linear regression model, R^2, explains 13% of the variation in advocacy construct (F value= 37.415, p-value= 0.000). The construct of identification with social media influencer has a significant impact on advocacy towards a collaborating brand, Beta= 0.361, t= 6117 and p-value=0.000.

The linear regression model, R^2, explains 32.8% of the variation in purchase intention construct (F value= 122.026, p-value= 0.000). The construct of identification with a social media influencer has a significant effect on purchase intention towards a collaborating brand, Beta= 0.573, t= 11.047 and p-value=0.000.

The linear regression model explains 2.9% of the variation in perceived image construct (F value= 7.566, p-value= 0.006). The construct of identification with social media influencer has a significant impact on perceived image towards collaborating brand, Beta= 0.171, t= 2.751 and p-value=0.006.

Table 8. Hypotheses Testing and Regression Outputs

Hypothesis	R	R²	Sig. (p-value)	F	t	β	Inference
H1: Awareness of the social media influencer is positively related to developing a parasocial interaction with the influencer.			0.000		4.450	0.252	Hypothesis Accepted
H2: Credibility of the social media influencer is positively related to a developing parasocial interaction with the influencer.	0.668	0.447	0.000	66.727	6.811	0.374	Hypothesis Accepted
H3: Physical attractiveness of the social media influencer is positively related to developing a parasocial interaction with the influencer.			0.000		4.277	0.225	Hypothesis Accepted
H4: Parasocial interaction with the social media influencer is positively related to the influencer's identification.	0.634	0.402	0.000	168.206	12.969	0.634	Hypothesis Accepted
H5: Identification with the social media influencer is positively related to the advocacy of the collaborating brand.	0.361	0.130	0.000	37.415	6.117	0.361	Hypothesis Accepted
H6: Identification with the social media is positively related to the purchase intentions of the collaborating brand.	0.573	0.328	0.000	122.026	11.047	0.573	Hypothesis Accepted
H7: Identification with the social media influencer is positively related to the perceived image of the collaborating brand.	0.171	0.029	0.006	7.566	2.751	0.171	Hypothesis Accepted

The findings in the above table, suggest that all of the hypothesized associations are accepted. A total of 44.7% of the variance in parasocial interaction construct is explained by the three predictor variables; awareness, credibility, and physical attractiveness. Among these three predictor variables, credibility has the most considerable effect on parasocial interaction, as such Beta = 0.374, p-value=0.000). Parasocial interaction construct explains 40.2% of the variance in identification construct. Identification explains variance by 13%, 32.8% and 2.9% in advocacy, purchase intention and perceived image, respectively.

4.4 Discussion

Regression analyses were undertaken to investigate the relationships between independent and dependent variables. Considering that there are seven hypotheses in this study. The first hypothesis (H1) presumes that there is a relationship between awareness of the social media influencer and developing parasocial interaction with the same influencer. The results demonstrate a significantly positive effect of awareness on parasocial interaction. Such results are in line with Brown (2015) findings; whereas he notes that previous knowledge of a media persona is compulsory to developing parasocial interaction with him or her. An experience of parasocial interaction occurs when an individual feel that there is a mutual awareness between him/her and a media performer (Cummins and Cui, 2014). Furthermore, Klimmt, Hartmann, and Schramm (2006) remark that an exposure (i.e., indicating awareness) to a media personality leads to forming processes of parasocial interaction.

The second hypothesis (H2) assumes that there is a relationship between credibility of the social media influencer and forming parasocial interaction with the same

influencer. The findings exhibit a significantly positive effect of credibility on parasocial interaction. These findings confirm the study of Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, and McCann (2003), wherein they remark that the audiences choose to involve with a media based on its credibility. Besides, the results of this study also corroborate Kang (2010) findings, wherein as the latter elaborates; an interaction between audience members and a source relies on that source's credibility. The reason behind this, is that audience tends to inspect the credibility of a source before proceeding with developing interactions (Kang, 2010).

The third hypothesis (H3) proposes that physical attractiveness of social media influencer is related to developing parasocial interaction with him or her. The study outcomes imply that there is a significantly positive effect of physical attractiveness on parasocial interaction. Such outcomes match those of Hartmann, Klimmt, and Vorderer (2001); physical attractiveness fosters parasocial interaction and acts as an antecedent to it. In fact, according to Rasmussen (2018), the perceived attractiveness of a social media influencer motivates followers to form parasocial interactions with such an influencer.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) presumes that parasocial interaction with the social media influencer is related to developing identification with that influencer. The results demonstrate that parasocial interaction has a significantly positive effect on identification. These results are in accordance with Tian and Yoo (2015) remarks; whereas parasocial interaction act as a necessary precondition for identification. The reason behind this is attributed to the fact that the level of involvement is more intense in identification rather than parasocial interaction; as such identification unlike parasocial interaction involves intense emotional and cognitive processing and initiates changes in values and attitudes

(Brown, 2015).

The fifth hypothesis (H5) assumes that identification with the social media influencer is related to developing advocacy towards collaborating brand. The findings display that identification has a significantly positive effect on advocacy. The findings are in line with Kemp, Childers, and Williams (2012, p. 509) study, wherein these authors prove that customers act as advocates for the brand they form a connection with, although the authors did not mention the word identification. However, they have implied that such connection "satisfy psychological needs, reinforce identity and allow an individual to connect to others" and indicated it as 'self-brand connection'. Furthermore, the research of Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, and Sen (2012) proves that recommending a brand is an outcome of identification; the researchers further reveal that the more customer identifies with a brand, the more likely that they will advocate this particular brand.

The sixth hypothesis (H6) proposes that identification with the social media influence is related to developing purchase intentions towards the collaborating brand. The outcomes imply that identification has a significantly positive effect on purchase intention. Such outcomes confirm the study of Fowles (1996), denoting that customers are more willing to consume brand or products that are endorsed by their favorite media character. In fact, Keh and Xie (2009) elaborate on the topic of brand identification, noting that brand identification not only stimulates customers to develop purchase intentions towards that brand, but also to pay a premium price to buy these brand products.

The seventh hypothesis (H7) presumes that identification with the social media influencer is related to developing perceived image towards the collaborating brand. The

results exhibit that identification has a significantly positive effect on the perceived image. Such results are in line with the research of Rifon, Jiang, and Kim (2016); wherein these authors explain that customers associate the image of an endorser to the collaborating brand and its products/services. In a study on sponsorship outcomes, Tsiotsou and Alexandris (2008) state that fans (i.e., customers) develop an image towards a brand based on what they associate with this brand. In particular, researchers prove that a result of the psychological connection between sports team and fans; fans develop a positive image towards the sponsoring (i.e., collaborating) brand. Tsiotsou et al., (2008) remark that such a psychological connection is referred to 'team attachment' but could also be referred to 'team identification' in other studies.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the conclusions and presents the limitations and future research avenues for scholars. In addition, the researcher outlines both the theoretical and managerial implications for this study.

5.2 Research Conclusions

The study aimed to investigate the relationships among the awareness, credibility, and physical attractiveness of social media influencers and parasocial interactions, the association between the parasocial interaction with social media influencers and identification with them, and the effects of identification with social media influencers on collaborating brands with respect to advocacy, purchase intention, and the perceived brand image. The research relied on two theories, parasocial interaction theory and social influence theory, to explain the proposed conceptual model and demonstrate how the involved concepts are related to each other.

The findings indicated that the antecedents of parasocial interaction have different effects on it. A point of interest is that the findings demonstrated that the impact of credibility is stronger than awareness and physical attractiveness. Thus, for a social media influencer to develop a parasocial interaction with followers, he or she needs to place more emphasis on credibility, followed by awareness and finally physical attractiveness. Another interesting point is that the effects of identification on collaborating brands vary. As such, identification has a substantial impact on stimulating followers' purchase

intentions toward collaborating brands. This verifies that the use of such a marketing instrument is one of the most adequate instruments for generating purchase intentions. However, this is not the case with perceived image, although the impact of identification on the former is considered the lowest. This finding is logical because developing a perceived image is related to one's self-concept (Zhang, 2015) and, therefore, requires deeper processing. Hence, a one-time short-termed collaboration with different influencers might not be very effective and could cause counter-desired consequences because customers would feel that their self-concept is being threatened or at least not being fulfilled. On the contrary, long-term collaboration with a single influencer could be fruitful as these customers would feel that the collaborating brand is in line with their self-concept. Consequently, due to identification, these customers would build a positive image toward this collaborating brand and give it a preference over other brands. Hereafter, the concurrent study provides a better understanding of the determinants behind developing relationships with social media influencers and how such relationships could impact collaborating brands.

5.3 Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The study findings interesting information to a wide range of stakeholders. In particular, these results could be useful to various scholars investigating different aspects of marketing in social media as well as those who want to focus specifically on social media influencers. The study's findings might be also valuable to both influencers as well as marketing managers during the planning of their media campaigns.

5.3.1 Theoretical Implications

The study advances scholars' understanding of influencer marketing in multiple ways. First, the study adds knowledge to the new concept of social media influencers, as it provides a fresh understanding of who these influencers are and to what extent influencer marketing is significant. Second, the study empirically tests relatively unexplored constructs in the social media context. It identifies two different relationship forms, parasocial interaction and identification, between a social media influencer and his/her followers. This, in fact, fulfills one objective of this study concerning examining the different relationships existing between an influencer and his/her followers. In the first form of relationship, denoted as parasocial interaction, the study explored how influencers could build relationships with followers and what carries out the most significant effect in developing such a relationship. The findings emphasize the importance of social media influencer characteristics—namely, credibility, followed by awareness and physical attractiveness, respectively—in building and strengthening such relationships. Such findings achieve another study objective concerning examining the antecedents of developing parasocial interaction with a social media influencer. Furthermore, the findings also imply how a parasocial interaction leads to identification and demonstrate the difference between both constructs, thereby fulfilling one of the identified objectives. Therefore, the study corroborates previous research (Brown 2009; 2015; Tian & Yoo, 2015) on parasocial interaction and identification. The second form of relationship, denoted as identification, clarifies how identification with a social media influencer could influence followers and transform them into customers of collaborating brands. The study reveals that identification has implications on the collaborating brand

in terms of advocacy, purchase intention, and perceived image. In this way, the study fulfills its final objective. In fact, the statistical findings prove that identification stimulates followers' behavior and attitude toward collaborating brands, particularly purchase intention, as identification explain 32.8% of the variation in purchase intention. The effect of identification on purchase intention is in line with Keh and Xie's (2009) study. The current study's findings also prove that identification attributes to 13% of variation in advocacy, thereby confirming the findings of Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012). Furthermore, the current study's findings demonstrate that identification explains 2.9% of variation in perceived image, which harmonizes with the study of Tsiotsou and Alexandris (2008). Third, the study provides a conceptual model that could serve as a foundation for other scholars to build on and expand the topics of parasocial interaction and identification in the social media context. This is important especially as this is one of the main research contributions illustrated and focused on from the beginning. Fourth, most previous research and studies in social media context have focused on the effect of social media influencers on followers and benefits grasped by collaborating brands without explaining the theories and relationships that stimulate such influence and drive such attitudinal and behavioral change. Hereafter, the concurrent study contributed to a better understanding of determinants of relationship building and drivers of influence.

5.3.2 Managerial Implications

Marketing managers of brands need to acknowledge that having social media accounts on different platforms is no longer enough; therefore, they need to continuously find ways to attract the attention of new and existing customers, engage them, and develop a positive

attitude toward their brand. The use of influencers is considered the most beneficial and effective marketing strategy in social media (Ward, 2017). Taking into consideration the conceptual model and the findings, the study provides important insights and implications on the influencer marketing strategy for marketing managers. First, marketing managers are provided with insights on how and why followers develop relationships with influencers, thereby proving that the current study has fulfilled the objective concerning the appointed point. Second, the study verifies that, when followers form a relationship with an influencer who promotes a collaborating brand, followers develop a positive attitude and behavior toward the collaborating brand through the process of identification. This indicates that the study has achieved its objective regarding the impact of identification on collaborating brands. Nevertheless, this does not mean that a brand should collaborate with any influencer; rather, marketing managers should ensure that their brand and the influencer are similar, to an extent, in their positioning, language, and values (Forbes, 2016) and function in a similar domain or context (e.g., both operate in the athletic domain). Consequently, the maximum effectiveness and efficiency of such collaboration would be achieved (Forbes, 2016). This is especially true for brand managers, as brands—unlike companies—usually have an explicitly articulated identity. For example, the Athleta brand promotes the "Power of She." Such a strong brand identity enables it to cooperate with a specific influencer who not only operates in a similar domain, but also has similar characteristics. For instance, Athleta could cooperate with a female influencer who is a young athlete, has a firm appearance, and promotes a healthy lifestyle. Such a cooperation will enable the brand, Athleta in this case, to grasp the maximum benefits. Nonetheless, brand managers need to understand that a strong identity and traditional communication

could sometimes mislead the managers and motivate them to force the influencer to promote their brand using a fixed written script provided by the brand. Whereas, some managers focus only on ensuring that the promotion is in line with their brand's identity and follow their brand's traditional means of advertising, disregarding how such a stiff and incomprehensive strategy could comprise the effectiveness of such a collaboration and negatively impact the promotion's authenticity. This is not to say that brands should deviate from their identity; rather, they should be careful and not overcomplicate the cooperation by forcing traditional communications or requiring many guidelines and conditions.

Third, the study findings prove the significant impact of identification on purchase intention. Identification with a social media influencer explains 32.8% of the variation in purchase intention. Consequently, this offers valuable insights for marketing managers seeking to stimulate customers' purchase intention in terms of the effectiveness of such a marketing instrument. Fourth, the findings demonstrate that identification has a significant effect on advocacy, with the former explaining 13% of the variation in the latter. This confirms Stokburger-Sauer et al.'s (2012) study proving that recommending and advocating a brand are outcomes of identification. Thus, it is recommended that such a marketing instrument be utilized along with other secondary instrument(s) to maximize such an effect. Fifth, the findings reveal that identification has a significant positive effect on perceived image, explaining 2.9% of variation in perceived image, although this is still the lowest percentage when compared to the variation explained in the two other dependent variables. Yet these findings still corroborate the results of Tsiotsou and Alexandris (2008). In fact, Zhang (2015) outlined that customers prefer a brand consistent with their self-concept, where self-concept refers to the collection of an individual's

perception of oneself, including elements such as characteristics and personality. Thus, when followers identify with a social media influencer who promotes a brand, the followers develop a positive image toward the collaborating brand. Considering that developing an image is a lengthy process that requires customers to go through intensified cognitive and emotional processing, long-term cooperation should be developed with influencers to significantly impact the brand image. However, marketing managers could still exploit influencers to affect perceived image, especially if they coupled this marketing instrument in hand with other instruments or products to aid the campaign and speed up the process. For example, the water brand Evian could collaborate with an influencer who is a young male athlete and who also operates in the fitness domain. The collaboration could be videos displaying how the influencer is exercising, and these videos could be posted on a daily basis on the influencer's social media accounts for his followers to watch, learning more about staying in shape and exercising like the influencer does. The influencer could talk about the importance of drinking water and how he relies on Evian water as a pure, natural, and trustworthy resource, especially as Evian is a 100% natural composition with no chemical treatment or additives ("Products," 2019). A consistent collaboration over time would encourage followers to start developing a new perceived image of Evian, where they will start to perceive it as not like any other water brand, but rather a brand that focuses on purity, strength, and fitness, eventually relying on this brand, especially due to their identification with the collaborating influencer. Nonetheless, to maximize the effectiveness of this campaign and speed up the lengthy process, Evian could launch another promotional campaign, such as sponsoring some exercise facilities. Another technique that Evian could exploit is using

other relevant products to support the promotion and aid in developing customers' perceived image. One product worth mentioning is Evian's facial spray product, which is used to avoid dehydration ("Reviews," 2019). Evian could also introduce a ready-to-be-consumed detoxed bottle of water that could assist in staying in shape while also reflecting purity and fitness, thereby corroborating development of the desired perceived image. Such products will not only aid in developing the desired perceived image, but also speed up the pace of doing so.

Social media marketing managers and influencers could also exploit this study's results to understand what they should emphasize and how could they amplify influence. The implications that follow parasocial interaction (i.e., identification) largely depend on how social media influencers interact with their followers and what characteristics they have as well as what they should concentrate on. The results indicate that three characteristics explain the variation in parasocial interaction by almost 44.7%, which is a large percentage that should be observed. Most important among these characteristics is credibility, followed by awareness and finally physical attractiveness. These findings imply that an influencer should dedicate efforts mainly to earning followers' trust and gaining credibility. Efforts to gain exposure along with repeat exposure among both existing and potential followers allow followers to acknowledge his/her distinctive features (e.g., sense of humor) and eventually retain awareness. Finally, the least effort among these three should be dedicated to physical attractiveness; this is not stating that an influencer should be ignorant toward such a characteristic, but rather not consider it the utmost concern.

5.4 Limitations

The research presents insights into and understanding of antecedents and consequences of identification, particularly in a new context: social media. However, the study is not without limitations. First, the articles and studies exploited were from multidisciplinary fields due to the lack of sufficient previous studies in the social media context. This required the researcher to place additional effort and lateral thinking to develop the research at hand. Second, the study employed convenience sampling as the participants were recruited through personal networks and site visits to university premises in Qatar. This approach resulted in another limitation, as 70% of respondents were female, which also means that the study has a demographic misrepresentation. Third, the study's context, Qatar, could impose a potential threat to the study's external validity; the distinctive cultural factors relevant to Qatar might have played a role. In fact, Eisingerich and Rubera's (2010) study on brand commitment found that customers' behavior toward a brand is influenced by many different factors, such as customer orientation and self-relevance. However, the impact of all these factors is mediated by cultural factors. Finally, the study is limited to the variables presented in the conceptualized model. However, other variables not incorporated into the presented model could also affect parasocial interactions and/or identification.

5.5 Future Research Suggestions

In a relatively unexplored context, social media, there are unaccountable areas for future research; this study suggests a few of them. First, other multiple variables could affect parasocial interaction and identification, yet they were not incorporated into the study's conceptual model. These other variables should be taken into consideration. Future

research could emphasize how a follower's original motive to use social media in the first place affects the likelihood of forming a parasocial interaction and identification with a social media influencer. Lee, Lee, Moon, and Sung (2015) identified five motives behind using Instagram, including social interaction, self-expression, archiving, escapism, and/or peeking. Other researchers could also inspect the effects of the influencer's type (e.g., expert, entertainer, motivational). Kirvesmies (2018) argued that different types of celebrities exist and each type has a different type of expertise and, therefore, a different level of influence. Furthermore, other additional variables could include the frequency of the influencer's posting and content of posts. Second, future research could compare the effects of parasocial interactions and identification on collaborating brands. Third, researchers could also use the type of medium (i.e., media platform) as a moderator, comparing the effectiveness of a message and influence depending on the utilized medium. Fourth, the current study employed a non-probability sampling which could have misrepresented the findings, therefore replicating this study using a probability sampling method is advised. Finally, as the current study was conducted in Qatar, then applying the presented framework to other cultural contexts could play a role in enhancing the likelihood of generalizing the results.

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APPENDIX

Appendix (A) Questionnaire
Questionnaire in English

Dear participants,

I am currently studying for a marketing master's degree at Qatar University. I am researching social media influencers and their impact on collaborating brands. Social media influencers, also known as bloggers, are "independent third-party endorser who shape[s] audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, [pictures] and the use of other social media." A collaborating brand is one that partners with a social media influencer to promote its specific brand. An example is the collaboration between the brand Aljazeera Perfumes and the social media influencer Haneen Al-Saifi to promote the former.

Please answer all questions as best as you can. Your response is important for us and will be treated as strictly confidential and for research purposes only.

Your participation is entirely voluntarily, and you have the ability to withdraw from it at any time. The survey will take approximately 5–7 minutes of your valuable time.

Should you have any questions and/or if you wish to be informed about the results of this study, please feel free to contact me at da082933@qu.edu.qa

This research is being supervised by Dr. Tamer Elsharnouby, College of Business and Economics, Qatar University.

Please indicate that you have read, understood, and agree to participate; kindly click on "Next" to start the survey. If you do not wish to participate, kindly close this window.

I thank you and appreciate your cooperation. Dalal Mohammad

Q1 Do you have an account on at least one of the social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.?
1. No   2. Yes

Q2 How often do you use your social media account(s)?
1.   Rarely (less than once a week)
2.   Once a week
3.   Twice a week
4.   Every other day
5.   Daily basis

Q3 Do you follow social media influencers, blogger(s), on one of these platforms?
1.   No   2. Yes

Q4 How many social media influencers do you follow?
1. 1
2. 2-4
3. 5-7
4. 8-10
5. More than 10

Q5 Please name the social media influencer, blogger, you follow? If you follow more than one, please specify the name of your favorite blogger? (one name only)
………………………………………………………………………………………

Q6 Please name the main collaborating brand with the blogger specified above? (One name only)
………………………………………………………………………………………

Q7 Please answer all the following questions referring to the collaborating brand you have specified above (Hereinafter referred to as Brand A).

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neutral	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. I have recommended brand A (the collaborating brand you named above) to lots of people					
2. I "talk up" about brand A to my friends					
3. I try to convince my friends to buy from brand A					
4. I try to spread the good-word about this brand.					

Q8 Please answer all the following questions referring to the collaborating brand you have specified above (Brand A).

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neutral	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. When choosing brands, I choose those that collaborate with the social media influencer that I follow.					
2. I would drive out of my way to buy from a brand that collaborates with the social media influencer that I follow.					
3. When a new brand collaborates with this social media influencer; I switch my buying to support them.					
4. I would choose to buy from a collaborating brand with the social media influencer that I					

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neutral	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
follow, even if the prices of competitors were lower.					
5. When choosing brands, it makes little difference to me if they are collaborators with the social media influencer that I follow.					

Q9 Please answer all the following questions referring to the collaborating brand you have specified above (**Brand A**).

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neutral	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. People I know think that brand A is a well-known brand.					
2. People I know think that brand A is a respected brand.					
3. People I know think that brand A is an admirable brand.					
4. People I know think that brand A is a prestigious brand.					
5. I have a positive attitude toward brand A and its products due to their collaboration with this social media influencer.					
6. The collaboration improves my perceptions about brand A and its related products.					
7. Due to the particular collaboration, I like more the products of brand A.					

Q10 Please answer all the following questions based on your favorite social media influencer/blogger that you follow.

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neutral	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. I am aware of the social media influencer that I follow.					
2. I can recognize the social media influencer that I follow among other competing social media influencers.					

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neutral	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
3. Some characteristics of the social media influencer that I follow come to mind quickly.					

Q11 Please answer all the following questions based on **your favorite social media influencer/blogger** that you follow

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neutral	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. I think this social media influencer is fair.					
2. I believe this social media influencer is biased.					
3. I think this social media influencer is accurate.					
4. I trust this social media influencer.					
5. I believe that this social media influencer separates fact from opinions.					
6. I believe this social media influencer is opinionated rather than factual.					
7. I think he (she) is moral.					

Q12 Please answer all the following questions based on **your favorite social media influencer/blogger** that you follow.

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neutral	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. I think he (she) is quite handsome (pretty).					
2. I like the way he (she) looks.					
3. He (she) wears neat clothes.					
4. He (she) is very good looking.					
5. He (she) is very attractive to me.					

Q13 Please answer all the following questions based on **your favorite social media influencer/blogger** that you follow.

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neutral	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. I look forward to watching this social media influencer on his (her) social media platform.					

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neutral	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
2. When I am watching this social media influencer, I feel as if I am part of his (her) team.					
3. I think this social media influencer is like an old friend.					
4. I would like to meet this social media influencer in person.					
5. If there were a story about this social media influencer in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.					
6. This social media influencer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.					
7. When this social media influencer shows me how he (she) feels about a brand; it helps me make up my own mind about the same brand.					

Q14 Please answer all the following questions based on **your favorite social media influencer/blogger** that you follow.

	(1) Strongly disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neutral	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly agree
1. When someone criticizes this social media influencer, it feels like a personal insult.					
2. I am very interested in what others think about this social media influencer.					
3. When I talk about this social media influencer, I usually say "we" rather than he (she).					
4. This social media influencer success is my success.					
5. When someone praises this social media influencer, it feels like a personal complement.					
6. If a story in the media criticized this social media influencer, I would feel embarrassed.					

Personal information

Q15 Your gender?

1. Male   2. Female

Q16 Your age group?

1. Below 18
2. 18-24

3. 25-31
4. 32-38
5. 39-45
6. Above 45

Q17 Your current educational level?
1. Below High school degree holder
2. High school degree holder
3. Undergraduate
4. Bachelor degree holder
5. Postgraduate degree holder

Q18 Your monthly income?
1. Less than QR 5000
2. QR 5000 – below QR 10,000
3. QR 10,000 – below QR 15,000
4. QR 15,000 – below QR 20,000
5. QR 20,000 – below QR 25,000
6. More than QR 25,000

Q19 Your nationality?
1. Qatari   2. Non-Qatari

Questionnaire in Arabic

أعزائي المشاركين،

أقوم حاليا بإعداد رسالة الماجستير في مجال التسويق في جامعة قطر. يتناول هذا البحث موضوع "المؤثرون على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي وأثرهم على العلامات التجارية المتعاونة".

يشير مصطلح "المؤثر على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي"، والمعروف أيضًا باسم المدون، إلى "شخص يقوم بتشكيل اتجاهات المستهلكين من خلال التعليقات والتغريدات والصور بالإضافة إلى استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي الأخرى. أما "العلامة التجارية المتعاونة"، فهي تشير إلى العلامة التجارية التي تتعاون مع المؤثر في منصات التواصل الاجتماعي بهدف ترويج هذه العلامة التجارية." على سبيل المثال، التعاون بين العلامة التجارية "الجزيرة للعطور" والمؤثرة الاجتماعية "حنين الصيفي"، بهدف الترويج لمتجر الجزيرة للعطور.
يرجى الإجابة على جميع الأسئلة على قدر المستطاع. إجابتك مهمة جدا بالنسبة لنا، وسيتم التعامل معها بسرية تامة ولأهداف بحثية فقط.
يرجى العلم بأن مشاركتك تطوعية، ولديك القدرة على الانسحاب منها في أي وقت. سيستغرق هذا الاستبيان حوالي 5-7 دقائق من وقتك فقط. في حال لديك أي استفسار فيما يتعلق بهذه الدراسة، أو رغبة في الاطلاع على نتائجها، لا تتردد في التواصل معي على العنوان التالي: da082933@qu.edu.qa .
يشرف على هذا البحث الدكتور تامر الشرنوبي، الاستاذ المشارك بكلية الإدارة والاقتصاد ، جامعة قطر.

يرجى الإشارة إلى أنك قرأت وفهمت محتوى النص، وفي حال موافقتك على المشاركة في هذا الاستبيان، يرجى النقر على "التالي."

إذا كنت لا ترغب بالمشاركة، يرجى إغلاق هذه النافذة.

شكراً لحسن تعاونكم،

دلال محمد

Q1هل لديك حساب واحد على الأقل على أحد منصات التواصل الاجتماعي مثل الانستقرام، فيسبوك، تويتر وما إلى ذلك؟

1-   لا

2-   نعم

Q2كم مرة تستخدم حسابك (حساباتك) على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي؟

1-   نادراً (أقل من مرة واحدة في الأسبوع)

2-   مرة واحدة في الأسبوع

3-   مرتين أسبوعياً

4-   يوم بعد يوم (3-4 مرات في الأسبوع)

5-   بشكل يومي

Q3هل تقوم بمتابعة مؤثرين (مدوّنين) علي منصات التواصل الاجتماعي؟

1-   لا

2-   نعم

Q4ما عدد المؤثرين على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي الذين تقوم بمتابعتهم؟

1-   1

2-   2-4

3-   5-7

4-   8-10

5-   مايفوق 10

Q5 يرجى كتابة اسم مؤثر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ، المدوّن ، الذي تقوم بمتابعته؟ إذا كنت تتابع أكثر من واحد ، فيرجى تحديد اسم مدوّنك المفضل؟ (اسم واحد فقط)

....

Q6يرجى تسمية العلامة التجارية الرئيسية المتعاونة مع المؤثر أو المدوّن المفضل المحدد أعلاه؟ (اسم واحد فقط)

....

Q7يرجى الإجابة علي الأسئلة التالية بناء علي العلامة التجارية المتعاونة التي حددتها أعلاه

(سوف يشار إليها فيما بعد باسم **العلامة التجارية**)

أوافق بشدة (5)	أوافق (4)	محايد (3)	لا أوافق (2)	لا أوافق بشدة (1)	
					قد أوصيت كثير من الأشخاص بشراء العلامة التجارية (أ) (العلامة التجارية المتعاونة التي ذكرتها أعلاه)
					أنا أتحدث بشكل ايجابي عن العلامة التجارية (أ) لأصدقائي
					أحاول إقناع أصدقائي بشراء العلامة التجارية (أ)
					أحاول نشر الأشياء الايجابية عن هذه العلامة التجارية

Q8يرجى الإجابة علي الأسئلة التالية بناء علي العلامة التجارية المتعاونة التي حددتها أعلاه
(**العلامة التجارية أ**)

أوافق بشدة (5)	أوافق (4)	محايد (3)	لا أوافق (2)	لا أوافق بشدة (1)	
					عند اختيار العلامات التجارية، أختار تلك التي تتعاون مع مؤثر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي الذي أتابعه
					سوف أقوم بتغيير ما تعودت شراءه من أجل الشراء من العلامة التجارية التي تتعاون مع مؤثر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي الذي أتابعه
					عندما تتعاون علامة تجارية جديدة مع مؤثر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي هذا، أحوّل من شرائي من أجل دعم هذا المؤثر
					سأختار الشراء من العلامة التجارية المتعاونة مع مؤثر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي الذي أتابعه، حتى لو كانت أسعار المنافسين أقل
					عند اختيار العلامة التجارية التي سأقوم بشرائها، لا يوجد فرق كبير بالنسبة لي فيما إذا كانت متعاونة مع مؤثر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي الذي أتابعه من عدمه

Q9يرجى الإجابة علي الأسئلة التالية بناء علي العلامة التجارية المتعاونة التي حددتها أعلاه (العلامة التجارية أ)

لا أوافق بشدة (5)	لا أوافق (4)	محايد (3)	أوافق (2)	لا أوافق بشدة (1)	
					الناس الذين أعرفهم يعتقدون أن العلامة التجارية (أ) هي علامة تجارية معروفة
					الأشخاص الذين أعرفهم يعتقدون أن العلامة التجارية (أ) هي علامة تجارية جديرة بالاحترام
					لأشخاص الذين أعرفهم يعتقدون أن العلامة التجارية (أ) هي علامة تجارية محبوبة
					االناس الذين أعرفهم يعتقدون أن العلامة التجارية (أ) هي علامة تجارية مرموقة
					لدي موقف إيجابي تجاه العلامة التجارية (أ) ومنتجاتها بسبب تعاونها مع هذا المؤثر (المدون)

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	لا أوافق بشدة (1)	أوافق (2)	محايد (3)	لا أوافق (4)	لا أوافق بشدة (5)
التعاون بين هذا المؤثر والعلامة التجارية (أ) يُحسن تصوري حول هذه العلامة التجارية والمنتجات المرتبطة بها					
بسبب هذا التعاون، أصبحت أحب منتجات العلامة التجارية (أ) أكثر					

يرجى الإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية استنادًا إلى **مؤثر منصات التواصل الاجتماعي**، أو **المدوّن المفضل** لديك والذي تتابعه Q10

	لا أوافق بشدة (1)	أوافق (2)	محايد (3)	لا أوافق (4)	لا أوافق بشدة (5)
أنا على دراية بمؤثر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي الذي أتابعه					
أستطيع أن أتعرف على هذا المؤثر الذي أتابعه من بين سائر المؤثرين الأخرين على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي					
بعض خصائص هذا المؤثر الذي اتابعه تتبادر إلى ذهني بسرعة (أتذكرها)					

يرجى الإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية استنادًا إلى **مؤثر منصات التواصل الاجتماعي**، أو **المدوّن المفضل** لديك والذي تتابعه Q11

	لا أوافق بشدة (1)	أوافق (2)	محايد (3)	لا أوافق (4)	لا أوافق بشدة (5)
أعتقد أن هذا المؤثر (المدوّن) عادل					
أعتقد أن هذا المؤثر متحيز					
أعتقد أن هذا المؤثر دقيق					
أنا أثق في هذا المؤثر					
أعتقد أن هذا المؤثر يستطيع أن يفصل بين الحقيقة والرأي الشخصي					
أعتقد أن هذا المؤثر مُتشبت برأيه وليس واقعيًا					
أعتقد أن هذا المؤثر يراعي الجوانب الأخلاقية					

يرجى الإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية استنادًا إلى **مؤثر منصات التواصل الاجتماعي**، أو **المدوّن المفضل** لديك والذي تتابعه Q12

	لا أوافق بشدة (1)	أوافق (2)	محايد (3)	لا أوافق (4)	لا أوافق بشدة (5)
اعتقد أنه (أنها) وسيم (جميلة)					
أنا أحب المظهر الذي (التي) يبدو (تبدو) عليه					
هو (هي) يرتدي (ترتدي) ملابس أنيقة					
هو (هي) جميل (جميلة) المظهر					
هو (هي) ملفت (ملفتة) للانتباه بالنسبة لي					

يرجى الإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية استنادًا إلى **مؤثر منصات التواصل الاجتماعي**، أو **المدوّن المفضل** لديك والذي تتابعهQ13

لا أوافق بشدة (5)	لا أوافق (4)	محايد (3)	أوافق (2)	لا أوافق بشدة (1)	
					أتطلع إلى مشاهدة هذا المؤثر علي منصة التواصل الاجتماعي الخاصة به
					عندما أشاهد هذا المؤثر (المدوّن)، أشعر وكأنني جزء من فريقه
					اعتبر هذا المؤثر (المدوّن) صديق قديم
					أود مقابلة هذا المؤثر (المدوّن) شخصيًا
					إذا كانت هناك قصة حول هذا المؤثر (المدوّن) في صحيفة أو مجلة، سوف أقرأها
					هذا المؤثر (المدوّن) يجعلني أشعر بالراحة، كما لو كنت مع صديق
					عندما يُظهر هذا المؤثر (المدوّن) كيف يشعر تجاه علامة تجارية، فذلك يساعدني على تحديد رأيي حول هذه العلامة التجارية

يرجى الإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية استنادًا إلى **مؤثر منصات التواصل الاجتماعي**، أو **المدوّن المفضل** لديك والذي تتابعهQ14

لا أوافق بشدة (5)	لا أوافق (4)	محايد (3)	أوافق (2)	لا أوافق بشدة (1)	
					عندما يقوم شخص آخر بإنتقاد هذا المؤثر (المدوّن) يبدو الأمر وكأنه إهانة شخصية
					أنا مهتم للغاية بما يعتقده الآخرون عن هذا المؤثر
					عندما أتحدث عن هذا المؤثر (المدوّن) غالباً ما أقول" نحن "بدلاً من هو (هي)
					أعتبر نجاح هذا المؤثر (المدوّن) هو نجاح شخصي لي
					عندما يشيد (يمدح) شخص ما هذا المؤثر (المدوّن)، فإنني أشعر وكأنه إطراء أو مدح شخصي لي
					عندما يتم انتقاد هذا المؤثر (المدوّن)، أشعر بالحرج

اسئلة شخصية
Q15النوع؟
1- ذكر
2- أنثى

Q16الفئة العمرية
1- أقل من 18
2- 18- 24
3- 25-31
4- 32 -38
5- 39- 45
6- أكثر من 45

Q17مستواك التعليمي الحالي؟
1- أقل من الشهادة الثانوية
2- حاصل على شهادة الثانوية العامة
3- طالب في المرحلة الجامعية

4- حاصل على درجة البكالوريوس
5- حاصل على دراسات العليا

Q18دخلك الشهري؟
1- أقل من 5000 ريال
2- 5000- أقل من 10000
3- 10000 – أقل من 15000
4- 15000 – أقل من 20000
5- 20000 – أقل من 25000
6- أكثر من 25000

Q19جنسيتك؟
1- قطري
2- غير قطري

Appendix (B) Exploratory Factor Analysis

Total Variance Explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings[a]
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	12.216	33.015	33.015	11.839	31.996	31.996	7.802
2	4.294	11.606	44.622	4.012	10.842	42.839	6.156
3	3.524	9.525	54.147	3.187	8.615	51.453	6.848
4	2.126	5.747	59.894	1.778	4.804	56.257	5.186
5	1.508	4.077	63.971	1.184	3.201	59.458	6.382
6	1.403	3.793	67.764	1.039	2.808	62.266	6.643
7	1.233	3.333	71.097	.911	2.463	64.729	8.420
8	1.004	2.715	73.812	.712	1.925	66.654	5.966
9	.723	1.955	75.767				
10	.657	1.776	77.543				
11	.601	1.624	79.167				
12	.594	1.605	80.772				
13	.520	1.404	82.176				
14	.483	1.304	83.481				
15	.471	1.272	84.753				
16	.443	1.197	85.950				
17	.431	1.165	87.115				
18	.385	1.040	88.155				
19	.357	.965	89.120				
20	.345	.931	90.051				

21	.339	.915	90.966
22	.329	.888	91.855
23	.306	.828	92.683
24	.291	.788	93.470
25	.264	.714	94.184
26	.249	.673	94.856
27	.229	.618	95.475
28	.220	.596	96.071
29	.207	.560	96.631
30	.196	.530	97.161
31	.185	.499	97.660
32	.170	.460	98.120
33	.165	.446	98.566
34	.157	.423	98.989
35	.134	.362	99.352
36	.124	.336	99.687
37	.116	.313	100.000

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

a. When factors are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Goodness-of-fit Test

Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
662.920	398	.000

Factor Correlation Matrix

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1.000	.133	.359	.136	.362	.537	.585	.273
2	.133	1.000	.374	.419	.268	.204	.457	.472
3	.359	.374	1.000	.301	.357	.360	.566	.526
4	.136	.419	.301	1.000	.562	.329	.186	.279
5	.362	.268	.357	.562	1.000	.556	.324	.299
6	.537	.204	.360	.329	.556	1.000	.393	.231
7	.585	.457	.566	.186	.324	.393	1.000	.554
8	.273	.472	.526	.279	.299	.231	.554	1.000

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

Appendix (C) Regression Analysis

Regression test between predictor variables (awareness, credibility, and physical attractiveness) and dependent variable (parasocial interaction)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.668[a]	.447	.440	.69177

a. Predictors: (Constant), physical attractiveness, credibility, awareness

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	95.794	3	31.931	66.727	.000[b]
	Residual	118.678	248	.479		
	Total	214.472	251			

a. Dependent Variable: parasocial interaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), physical attractiveness, credibility, awareness

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-.326	.263		-1.242	.215
	Awareness	.283	.064	.252	4.450	.000
	Credibility	.440	.065	.374	6.811	.000
	physical attractiveness	.259	.061	.225	4.277	.000

a. Dependent Variable: parasocial interaction

Regression between Parasocial interaction and Identification

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.634[a]	.402	.400	.77391

a. Predictors: (Constant), parasocial interaction

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	100.745	1	100.745	168.206	.000[b]
	Residual	149.734	250	.599		
	Total	250.479	251			

a. Dependent Variable: identification

b. Predictors: (Constant), parasocial interaction

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.289	.180		1.604	.110
	parasocial interaction	.685	.053	.634	12.969	.000

a. Dependent Variable: identification

Regression test between Identification and Advocacy

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.361[a]	.130	.127	.85941

a. Predictors: (Constant), identification

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	27.635	1	27.635	37.415	.000[b]
	Residual	184.648	250	.739		
	Total	212.282	251			

a. Dependent Variable: advocacy

b. Predictors: (Constant), identification

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.395	.148		16.154	.000
	identification	.332	.054	.361	6.117	.000

a. Dependent Variable: advocacy

Regression test between Identification and Purchase intention

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.573[a]	.328	.325	.81890

a. Predictors: (Constant), identification

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	81.830	1	81.830	122.026	.000[b]
	Residual	167.648	250	.671		
	Total	249.478	251			

a. Dependent Variable: purchase intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), identification

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.258	.141		8.902	.000
	identification	.572	.052	.573	11.047	.000

a. Dependent Variable: purchase intention

Regression test between Identification and Perceived image

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.171[a]	.029	.025	.77098

a. Predictors: (Constant), identification

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.497	1	4.497	7.566	.006[b]
	Residual	148.603	250	.594		
	Total	153.100	251			

a. Dependent Variable: perceived image

b. Predictors: (Constant), identification

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.364	.133		25.292	.000
	identification	.134	.049	.171	2.751	.006

a. Dependent Variable: perceived image