QATAR UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND FOLLOWERS' ATTRIBUTES

ON WOM AND PATRONAGE: A LESSON FROM QATARI MARKET

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Title: The Impact of Social Media Influencers and Followers' Attributes on WOM and Patronage: A Lesson From Qatari Market

Supervisor of Thesis: Dr. Mohamed Slim Ben Mimoun .

With the rise of social media and the increase in the amount of time individuals spend online, firms need to know how to incorporate social media in their marketing to maximize their brand reach and engage with the right customer. In this context, social media influencers and the parasocial relationship became important elements. This study investigates which attributes possessed by the followers themselves or the social media influencer can impact the followers' parasocial relationship with the influencers and lead to behavioural intention, WOM and purchase intention, and actual behaviour. It also investigates the mediating role of parasocial relationship between the followers' attributes and social media influencers attributes and behavioural intentions. An online survey was conducted among 691 Instagram users in Qatar. The findings show that followers and social media influencers attributes have a positive impact of the parasocial relationship with the social media influencers, and parasocial relationship with the social media influencers has a significant and positive impact on the followers behavioural intentions. However, the result didn't show a significant impact of parasocial relationship on the followers' actual purchase behaviour. In addition, results also show that parasocial relationship mediates the relationship between the followers' and social media influencers attributes and behavioural intentions. The managerial and theoretical implication is

discussed.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents and family for their continuous support and

encouragement.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Social media platforms have become a necessary part of personal and professional life as they provide a platform to people to impart information and interface with each other, and for organisations to reach their clients by guaranteeing that they can reliably provide relevant content. According to Pagani et al. (2011), social media enables people to be intuitive by sharing their contents, for example, posting assessments, photographs, and recordings. It is further strengthened by Lim et al. (2012), who consider the discussion of brands of different products and services on social media platforms. Individuals are using different types of social media platforms including Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, You Tube, and Twitter. Those social media and social networking sites have become essential sources of information and content due to individuals' active use (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

In Qatar, Facebook and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms. With 2.82 million internet users, as well as social media active users, the potential numbers of people that marketers can reach using adverts on Facebook and Instagram are 2.4 million and 960 thousand respectively (Kemp, 2020). In fact, those social media platforms have become very influential marketing tools, and the number of their influencers is increasing in the region. The opportunities that social media offers to customers to share and learn more and to business managers to conduct promotional activities have increased. Brand and business managers are increasingly investing in social media influencers to endorse their brands (Childers et al., 2019).

A social relationship has been formed between social media platforms users (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Previous researches have investigated this relationship which they called a parasocial relationship (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Yet, most of them have been focusing on the parasocial relationship between viewers and the traditional

media. With the growth of social media and social media influencers' popularity, brand and business managers need to know what impact the followers' relationship has with their social media influencers. The present research focuses on the relationship between Social Media Influencers and Followers' Attributes and their impact on the parasocial relationship and its outcomes. Figure 1 shows a framework which this study used for an initial investigation and elaborated later on.
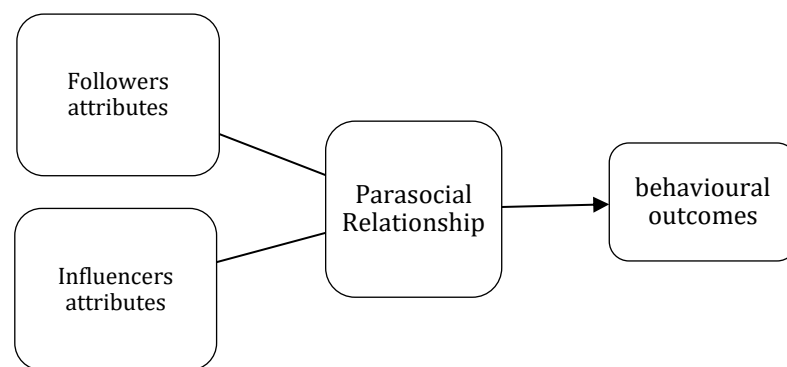
Figure 1. Initial framework

1.1 Background of the Research

With the growing popularity of social media platforms, individuals can accumulate a larger number of followers. Once they get the high number of daily hits, shared posts or followers, they become able to shape the audience attitudes through their social media accounts (Freberg et al, 2011). Analogous to a celebrity's position in marketing, social media influencers serve as a people's reference group and companies will ask them to endorse their brands. While celebrities and social media influencers can also be used as endorsers, social media influencers provide a different form of

endorsement (Freberg et al., 2011), as they are ordinary consumers who use the megaphone offered by the social media platforms (McQuarrie et al, 2013) to reach thousands of other consumers and "build their fame" (O'Connor, 2017). Since most of those influencers became famous due to the personal related information they have shared, consumers can relate easily to them and to their daily choices and decisions.

1.2   Problem Statement

According to Talavera (2015), previous researches have shown that social media influencers' messages are more reliable and compelling to customers. In addition, using the influence of social media influencers has become a very important and effective marketing tool. However, with the multiplicity of choices marketer have today, the multiple social media influencers and different types of social networks, they need to understand how to make the best choices and decisions. Recently, parasocial relationship has emerged as central in research dealing with the effects of social media influencers (Rosaen & Dibble, 2016; Dibble et al., 2016; Slater et al., 2018). Previous researchers have identified several significant antecedents of parasocial relationship. Some of those researchers investigated attributes that are related to the influencers and some of them focused on attributes that are related to the followers. Studies found that the influencer's physical attractiveness (Kurtin et al, 2018; Lee & Watkins, 2016), social attractiveness (Kurtin et al, 2018; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019), attitude homophily (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019; Yuan et al, 2016), source credibility, source trustworthiness, and expertise (Yuan et al., 2016) significantly correlated with an influencer's parasocial relationship with consumers and can impact their behaviour. Other attributes including popularity, leverage, fashionable, and affinity (Yuan, Moon, Kim, & Wang, 2019).

Other researchers have also investigated the impact of the followers' attributes on

their parasocial relationship with their influencers. For example, Hwang and Zhang (2018) found that the viewer's empathy and social self-esteem are predictors of parasocial interaction between viewers of the Chinese social network site, Weibo, and digital celebrities. Although many researchers have investigated the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumers' behaviour, only a few investigated the promotional role of social media influencers' parasocial relationships and its impact on consumer behaviour. In fact, few researches have been done on the social network site Instagram. Lee and Watkins (2016) suggested that further studies should be done considering different cultures. The Middle East or the Gulf region might have different factors influencing parasocial relationships. This study aims to address this gap by enhancing the knowledge of the persuasion factors related to the influencing attempts of the social media influencers and their impact on consumers' behaviour.

1.3   The purpose of the research

This research aims to enhance the theoretical knowledge of marketers, brand owners, social media influencers, and market researchers about the use of social media influencers and their impact on consumers' behaviour. More specifically, this research aims to explore the attributes that impact followers' relationship with their social media influencers and influence their behavioural intentions (WOM and Purchase Intention) and actual behaviour (actual purchase behaviour). It highlights the more influential attributes, influential versus followers related, that affects followers' parasocial relationship with social media influencers. Therefore, it provides the researchers with more knowledge of the influencers' endorsement marketing and contributes to their future researches. Also, it provides guidance to marketers and brand managers on how to incorporate social media influencers in their marketing

strategy. In addition, it helps social media influencers to have a better understanding of how to improve their influential attributes and assists marketers in choosing between different endorsements opportunities.

1.4   Research Question

The research statement for the present study is as below:

What are the most important social media influencer and followers' attributes that impact the followers' relationship with their social media influencers and what is their impact on behavioural intention and actual behaviour?

1.5   Research Sub-questions

This study aims to explore the impact of parasocial relationships between the consumers and their social media influencers on their word-of-mouth (WOM), purchase intention and actual purchase. More specifically, this study tries to understand which factors impact consumers' parasocial relationships with the consumers the most. It tries to answer the following questions:

–   What makes social media content creators influence their followers?

–   What factors are making them develop a relationship that is more influential with their followers?

–   What followers' characteristic makes them develop a parasocial relationship with the social media influencer (SMI)?

–   Does a parasocial relationship between followers and SMI have an impact on followers' behavioural intentions?

–   Does a parasocial relationship between followers and SMI have an impact on followers' actual behaviour?

1.6   Research Structure

The structure of this paper is as the following:

The first chapter provides an introduction for this paper and then presents the research problem, purpose, main and sub-questions that the research is trying to address. The second chapter presents the literature review, more specifically, the definition of the concepts, the research model, and the hypotheses. The third chapter, explains the methodology of this study. The fourth chapter presents an analysis and discussion of the results. Chapter five discusses the study's theoretical and managerial implications, the limitations of the study, and the possibilities they open up for further research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Background

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review about what has been written and found from previous works of literature relating to the relevant topic. It has three sections: the first section provides the definition of each concept. The second section provides a theoretical background of how the framework was developed and how each variable relates to the other. The third section considers what was found in the literature review and, based on that, the hypotheses that will be tested later on were formulated.

2.2 Presentation of main concepts

2.2.1 Social media

Social media refers to websites and applications that allow individuals to interact and share different forms of content. These applications came as a result of Web 2.0 technology. Unlike Web 1.0, Web 2.0 characteristics include interpersonal communication, information sharing and a user-focused design (Toplu et al, 2014). Similarly, Kietzmann et al. (2011) state that "social media employs mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content". Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as Internet applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of a Web 2 server to allow the sharing of content created by users. Given that, social media is a tool that allows people to interact and share information. Many different types of social media have been introduced since the idea of social media started. These provide different ways of content creation or information sharing, including blogging, photo and/or video sharing, and product and service review (Aichner & Jacob, 2015).

Some of the most popular social networking sites include Facebook, LinkedIn,

YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Since these social media sites provide different content creation and information sharing possibilities, therefore these possibilities can serve different social functions for organisations. In a research conducted by Parveen et al (2015), researchers found that social media allow organisations to promote their products, conduct marketing research and gather information about their customers and competitors, obtain referrals for their product and services, share the organisation's information, reach new customers, and get opinions and feedback from customers. Given their popularity, benefits, and low cost, brands and organisations found that it is beneficial to incorporate them in their marketing plan. However, when using social media platforms for business purposes, it is essential to understand what the right platforms is and how to use its metrics.

2.2.2 Social media influencer

Traditional celebrities' endorsement is a popular advertising strategy. They generate a meaning transfer process that influences consumers' positive feelings regarding the endorsed products or brands (Silvera & Austad, 2004), which leads to influence their behaviour (Till et al, 2008). Although the idea of celebrity endorsement has been widely used before in marketing strategies, the idea of social media influencers has emerged with the popularity of social media sites. Scholars referred to the individuals who can exert influence on the opinions, decisions, and actions of many others as opinion leaders (Zhao et al, 2018).

Given that, influencers can be defined as individuals who are able to build a relationship with the public and influence their opinions and decisions (De Veirman et al., 2017). They are individuals who can accumulate a larger number of followers. Once they get a high number of daily hits, shared posts, or followers, they become able to shape the audience attitudes through their social media accounts (Freberg et

al., 2011). In fact, followers found them to be more authentic and expert in their area, thus they perceived them as opinion leaders (Childers et al, 2019). Since most of those influencers became famous due to the personal related information they shared, consumers can relate easily to them and to their daily choices and decisions.

2.2.3 Word of mouth (WOM)

Word-of-mouth (WOM) has a great impact on customers' buying decisions. It has been defined as, "the readiness to provide positive referrals about a service provider by an existing customer, who does not have monetary gain from doing so" (Høst & Knie-Andersen, 2004). Many researchers have suggested that consumers would engage in WOM mainly when they are disconfirmed/ dissatisfied (Anderson, 1998). However, other researchers investigated the motives for consumers' engagement in positive WOM. They found that consumers' motives for positive WOM communication included self- involvement, message involvement (Dichter, 1966), product-involvement, altruism, self-enhancement, and helping the company (Dichter, 1966; Pollay et al., 1970). Later researches focused on understanding consumers' motives for engaging in eWOM referring to "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). In this research, we are focusing on the consumers' WOM intention in general and not only in social media and the internet.

2.2.4 Parasocial relationship (PSR)

Theoretical understanding of parasocial experiences has become a popular field of study. Such studies investigated the parasocial connections with media personae in two forms: the parasocial interactions and parasocial relationships (Rosaen & Dibble, 2017). The concept of parasocial interaction has been introduced to explain the

interaction between traditional celebrity media and their audience. Horton and Richard Wohl (1956) were the first to explain that a parasocial interaction is a one-sided relationship that lacks reciprocity and is controlled by the media character. It is a psychological connection (A. M. Rubin & Step, 2000) and self-established relationship where the other person, the media character, is unaware of it (Kelman, 1958). Given that traditional media does not allow interaction between the audience and the media character, this relationship is illusionary.

Rubin et al. (1985) made a significant contribution when they developed a 20-item scale to measure the parasocial interaction between newscasters and their viewers. They conceptualise parasocial interaction as "interpersonal involvement of the media user with what he or she consumes." This involvement may take different forms, which may include "seeking guidance from a media persona, seeing media personalities as friends, imagining being part of a favourite program's social world, and desiring to meet media performers" (Rubin et al., 1985). Even though they have used the term parasocial interaction and referred to Horton and Wohl's definition (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956), there is a conflict between parasocial interaction and parasocial relationship. Their parasocial interaction measurement scale included items related to parasocial interaction and items that are more related to sustained parasocial relationship (Slater et al., 2018).

However, many other researches actually treated parasocial interaction and parasocial relationship indistinguishably. The two constructs are related, yet researches need to have a clear distinction between the two constructs. In fact, Horton and Wohl differentiated between the two concepts in their paper. Parasocial interaction is defined as a "simulacrum of conversational give and takes" (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956); on the other hand, parasocial relationship is a long-term relationship resulting

from repeated interactions (Slater et al., 2018). Therefore, the two concepts, parasocial interaction and parasocial relationship, cannot be used interchangeably and researches need to choose the most relevant concept and its measurement scale.

Initially researchers started to investigate whether parasocial relationship was similar or different from the actual interpersonal relationship. Those researches focused on one group of media characters by exploring the audience's parasocial relationship with the newscasters (R. B. Rubin & McHugh, 1987), soap operas (Perse & Rubin, 1989), and hosts of shopping channels (Grant, et al, 1991). Moreover, in recent studies, the concept has been applied to understand the relationship between viewers and influencers of social media platforms. Unlike traditional media, social media platforms allow users to interact. However, influencers cannot respond to all their followers' comments or fully engage with them in discussions and therefore influencers' relationship with their followers is similar to the traditional media's relationship with their audience (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019).

Later researches tried to understand the antecedents and outcomes of the parasocial relationship. According to Turner (1993), attitude homophily and the audience's self-esteem are strong predictors of parasocial interaction between the TV performance and their audience. However, Chung and Cho (2017) proposed that celebrities' self-disclosure (sharing their own personal and professional information) on social media positively impacted their parasocial relationship with their fans. Hwang and Zhang (2018) focused more on the viewers' attributes instead of the influencers' attributes. Their research suggested that empathy and low self-esteem have a positive influence on parasocial relationships; which in turn have positive impact on followers' purchase and eWOM intentions (Hwang & Zhang, 2018).

Sokolova & Kefi (2019) focused on the influencer's attributes. They conducted their

research on beauty and fashion influencers and found that attitude homophily and social attractiveness were strongly related to both the parasocial interaction that the audience form with the social media influencer and the social media influencer's perceived credibility, which are positively related to purchase intention (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019).

Table 1 summarises previous researches dealing with the effects of the parasocial relationship with celebrities/ influencers on individual behaviour in a social media context:

Table 1. List of Researches on the Influence of Parasocial Relationship with Celebrities/ Influencers on Individual Behaviour.

No.	Auther/s	Journal	Year	Theory	Independent Variable	Mediating Variable	Dependent Variable
1	Chun Lin Yuan, Hakil Moon, Kyung Hoon Kim, Shuman Wang	Journal of Business Research	2019	Signalling theory	Popularity, Leverage, Fashionable, Affinity	Parasocial relationship	Value Equity, Brand Equity, Relationship Equity
2	Karina Sokolova, Hajer Kefi	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	2019	Persuasion, Parasocial interaction, and Social influence theory	Physical attractiveness Attitude Homophily Social attractiveness	Parasocial interaction and credibility	Purchase intention
3	Kumju Hwang, Qi Zhang	Computers in Human Behaviour	2018	The Uses and Gratifications theory (UGT) Sociometer theory	Model1: Empathy, Loneliness, and Social self-esteem Modle2: Persuasion knowledge	Modle1: Parasocial relationship Model2: Parasocial relationship	Model1: Purchase intention and eWOM intention Model2: Purchase intention and eWOM intention

N o.	Auther/s	Journal	Year	Theory	Independent Variable	Mediating Variable	Dependent Variable
4	Siyoung Chung, Hichang Cho	Psychology and Marketing	2017	Social penetration theory, Signalling theory, and identification (part of the social influence theory)	Social media interactions	Self-disclosure, para-social relationships, Source trustworthiness, and Brand credibility.	Purchase intention
5	Jennifer Edson Escalas James R. Bettman	Journal of Advertising	2017	Meaning transfer and Sociometer theory	Need to belong (NTB) (high or low)	Para-social relationship and the role of source congruence.	Self-brand connections
6	Chun Lin Yuan , Juran Kim, Sang Jin Kim	Journal of Business Research	2016	Parasocial relationship theory	Motivation to use SNS and Source credibility	Para-social relationship	Attitude, customer equity drivers, and customer lifetime value.
7	Jung Eun Lee, Brandi Watkins	Journal of Business Research	2016	Parasocial interaction (PSI) and social comparison theory.	Social attractiveness, physical attractiveness, and attitude homophily.	Parasocial relationship, Luxury brand value, brand-user-imagery fit, and brand luxury.	Purchase intentions

The above table presents the most recent studies conducted to investigate the parasocial relationship, its antecedents and outcomes in the context of social media. Since the aim of this study is to investigate the impact of some of the social media influencers' attributes on the parasocial relationship, the previous researches listed above investigated the following social media influencers' attributes: popularity, leverage, fashionability, affinity (Yuan et al., 2019), physical and social attractiveness (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019), and source credibility (Yuan et al., 2016). Given that, and to provide a significant contribution to theory and practice, this study focuses on the newly introduced attributes including popularity, leverage,

fashionability, and affinity. In addition, many previous studies that have been carried out on the parasocial relationship in the context of traditional media have investigated other attributes. The signalling theory suggests that with imperfect information, it is hard to distinguish between a high-quality and low-quality product, and the idea of signalling is that one party, the brand or the firm, credibly conveys some information about its product to others (Kelman, 1958). Influencers can be used as a signalling mechanism (Yuan et al., 2019). Based on that, influencers' attributes such as popularity, leverage, fashionability, and affinity are important to credibly provide information to others.

In addition to that, the aim of this study is to investigate the impact of some of the followers' attributes on the parasocial relationship, the previous researches listed in table 1 investigated the following followers' attributes: attitude homophily (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019), empathy, loneliness, social self-esteem (Hwang & Zhang, 2018), and the need to belong (Escalas & Bettman, 2017). This research adopted Hwang and Zhang's (2018) model, however, loneliness is replaced by attitude homophily. Hwang and Zhang (2018) could not find a significant correlation between parasocial relationship and loneliness which could be due to the three items scale that has been used to measure loneliness. Since this study intends to use previously developed and tested scales, Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona's (1980) 20 item scale was too long for a questionnaire measuring multiple variables. Attitude homophily was another interesting attribute, as suggested by the social influence theory, consumers are more likely to be influenced by the celebrity or endorsers when they sense a similarity between themselves and the celebrity's behaviour and attitude (Thomson, 2006).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1. Main theories

Building on our literature review and on the previous analysis of Table 1, we identify two main theories that could be very helpful in achieving our research goals: signalling theory and social influence theory.

a. Signalling theory

Signalling theory suggests that due to information asymmetry in market transactions, parties might face inequalities in getting information about the goods and services. This theory was introduced by Michael Spence (1973), where he also proposed that one party can send signals to the other party revealing some information to reduce the risk and help him/her in the decision process. Information asymmetry in the market can negatively impact on the perception of risk and trust (Cukierman & Meltzer, 1986). However, if the brand provides information about the quality of its good or services and reduces the buyer's risk, they can obtain higher prices (Jacoby, 1971). In the social media context, Yuan et al. (2019) argue that successful celebrities are used as a signal mechanism. They are reliable and high-quality signals and thus able to provide ubiquitous advertising (Yuan et al., 2019).

b. Social influence theory

The social influence theory has been widely used in marketing research to provide a theoretical explanation for the endorsement process. Social influence theory explains how endorsers are able to influence consumers through two main processes: identification and internalisation (Kelman, 1961). Identification is when individuals agree to change their attitudes or behaviour due to the influence of someone they like, and internalisation is when individuals accept and agree to adapt to a set of norms of an influential group that are similar to their own values (Kelman, 1961). Previous

marketing studies have adopted this theory to understand the relationship and impact of celebrity endorsement on consumers (Choi & Rifon, 2012; McCormick, 2016; Albert et al., 2017). When consumers sense a similarity between theirs and the celebrity's behaviour and attitude, they are more likely to be influenced by the celebrity (Thomson, 2006), and this would show a significant influence on brand attitude and the consumer's buying intention (Pradhan et al., 2016).

2.3.2 Followers' main attributes

Building on our literature review and on Table 1 analysis, we identify three main attributes of followers that could be important in our research context: Attitude homophily, Low-self-esteem and Empathy.

a. Attitude Homophily

Homophily refers to the extent to which individuals tend to bond with other individuals who are similar to themselves. Eyal and Rubin (2003) state that homophily is "the degree to which people who interact are similar in beliefs, education, social status, and the like". Individuals find that the more similarity they have with others leads to more connectivity and, thus, it is an important factor of their interpersonal interactions and relationships. This has been discovered in many social networking studies (Aral & Walker, 2014; McPherson et al, 2001; Walker & Aral, 2012), as well as in parasocial relationships with significant individuals, such as a television character (Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Turner, 1993) and vloggers (Lee & Watkins, 2016). In some researches, it is also referred to as source congruency.

b. Low social self-esteem

All individuals' social affordances require them to be accepted by others. Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue that because of the adaptive advantage of being accepted, individuals begin to possess a strong need for acceptance and belonging. Moreover,

individuals begin to develop a psychological system that acts as a monitor of their interpersonal value and helps them to gain acceptance and avoid rejection from others (Leary et al, 2011).

In fact, the sociometer theory is a theory that explains the state self-esteem system, which suggests that state self-esteem serves as a thermostat of individual effectiveness in social relations and interactions with others (Leary et al, 1995). When individuals experience acceptance or rejection, they tend to feel good or bad about themselves, and thus the sociometer theory suggests that those feelings, state self-esteem are part of this regulatory system (Leary, 2005). Individuals who experience rejection will feel bad about themselves and experience lower self-esteem. Individuals' desire and fundamental need to belong is the motivational spirit of their self-esteem system, and based on that, they begin to have and maintain lasting and satisfying social relationships (Leary, 1999). Self-esteem describes a person's sense of self-worth or value. Ciarma and Mathew (2017) define self-esteem as "a person's level of self-acceptance, which stems from an appraisal of global self-worth, attractiveness, competence, and ability to achieve one's own aspirations".

c. Empathy

Empathy plays a crucial role in an individual's interactions and relationships. In fact, it has been recognised as the interpersonal relationship's most essential component (Akgün et al, 2015). It functions as a "social glue" in an adolescent's interactions (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004), which they develop through their experiences. Empathy allows individuals to relate to others and strengthen their relationships. It is defined as the ability to observe, understand, and feel others' internal state (de Vignemont & Singer, 2006; Zaki & Ochsner, 2012), including the capacity to communicate this understanding and an intention to help (Archer & Turner, 2019).

However, there are many arguments on the impact of the use of social media on individuals' empathy. There are few researchers investigating the relationship between social media use, including online gaming and Internet browsing, and empathy (Alloway et al, 2014; Carrier et al, 2015).

2.3.3 Social-media influencers main attributes

Different classifications of social-media influencers exist in the literature (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019; Yuan et al., 2016). Among these classifications, we utilised the classification used by Yuan et al. (2019), as it is one of the most complete, recent classifications and fitted our context. Yuan et al. (2019) identified four main attributes for social media influencers: popularity, leverage, fashionability and affinity.

a. Popularity

The popularity of social media influencers has a great impact on their followers. Being a popular individual usually means being liked and known by many people. Yuan et al. (2019) defined the popularity of social media influencers as a measure of their exposure and how recognisable they are in the online community. The more popular the influencer, the more he/she may be exposed to people.

b. Leverage

Leverage is, basically, referring to the power of the influencers or endorsers. It is usually a measure of their topicality and influence in social media (Yuan et al., 2019). Previous research indicated that the degree of the influence that an influencer has will depend on his perceived power; for example, once he perceived himself as an expert in a specific area, he will gain more power (Leparoux et al., 2019).

c. Fashionability

Fashionable or trendy influencers become the main requirement, when a brand tries to

recruit their representative. According to Farennikova et al. (2011), fashionability has been defined as "fashion web celebrity endorsers refers to their aesthetic innovation and ability to set trends regarding fashion products".

b. Affinity

The affinity of the influencer means that the content he/ she transmitted is close to public life (Yuan et al., 2019). Brands also use celebrities as ambassadors to increase the affinity between the brand and consumers.

2.4 Hypotheses development

2.4.1 Effects of followers' attributes on parasocial relationship

Empathy's effects on parasocial relationship

Alloway et al. (2014) found a positive, rather than a negative, relationship between social media use and empathy, and Carrier et al. (2015) found that online activities, such social networking sites, leading to face-to-face communication have increased real-world empathy. Moreover, individuals develop their social skills by practising them mainly through face-to-face communication, often with family, peers and close friends. However, there is often a large overlap between individuals' online and offline relationships (Valkenburg et al, 2011). In a study conducted by Valkenburg et al. (2011), it was found that individuals find social media a safe place, where they can practice some social skills.

Despite the crucial role of empathy in individuals' relationships, in the online and offline community, and the impact of social media activities on individuals' empathy in the real-world, the impact of empathy on parasocial relationships has not been sufficiently investigated. To our knowledge, there are only a few researches investigating empathy's influence on parasocial relationships. In fact, since social

media provides easy access to others, then it can facilitate empathy by allowing them to access others in similar situations (Caplan & Turner, 2007), such as expressing empathy through a health support online community (Carrier et al., 2015). Since previous researches show that empathy positively influenced parasocial relationships (Carlo et al., 2012; Hwang & Zhang, 2018), we hypothesised the following:

H1-1: Followers' empathy has a positive impact on the parasocial relationship with Instagram influencers.

Effect of homophily on the parasocial relationship

Previous researches showed that homophily has a positive influence on parasocial interactions (PSI) (Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Lee & Watkins, 2016; Turner, 1993). In the endorsement context, previous studies showed a relationship between the meaning transfer on consumers' attitude and purchase intention (Peetz et al., 2004): consumers are more likely to accept the meaning from social media influencers, who they found similar to themselves (Lim, et al., 2017). A vlogger, for example, when he/ she is perceived to be similar to his/ her fans or has desirable traits, then this will lead to the formation of a parasocial relationship between them (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Therefore, we hypothesised that:

H1-2: Instagram influencers' attitude and homophily has a positive impact on their parasocial relationship with their followers.

Effect of low self-esteem on the parasocial relationship

The findings of previous research show that individuals, who feel that their self-esteem is threatened, tend to connect with celebrities; this connection allows them to appropriate symbolic meaning from the celebrity, which helps them to increase their self-esteem (Escalas & Bettman, 2015). Prior researches have also investigated the

impact of self-esteem on individuals' use of social media. Findings show that individuals with low self-esteem improve their social relations by communicating online (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2017). In fact, findings showed that positive social interaction between users online increases one's self- esteem (Gonzales, 2014; Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). In addition to that, other research found that individuals with low self-esteem use social media to express themselves, as they considered it a safer environment (Andreassen et al., 2017; Forest & Wood, 2012; Jiang et al., 2013; Tidwell & Walther, 2002; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009), since they do not feel comfortable making real friendships in order to avoid rejection (Murray et al., 2003). This, in fact, leads individuals with low self-esteem to use social media platforms to present themselves in a different form (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2017) and to make more friendships (Eşkisu et al., 2017). Therefore, individuals with low self-esteem find social media as a way to form and maintain parasocial relationships to compensate for their deficiencies, in order to feel socially acceptable. This led us to hypothesise the following:

H1-3: Followers' low self-esteem has a positive impact on the para-social relationship with Instagram an influencer.
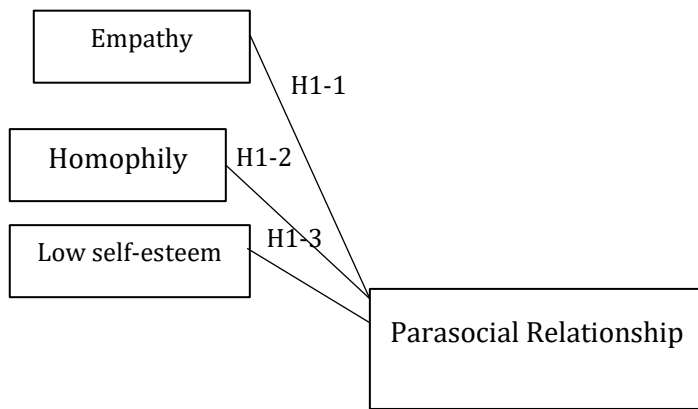
Figure 2.Conceptual framework including hypotheses 1-1 to 1-3[L][SEP]

2.4.2 Effects of influencers attributes on the parasocial relationship

Effects of popularity on the parasocial relationship

To maintain and increase popularity on Instagram, influencers communicate and interact with their followers regularly through responding to their comments, direct messages, or question-and-answer session (Yeru, 2019). Those interactions increase connectedness between his/herself and his/her followers (Yeru, 2019). Based on that, the popular influencer has a positive impact on the followers' purchase decision and behaviour. This led us to hypothesise the following:

H2-1: The popularity of the influencer will positively impact his/ her parasocial relationship on Instagram.

Effects of leverage on the parasocial relationship

Yuan et al. (2019) in their study argued that it is not only the popularity of the endorser that is important, but also his/her leverage. In fact, social media influencers can be popular, as followers are interested in their content, but they might not have the power or tendency to influence the follower's behaviour. Thus, we expect that higher leverage will lead to higher parasocial interaction and we present the following

hypothesis:

H2-2: The leverage attribute of the influencer will positively impact his/her parasocial relationship on Instagram.

Effects of fashionability on the parasocial relationship

Consumers nowadays are looking for updates on the latest trends in social media platforms, especially those of fashion bloggers. This has brought about the reliance of the audience of these fashion bloggers on information and inspiration trends, making them trend leaders (Lea-Greenwood, 2013). In addition to that, since staying fashionable and trendy requires a lot of effort and knowledge, followers can refer back to, or try to copy the style of those influencers. Given that, fashion is essentially a leader-follower interaction. Thus, we expect that:

H2-3: The fashionable attribute of the influencer will positively impact his/her parasocial relationship on Instagram.

Effects of affinity on the parasocial relationship

Since social media is more accessible to consumers, this allows social media influencers to be more accessible to the audience. This might increase affinity even more, mainly due to the fact that social media influencers share their own lifestyles, which followers find similar to their own, and thus they feel that they are more willing to accept those influencers' choices and believe that it represent their own choices as well (Landwehr et al., 2013). In addition, due to their direct interaction with their followers, for example through comments, they seem more 'real' and accessible (Nouri, 2018). This attribute differentiates the social media influencers from the traditional celebrities, as the former has strong affinity (Hwang & Zhang, 2018).

Based on that, we expect that influencers' affinity, how close they are to the public, will have an impact on their parasocial relationship with their followers and hypothesise the following:

H2-4: The affinity attribute of the influencer will positively impact on his/ her parasocial relationship on Instagram.
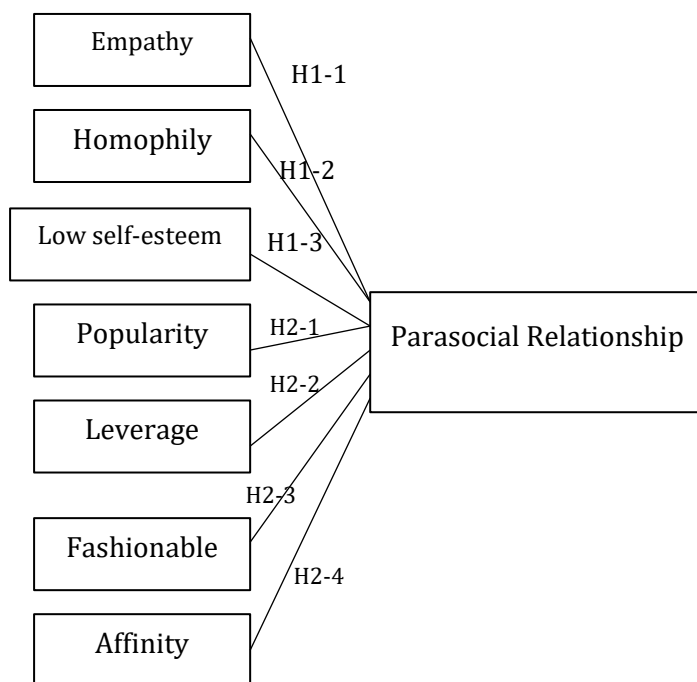
Figure 3.Conceptual framework including hypotheses 1-1 to 2-4

2.4.3 Effects of parasocial relationship on purchase intention

Purchase intention is defined as what consumers think they would buy (Blackwell at el., 2001). The consumer's buying decision is associated with their subjective judgment and general evaluation of the product or service (Blackwell et al., 2001). Purchase intention is a key predictor of consumers' actual purchase behaviour. Previous researches on the parasocial relationship found that the parasocial

relationship has a positive impact on consumer purchase intention (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). Online celebrities such as Instagrammers, You Tubers, and bloggers have more impact on the purchase behaviour of young consumers aged between 18-30 years than traditional celebrities, as they found online celebrities more relatable and credible (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Consumers' high expected value and engagement with the brand are positively related to their purchase intention. Marketers found that since consumers develop an engagement with influencers by building interactions that are personal and intimate (Abidin, 2015), the influential power of the social media influencers contributes to increasing consumers' expected value of recommended brands (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019) and will impact positively on the purchase of the recommended brand or product. Thus, we hypothesise that:

H3: The followers' parasocial relationship with Instagram influencers has a positive impact on their purchase intention.

2.4.4 Effects of parasocial relationship on actual behaviour

Most researches predict and measure consumers' actual purchase behaviour through purchase intention. Assuming that intention is the mental representations of a person's willingness to perform certain behaviour, it can be considered as a predictor of actual behaviour. To our knowledge limited researches have been carried out to measure consumers' actual behaviour directly. It is argued that due to advertisements and endorsement from celebrities being perceived as a trustworthy source of information when parasocial relationships are formed (Hwang & Zhang, 2018), these relationships could lead them to actually purchase the products or the services recommended. Therefore, we expect that:

H4: The followers' parasocial relationship with social media influencers has a positive impact on their actual purchase behaviour.

2.4.5 Effects of parasocial relationship on WOM

Many researches have been conducted to understand the antecedents of consumers' engagement in word of mouth (WOM). It has been found that some of those antecedents include consumer satisfaction (Li & Liu, 2014; C. M. Lim & Kim, 2011), brand love relationship as a parasocial relationship (Fetscherin, 2014), perceived usefulness (Li & Liu, 2014), and consumer loyalty (Gremler & Brown, 1999). Research also supports the effect of PSR on consumers' behavioural outcomes including WOM (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Jin & Phua, 2014; Thorson & Rodgers, 2006). In fact, Jin and Phua (2014) observed that celebrities with many followers on Twitter can influence consumers' behaviour, including purchase intentions and eWOM. In addition, significant WOM from others is perceived as a credible source of information to force purchase intentions and decisions, and consumers perceive advertisements or endorsement of celebrities as trustworthy information when parasocial relationships are established (Hwang and Zhang, 2018). Therefore, we hypothesised the following:

H5: Followers' parasocial relationship with social media influencers has a positive impact on their WOM intention.
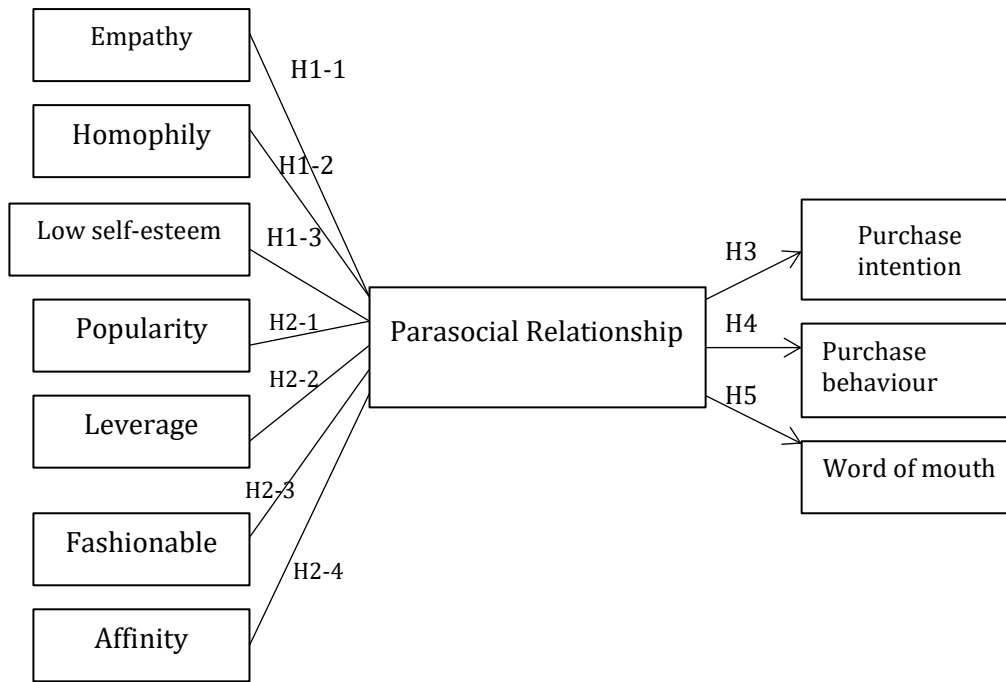
Figure 4. Progression of the conceptual framework including hypotheses 1-1 to 5

2.4.6 Parasocial relationship as mediator

Parasocial relationship can be considered as a mediator between social media attributes and positive outcomes. Initial researches investigated the impact of media or celebrity characteristics and consumers' positive outcomes. Few researches have investigated the effect of parasocial relationship as a mediator between the social media influencer's attributes and the followers' behavioural outcomes. For example, Gong and Li (2017) found that parasocial relationship mediated the relationship between source attractiveness and celebrity endorsement effectiveness (attitude toward the advertisement and the product). In fact, the results of their study shows that parasocial relationship fully mediates the effect of source attractiveness toward endorsement effectiveness (Gong & Li, 2017). Given that, viewers' or followers' parasocial relationship with the celebrity is important to have positive outcomes. Hwang and Zhang (2018) found that parasocial relationships mediate the relationship

between empathy and purchase intention, empathy and eWOM, low social self-esteem and purchase intentions, and low social self-esteem and eWOM intentions. This study also intends to investigate the mediating role of parasocial relationships between followers and social media influencer attributes and the followers' behavioural outcomes. Therefore, taking into account the previous hypotheses and the different work presenting parasocial relationship as a mediator, we hypothesised:

H6-1: The effect of followers' empathy on purchase intention is mediated by the parasocial relationship with the Instagram influencers.

H6-2: The effect of followers' Instagram influencers' attitude and homophily on purchase intention is mediated by the parasocial relationship with their followers.

H6-3: The effect of followers' Instagram influencers' low self-esteem on purchase intention is mediated by the parasocial relationship with their followers.

H6-4: The effect of the popularity of the influencer on purchase intention is mediated by the parasocial relationship with their followers.

H6-5: The effect of the leverage of the influencer on purchase intention is mediated by the parasocial relationship with their followers.

H6-6: The effect of the fashionability of the influencer on purchase intention is mediated by the parasocial relationship with their followers.

H6-7: The effect of the affinity of the influencer on purchase intention is mediated by the parasocial relationship with their followers.

H7-1: The effect of followers' empathy on WOM is mediated by the parasocial relationship with the Instagram influencers.

H7-2: The effect of followers' Instagram influencers' attitude and homophily on WOM is mediated by the parasocial relationship with their followers.

H7-3: The effect of followers' Instagram influencers' low self-esteem on WOM is mediated by the parasocial relationship with their followers.

H7-4: The effect of the popularity of the influencer on WOM is mediated by the parasocial relationship with their followers.

H7-5: The effect of the leverage of the influencer on WOM is mediated by the parasocial relationship with their followers.

H7-6: The effect of the fashionability of the influencer on WOM is mediated by the parasocial relationship with their followers.

H7-7: The effect of the affinity of the influencer on WOM is mediated by the parasocial relationship with their followers.
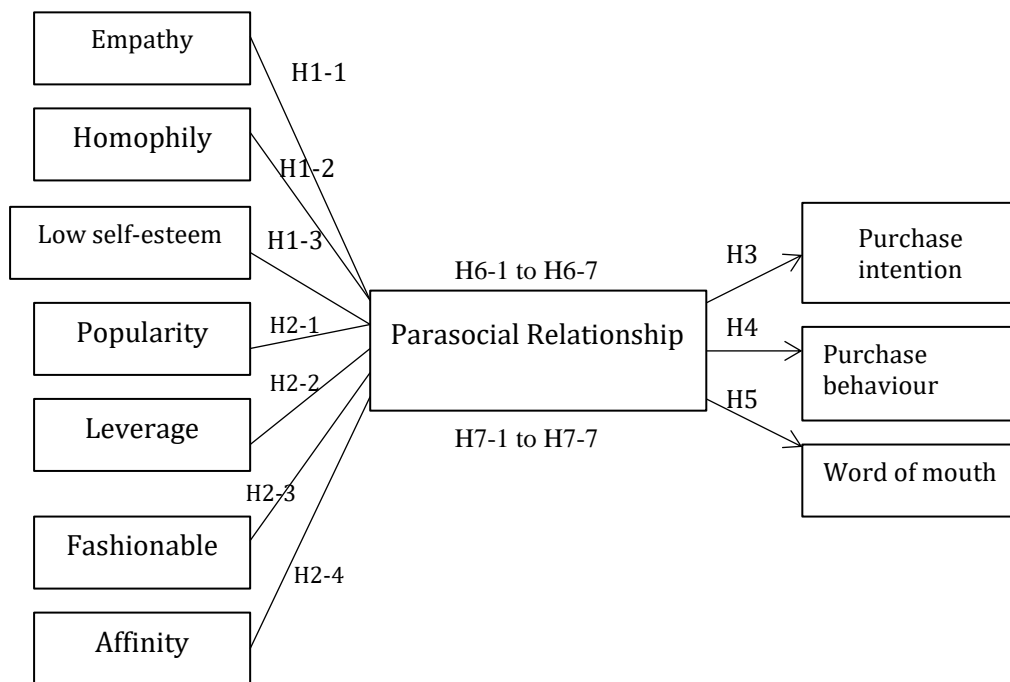
Figure 5. Conceptual framework including the mediating hypothesises

2.5 Conclusion

This study aims to investigate the most important social media influencer and followers' attributes that impact on the followers' relationship with their social media

influencers and influence their behavioural intention and actual behaviour. The literature review has focused on recent studies carried out on parasocial relationships in the context of social media and social media influencers. While some previous researches have been conducted to investigate the impact of influencers' attributes and their impact on the followers' behaviour, this study took the opportunity to address the gap and limitations of those studies. This study uses two main theories, the Signalling Theory and the Social Influence Theory. These two theories were used to develop the conceptual framework and explain how the constructs related to each other. Previous marketing studies have adopted these theories to understand the relationship and impact of celebrity endorsement on consumers. Parasocial relationship forms when followers connect with celebrities or influential people and they internalise aspects of their persona due to the social roles they serve. This study investigates the impact of three follower and four social media related attributes on parasocial relationships and followers' behavioural outcomes.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the method used to attain the results for this research. The chapter is divided into three sections: the first section gives an explanation of the research design, articulates what this research is focusing on, the research method and how it has been executed. The second section discusses how the questionnaire has been developed and data has been collected. The third section discusses the data sample and its inclusion and exclusion criteria. Finally, the last section identifies the tools and procedures to be used for analysing data.

3.2 Research Design

This research paper aims to examine social media influencers and their impact on consumers' intention and behaviour. Multiple attributes of social media influencers and followers were considered, including the influencer's popularity, leverage, fashionability and affinity, and the follower's homophily with the influencer, empathy, and low social self-esteem. In addition, the research examined the effect of each of those independent variables on the followers' parasocial relationship with the influencer. The effect of parasocial relationship on the followers' WOM, and purchase intention and behaviour were also examined.

Those attributes were considered as independent variables. A quantitative research method was used, which includes using a questionnaire to collect the data. The different scales used in the questionnaire were adopted from previous researches. Appendix A shows all the constructs, their measurement items, and sources. This research can be considered as explanatory research in which a phenomenon has been

observed previously and we wish to explore it more. It includes an explicit theory and precisely formulated hypotheses.

3.3 Data collection technique, instrument and pilot test

To test the research hypothesis, the present study relied on collecting responses through a survey questionnaire. All scales were adopted from the literature to ensure the content validity of the constructs. The survey was translated into Arabic to ensure sufficient participants. Also, both Arabic and English surveys were handed out to 3 individuals who were proficient translators and they were asked to check on the clarity of the translated items. Once the Arabic version of the questionnaire was finalised, a pre-test was conducted. Ten individuals were requested to complete the questionnaire and provide their comments, in case they found anything unclear. Accordingly, the questionnaires were slightly modified. To be able to provide the time needed to complete the questionnaire, the time taken by each individual in the pre-testing was reported. The average time needed was 8.5 minutes, and 1.5 minutes contingency was given.

Google Form was used to launch the questionnaires online. The online questionnaires included 4 sections (see Appendix B). The first section introduced the title of the study, its purpose, and the time needed to complete the questionnaire. It also clarified that participation was voluntary and confidential and participants could withdraw at any time they wanted. Finally, it provided the supervisor's contact details. The second section measured the participant's Instagram usage and asked about their favourite influencer. It consisted of four questions, including: "On average, how much time do you spend on social media every day?; list your favourite Instagram influencer; how often have you been following him/her?; and name your favourite Instagram influencer's area of expertise".

The third section included all the measurement items where the participants had to rate the statements, using a 5 Likert rating scale with "strongly disagree" as the lowest score and "strongly agree" as the highest. It consisted of 51 pre-established items to measure the 11 constructs. It also asked the participants to indicate if they had purchased any product or service that was recommended by their favourite Instagram influencer, and where the participant replied in the affirmative he/she was asked to indicate what the product or service was and how much it cost them. The final section required participants to provide personal information including age, gender, nationality, level of education, and annual income.

3.4 Research Sample

Participants in the study were social media users who had Instagram accounts and were 18 years old and above. Both a hard copy and an online link of the questionnaire were sent out to the researcher and supervisor's family and friends. The hard copy was mainly distributed by the researcher at her and her friends' workplace. The questionnaire was also distributed through a broadcast email by the Communications department at Qatar University to Qatar University students, faculty and staff. Students following the Marketing Research course in the Bachelor degree program at the College of Business and Economics of Qatar University responded to the questionnaire and participated actively. A sample of at least 275 participants was required and 691 responses were collected; however, only 574 responses were used. The rest were eliminated due to various reasons including incomplete responses, the participant being under 18, the participant not having an Instagram account, or not following any Instagram influencer.

3.5 Data Analysis

This next chapter provides an analysis of the collected data but this section explains

the process. Data analysis is basically converting the mass data into meaningful insights that can provide answers to the research questions. Since this was quantitative research, the data analysis process included the following steps: first, data preparation, which included editing and coding the data. This was done using SPSS before proceeding with testing the measurement. Incomplete or invalid responses were excluded from the datasets. Responses which did not complete the questionnaire, failed to name an Instagram influencer, or indicated that they did not use Instagram were removed. Once the data was cleaned and coded, descriptive analyses were conducted on the data.

The descriptive statistics included providing absolute numbers to describe the sample; however, this did not explain the rationale or reasoning behind those numbers. The descriptive statistics that the study will provide in the following chapters included sample characteristics and data analysis.

Before the final data collection, an initial dataset of 70 responses was collected to measure the strength and the appropriateness of the scales and their items. An Explanatory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed on this using IBM SPSS 26.

A Confirmatory Factor Analysis using AMOS 23 was performed on the final sample, it had the objective to test for the FIT and validity of the different scales. Hypotheses were tested using the PROCESS Macro on IBM SPSS 26, we tested for direct effects of independent variables, indirect effects and mediation using Model 4. Finally, additional analysis was performed using multiple regression on IBM SPSS 26.

3.6 Conclusion

To summarise, this chapter has explained the methodology used to conduct the research and answer the research question. A questionnaire from pre-existing

measurement items was developed and translated to measure the constructs. The questionnaire was launched online. An initial dataset of 70 responses was collected to measure the strength and appropriateness of the items. The following chapter provides the findings and analysis of the data.

Chapter 4: Data Analyses & Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter includes the quantitative study data analysis and discusses the related results. The analysis was conducted using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS 26), PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018; Model 4), and AMOS 26 graphics. First, it presents the descriptive data analysis in two parts: sample characteristic and descriptive data. The sample characteristic includes the percentage of the gender, age range, and income distribution of respondents' social media behaviours. The descriptive data includes an analysis of the general information provided by the participants, such as time spent on social media, their favourite Instagram influencer, and his/ her area of expertise.

Second, this chapter also presents the inferential data analysis which includes Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), mediation test and multiple regression analysis.

4.2 Sample Characteristic

This section provides a summary of the figures related to the characteristics of the respondents, including their gender, nationality, age, and annual income. A total of 691 responses were collected, of which 574 responses were used in this research. The 115 were eliminated due to different reasons, including the following: the survey was not completed, respondents were not following any influencer on Instagram, or they were not using Instagram at all.

Figure 6. Gender and nationality distribution

Participants were 38% male and 61% female, living in Qatar. 73% of them were Qatari and only 27% were Non-Qatari (see figure 6 above). The age group was divided into six groups (see figure 7 below). The majority (65%) of them were between the age of 18 -24 years. 25% were between the age of 25 – 34 years, 8% were between the age of 35 – 44 years old, 2% were between the age of 45 – 54 years old, and 0.5% were between the age of 55 – 64 years old.
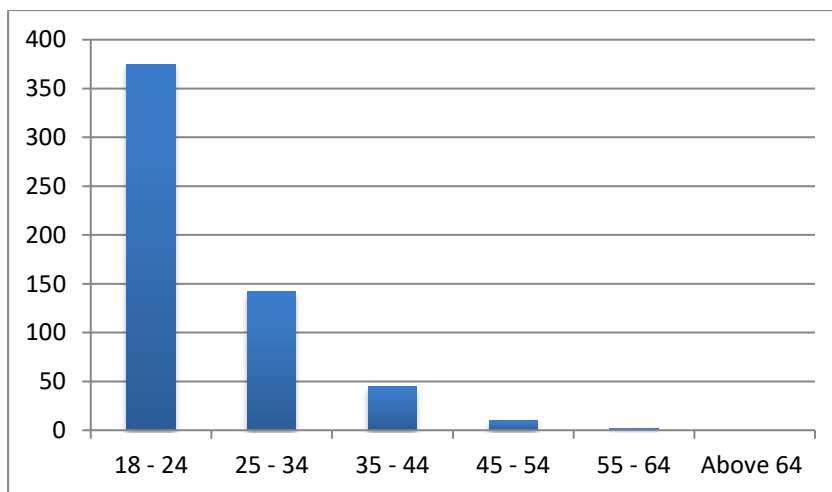
Figure 7. Age distribution

The general distribution in term of age fits with the general distribution of Instagram users in Qatar, as 83% of the Instagram users in Qatar are between 18 and 34 years old.

The annual income was divided into six groups (see figure 8 below). Most of the participants (62%) earn less than QTR 50,000 annually. Secondly, 20% of them earn between QTR 50,001 – 150,000 annually. For the rest, their annual earnings are as follows: 8% of them earn between 150,001-250.000, 5% of them earn between 250,001-350,000, 2% of them earn between 350,001 – 450,001, and 3% of them earn above 450,001 annually. The distribution of annual income shown in Figure 8 indicates that most of the participants were earning less than 50,000, most likely because most of them were students.
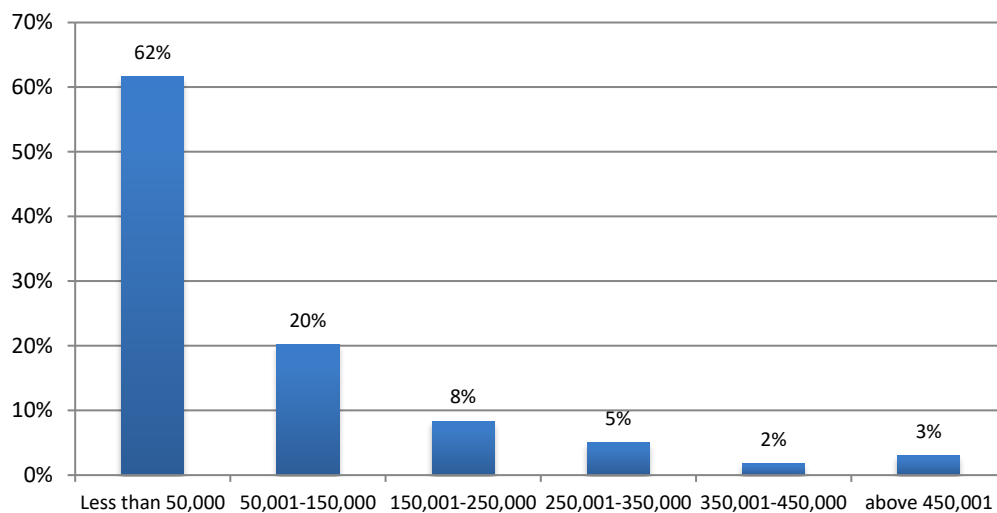
Figure 8.Income distribution

4.3 Descriptive results

The participants mentioned many different Influencers. Table 2 below shows the top 6

Influencers that were mentioned by the participants and their frequency. Seventy-three participants mentioned Abdulla AlGafri, a Qatari social media influencer who uses two nicknames including QQQ and AlGafri. The second most frequent name was Haneen AlSaify and 27 participants mentioned her. Haneen is a Palestinian vlogger/ fashionista living in Qatar.

Out of the 6 most mentioned influencers, 3 were Qatari or Qatari-based influencers (Abdulla AlGafri, Haneen AlSaify, and No signal). The rest were from the Gulf (Noha Nabil and Dr. Mohammed AlSafy), apart from Cristiano Ronaldo, who is a very famous Portuguese football player.

Table 2.The Top Six Social Media Influencers Mentioned by the Participants

	Influencer Name	Frequency	Percentage
1	Abdulla AlGafri	74	13%
2	Haneen AlSaify	27	5%
3	Cristiano Ronaldo	17	3.0%
4	No signal	15	2.6%
5	Noha Nabil	14	2.4%
6	Dr. Mohammed AlSafy	12	2.1%
7	Others	415	72%

Social media influencer areas of expertise were divided into 6 groups, including the following: fashion, travelling, beauty products, food and beverages, others and multiple. Multiple was added as many of the participants (32%) had listed more than one area of expertise. The majority (47%) mentioned other areas, 7.7% were in food

and beverages, 5.2% were in travelling, and 2.8% in beauty products.
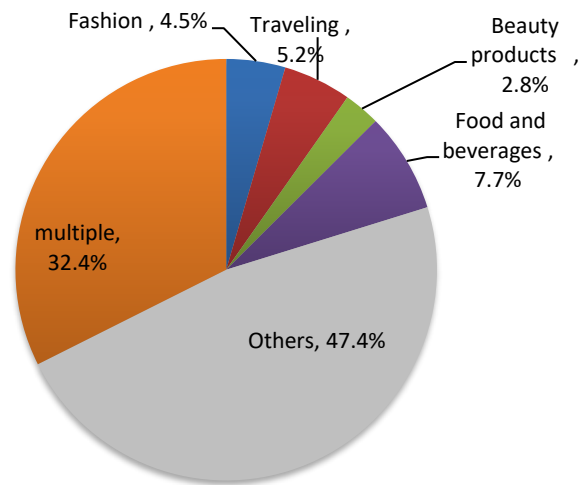
Figure 9. Instagram influencers' area of expertise

The majority of the participants had been following their Instagram influencers for more than three years (39%). The rest are as shown in figure 10 below.
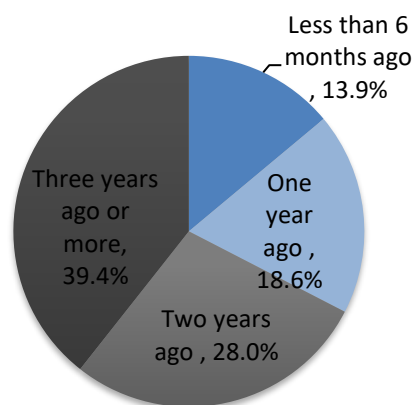
Figure 10. When the participants started following their favourite Instagram influencers

Regarding the hours that the respondents usually spent on social media every day, the majority (49%) indicated that they spent around 5 or more hours, 36% of them spent around 3-4 hours and the rest spent around 1-2 hours (see figure 11 below). Those percentages are not limited to Instagram only, and thus many of the participants included other social media applications, such as YouTube and Snapchat, and the time they spent on WhatsApp.
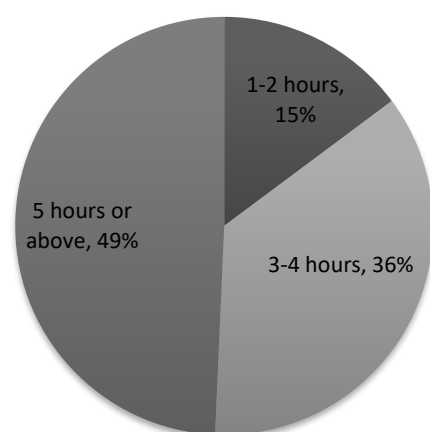
Figure 11.Time spent on social media everyday

4.4 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is a class of procedures that are used for data reduction and summarising. Usually, EFA is used at the beginning of the data analysis process to explore the interrelationships of a number of variables. It examines an entire set of interdependent relationships without making the distinction between dependent and independent variables. Also, it measures latent variables, which cannot be measured directly and allows researchers to remove the unnecessary items (Pallant, 2011). The sample size is an important indication of the suitability of the data.

However, researchers have different arguments regarding the sample size. For example, some argue that there should be at least four or five times as many observations (sample size) as there are variables. In this study, an Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted on each scale and its items. Several well- recognised criteria for the factorability of a correlation were used.

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

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test measures the sampling adequacy to determine if the responses given with the sample are adequate or not. The commonly recommended value is 0.6. Looking at Table 3 below, the KMO measure is above the recommended value for all of the variables indicating that the sample is adequate. Bartlett's test is another indication of the strength of the relationship among variables. It is used to test if samples are from populations with equal variances. From the same table, we can see that the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant (0.00) for all of the variables. That is, the significance is less than 0.05. and the null hypothesis can be rejected.

Table 3.KMO and Bartlett's Test

Construct	KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Sig.	Inference
Empathy	.824	266.794	.000	Sampling is adequate
Homophily	.887	1886.170	.000	Sampling is adequate
Low self-esteem	.779	835.143	.000	Sampling is adequate
Popularity	.678	91.892	.000	Sampling is adequate
Leverage	.729	74.284	.000	Sampling is adequate
Fashionable	.635	32.921	.000	Sampling is adequate

Construct	KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Sig.	Inference
Affinity	.644	29.956	.000	Sampling is adequate
PSI	.740	115.696	.000	Sampling is adequate
WOM	.721	90.245	.000	Sampling is adequate
Purchase Intention	.778	174.297	.000	Sampling is adequate

4.4.2 Factorial analysis & Reliability Test

Reliability measures the degree to which a measuring item produces a reliable and consistent result. It tests the internal consistency or the degree in which all the items measure the same attribute (Pallant, 2011). Testing the reliability of the construct items should be done before proceeding with testing the structural model. Cronbach's alpha is used to evaluate items' reliability. Its value range is between 0 to 1 and the general rule of thumb is that a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 and above is good.

The rule of thumb of Eigen value >1 was used to choose the number of components for the different scales. All the results are summarised in the table below:

Table 4.Reliability Statistics

Variable	Component	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Analysis
Empathy	Empathy Behaviour	.829	4	Highly reliable
	Empathy Feeling	.901	4	Highly reliable
Homophily	1 Component	.882	7	Highly reliable
Low self-esteem	1 Component	.772	4	Highly reliable

Variable	Component	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Analysis
Popularity	1 Component	.882	7	Highly reliable
Leverage	1 Component	.854	3	Highly reliable
Fashionable	1 Component	.706	3	Highly reliable
Affinity	1 Component	.691	3	Acceptable

We present the following details of the EFA for the different scales.

Empathy

Factor analyses results show that there were two distinct components, explaining 72% of the variance. The first component was measured by Empathy items 1, 2, 3, and 4 and the second component was measured by Empathy items 5, 6, 7, and 8. The first four variables were related to the followers' ability to tell or understand how the influencer was feeling, and component 1 can be interpreted as "Empathy Behaviour". The last 4 variables were related to feeling how the influencer felt, therefore component 2 can be interpreted as "Empathy Feeling".

The reliability test was carried out on each component, first on the items of the first component and then on the items of the second component, and the results show the following: Cronbach's Alpha is 0.90 and deleting any of the item would actually reduce it. The results are the same for the items of the second component, which has Cronbach's Alpha of 0.82.

Homophily

Factor analyses results show that there is only one distinct component explaining

58.7% of the variance. The reliability test was carried out, and the results show the following: Cronbach's Alpha is 0.882 with the 7 items included.

Low self-esteem

Only items 3, 5, 6, and 7 were retained from the seven low self-esteem measurement items. Factor analyses results show that there is only one distinct component, explaining 58.7% of the variance. The reliability test was conducted, and the results show the following: Cronbach's Alpha is 0.772 with the 4 items included.

Popularity

Factor analyses results show that there is only one unique component, explaining 77.9% of the variance. The reliability test was conducted, and the results show the following: Cronbach's Alpha is 0.882 with the 7 items included.

Leverage

Factor analyses results confirms the one-dimensionality of the scale, retaining only one distinct component that explains 77.5% of the variance. The reliability test was conducted and the results show the following: Cronbach's Alpha is 0.854 with the 3 items included.

Fashionability

Factor analyses results indicate that there is only one unique component that explains 63.0% of the total variance. The reliability test was conducted, and the results show the following: Cronbach's Alpha is 0.706 with the 3 items included.

Affinity

Factor analyses results show that there is only one distinct component, explaining 61.7% of the variance. The reliability test was carried out, and the results show the following: Cronbach's Alpha is 0.691 with the 3 items included.

4.5 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

After conducting the EFA, the results were used to conduct a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on the final sample. CFA is an analysis that determines the reliability and validity of the model's constructs and evaluates the fit between observed and estimated covariance matrices (Hair et al., 2010). The model fit indices are examined to assess the fit of the CFA (Hair et al., 2010). The model fit indices examined include the following: Chi-Square (CMIN), CMIN/DF with value below 2 is proffered and between 2-5 considered acceptable, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) with a value above 0.9 is considered acceptable, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) with a value of 0.08 or less is considered acceptable, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be .5 or greater to suggest adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). The CFA was conducted using AMOS graphics 26. When the model fit indices were low, some items with low standardised loadings were removed.

The model fit indices of the followers' attributes (empathy, homophily, and low self-esteem), social media influencer's attributes (popularity, leverage, fashionability, and affinity), and behavioural intentions (WOM and purchase intention) models were assessed in AMOS. Most of the results fall within the ideal or acceptable ranges as shown in the below tables. The Chi-square was lower than 2 and insignificant. The AVE is higher than 0.5 except for homophily, leverage, and fashionability, which are

slightly lower than 0.5. The following tables displays each model fit indices:

Table 5.CFA Model Fit for Empathy

Model Fit Indices	Value
CMIN	11.950
CMIN/DF	1.494
TLI	.994
CFI	.998
RMSEA	.029
AVE for empathy behaviour	.585
AVE for empathy feeling	.679

Table 6.CFA Model Fit for Homophily

Model Fit Indices	Value
CMIN	19.247
CMIN/DF	1.925
GFI	.991
TLI	.984
CFI	.992
RMSEA	.040
AVE	.479

Table 7.CFA Model Fit for Low Self-Esteem and Parasocial Relationship

Model Fit Indices	Value
CMIN	23.093
CMIN/DF	1.540
GFI	.990
TLI	.991
CFI	.995
RMSEA	.031
AVE for low self-esteem	.522
AVE for parasocial relationship	.509

Table 8.CFA Model Fit for the Social Media Influencer Attributes (Popularity, Leverage, Fashionable, and Affinity)

Model Fit Indices	Value
CMIN	62.846
CMIN/DF	1.699
GFI	.982
TLI	.986

Model Fit Indices	Value
CFI	.992
RMSEA	.035
AVE for popularity	.718
AVE for leverage	.436
AVE for fashionability	.479
AVE for affinity	.548

Table 9. CFA Model Fit for the Behavioural Intentions (WOM and Purchase Intention)

Model Fit Indices	Value
CMIN	15.643
CMIN/DF	1.422
GFI	.993
TLI	.996
CFI	.998
RMSEA	.027
AVE for WOM	.616
AVE for purchase intention	.653

4.6 Hypothesis Testing

The final step of this section, after conducting the EFA and CFA, was to test the hypotheses. This section is divided into two parts: mediation analysis and multiple regression analysis. These analyses were carried out using SPSS 26.

4.6.1 Mediation analysis

Mediation analysis aims to show whether the relationship between two variables is explained by a third intermediate variable or not. The third intermediate variable is called a mediator. In this part, we investigated the extent to which social media influencer attributes influences consumer WOM and purchase intention through a parasocial relationship. SPSS macro tool, PROCESS, has been used to conduct the analysis.

To assess the significance of the hypotheses, the p-values were looked at. P-values below 0.05 are considered significant. The direct and indirect effect was tested using a percentile bootstrap estimation approach with 5000 samples using PROCESS macro.

Empathy Feeling: Parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between empathy feeling and purchase intention, and fully mediates the relationship between empathy feeling and WOM.

The regression of purchase intention on empathy feeling, ignoring the mediator, is significant: B= 0.272, p = .000, indicating that independently from the mediator, empathy feeling has a significant positive effect on purchase intention. Results show that empathy feeling was a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B= .1968, p < .05), this is in accordance with H1-1, and parasocial relationship was a significant predictor of purchase intention (B=. 4822, p < .05), in accordance with H3. In addition to that, empathy feeling is a significant predictor of purchase intention when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B= .1771, p < .05). Results show a significant direct effect of .1771, p < 0.05 and a confidence interval of .1068,.2474, and an indirect effect of .0949 and a confidence interval of .0519,.1372. Given that the effect of empathy feeling on purchase intention was reduced when parasocial relationship was introduced, then the parasocial relationship mediates the relationship between empathy feeling and purchase intention, supporting H7-1.

The regression of WOM on empathy feeling, ignoring the mediator, was significant: B= .168, p = .000, indicating that independently from the mediator, empathy feeling has a significant positive effect on WOM. Results show that empathy feeling is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B= .1968, p < .05), this is in

accordance with H1-1, and parasocial relationship was a significant predictor of WOM (B = .6391, p < .05), in accordance with H5. In addition to that, empathy feeling is not a significant predictor of WOM when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B= .0420, p > .05). Results show an insignificant direct effect of .0420, p > 0.05 and a confidence interval of -.0218, .1058, and an indirect effect of .1258 and a confidence interval of 0.716, .1782. Therefore, parasocial relationship fully mediates between empathy feeling and WOM, supporting H6-1.

Therefore, H1-1, H6-1 and H7-1 are H1-1 partially supported and H3 and H5 supported as presented in Figures 12 and 13 below.

Figure 12. Mediation test: empathy feeling- parasocial relationship- purchase intention

Figure 13. Mediation test: empathy feeling- parasocial relationship- WOM

Empathy behaviour: Parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between empathy behaviour and WOM and purchase intention

The regression of purchase intention on empathy behaviour, ignoring the mediator, is significant: B= 0.290, p= .000. Results show that empathy behaviour is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B= .2121, p < .05), in accordance with H1-1, and parasocial relationship is a significant predictor of purchase intention (B= .4771, p < .05) in accordance with H3. In addition to that, empathy behaviour is a significant predictor of purchase intention when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B= .1886, p < .05). Results show a significant direct effect of .0358, p > 0.05 and a confidence interval of .1183,.2589, and an indirect effect of .1012 and a confidence interval of .0561,. 1479. Therefore, parasocial relationship partially mediates between empathy behaviour and purchase intention.

The regression of WOM on empathy behaviour, ignoring the mediator, is significant: B= 0.218, p = .000. Results show that empathy behaviour is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B= .2121, p < .05), in accordance with H1-1, and parasocial relationship was a significant predictor of WOM (B= .6295, p < .05) in accordance with H5. In addition to that, empathy behaviour is a significant predictor of WOM when controlling for the mediator parasocial relationship (B= .0843, p= .0096). Results show a significant direct effect of .0843, p < 0.05 and a confidence interval of .0205,.1480, and an indirect effect of .1335 and a confidence interval of .0730,.1917. As the effect of empathy behaviour on WOM was reduced when parasocial relationship was introduced, parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between empathy behaviour and WOM.

Therefore, H1-1, H6-1 and H7-1 are supported as presented in Figures 14 and 15 below.

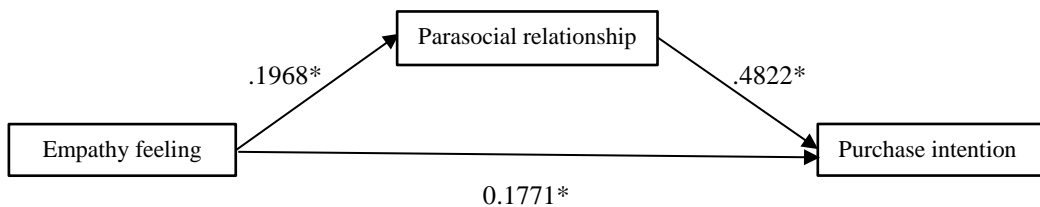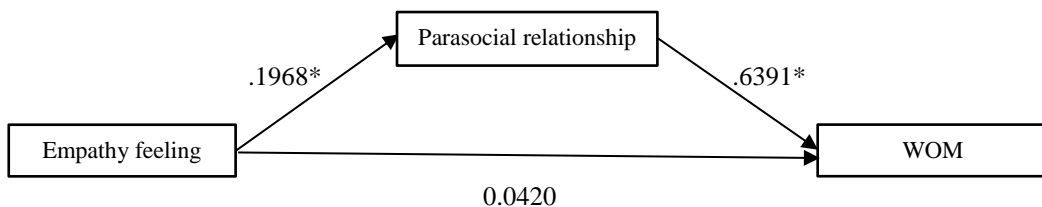Figure 14. Mediation test: empathy behaviour- parasocial relationship- purchase intention

Figure 15. Mediation test: empathy behaviour- parasocial relationship- WOM

Homophily: Parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between homophily with purchase intention and WOM

The regression of purchase intention on homophily, ignoring the mediator, is significant, B= 0.419, p = .000. Results show that homophily was a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B= .4403, p < .05), supporting H1-2, and parasocial relationship was a significant predictor of purchase intention (B= .4126, p < .05). In addition to that, homophily is a significant predictor of purchase intention when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B= .1548, p < .05). Results show a direct effect of .2374, p = .0000 and a confidence interval of .1615, .3133, and an indirect effect of .1816 and a confidence interval of .1377, .2296. As the

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effect of homophily on purchase intention was reduced when parasocial relationship was introduced, parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between homophily and purchase intention, supporting H6-2.

The regression of WOM on homophily, ignoring the mediator, is significant, B= 0.375, p = .000. Results show that homophily is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B= .4403, p < .05) and parasocial relationship is a significant predictor of WOM (B= .5983, p < .05). In addition to that, homophily is a significant predictor of WOM when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B= .1114, p < .05). Results show a direct effect of .1114, p = .0016 and a confidence interval of .0423,.1806, and an indirect effect of .2634 and a confidence interval of .2082,.3181. As the effect of homophily on WOM was reduced when parasocial relationship was introduced, parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between homophily and WOM, supporting H7-2.

Therefore, H1-2, H6-2 and H7-2 are all supported. Summary of the results is presented in Figures 16 and 17 below.

Figure 16.Mediation test: Homophily- parasocial relationship- purchase intention

Figure 17.Mediation test: Homophily- parasocial relationship- WOM
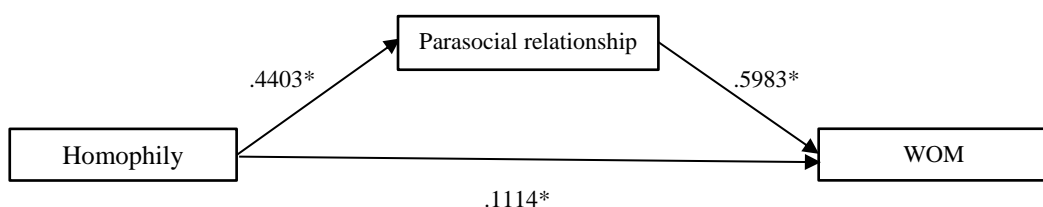
Low self-esteem: Parasocial relationship fully mediates the relationship between low self-esteem and purchase intention

The regression of purchase intention on self-esteem, ignoring the mediator, is significant, B= 0.121, p= .004. Low self-esteem is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B= .1098 , p= .0085), supporting H1-3, and parasocial relationship was a significant predictor of purchase intention (B= .5099, p = .000). In addition to that, low self-esteem is not a significant predictor of purchase intention when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B= .0650, p = .0709). The direct effect of .065 and a confidence interval of -.0056,.1356 is not found to be significant, while the indirect effect of .0560 has a confidence interval of .0090, .1032. Therefore, it is a full mediation supporting H6-3.

The regression of WOM on self-esteem, ignoring the mediator, is insignificant, B= .074, p = .07. Given that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and WOM then parasocial relationship cannot mediate this relationship. Therefore, H7-3 is rejected.

Given those results, only H1-3 and H6-3 are supported as presented in Figure 18 below.

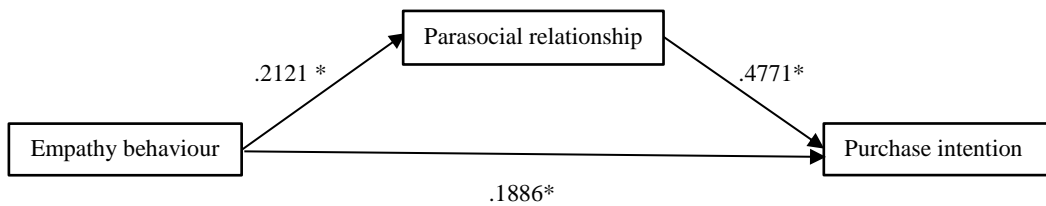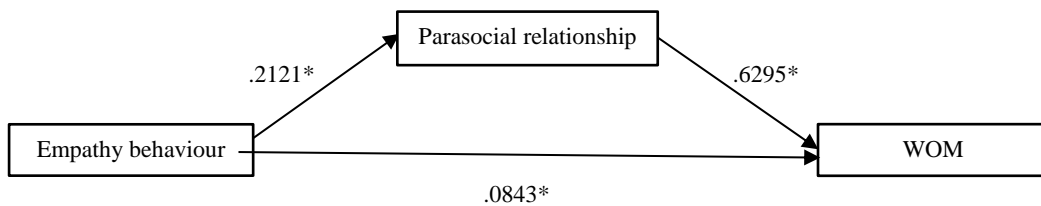Figure 18. Mediation test: low self-esteem- parasocial relationship- purchase intention

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Popularity: Parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between popularity with purchase intention and WOM

The regression of purchase intention on popularity, ignoring the mediator, is significant, B= 0.338, p <.05. Popularity is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B= .4903, p < .0000), supporting H4-1, and parasocial relationship is a significant predictor of purchase intention (B= .4628, p < .05). In addition to that, popularity is a significant predictor of purchase intention when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B= .1106, p = .0070). The direct effect of .1106 and a confidence interval of .0304,.1908 and the indirect effect of .2269 and a confidence interval of .1708,.2864 are significant. Therefore, parasocial relationship partially mediates between popularity and purchase intention, supporting H6-4.

The regression of WOM on popularity, ignoring the mediator, is significant, B= 0.483, p < .05. Popularity is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B= .4903, p < .05) and parasocial relationship is a significant predictor of WOM (B =.5403, p < .05). In addition to that, popularity is a significant predictor of WOM when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B= .2182, p < .05). Both the direct effect of .2182 and a confidence interval of .1486,.2878, and the indirect effect of .2649 and a confidence interval of .2049,.3291 are significant. As the effect of popularity on WOM was reduced when parasocial relationship was introduced, parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between popularity and WOM, supporting H7-4.

Therefore, H4-1, H6-4, and H7-4 are supported, and a summary of the results is presented in Figures 19 and 20 below.

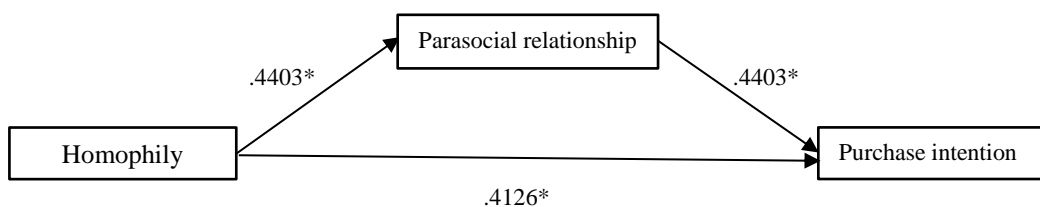Figure 19.Mediation test: Popularity- parasocial relationship- purchase intention

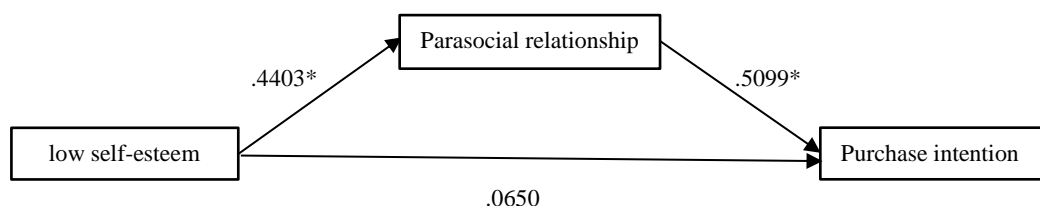Figure 20.Mediation test: Popularity- parasocial relationship- WOM
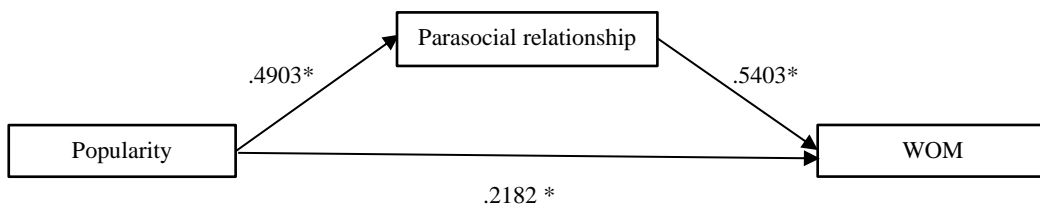
Leverage: Parasocial relationship fully mediates the relationship between leverage and purchase intention and partially mediates the relationship between leverage and WOM

The regression of purchase intention on leverage, ignoring the mediator, is significant, B= .346, p = <.05. Leverage is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B = .5921, p < .05), supporting H4-2, and parasocial relationship is a significant predictor of purchase intention (B= .4804, p = .000). In addition to that, leverage is not a significant predictor of parasocial relationship when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B= .0618, p = .1639). The direct effect of .065 and a confidence interval of -.0056,.1356 is not found to be significant, while the indirect effect of .2845 and a confidence interval of .2245,.3489 is significant. Therefore, parasocial relationship completely mediates the relationship between leverage and purchase intention, supporting H6-5.

The regression of WOM on leverage, ignoring the mediator, is significant, B= .510, p = <.05. Leverage is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B= .5921, p < .05) and parasocial relationship is a significant predictor of WOM (B= .5319, p < .05). In addition to that, leverage is a significant predictor of WOM when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B=.1950, p <0.05). The direct effect of .1 950 and a confidence interval of .1189,.2710 and the indirect effect of .3149 and a confidence interval of .2495,.3817 is significant. Therefore, parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between leverage and WOM, supporting H7-5.

Therefore, H4-2, H6-5 and H7-5 are accepted. See the summary of the result in Figure 21 and 22 below.

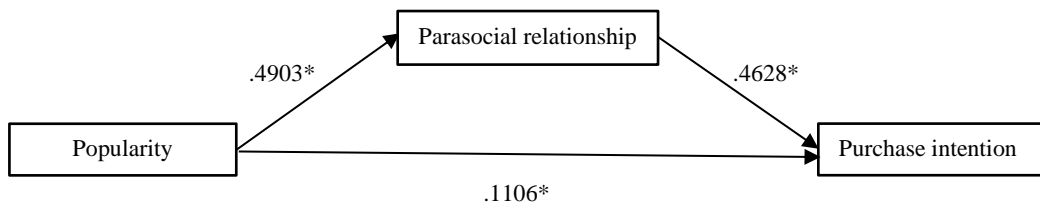Figure 21.Mediation test: Leverage- parasocial relationship- purchase intention
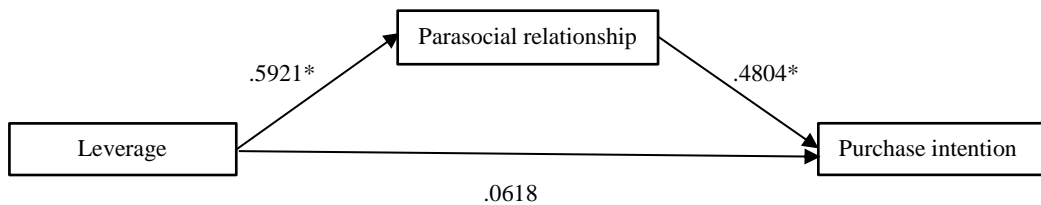
Figure 22.Mediation test: Leverage- parasocial relationship- WOM
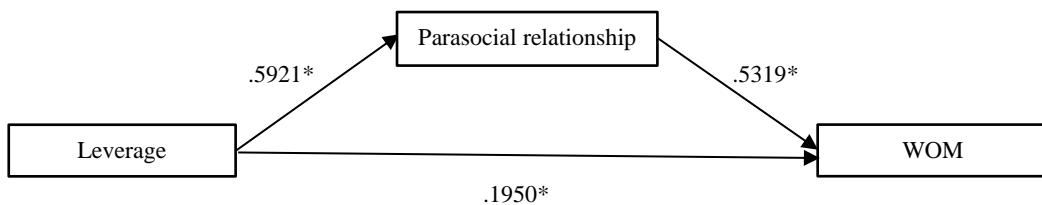
Fashionability: Parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between fashionability and purchase intention and fashionability and WOM

The regression of purchase intention on fashionability, ignoring the mediator, is significant, B= 0.401, p < .05. Results show that fashionability is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B= .5755, p < .05), supporting H4-3, and parasocial relationship was a significant predictor of purchase intention (B= .4280, p < .05). In addition to that, fashionability is a significant predictor of purchase intention when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B= .1548, p < .05). Results show a significant direct effect of .1548, p = .0000 and a confidence interval of .0697, .2399, and an indirect effect of .2463 and a confidence interval of .1899,.3052. Therefore, parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between fashionability and purchase intention, supporting H6-6.

The regression of WOM on fashionability, ignoring the mediator, is significant (B= 0.507, p < .05). Results show that fashionability is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B=.5755, p < .05) and parasocial relationship is a significant predictor of WOM (B =.5316, p < .05). In addition to that, fashionability is a significant predictor of WOM when controlling for the mediator, the parasocial relationship (B= .2011, p < .05). Results show a significant direct effect of .2011, p < .05 and a confidence interval of.1263,.2759, and an indirect effect of .3060 and a confidence interval of .2462,.3672. Therefore, parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between fashionability and WOM, supporting H7-6.

Given those results, H4-3, H6-6, and H7-6 are all accepted and the results are summarised in Figures 23 and 24.

Figure 23.Mediation test: Fashionable- parasocial relationship- purchase intention
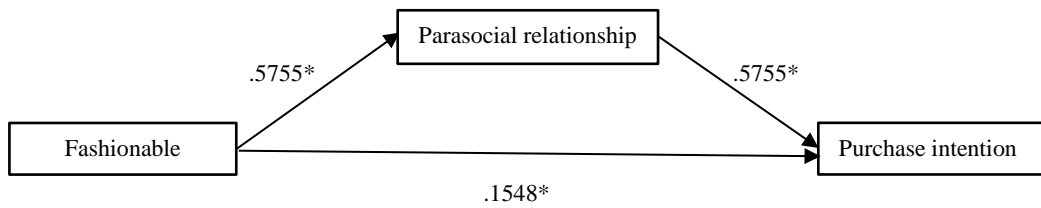
Figure 24.Mediation test: Fashionable- parasocial relationship- WOM
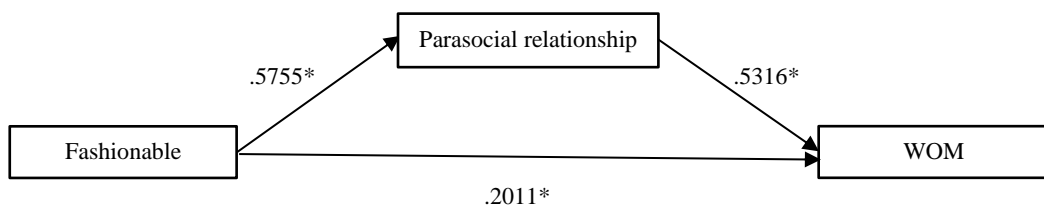
Affinity: Parasocial relationship fully mediates the relationship between affinity and purchase intention and partially mediates the relationship between affinity and WOM

The regression of purchase intention on affinity, ignoring the mediator, is significant (B= 0.378, p < .05). Affinity is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B = .6767, p = .0000), supporting H4-4, and parasocial relationship is a significant predictor of purchase intention (B= .4821, p= .0000). In addition to that, affinity is not a significant predictor of parasocial relationship when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B= .0517, p= .2878). The direct effect of .0517 and a confidence interval of -.0438,.1472 is not found to be significant, while the indirect effect of .3262 has a confidence interval of .2505,.4022. Therefore, parasocial relationship completely mediates the relationship between affinity and purchase intention, supporting H6-7.

The regression of WOM on affinity, ignoring the mediator, is significant (B= 0.553, p

< .05). Affinity is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship (B= .6767, p =

.0000) and parasocial relationship is a significant predictor of WOM (B=.5035, p =

.0000). In addition to that, affinity is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship

when controlling for the mediator, parasocial relationship (B= .2126, p < .05). The

direct effect of.2126 and a confidence interval of .1293,.2959 is significant, and the

indirect effect of .3407   has a confidence interval of .2677,.4159. Therefore,

parasocial relationship partially mediates the relationship between affinity and WOM,

supporting H7-7.

Therefore, H4-4, H6-7, and H7-7 are accepted. The summary of the results is

presented in Figures 25 and 26.

Figure 25.Mediation test: Affinity- parasocial relationship- purchase intention
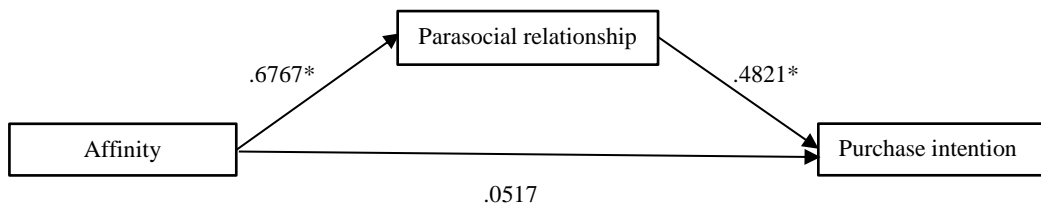
Figure 26.Mediation test: Affinity- parasocial relationship- WOM
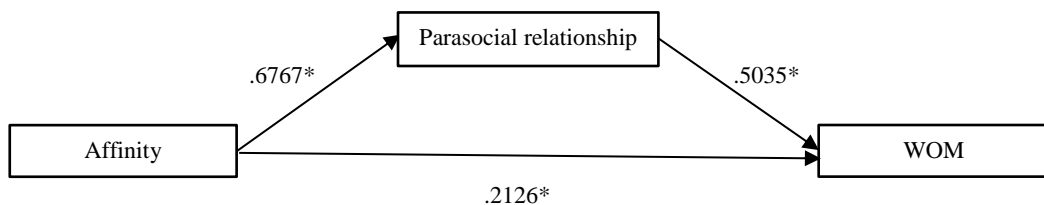
4.6.2 Multiple Regression Analysis (additional analyses)

Initial regression analysis was conducted of the actual purchase on parasocial

relationship and results indicate a non-significant effect of parasocial relationship on actual behaviour (purchase behaviour), measured with the amount of money spent to purchase products recommended by the favourite social media influencer. Therefore, H4 is rejected.

Two multiple regression analyses were conducted to test respectively the direct effects of followers' attributes and social media influencers' attributes on actual purchase.

Regression test of the actual purchase on the follower's attributes

However, before considering the results of the multiple regression, the collinearity test was looked at. Collinearity tests the association or correlation between more than two predictor variables in the model. Multicollinearity has been assessed by examining the tolerance, which should be more than 0.10, and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), which should be between 1-10. The collinearity test (as given in table10 below) shows that all the tolerance values are above 0.10 and VIF values are between 1-10, suggesting that there is no collinearity issue.

Table 10. Collinearity Test

Variables	Tolerance	VIF
Empathy Filing	.695	1.439
Empathy Behaviour	.856	1.168
Homophily	.643	1.556
Low self esteem	.831	1.204

The multiple regression model explains 2% of the variance in actual purchase (F value= 2.970, p-value=0.019). This means a small amount of the variation in the

dependent variable, actual purchase, can be explained by the variation in the independent variables: empathy, homophily, and low self-esteem.

In fact, only homophily and low self-esteem have a significant impact on actual purchase. Homophily has a positive effect on purchase intention (B= .148, t = 2.287, p-value=0.023) and low self-esteem has a negative effect on purchase intention (B= -.115, t= -2.025, p- value=0.044). The regression analysis results are available in Appendix C.

Regression test of the actual purchase on the social media's attributes

The collinearity test (as given in table 11 below) shows that all the tolerance values are above 0.10 and VIF values are between 1-10, suggesting that there is no collinearity issue.

Table 11. Collinearity Test

Variables	Tolerance	VIF
Popularity	.518	1.929
Leverage	.454	2.205
Fashion	.455	2.198
Affinity	.503	1.988

The multiple regression model explains 1.6% of the variance in actual purchase (F value= 2.293, p-value=0.058). Given that the p value is only slightly more than 0.05, the results were looked at. Only leverage and fashionability have a significant impact on actual purchase. Leverage has a significant negative effect on purchase intention (B= -.155, t = -2.012, p-value=.045) and fashionability has a significant positive effect on purchase intention (B= .206, t= 2.669, p- value=.008). The regression analysis

results are available in Appendix C.

Table 12.Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship between variables	B	Result
H1-1	Empathy Feeling → Parasocial Relationship	.1968	Hypothesis Accepted.
	Empathy Behaviour → Parasocial Relationship	.2121	
H1-2	Homophily→ Parasocial Relationship	.4403	Hypothesis Accepted.
H1-3	Low self-esteem → Parasocial Relationship	-.022	Hypothesis Accepted.
H2-1	Popularity → Parasocial Relationship	.4903	Hypothesis Accepted.
H2-2	Leverage → Parasocial Relationship	.5921	Hypothesis Accepted.
H2-3	Fashionability → Parasocial Relationship	.5755	Hypothesis Accepted.
H2-4	Affinity → Parasocial Relationship	.6767	Hypothesis Accepted.
H3	Parasocial relationship → Purchase Intention.	-	Hypothesis Accepted.
H4	Parasocial Relationship → Actual Purchase behaviour.	-	Hypothesis Rejected.
H5	Parasocial Relationship → WOM intention.	0.647	Hypothesis Accepted.
H6-1	Empathy Feeling- Parasocial Relationship-purchase intention	.0949	Hypothesis Accepted.
	Empathy Behaviour- Parasocial Relationship- purchase intention	.1012	
H6-2	Homophily- Parasocial Relationship-purchase intention	.1816	Hypothesis Accepted.
H6-3	Low self-esteem- Parasocial Relationship-Purchase intention	.0560	Hypothesis Accepted.
H6-4	Popularity- Parasocial Relationship-Purchase intention	.2269	Hypothesis Accepted.
H6-5	Leverage- Parasocial Relationship-Purchase intention	.2845	Hypothesis Accepted.

Hypothesis	Relationship between variables	B	Result
H6-6	Fashionability- Parasocial Relationship- Purchase intention	.2463	Hypothesis Accepted.
H6-7	Affinity- Parasocial Relationship- Purchase intention	.3407	Hypothesis Accepted.
H7-1	Empathy Feeling- Parasocial Relationship- WOM	.1258	Hypothesis Accepted.
	Empathy Behaviour- Parasocial Relationship- WOM	.1335	
H7-2	Homophily- Parasocial Relationship- WOM	.2634	Hypothesis Accepted.
H7-3	Low self-esteem- Parasocial Relationship- WOM	.0710	Hypothesis rejected.
H7-4	Popularity- Parasocial Relationship- WOM	.2649	Hypothesis Accepted.
H7-5	Leverage- parasocial relationship- WOM	.3149	Hypothesis Accepted.
H7-6	Fashionability- Parasocial Relationship- WOM	.3060	Hypothesis Accepted.
H7-7	Affinity- Parasocial Relationship- WOM	.3407	Hypothesis Accepted.

4.7 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attributes that impact on the followers' relationship with their social media influencers and influence their behaviour. Followers' related attributes as well as social media influencer's related attributes were investigated. Regression analysis with PROCESS was used to test the impact of each attribute on parasocial relationships with the social media influencer and the two behavioural outcomes, purchase and WOM intention. It was also used to conduct the mediation analysis.

The first three hypotheses assume that there is a relationship between the followers' attributes (empathy, attitude homophily, and low self-esteem) and parasocial

relationship with the social media influencer. Results show that empathy has two dimensions: empathy related to feeling as the other, and empathy related to actually showing a certain reaction/ behaviour. Therefore, H1 were divided into two, empathy feeling and empathy behaviour, and all tests were conducted for each component separately. All the first three hypotheses were supported. There was a significant positive relationship between the followers' empathy and their parasocial relationship with the influencer. This aligns with the findings of Hwang and Zhang (2018), that followers with high empathy toward the influencer positively influences their parasocial relationships. Also, it is aligned with the findings of Derrick et al. (2008), which found that empathy is an important factor for the development of the parasocial relationship. These results show that followers' high empathy with the social media influencers has a positive impact on their parasocial relationship.

In addition to that, there is a significant positive impact of the followers' homophily on their parasocial relationship with the influencer. Such a result is in line with Lee and Watkins' (2016) findings, that homophily was a strong indicator of parasocial relationship. Also, supporting that individuals are more likely to accept social media influencers and what they are trying to deliver if they found them similar to themselves (Lim, et al., 2017). Regarding followers' low self-esteem, there was a significant positive relationship between the followers' low self-esteem and their parasocial relationship. This is also supporting Hwang and Zhang's (2018) finding, that followers' low social self-esteem positively influences their parasocial relationships. Perhaps it also supports that individuals who feel that their self-esteem is threatened tend to connect with celebrities as a symbolic meaning to increase their self-esteem (Escalas & Bettman, 2015).

Moreover, four followers' attributes were investigated in this study: popularity, leverage, fashionability, and affinity. These attributes were taken from a very recent study done by Yuan et al. (2019). All of the four hypotheses were supported. The results of this study were consistent with Yuan et al.'s (2019) except for popularity. Contrary to Yuan et al's (2019) findings, consumers in the Qatari market seems to perceive popularity as an important attribute that has a significant effect on parasocial relationship. However, it is also important to note that participants were asked to list their favourite influencers at the beginning of the survey and complete the survey having in their mind this influencer. To many people, the word influencer is associated with popularity, and thus they might have been following less popular people, but listed the most popular one, assuming that influence is associated with popularity.

With regards to affinity, Yuan et al. (2019) found that because of the nature of social media, followers were able to be more familiar with the affinity of the social media influencers than with that of a traditional celebrity, and thus their recommendations are more likely to be beneficial to them. This was supported by the findings of this study. People in Qatar are able to relate more to social media influencers than to the traditional celebrities as those social media influencers share their lifestyle on a regular basis. This was also supported by previous researches that suggested that self-disclosures on social media platforms increase the feeling of connection and play an important role in developing relationships (Ferchaud al el. 2018; Utz, 2015). In addition to that, regarding the influencer's fashionability and leverage, the findings of this study was in line with Yuan et al.'s (2019), which suggested that information delivered by a web celebrity, who has a strong leverage and who is up to date (fashionable), will attract the attention of followers.

The significant positive relationship between parasocial relationship and the behavioural outcomes, WOM and purchase intention, is also in line with the results of many previous researches. For example, Hwang and Zhang (2018) found followers develop a closer relationship with a social media celebrity than with traditional celebrities and this impact on their WOM intention and purchase intention. This means that when followers get more attached or obsessed with the influencer then they are more likely to purchase than the less attached or obsessed followers (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019).

Results for the impact of parasocial relationship on actual purchase were insignificant. However, further analyses were carried out to investigate the impact of followers' and influencers' attributes on actual purchase. The regression model of the actual purchase on the follower's attributes shows that only attitude homophily and low self-esteem have a significant impact on the followers' actual purchase behaviour. Homophily has a significant positive impact on actual behaviour and low self-esteem has a significant negative impact on actual behaviour. Given that, when followers feel that there is an attitude of homophily between them and their favourite social media influencer, then they are more likely to have actually purchased something that was recommended by him/her. While followers with low self-esteem are less likely to actually purchase something that was recommended by a social media influencer.

In addition to that, the regression model of the actual purchase on the social media influencer's attributes was slightly above the recommended p-value at p= 0.058. Results show that leverage has a significant negative impact on actual purchase, and fashionability has a significant positive impact on actual purchase. This means that the more the social media influencer is perceived to be powerful in a specific area, the

less likely that followers are found to have purchased something recommended by her/him. The results found it to be the opposite when the social media influencer was perceived to be fashionable.

Investigating the impact on followers' actual behaviour is one of the main contributions of this research. This is because, to our knowledge, we could not find any research that actually has done that through a questionnaire. Followers' actual purchase was measured through three direct questions, including: Have you purchased something recommended by your Instagram influencer? what was it? and how much did it cost? The study results show that parasocial relationship has no significant impact on the followers' actual purchase. These results provide some interesting points about followers' profile and what impacts their actual behaviour.

Moreover, H6-1 to H6-7 assume that parasocial relationship mediates the relationship between the followers and social media attributes and purchase intention, and H7-1 to H7-7 assume that parasocial relationship mediates the relationship between the followers and social media attributes and WOM intention. These hypotheses were formed based on the existent literature review regarding the impact of followers' and influencers' attributes on parasocial relationship and the behavioural outcomes. Not many researches have been conducted on the mediating impact of parasocial relationship, therefore, this is also considered as one of the main contributions of this study. All the hypotheses were supported except for H7-3 that assumes that parasocial relationship mediates the relationship between followers' low self-esteem and WOM intention' showing that low self-esteem does not have an impact on WOM intention that parasocial relationship can mediate.

In addition to that, parasocial relationship fully mediates the relationship between

empathy feeling and WOM, low self-esteem and purchase intention, leverage and purchase intention, and affinity and purchase intention. This suggests that without the parasocial relationship the effectiveness of those attributes will not be significant to have the indicated positive outcomes. The fact that full mediation has occurred stresses the importance of the parasocial relationship. These attributes cannot influence the followers' behaviour without the existence of a parasocial relationship between them and the social media influencer.

In their study, Hwang & Zhang (2018) also examined the mediating effect of parasocial relationships on the relationships between empathy and purchase intentions, empathy and eWOM intentions, low social self-esteem and purchase intentions, and low social self-esteem and purchase intentions. The only result that matches the findings of this study is that parasocial relationship fully mediates the relationship between low self-esteem and purchase intentions. With regards to followers' attributes, the findings of this study, and in line with Hwang & Zhang (2018), suggest that when followers have low self-esteem, they do not intend to purchase what their Instagram influencer promotes, unless they have a parasocial relationship with this Instagram influencer. Similarly, when they have empathy toward their influencers, they are not willing to recommend what their Instagram influencer promotes, unless they have a parasocial relationship with this Instagram influencer.

With regards to the influencers' attributes, results suggest that even when the influencer possesses a leverage (power) or has an affinity (close to the public), people in Qatar would not show purchase intention, unless they have a parasocial relationship with this influencer.

However, findings show that both leverage and affinity remained significant even after including the parasocial relationship variable between them and the WOM. This may imply that for people in Qatar, the influencer's leverage or affinity would impact on their WOM intention even if they do not have a parasocial relationship with this influencer. These findings may suggest that followers are willing to recommend or say positive things about what their favourite Instagram influencer promotes, even when they do not have a parasocial relationship with this influencer, but they might not have the intention to buy. This is perhaps because intention to purchase is risker than recommending to others.

Similarly, the relationship between empathy feeling and purchase intention, empathy behaviour and WOM, empathy behaviour and purchase intention, homophily and purchase intention, homophily and WOM, popularity and purchase intention, popularity and WOM, fashionable and purchase intention, and fashionable and WOM, are all partially mediated by parasocial relationship. These relationships remained significant, even after including the mediating variable, parasocial relationship. This indicates that there is a direct effect of those attributes on the followers' positive behaviour. An interesting finding of this research is that followers have positive WOM and purchase intentions when their fashionable or popular influencers recommend something, even if they do not have a parasocial relationship with this influencer.

The findings of the regression analysis of the actual purchase on the followers' and influencers' attributes and the mediating analysis show interesting points about the impact on followers' intention versus the impact on their actual behaviour. While parasocial relationship mediates the relationship between social media influencer and

followers' attributes and the followers' intention to behave, parasocial relationship has no significant impact on the followers' actual behaviour. What made followers buy something recommended by their favourite Instagram influencer was either because they felt that there was a similarity between their attitude and their social media influencer's attitude, or because they perceived this social media influencer as fashionable or trendy, or it could be due to both factors. In addition to that, what made followers hesitate or not to buy something recommended by their favorite Instagram influencer was either because they had low self-esteem, or because they perceived that their favourite Instagram influencer had a high leverage (perceived power in specific area).

4.8 Conclusion

This study aimed to understand what impact the followers' parasocial relationships with the influencers has on influencing their behaviour, and the findings provided by this chapter show some interesting insights. These findings offer a significant contribution to theoretical and managerial implications. Also, while some hypotheses could not be accepted or rejected, the study cannot be free of limitations and thus this is an opportunity for future researches. Implications, other limitation and suggestions for future researches are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Implications, Limitations and Future Researches

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the study in the conclusion, discusses its theoretical and managerial implications, and finally presents the limitations and suggestions for future research.

5.2 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of the followers and social media influencers' attributes on the followers' parasocial relationship with social media influencers and their positive outcomes. In addition, it aimed to investigate the mediating effect of the parasocial relationship between those attributes and the followers' behavioural intentions (WOM and purchase intentions). The followers' attributes included empathy and homophily with the social media influencer, and low self-esteem. The social media influencers' attributes included popularity, leverage (perceived power), fashionability, and affinity (how close he/ she is to public life). The three positive outcomes that have been investigated included purchase and WOM intentions, and actual purchase.

This research used two main theories, the Signalling theory and the Social Influence theory to develop the conceptual framework and explain how the constructs related to each other. In fact, previous marketing studies have adopted those theories to understand the relationship and impact of celebrity endorsement on consumers.

Findings of this study show that all the investigated followers' and social media influencer's attributes have a significant impact on the followers' parasocial relationship with their influencers. Given that, parasocial relationship is an important

linkage between customers and businesses (Yuan et al., 2019), and marketers and managers need to understand the antecedents of this relationship. This study provides significant antecedents of the followers' parasocial relationship with the social media influencer. In fact, it also shows that some of those antecedents, followers' or social media influencer attributes, can actually have a direct significant and positive outcome; however, the impact of some of them is significant only through the mediation of the parasocial relationship (indirect effect).

More specifically, the results of this study show that parasocial relationship fully mediates the relationship between empathy feeling and WOM, low self-esteem and purchase intention, leverage and purchase intention, and affinity and purchase intention. This suggests that, for example, followers who empathise, by feeling, with their favourite social media influencer are more likely to talk about the product or service that has been recommended by the social media influencer when they have a parasocial relationship with this influencer. Similarly, followers who have low self-esteem are more likely to have the purchase intention to purchase something that was recommended by their social media influencer, when they have a parasocial relationship with this influencer. In addition to that, a social media influencer who is perceived to be expert or powerful in a specific area, or very close to the public, will not be able to influence his followers' purchase intention, unless there is a parasocial relationship between them. The full mediation of these cases shows the importance of the parasocial relationship as certain attributes cannot influence the followers' behaviour without the existence of a parasocial relationship between them and the social media influencer.

Interesting findings are also that the relationship between some of the social media attributes and behavioural intentions remained significant, even after including the mediating variable, parasocial relationship. This indicates that there is a direct effect of those attributes on the followers' behavioural intentions. For example, findings show that fashionable and popular Instagram influencers have a significant direct effect on their followers' WOM and purchase intentions. Looking at the demographic profile of the respondents, since 60% of respondents are between the ages of 16-24, it is interesting to see that the Instagram influencers that they have listed are very popular and up-to-date with the different trends.

Given these results, suggested practical implications could be that brand managers who are considering having a social media influencer to promote their product or service need to decide what is their main objective of having a social media influencer. If they would like to have their customers' intention to buy their products or services, then they might consider having a social media influencer, who is very popular and fashionable. A social media influencer with such attributes is able to impact on their followers' purchase intentions even if they do not have a parasocial relationship with their followers. However, considering a social media influencer who is very close to the public or perceived to be powerful in a specific area, then the brand managers need to make sure that this social media influencer has a parasocial relationship with their followers to be able to impact on their purchase intention. The findings of this study also show that followers' homophily with their social media influencer and the influencer's fashionability have a positive impact, while followers' low self-esteem and the influencer's leverage have a negative impact on the followers' actual purchase behaviour.

Moreover, for brand managers who would like to have people in the Qatari market to talk about their product or service, then all of the given attributes of both followers and influencers are effective. Perhaps some of them might require that the social media influencer and followers have a parasocial relationship, however, to understand what impact this had on followers' actual purchase in the past, those brand manager need to have a deeper look into the customer's profile. Findings of this research show that followers, who felt that there was a similarity between them and between the social media influencers, or perceived the social media influencer as fashionable, actually did purchase something recommended by their favourite social media influencer. Therefore, these brand managers should consider having a social media influencer, who represents their customers (there is an attitude of homophily between them), and who is perceived as fashionable to be able to sell their products or service.

5.3 Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This study offers several contributions to the literature. More specifically, it aims to enhance the theoretical knowledge of market research about the use of social media and social media influencers. First, previous studies have mainly focused on the impact of using traditional celebrities for advertising. This study sheds light on how social media influencers can impact on their followers and their behavioural intentions. Therefore, it enhances the researchers' and marketers' understanding of the social media and its influencer marketing.

Second, it provides an integrated model presenting how followers' related attributes and influencers' related attributes impact on the parasocial relationships, which lead to positives outcomes. Previous researches mainly focused on the influencers' attributes, while results show that they are, in fact, important to consider, but the

results of this study show that followers' attributes can also impact on their parasocial relationship with the influencer.

Third, this study also investigated the mediating effect of parasocial relationship between the followers' and influencer's attributes and the followers' behavioural intentions. Results show that some of the relationships are fully mediated by parasocial relationship, including the relationship between empathy feeling and WOM, low self-esteem and purchase intention, leverage and purchase intention, and affinity and purchase intention. Given that, researchers and marketers should pay more attention to the phenomenon of parasocial relationship. This will allow them to have a deeper understanding of customer behaviour.

This study also offers several managerial implications; this study can be helpful for marketers and business managers in different ways. Social media and social media influencers provide great marketing opportunities. However, marketers and business managers need to understand that having social media accounts or having a popular celebrity or social media influencer is no longer an effective marketing strategy. Therefore, the conceptual framework and findings of this study provide useful insights and implications related to social media influencer marketing.

The main focus of this study was the parasocial relationship with the social media influencer. The study shows that this relationship is driven by the followers' and the influencers' attributes. It shows marketers that the establishment of emotional connections between their consumers and influencers can actually lead to positive outcomes. For example, the findings suggested that the influencer's leverage (power) or affinity (how close he/ she is to public life), is ineffective if the influencer does not have a parasocial relationship with the follower.

The results of our study could help marketers by using the different followers' attributes to identify the profile of people who will be the most impacted by social media influencers in terms of purchase behaviour and intention, as well as those that will podcast the recommendations of social media influencers (WOM). They will also help marketers in identifying the characteristics that make social media influencers more effective, as our results show that popularity is not the unique characteristic that will make social media influencers' recommendations effective for their followers.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations which can open up possibilities for research. We made the choice to focus on users of Instagram in Qatar, and thus marketers and business managers need to be careful in considering its generalisability. In fact, future researches should consider the effect of parasocial relationship on followers' behaviour in different cultures. Future studies can investigate how the formation of the parasocial relationship with the social media influencer might be different in different cultures. For example, people in Qatar are influenced by a collective culture, and thus the factors that affect their parasocial relationship with the influencers might be different than those affecting people influenced by an individualist culture.

Future researches should consider focusing on influencers of a specific area of expertise. This study did not focus on a specific area of expertise. Some previous researches conducted on parasocial relationship have focused on a specific area including fashion (Yuan et al., 2019), beauty and fashion (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019), and social shopping websites (Zheng et al. , 2019). Followers might respond differently to endorsements in different areas. Therefore, future researchers should consider focusing on influencers of one or two areas, as it might impact on the findings of the parasocial relationship or endorsement.

Finally, while the findings of this study show that the results for social media using Instagram are consistent with those found by studies done on other social media, not all social media platforms have the same settings or features. Future research should consider providing more insights, and perhaps a comparative analysis about the impact of the social media platform settings or features.

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Measurement Items

Construct	Description	Sources
Empathy	I can often understand how my favourite Instagram influencer is feeling even before he/ she submits a media content on Instagram. I can tell when my favourite Instagram influencer is angry even if he/she tries to hide it. I can tell when my favourite Instagram influencer pretends to be happy when he/she actually is not. I can tell easily how my favourite Instagram influencer is feeling. When my favourite Instagram influencer is scared, I feel afraid. When my favourite Instagram influencer is sad, I become sad too. When my favourite Instagram influencer is angry, I feel angry too. When my favourite Instagram influencer is nervous, I become nervous too.	(Hwang & Zhang, 2018)
Homophily	This Instagram influencer thinks like me. This Instagram influencer is similar to me. This Instagram influencer is like me. This Instagram influencer shares my values. This Instagram influencer has a lot in common with me. Instagram influencer behaves like me. This Instagram influencer has thoughts and ideas that are similar to mine. I think that my Instagram influencer could be a friend of mine. I would like to have a friendly chat with my Instagram influencer. This Instagram influencer treats people like I do.	(Lee & Watkins, 2016)
Low social self-esteem	I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or a failure. I feel self-conscious. I feel displeased with myself. I am worried about what other people think of me. I feel inferior to others at this moment. I feel concerned about the impression I am making. I am worried about looking foolish.	(Heatherton & Polivy, 1991)
Popularity	This Instagram influencer has a high exposure in the Instagram environment. This Instagram influencer has a high popularity in the Instagram environment. This Instagram influencer has a high reputation in the Instagram environment.	(Yuan et al., 2019)
Leverage	This Instagram influencer can cause debate in the Instagram environment. This Instagram influencer is topical in the Instagram environment. This Instagram influencer remarks in the Instagram environment are sensational.	(Yuan et al., 2019)
Fashionable	This Instagram influencer can lead the trend in the Instagram environment. This Instagram influencer is very fashionable. This Instagram influencer is very sensitive to fashion.	(Yuan et al., 2019)
Affinity	This Instagram influencer is very close to people. This Instagram influencer behaviour is in a popular style. This Instagram influencer is a very down-to-earth person.	(Yuan et al., 2019)
Parasocial relationship	I feel close enough to my faviort Instagram influencer to use his(her) Instagram.	(Kim, Ko, &

	I feel comfortable about my faviort Instagram influencer messages. I can rely on information I get from my favourite Instagram influencer. I feel fascinated with my favourite Instagram influencer's Instagram. In the past, I pitied my favourite Instagram influencer when he/she made a mistake on his/her Instagram. I think that my favourite Instagram influencer's Instagram is helpful for my interests (in fashion and others).	Kim, 2015)
Word of mouth (WOM)	I am likely to say positive things about what my Instagram influencer promotes to others. I would recommend what my Instagram influencer promotes to my friends and relatives. If my friends were looking for a product or service of this type, would recommend what my Instagram influencer said about it.	(Su, Swanson, Chinchanachokchai, Hsu, & Chen, 2016)
Intention to Purchase	I will buy the product or the service that Instagram influencer promoted through Instagram. I have the intention to buy the product or the service that my Instagram influencer promoted on Instagram. I am interested in buying the product or the service my Instagram influencer promoted on Instagram. It is likely that I will buy the products or services my Instagram influencer promoted on Instagram in the future. Overall, I am pleased with what my Instagram influencer promotes on Instagram.	(Hwang & Zhang, 2018)

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Questionnaire in English

Dear Respondent,

We would like to invite you to participate in this research study, and which is approved by QU-IRB board under the reference number .... If you have any questions related to ethical compliance of the study you may contact them at QU-IRB@qu.edu.qa

The purpose of the study is to investigate which attributes impact the followers' relationship with their social media influencers and influence their behaviour, purchase intention and actual purchase.

The survey should not take more than 10 minutes of your time. The information collected will be kept strictly confidential. Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. If you would like to obtain the results of the study, you may provide your e-mail address at the end of the survey, however this is entirely optional. The data will be used for the purpose of this study only. You may withdraw from this study at any time.

If you have any questions you may contact us by email ;

PI 1 (Project Supervisor) Name: Mohamed Slim Ben Mimoun

Address: College of Business & Economics, Qatar University, P . O. Box 2713, Doha, Qatar

Email : mbenmimoun@qu.edu.qa

Phone : 44037149

If you have read, understood and agree to participate, please proceed with the survey. Thank you for your valuable time.

Part A: General Information

1. How many hours do you spend on social media every day?

☐Never   ☐ 1-2 hours   ☐ 3-4 hours   ☐ 5 hours or above

2. Which Instagram influencer do you mostly follow? (mention one influencer)

☐ -------------------------------

3. When did you start following this Instagram influencer?

☐ less than 6 months ago

☐ One year ago

☐ Two years ago

☐ Three years ago or more

4. What is the area of expertise of this Instagram influencer?

☐ Fashion

☐ Traveling

☐ Beauty products

☐ Food and beverages

☐ Others: -------------------------------

To what extent do you agree on the following statements?

(1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Emp1: I can often understand how my favourite Instagram influencer is feeling even before he/ she submits a media content on Instagram.					
Emp2: I can tell when my favourite Instagram influencer is angry even if he/she tries to hide it.					
Emp3: I can tell when my favourite Instagram influencer pretends to be happy when he/she actually is not.					
Emp4: I can tell easily how my favourite Instagram influencer is feeling.					
Emp5: When my favourite Instagram influencer is scared, I feel afraid.					
Emp6: When my favourite Instagram influencer is sad, I become sad too.					
Emp7: When my favourite Instagram influencer is angry, I feel angry too.					
Emp8: When my favourite Instagram influencer is nervous, I become nervous too					
Hom1: This Instagram influencer thinks like me.					
Hom2: This Instagram influencer is similar to me.					

Statement	1 2 3 4 5

Hom3: This Instagram influencer is like me.

Hom4: This Instagram influencer shares my values.

Hom5: This Instagram influencer has a lot in common with me.

Hom6: Instagram influencer behaves like me.

Hom7: This Instagram influencer has thoughts and ideas that are similar to mine.

Hom8: I think that my Instagram influencer could be a friend of mine.

Hom9: I would like to have a friendly chat with my Instagram influencer.

Hom10: This Instagram influencer treats people like I do.

Low1: I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or a failure.

Low2: I feel self-conscious.

Low3: I feel displeased with myself.

Low4: I am worried about what other people think of me.

Low5: I feel inferior to others at this moment.

Low6: I feel concerned about the impression I am making.

Low7: I am worried about looking foolish.

Pop1: This Instagram influencer has a high exposure in the Instagram environment.
Pop2: This Instagram influencer has a high popularity in the Instagram environment.

Pop3: This Instagram influencer has a high reputation in the Instagram environment.
Lev1: This Instagram influencer can cause debate in the Instagram environment.
Lev2: This Instagram influencer is topical in the Instagram environment.

Lev3: This Instagram influencer remarks in the Instagram environment are sensational.
Fash1: This Instagram influencer can lead the trend in the Instagram environment.
Fash2: This Instagram influencer is very fashionable.

Fash3: This Instagram influencer is very sensitive to fashion.

Aff1: This Instagram influencer is very close to people.

Statement	1 2 3 4 5

Aff2: This Instagram influencer behaviour is in a popular style.

Aff3: This Instagram influencer is a very down-to-earth person.

PSI1: I feel close enough to my favourite Instagram influencer to use his(her) Instagram.

PSI2: I feel comfortable about my favourite Instagram influencer messages.

PSI3: I can rely on information I get from my favourite Instagram influencer.

PSI4: I feel fascinated with my favourite Instagram influencer's Instagram.

PSI5: In the past, I pitied my favourite Instagram influencer when he/she made a mistake on his/her Instagram.

PSI6: I think that my favourite Instagram influencer's Instagram is helpful for my interests (in fashion and others).

WOM1: I am likely to say positive things about what my Instagram influencer promotes to others.

WOM2: I would recommend what my Instagram influencer promotes to my friends and relatives.

WOM3: If my friends were looking for a product or service of this type, would recommend what my Instagram influencer said about it.

Int1: I will buy the product or the service that Instagram influencer promoted through Instagram.

Int2: I have the intention to buy the product or the service that my Instagram influencer promoted on Instagram.

Int3: I am interested in buying the product or the service my Instagram influencer promoted on Instagram.

Int4: It is likely that I will buy the products or services my Instagram influencer promoted on Instagram in the future.

Int5: Overall, I am pleased with what my Instagram influencer promotes on Instagram.

You have purchased something recommended by your Instagram influencer.

Yes/ No

If yes, please specify what was the product/ service.

100

If yes, please specify what was the price of the product/ service.

Part C: Demographic Information

1. What is your age?

☐18 - 24 years old   ☐25 - 34 years old   ☐ 35 - 44 years old

☐ 45 - 54 years old   ☐55 - 64 years old   ☐ 64 years & above

2. What is your gender?

☐ Male   ☐ Female

3. What is your nationality?

☐Qatari   ☐Non-Qatari

4. What is your level of education?

☐ High school   ☐ Diploma (2 years) ☐ Undergraduate ☐ Postgraduate

5. Please state your current occupation:

☐ Employed   ☐Unemployed ☐ Student   ☐ Retired

6. What is your annual income?

☐   Less than 50,000 Qatari Riyals

☐   50,001-150,000 Qatari Riyals

☐   150,001-250,000 Qatari Riyals

☐   250,001-350,000 Qatari Riyals

☐   350,001-450,000 Qatari Riyals

☐   450,001 Qatari Riyals or above

عزيزي المشارك ،

نود أن ندعوك للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة التي تمت الموافقة عليها من قبل مجلس QU-IRB تحت الرقم المرجعي ....

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو التحقق من السمات التي تؤثر على علاقة المتابعين بالمؤثرين على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي تأثيرها على سلوكهم (شراء المنتج).

يحتاج هذا الاستبيان الى 10 دقائق من وقتك. سيتم الاحتفاظ بالمعلومات التي تم جمعها بسرية تامة. مشاركتك ستكون تطوعي ومجهولة بالكامل. إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على نتائج الدراسة ، فيمكنك تقديم عنوان بريدك الإلكتروني في نهاية الاستطلاع ، ولكن هذا اختياري تماماً. يمكنك الانسحاب من هذه الدراسة في أي وقت.

إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة يمكنك الاتصال بنا عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني ؛

1.1 PI (مشرف المشروع)
الاسم: محمد سليم بن ميمون
العنوان: كلية إدارة الأعمال والاقتصاد ، جامعة قطر ، ص. صندوق 2713 ، الدوحة ، دولة قطر
البريد الإلكتروني: mbenmimoun@qu.edu.qa
هاتف: 44037149

إذا كنت قد قرأت وفهمت ووافقت على المشاركة ، فيرجى متابعة الاستبيان.

شكرا لك على وقتك الثمين.

الجزء الأول:
١. كم من الوقت تقضية على شبكات التواصل الإجتماعي يوميا؟
لا استخدم شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي.
ساعة - ساعتين يوميا.
٣-٤ ساعات يوميا.
٥ ساعات أو أكثر.

٢. أكثر مؤثر تتابعة على انستقرام؟
عبدالعزيز العجيل
ليدي عاشة
الفتون الجناحي
حنين الصيفي
عبدالله الغافري
آخر (الرجاء التحديد):- ------------------------------------

٣. متى بدأت بمتابعته (مؤثر الانستقرام الذي تم ذكره في السؤال السابق)؟
خلال الست شهور السابقة
منذ سنه
منذ سنتين
منذ ثلاث سنين أو أكثر

٤. ماهو المجال الذي يختص فيه مؤثر انستقرام الذي ذكرته؟

الأزياء

السفر

مستحضرات التجميل

الأكل و الشرب

أخرى (الرجاء التحديد):- -------------------------------------

الجزء الثاني: ما هي درجة موافقتك أو عدم موافقتك على العبارات التالية فيما يخص أفضل مؤثر في انستقرام:

(١) لا أوافق بشدة، (٢) لا أوافق، (٣) محايد، (٤) أوافق، (٥) أوافق بشدة

5	4	3	2	1	
					Emp1. استطيع معرفة ما يشعر به مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي حتى قبل وضعة أي محتوى في انستقرامه.
					Emp2. استطيع معرفة اذا كان مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي كان غاضبا حتى لو حاول اخفاء ذلك.
					Emp3. استطيع معرفة اذا كان مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي يمثل بانه سعيد وهو في الحقيقة عكس ذلك.
					Emp4. استطيع بسهوله معرفة ما يشعر به مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي.

						Emp5. عندما يشعر مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي بالخوف، اشعر انا بالخوف ايضا.
						Emp6. عندما يشعر مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي بالحزن اشعر انا بالحزن ايضا.
						Emp7. عندما يشعر مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي بالغضب اشعر انا بالغضب ايضا.
						Emp8. عندما يشعر مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي بالتوتر اشعر انا بالتوتر ايضا.
						Hom1: مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي يفكر بنفس الطريقة التي أفكر بها.
						Hom2: مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي يبدو مطابقا لي.
						Hom3: مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي يشبهني.
						Hom4: مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي يشاركني مبادئي.
						Hom5: مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي يشاركني نفس القيم.
						Hom6: مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي يتصرف مثلي.
						Hom7: مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي لديه أفكار وآراء تشبه أفكاري وآرائي.
						Hom8: اعتقد بأن مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي ممكن أن يكون صديقي.
						Hom9: أود أن اجري محادثة ديه مع مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي.
						Hom10: مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي يعامل الناس مثلي.
						Low1: أنا قلق بشأن ما إذا كنت أعتبر ناجحا أو فاشلا.
						Low2: أشعربأن لدي وعي ذاتي.
						Low3: أشعر بعدم الرضا من نفسي.
						Low4: أنا قلق بشأن ما يعتقده الآخرون عني.
						Low5: أشعر بأني أقل مستوى من الآخرين في هذه اللحظة.

					Low6: أشعر بالقلق بشأن الانطباع الذي اتركه.
					Low7: أنا قلق أن أبدو احمقا في نظر الآخرين.
					Pop1: مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام له ظهور كبير في انستقرام.
					Pop2: مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام له شعبية كبيرة في انستقرام.
					Pop3: مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام له سمعه عالية جدا في انستقرام.
					Lev1: مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام يمكن أن يحدث جدلا في انستقرام.
					Lev2: مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام مختص في مجاله.
					Lev3: ملاحظات مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام مدهشة.
					Fash1: مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام يستطيع قيادة التوجه العام (مثال: في الموضة، أو الأكل، أو السفر، أو كل ماهو جديد).
					Fash2: مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام عصري للغاية.
					Fash3: مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام لديه دقة عاليه في ما يتعلق بما هو حديث في ميدان اختصاصه.
					Aff1: مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام قريب جدا من الناس.
					Aff2: يتمتع مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام بإسلوب عصري في انستقرام.
					Aff3: مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام متواضع جدا.
					PSI1: أشعر بالراحة من استخدام مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام.
					PSI2 : أشعر بالراحة تجاه محتوى مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام

					PSI3: أشعر بانني استطيع الاعتماد على المعلومات التي احصل عليها من مؤثري المفضل في انستقرام.
					PSI4: أشعر بأنني معجب بانستقرام مؤثري المفضل.
					PSI5: في الماضي ، أشفقت على مؤثري المفضلة عندما أرتكب خطأ في انستقرامه.
					PSI6: أشعر بأن انستقرام مؤثري المفضل مفيد لاهتماماتي (في مجال الموضة وغيره).
					WOM1: من المرجح أن أقول أشياء إيجابية حول ما يروج له مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي.
					WOM2: أوصي بما يروج له مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي لأصدقائي وأقاربي.
					WOM3: إذا كان أصدقائي يبحثون عن منتج أو خدمة من هذا النوع ، فأنصح بما قاله مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لدي عنه.
					Int1: سأشتري المنتج أو الخدمة التي يروج لها مؤثري المفضل على حسابه في انستقرام.
					Int2: لدي نية لشراء المنتج أو الخدمة التي روج لها مؤثري المفضل على حسابه في انستقرام.
					Int3: أنا مهتم بشراء المنتج أو الخدمة التي يروج لها مؤثري المفضل على حسابه في انستقرام.
					Int4: من المحتمل أن أشتري المنتجات أو الخدمات التي يروج لها مؤثري المفضل على حسابه في انستقرام في المستقبل.
					Int5: بشكل عام ، أنا سعيد بما يروج له مؤثري المفضل على حسابه في انستقرام.

Act1:هل سبقت واشتريت شي اوصى به مؤثر انستقرام المفضل لديك.
نعم / لا

Act2: اذا اجبت بنعم، اذكر المنتج او الخدمة.

Act3: اذا اجبت بنعم، كم كان سعر المنتج او الخدمة.

الجزء الثالث: معلومات عامة

١. العمر:

١٨ ـ ٢٤ سنة

٢٥ ـ ٣٤ سنة

٣٥ ـ ٤٤ سنة

٤٥ ـ ٥٤ سنة

٥٥ ـ ٦٤ سنة

فوق ال ٦٤ سنة

٢. النوع:

ذكر

أنثى

٣. الجنسية:

قطري

غير قطري

4. معدل دخلك السنوي:

أقل من ٥٠،٠٠٠ ريال قطري

٥٠،٠٠١ ـ ١٥٠،٠٠٠ ريال قطري

١٥٠،٠٠١ ـ ٢٥٠،٠٠٠ ريال قطري

٢٥٠،٠٠١ـ ٣٥٠،٠٠٠ ريال قطري

٣٥٠،٠٠١ ـ ٤٥٠،٠٠٠ ريال قطري

٤٥٠،٠٠١ ريال قطري أو اكثر

Appendix C: Multiple regression analysis results

Regression test of the actual purchase on the follower's attributes

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.143[a]	.020	.014	1.240

a. Predictors: (Constant), Low self esteem, Empathy Behaviour, Empathy Filing, Homophily

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18.282	4	4.570	2.970	.019[b]
	Residual	875.511	569	1.539		
	Total	893.793	573			

a. Dependent Variable: Act3: If yes, please specify what was the price of the product/ service.

b. Predictors: (Constant), Low self esteem, Empathy Behaviour, Empathy Filing, Homophily

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.817	.052		15.781	.000		
	Empathy Filing	.026	.062	.021	.417	.677	.695	1.439
	Empathy Behaviour	.050	.056	.040	.895	.371	.856	1.168
	Homophily	.148	.065	.118	2.287	.023	.643	1.556
	Low self esteem	-.115	.057	-.092	-2.015	.044	.831	1.204

a. Dependent Variable: Act3: If yes, please specify what was the price of the product/ service.

Collinearity Diagnostics^a

Variance Proportions

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	(Constant)	Empathy Filing	Empathy Behaviour	Homophily	Low self esteem
1	1	1.870	1.000	.00	.11	.04	.13	.11
	2	1.029	1.348	.00	.12	.62	.01	.04
	3	1.000	1.367	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	4	.685	1.652	.00	.17	.01	.13	.84
	5	.416	2.119	.00	.60	.33	.73	.01

Regression test of the actual purchase on the social media's attributes

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.126^a	.016	.009	1.243

a. Predictors: (Constant), aff, Popularity, Fashion, Leverage

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.176	4	3.544	2.293	.058^b
	Residual	879.616	569	1.546		
	Total	893.793	573			

a. Dependent Variable: Act3: If yes, please specify what was the price of the product/ service.

b. Predictors: (Constant), aff, Popularity, Fashion, Leverage

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)	.817	.052		15.744	.000		
	Popularity	.042	.072	.034	.581	.561	.518	1.929
	Leverage	-.155	.077	-.124	-2.012	.045	.454	2.205
	Fashion	.206	.077	.165	2.669	.008	.455	2.198
	aff	-.033	.073	-.027	-.457	.648	.503	1.988

a. Dependent Variable: Act3: If yes, please specify what was the price of the product/ service.

Collinearity Diagnostics

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions				
				(Constant)	Popularity	Leverage	Fashion	aff
1	1	2.795	1.000	.00	.04	.04	.04	.04
	2	1.000	1.672	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	3	.539	2.278	.00	.36	.12	.15	.28
	4	.377	2.721	.00	.32	.33	.25	.38
	5	.289	3.108	.00	.27	.51	.56	.29

a. Dependent Variable: Act3: If yes, please specify what was the price of the product/ service.