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Choosing the Best Social Media Influencer: The role of gender, age, and product type in influencer marketing.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Social media has created a new type of celebrity form (influencers), which is defined as people who are famous on social media and have many followers. Companies currently depend on influencers to send their marketing messages to the audience, and to increase the marketing ROI, it is important to target the right influencers.

Purpose: This research focused on social media influencers' impact on consumer purchase intent and showed whether gender difference of consumers or influencers had any effect on those decisions. The research also included the age of consumers and the product type to know if they had any effect.

Methodology: Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to obtain the required information; two focus groups were conducted to get the names of 80 influencers, and an online questionnaire was used to collect the data, formula of the sample size by Krejcie and Morgan (1970 as cited by Kasomo, 2001) was used to determine study sample of 387 respondents.

Results: The results indicated that male influencers impact male consumers more than female consumers, while female influencers impact female consumers more than male consumers. Age of consumer does not affect the gender-based impact results. In addition, the results indicate that only few influencers have more impact on specific product type, thus, influencer's impact based on product type is not so common.

Recommendations: It is recommended for the companies to find influencers who are having a lot of impact on a specific product type that matches the product they want to promote, and to select the influencer based on the customers they are targeting, if companies are targeting female customers, they should look for popular female influencer, and if they are targeting male customers, they should look for popular male influencer.

Keywords: *Social Media, Influencers, Gender Difference, Saudi Arabia.*

1.1 Background to the Study

As of today, social networks are attracting many people; more than two billion worldwide are using social networks, which has encouraged companies to gain benefits out of them through advertising, as it will increase their revenue. In social networks, advertising is a multibillion-dollar business, and it is projected to reach 70 billion dollars income annually from advertisements only by the year 2019 (Hajarian et al., 2017). It is also an important communication channel for almost all types of business. As such, it is the most appropriate platform for companies to interact with their clients and, given the extraordinary reach of social media, companies are increasingly relying on it as a channel for marketing communication (Kumar et al., 2016). Digital marketing is less expensive than traditional marketing, and the advantages of social media campaigns include the ability to target specific demographics, fast and quantifiable outcomes, and the ability to quickly change campaigns as needed (Cordero-Gutierrez & Lahuerta-Otero, 2020).

In addition, companies nowadays tend to use social media networks as a marketing tool for brand recognition and brand awareness. Although there are many types of social media networks, the advertising focus should be concentrated on the most popular ones; users of social networks are spending most of the time on Instagram, followed by Snapchat, then Facebook, and Twitter, respectively. Regarding the use intensity. It was mostly for Snapchat and Instagram, followed by Facebook and Twitter, respectively (Alhabash, 2017). Instagram has more than two hundred and fifty (250) million daily users (Website: instagram-press.com/blog/2017/08/02/celebrating-one-year-of-instagram-stories, 2017), as for Snapchat, it has one hundred seventy eight (178) million average daily users, and more than twenty five million as the average number of times daily users open the app (Website: forbusiness.snapchat.com, 2017); such numbers are to be considered even by small firms to promote their products.

Regarding the type of communication with the customers, in order to deliver information efficiently, the content has to be visual, telling a story combined with visuals to support it can be very effective; people retain 65% of information for three days when visual content is used, compared to 10% retained data when only verbal content is used (Medina, 2008). For example, photos and videos play a significant role in the decision-making for people who want to select a travel destination, and the majority of those people believe that photos and videos are more important than text and comments in searching for related information, they also pointed out that Instagram had some influence in their travel planning (Terttunen, 2017).

Hence, social media networks provide a suitable platform for the companies to deliver their messages in the best way as they can send visual content to the customers. Many youth and millennial started using Snapchat because it is new, supports creative use, suits quick response, supports very good privacy, one can zoom in and out while filming and editing video on the fly and sharing it immediately, it enables filming live action in two perspectives by switching between front and rear cameras, it includes live filters like the temperature or your speed, and a self-destruct option supports the youth's trend to create new live stories about themselves on a daily basis (Ibrahim, 2017).

Advertising firms do not have as much effect over the present-day consumer; this can be attributed to the fact that people nowadays are not much influenced by traditional advertisements, and traditional mass media that was used by marketers in the past is no longer the preferred style for marketing messages communication to the new generation. In fact, people nowadays are more inspired by other influencers like online reviews, blogs and testimonials, as well as video reviews (DeBelen, 2016). People today are trusting

recommendations from individuals even if they don't know that person; getting a recommendation from "anyone" is considered credible whether or not the person has credibility (Forbes, 2013).

Today, social media networks offer the possibility of electronic word of mouth, "eWoM", which is a mediated form of Word of Mouth, eWoM reviewers affect the purchasing behaviors of people, especially millennials; the nature of the influence is directed at entertaining, persuading and educating people rather than informing them with new products (Svantesdotter et al., 2017). And it appears that social media users trust and rely on fashion influencers for their daily intake of latest trends, new brands, upcoming designs, and new offerings for products (Dasgupta & Kothari, 2018). Companies depend in this era on social media influencers to send their marketing messages to the audience; the growing number of social media influencers generates a world of opportunities, and opens up a new channel for brands to connect with consumers directly (O'Connor, 2016).

Recently, social media has created a new type of celebrity form, the so called "micro-celebrity," which is defined as people who are famous on social media and have many followers. A positive attitude with regard to promotional tools was influenced by trustworthiness of the micro-celebrity; however, too pushy promotion and too obvious marketing influenced negative attitude (Korotina & Jargalsaikhan, 2016). The majority of followers choose micro-celebrity over companies with regard to trustworthiness of a product's quality for various reasons, such as, if it is a video, they can see real people with real experience, it is quick and easy to find on their phones, and they can see different products and the difference they can make (Ertekin et al., 2016). It is worth knowing that the gender of social media celebrities plays a significant role in the influence (Zhang, et al., 2017).

Regarding the customers, it was found that both men and women have approximately the same media concept knowledge, both use the same top four social media tools (Liu, 2017). However, the behavior is somehow different; regarding travel planning; for example, it was found that men usually read information provided on tourism websites, while women value travel blogs and follow bloggers on social media networks (Terttunen, 2017). Even when talking about customers' preferences in purchasing, in buying a backpack as an example, it was found that men give more importance to factors such as quality and durability, while women give more importance to other factors such as price and design (Sathish et al., 2015).

In Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabian culture has experienced significant social and cultural changes over the previous few years; the government has established an annual award for the leaders of social media which is aligned with the 2030 vision of Saudi Arabia that seeks to develop talents by creating a motivating environment supporting the production and exchange of knowledge. In addition, the annual meeting of the Crown Prince with the influencers of social media indicates that the influencers are taking advantage of the development that is currently happening in Saudi Arabia, which has encouraged citizens and residents of Saudi Arabia to use the social media and have a good bond with the social media influencers (Qabur, 2018).

1.2 Problem Statement

In order to make the advertisements more attractive, companies and agencies shifted from traditional marketing to social media marketing by using social media influencers, but companies need to know what influencers to target in order to achieve the best influence on consumers. It was found that the gender of social media influencers plays a significant role on the impact. In addition, purchase intent of males and females differs in many ways, and previous studies showed that the impact based on the gender of social media influencers is one

of these differences Kumar (2015) and (Zhang et al., 2017). However, it is still not clear how gender difference of influencer would impact the consumer buying intent in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the research showed if there is a dependency between the age of the customer and the impact of the influencer, or if there is a dependency between the type of the product and the impact of the influencer.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify if there is a relation between the gender of social media influencers and their impact on the customers, based on the gender and the age of the customer. Also, to determine if there is a relation between the impact of social media influencers and the type of product or service purchased by the influenced customer. Based on the background, it was observed that many companies lately targeted the social media influencers to advertise their products, and the more followers the influencer have the more he/she will get paid for the advertisement. Companies believed that it is logical to target the top influencer since more orders will come from his/her followers only, but this might not be the case. This study showed what the best approach is for the companies, and who to target. Who is the influencer that had more impact on men/women? Who is the influencer that had more impact on boys/girls? Should they target male influencers or female influencers? This would help them to achieve a higher return on investment (ROI), which is an important thing for any organization.

The study also added to current literature and filled the blurred area left by researchers in the field of social media influencer endorsements according to the gender (of influencers and consumers), consumer's age, and product type. It is anticipated that this study would provide a contribution to social knowledge and would present a new base as well as theoretical directions for future research in these fields.

2.1 Literature Review

Although there are many previous studies done in other countries regarding the gender difference in online purchasing that is affected by social media's influencer endorsements, there are very few similar studies available in Saudi Arabia. According to Mir and Zaheer (2012), consumers deliver extra significance to the product-associated content created by using different clients on social media networks rather than producer-generated content material. The findings verified the claim of social impact theory that "as the number of people increases the impact on the target individual's attitude and behavior enhances." The results showed that a wide variety of users who generate product related content on social media networks affects the perceived credibility of this content material positively. Thus, consumers who are looking for other consumers' product related suggestions and information on the social media networks perceive user generated content as more credible when multiple consumers create it. Results also revealed that perceived credibility of user generated content affects consumers' attitude toward it positively, which, in turn, affects their purchase intent of the product mentioned in it.

Gruen et al. (2006), showed that eWOM has higher empathy, relevance, and credibility for clients than marketer-created sources of data on the web. According to Kim and Ko (2012), social media networks are ideal tools for eWOM, because customers generate and distribute brand-related information to their peers, friends, and other acquaintances without restrictions. In a study by Jansen et al. (2009) that examined the WOM activity relate to brands on Twitter, it was found that consumers' posts generate data dissemination processes, which include branding comments, and opinions. According to Pitta and Fowler (2005), eWOM has long been considered a powerful marketing tool because clients, before purchasing the product, seek information online published by previous consumers to review information and release anxiety.

Chu and Kim (2011) mentioned that researchers can analyze the use of eWOM on social media networks from three viewpoints: opinion seeking, opinion passing, and opinion giving. Clients who have a high level of opinion seeking attitude tend to seek information and recommendation from other consumers when making a decision to purchase. Clients who have a high level of opinion giving attitude, also named opinion leaders, have a considerable influence on consumers' behaviors. According to Brodie et al. (2013), client engagement, such as contribution in positive WOM, increases the satisfaction, loyalty, connection, trust, and empowerment, it also leads to higher client retention.

Forbes' (2013) study indicated that consumers buying either expensive or inexpensive product, do so based on suggestions by their friends or contacts on social media networks, and, according to Yang (2012), when a customer's friend on social media networks shares or recommends products or services on their social media accounts it affects their opinion about the brand and their decision-making. However, advertising on social media network which is provided by business-related sources affect both customer brand attitudes and buying intention.

Referring to Chu (2011), social media users who are Facebook group members preserve a more positive attitude to social media and advertising and users who have more favorable attitudes to advertising are more expected to join a brand's group on Facebook to receive promotional messages. In a study by Di Pietro and Pantano (2012), it was found that enjoyment is the major factor that affects consumers to use social media networks as a platform for assisting in their purchasing decisions; the fun provided by Facebook platform, as well as the opportunity it offers users to ask for recommendations in an easy and enjoyable way, motivates people to pay more attention to the promotions provided by Facebook. According to Casaló et al. (2017a), Instagram shopping tool provided entertainment to users, which resulted in increased intention to recommend Instagram accounts to other users, especially when they share the same interests.

Leitner and Grechenig (2009) mentioned that customers can collaborate online, discuss information about services and products, and get recommendation from trusted persons so that they can make more accurate buying decisions. The use of social media networks enhances the shopping experience by building relationships and influencing purchasing behavior, and, according to Casaló et al. (2020a), it was found that a social media platform is considered to be a strategic advertising tool that enables small and medium companies to communicate with their clients directly at lower cost and with higher efficiency.

According to Iyengar et al. (2009), due to the growing use of the internet, consumers exchange their thoughts within the context of discussion groups that are facilitated by social media networks with the purpose of seeking help, information and recommendations before buying a product or service. Social media networks have become platforms that companies consider for their images, brands, and sales revenue. Nowadays, people spend a lot of time on these platforms so that it is typical for businesses to consider these platforms as areas for advertisements and social media users as potential clients. According to Casaló et al. (2020b), it was witnessed that companies increasingly collaborated with social media influencers to offer their products to potential customers, the reason was because consumers' reaction to the brands and products has changed as it was shown that influencers' posts on Instagram led to higher purchase intentions. Casaló et al. (2017b) found that the number of consumer interactions with brands on Instagram is higher than other social media platforms, which would motivate development of brand communities on Instagram.

Sharma (2012) found that positive or negative data about a brand or a product available on the social media have a large influence on consumers' buying behavior; the clients spread positive or negative word of mouth through social media, and, according to Themba and Mulala (2012),

the engagement in eWOM in general and especially opinion seeking has a significant and positive influence on buying decisions. In other words, the results indicate that seekers for opinion are more likely to be affected by information taken from online sources.

Zauner et al. (2012) indicated that marketing activities via social media have a positive effect on clients' value perceptions of the sponsoring business. Customers who feel that they receive excellent value tend to become more loyal to the organization and recommend others in their reference group to be dedicated to the same organization. Perceived value can be positively affected by encouraging interactions with groups of compatible members on social media; such groups can be offered by a firm, but are primarily run by the customers themselves. As there is a lively interaction among the members of social media networks, the active members may become agents for the marketer by spreading its message within the group. By targeting these active users, brands can leverage the effect of their marketing activities and improve the cost-effectiveness of such activities in the social media network. Orús et al. (2019) found that physical stores might profit from evolving mobile technology and integrating applications such as customer suggestions, which could influence consumer purchase decisions, and, according to Cantalops et al. (2018), positive eWOM is critical for the hotel industry, not only because it improves the company's reputation, but also because it attracts new customers.

Talking about gender's impact along with age, to the findings of a study by Nadeem et al. (2015), indicated that the attitude of female customers is influenced more by peer endorsements than males, and, Abbas et al. (2018) found that buying intention of female clients for mobile phone is affected by the attractiveness, likeability, and credibility of the influencer. So, although two things are common between the perception of female and male clients, namely attractiveness and likeability, for female, one thing is different, which is credibility. According to Kumar (2015), there is significant association between impact of influencers and gender on the purchasing with reference to cell phone devices advertisements as female customers were more influenced. There was no significant association between the impact of influencers and the age of consumers on the purchasing with reference to cell phone devices advertisements. Referring to a study by Attia (2017), regarding the impact of influencers on purchase intentions, it was found that inner attraction, trustworthiness, expertise, and fit have a considerable positive effect on purchase intentions for male consumers, while, for female consumers, only inner attraction, trustworthiness, and fit had significant effect on purchase intentions.

Regarding the type of product, Belanche et al. (2021b) found that the high level of influencer-product congruence prompts high consumer-product congruence, and vice versa. GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) have taken major steps to enhance their information technology infrastructures according to a study by Alajmi and Rorissa (2018). There is also a considerable increase in internet usage in the Middle East as it grew to 90 million users in 2012 after being only 3.2 million users in 2000, with the GCC countries registering the highest increase. The number of internet users in the GCC countries was expected to reach more than 40 million (about 62% of the population) by the end of year 2017. In a study by Sohail and Al-Jabri (2017), it was found that, in Saudi Arabia, the social media networks are the most effective tools for brand development as compared to the other promotional tools.

Some of the previous studies focused on only celebrity endorsements in social media or on eWOM influence toward purchase intention while some focused on only gender differences in purchasing intent. However, to the best of our knowledge, this study is one of a small number of studies that investigate social media celebrity endorsements according to the gender (of

influencers and consumers), consumer's age, and product type. In addition, there are researches investigating such gender difference in other countries, but no research addresses that in Saudi Arabia; this research addressed that gap.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Research hypotheses, question, literature review, and conceptual framework about social media influencing according to the gender, age and product type was formed as the following:

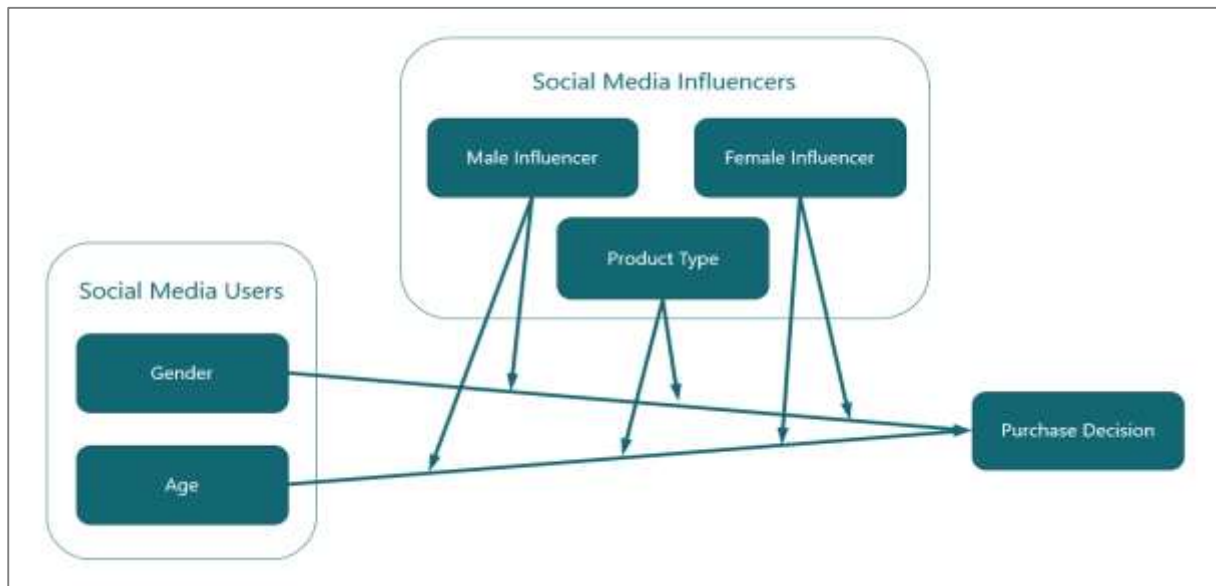


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

Source: Author's Development

Conceptually, it is asserted that social media influencer advertising role predicts a positive variance in consumer purchase decision. However, it is proposed that there is a relation between consumer purchase decision and gender of both influencer and client, age of client, and product type.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Because this study focused on intention and attitude, social theories were examined as fundamental theoretical framework. To explain the interplay between motives, attitude toward social media influencers, and how that is related to gender and age, the current study was based on Social Learning Theory and Social Role Theory. According to Social Learning Theory (Bandura & Walters, 1963), influencers lead by example, recommending products that they like through advertisements. As a result, viewers who see these examples may be more likely to follow the influencer's practices, while, in Social Role Theory, women and men support gender stereotypes by acting in accordance with their social roles, which are commonly divided along gender lines (Eagly, 1987).

Influencers Marketing

Advertisement through social media influencers is a type of strategy wherein an influencer uses his or her account on social networks to advertise a particular product (Childers et al., 2018). Due to the rise of social media platforms' popularity, a significant part of the marketing budget is spent in social media marketing (Casaló et al., 202b). This leads corporations to be able to deliver tailored content by taking into consideration a person's desire (Lee & Watkins, 2016).

Along with the importance of social media platforms for managing customer relations, they are also used to find influencers and to be in touch with consumers through these influencers (Harrigan et al., 2015). One of the ways a company can use influencer marketing is by sending some products free of charge to the influencers hoping that they promote the products by providing recommendations to the followers. Otherwise, influencers get paid by companies in order to promote their products on their social media accounts (Sammis et al., 2016). Thus, companies and influencers both benefit from this type of marketing strategy. Users follow these influencers in order to stay informed about the new trends related to their interests (Weismueller et al., 2020). Recently, people have used influencers' reviews and opinions as a source of information for their purchasing behavior (Swant, 2016). However, it is hard for companies to find the ideal influencers to stimulate the distribution of customer-generated brand stories (Gensler et al., 2013).

Influencing Based on Gender

Gender can be seen as an effective factor in customer response toward advertisements (Keshari & Jain, 2016). It was found that there is significant association between the impact of influencers and the gender on the purchasing as female customers were more influenced (Kumar, 2015). In addition, certain people can have more impact than others due to their personal features, such as age, gender and marital status (Zhang et al., 2017). It was also found that gender is an essential variable for credibility. Users, no matter their gender, favored blogs by female authors (Winter & Krämer, 2014). On the other hand, another study indicated that social media posts by male influencers drew more client attention and received more views (Vaiciukynaite, 2019).

Taking into account the above literature, the following hypotheses were created:

H1: Male influencers have similar impact level on male and female consumers.

H2: Female influencers have similar impact level on male and female consumers.

Influencing Based on Age

Age goes with a person's need, as people get older, their needs change. The change can also be found in their purchase decision-making; therefore, the age of the influencer is also an important factor when analyzing the impact on millennials, as millennials trust influencers of the same age as them (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017). However, other studies found that there was no significant association between the impact of influencers and the age of consumers (Kumar, 2015).

Taking into account the above literature, and due to the difficulty to know the age of the influencers, only the age of the consumers would be analyzed, thus, the following hypothesis was created:

H3: Consumers' age and the impact of influencer based on gender are independent.

Influencing Based on Product Type

The customer's assessment of a person's effectiveness in relation to a product is dependent on the endorser's compatibility with the product (Till & Busler, 2000). Meaning that customers will have a favorable attitude toward the brand and view the endorser to be very effective if the endorser and the endorsed products are a good match. There is another study which suggested that influencer-product pairings in Instagram posts inspire viewers to look for information on marketed products (Belanche et al., 2020). It was also found that, when there is a congruence

between the influencer and the promoted product, followers perceive the influencer as a more credible source (Belanche et al., 2021a).

Taking into account the above literature, the following question was created:

Q1: Is there a dependency between the type of product and the impact of the influencer?

3.2 Research Design

As mentioned earlier there are currently firms using influencers to promote their product and service. In addition, there is a limited amount of research done on this particular field. In terms of these situations, and based on the research objective, the design of this research in general was exploratory research. The research used mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative) in order to obtain the required information. The qualitative phase of the study was performed for data collection by two focus groups, the main reason for that was to collect the names of influencers. It was decided to go for this method because Snapchat and Instagram were contacted for a list of popular influencers in Saudi Arabia but didn't get a reply, Snapchat and Instagram were selected since they are the most popular social media platforms (Alhabash, 2017). Therefore, a discussion among men and women was performed separately.

3.2.1 Focus Groups

The main purpose of the focus groups was to collect as many influencers as possible. None of the members of the focus groups was impacted by an influencer before, so, to increase the accuracy, the influencer must be mentioned by both groups in order to be selected. And, in order to make sure each group provided a list of influencers related to this research, the following questions were asked:

- Who are the popular social media influencers followed by people from Saudi Arabia?
- Do they make advertisements for commercial purposes?

The results that met both conditions in the questions asked were collected, and only the matching influencers' names from both groups were selected; the total number was 80 influencers, 47 among them were female, and 33 were male. The participants were also given the option to put additional celebrities who they were influenced by, the total number of the additional influencers who were added was 45, 18 among them were female, and 27 were male. Thus, the overall total number of the influencers was 125, 65 among them were female, and 60 were male (influencers details are provided in Appendix 1). The quantitative phase of the study was performed for data collection by an online survey including the names of the influencers who were collected using the focus groups.

3.2.2 Instrumentation

The survey instrument used in this study was developed to measure the number of purchases that was done after any of the 80 influencers talked about it (survey details are provided in Appendix 2). The survey not only asked for the number of purchases generally, the participant also had to select the category of that purchase to specify what type of product or service it was. A total of 11 categories of different products and services was added in the survey:

- Restaurant/Cafe/Shop
- Internet Website/Mobile App
- Chemical/Medical Products
- Services/Investment
- Electrical/Manual/Plastic Products

- Furniture/Decoration/Building
- Perfumes/Cosmetics
- Clothes/Accessories
- Medical/Training Center
- Food/Kitchen Tools
- Tourism/Entertainment Activity

The products and services were selected referring to the Nice Classification from WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization), which has 45 classes. Since the list is too long, the classes were grouped into 11 categories (as shown in Table 1), making sure that all of the classes are covered, excluding “Firearms” and “Wine and Spirits” as they are not allowed in Saudi Arabia:

Table 1. Nice Classification Grouping

Product/Service Category	Matching Nice Class
Restaurant/Cafe/Shop	Hotels and Restaurants
Internet Website/Mobile App	Computer, scientific & legal
Chemical/Medical Products	Chemicals / Paints / Lubricants and fuels Pharmaceuticals / Medical Apparatus
Services/Investment	Advertising and business / Insurance and financial Transportation and storage / Treatment of materials Computer, scientific & legal / Personal
Electrical/Manual/Plastic Products	Machinery / Hand tools / Yarns and threads Electrical and scientific apparatus Environmental control apparatus Vehicles / Musical Instruments / Leather goods Paper goods and printed matter Toys and sporting goods / Telecommunications
Furniture/Decoration/Building	Metal goods / Rubber goods Nonmetallic building materials Furniture and articles not otherwise classified Cordage and fibers / Fabrics Floor coverings / Building construction and repair
Perfumes/Cosmetics	Cosmetics and cleaning preparations
Clothes/Accessories	Jewelry / Clothing / Fancy goods
Medical/Training Center	Education and entertainment Medical, beauty & agricultural
Food/Kitchen Tools	Housewares and glass / Meats and processed foods Staple foods / Natural agricultural products Light beverages / Smokers' articles
Tourism/Entertainment Activity	Education and entertainment / Hotels and Restaurants

3.2.3 Data Collection and Sampling

The study was based on a convenience sampling method using a survey that was targeted to Saudi Arabia population; an online web survey system (www.surveymonkey.com) was used to gather the data; the survey lasted for about four months and received 1129 responses, 387 of them were completed with overall completion rate of 34.2%.

Choosing almost the whole nation as the population of this study was because of the difficulty of filtering the people in an online survey. The formula of the sample size of this study was by Krejcie and Morgan (1970 as cited by Kasomo, 2001). It is given as follows:

$$n = \frac{\chi^2 \times N \times P(1 - P)}{(ME^2 \times (N - 1)) + (\chi^2 \times P \times (1 - P))}$$

Where,

n = sample size

χ^2 = Chi-square for the confidence level 95%, which will be 1.96 = (3.8416)

N = population size = 32,552,336 (Website: www.stats.gov.sa/en/930, 2018)

P = population proportion = 50% = 0.50

ME = desired margin of error (confidence interval) = 5% = 0.05

= $(3.8416 \times 32,552,336 \times 0.5 (1 - 0.5)) / ((0.05 \times 0.05 (32,552,336 - 1) + 3.8416 \times 0.5 (1 - 0.5))) = 31263263 / 81382$

n = 384 (the number was the same even after removing the people under 10 years)

According to Kosar et al. (2018), 5% is a common margin of error with accepted confidence level of 95% for infinite population size. To have as many people as possible to participate, the survey link was distributed using multiple methods: WhatsApp, Twitter, and Snapchat. An ad campaign was purchased to show pop-up advertisements for the survey link. Some firms were targeted in the hope that one of them would sponsor the study, so a draw was mentioned in the survey to encourage people to participate and encourage them to tell other people they know to participate also. In addition, some influencers were targeted to help in the distribution of the survey.

3.3 Framework for Data Analysis

Typical steps in the analytical process were used, including:

- Organizing the data into a more manageable form.
- Becoming familiar with the data through inspection and finding patterns in the data.
- Processing recognized categories.
- Looking for relations and connections between categories.
- Translating the findings in a way that addresses the research objectives.

4.1 Data Statistics

According to the results of the survey, the completion statistics for the respondents are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Survey Completion Statistics

Total Responses	Completed	Completion Rate
1129	387	34.2%

The detailed statistics for the completed respondents are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Survey Completed Respondents Statistics

Place	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Saudi Arabia	387	100.0%
Out of Saudi Arabia	0	0.0%
Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Female	209	54.0%
Male	178	46.0%
Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 15 Years	0	0.0%
15 to 24 Years	151	39.0%
25 to 34 Years	156	40.3%
35 to 45 Years	80	20.7%
More than 45 Years	0	0.0%

The survey was completed by 387 respondents and all of them are in Saudi Arabia, which is the targeted group for this study. In this survey, 54.0% of respondents are females, while 46.0% are males. Regarding the age, 39.0% of respondents are between 15 to 24 years old, 40.3% of them are between 25 to 34 years old, 20.7% of them are between 35 to 45 years old; no respondent was below 15 years or above 45 years.

4.2 Impact of Influencers on Gender

Hypotheses H1 and H2 suggest that male and female influencers have similar influence level on male and female consumers; to test those hypotheses, the survey results were grouped based on gender, as shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Survey Results (Grouped by Gender)

	Female Celebrities Influence		Male Celebrities Influence	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Female	2217	83.6%	541	38.3%
Male	434	16.4%	873	61.7%

According to the results, male celebrities' influence on female consumers was 38.3% compared to 61.7% influence on male consumers. It is clear that male consumers were influenced by male celebrities more than female consumers were. In addition, female consumers were influenced by female celebrities 2217 times, and that is much higher compared to the influence by male celebrities, which is 541 times only.

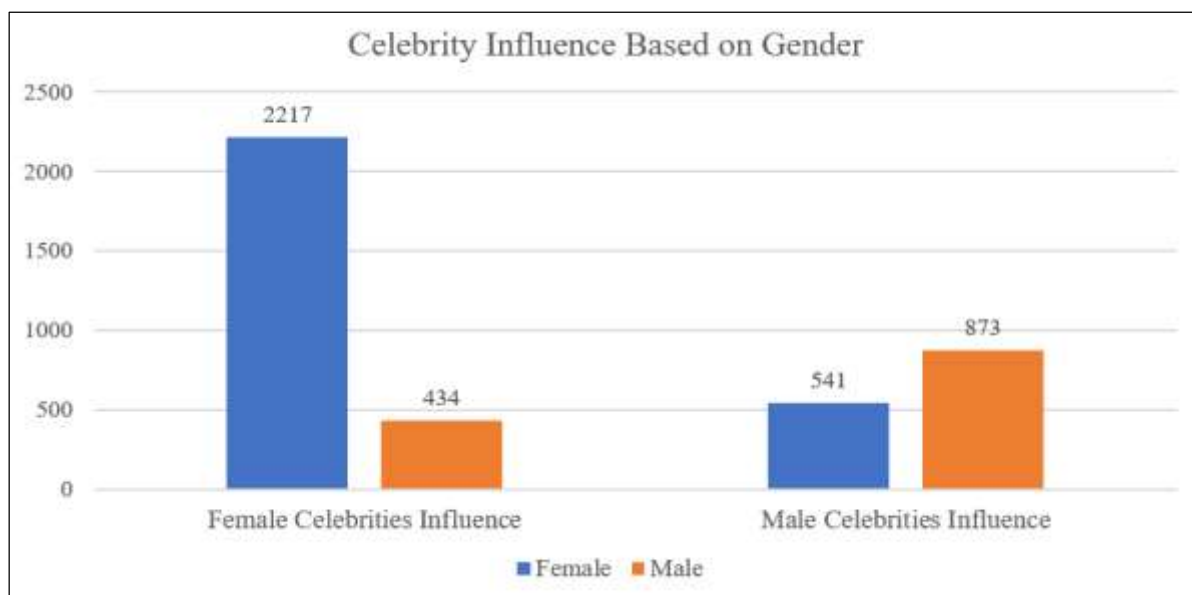


Figure 2. Gender-Based Results Chart

Female celebrities’ influence, however, on female consumers was 83.6% compared to 16.4% influence on male consumers. It is clear that female consumers were influenced by female celebrities much more than male consumers were. In addition, male consumers were influenced by female celebrities 434 times only, and that is much lower compared to the influence by male celebrities, which is 873 times. For the data comparison, the ANOVA single factor was conducted for an α -value of 0.05 (95% confidence) for all tests. Results related to the influence of celebrities based on gender are shown in Figure 3.

Anova: Single Factor (Influence of Celebrities on Male Consumers)						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	541.3511236	1	541.3511236	9.908295822	0.001785047	3.867861282
Within Groups	19341.19663	354	54.63614867			
Total	19882.54775	355				

Anova: Single Factor (Influence of Celebrities on Female Consumers)						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	6720.038278	1	6720.038278	24.8464607	9.12757E-07	3.863909283
Within Groups	112512.4402	416	270.4625966			
Total	119232.4785	417				

Figure 3. ANOVA Results for Influence of Celebrities Based on Gender

P-value for (Influence of Celebrities on Male Consumers) test was less than 0.05, and *F*-value (9.90) is more than the *F*-critical value (3.86), which shows that the variance is significantly different. *P*-value for (Influence of Celebrities on Female Consumers) test is less than 0.05, and *F*-value (24.84) is more than the *F*-critical value (3.860), which shows that the variance is significantly different.

Thus, the results of the study neither support hypothesis H1 nor H2.

4.3 Influence Related to Age

Hypothesis H3 suggests that consumers' age and the impact of influencer on consumers' buying decision based on gender are independent; to test that hypothesis, the results of the survey were grouped based on gender and age, as shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5. Survey Results (Grouped by Gender and Age)

	Female Celebrities Influence		Male Celebrities Influence	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
15 to 24 Years Female	962	86.7%	221	34.3%
15 to 24 Years Male	147	13.3%	424	65.7%
25 to 34 Years Female	687	74.9%	236	43.2%
25 to 34 Years Male	230	25.1%	310	56.8%
35 to 45 Years Female	568	90.9%	84	37.7%
35 to 45 Years Male	57	9.1%	139	62.3%

According to the results, female celebrities' influence on 15 to 24 years female consumers was 86.7%, and that is much more than their influence on 15 to 24 years male consumers, which is 13.3%. Female celebrities' influence on 25 to 34 years female consumers was 74.9%, and that is more than their influence on 25 to 34 years male consumers, which is 25.1%. Female celebrities' influence on 35 to 45 years female consumers was 90.9%, and that is much more than their influence on 35 to 45 years male consumers, which is 9.1%.

On the other hand, male celebrities' influence on 15 to 24 years female consumers was 34.3%, and that is much lower than their influence on 15 to 24 years male consumers, which is 65.7%. Male celebrities' influence on 25 to 34 years female consumers was 43.2%, and that is lower than their influence on 25 to 34 years male consumers, which is 56.8%. Male celebrities' influence on 35 to 45 years female consumers was 37.7%, and that is lower than their influence on 35 to 45 years male consumers, which is 62.3%.

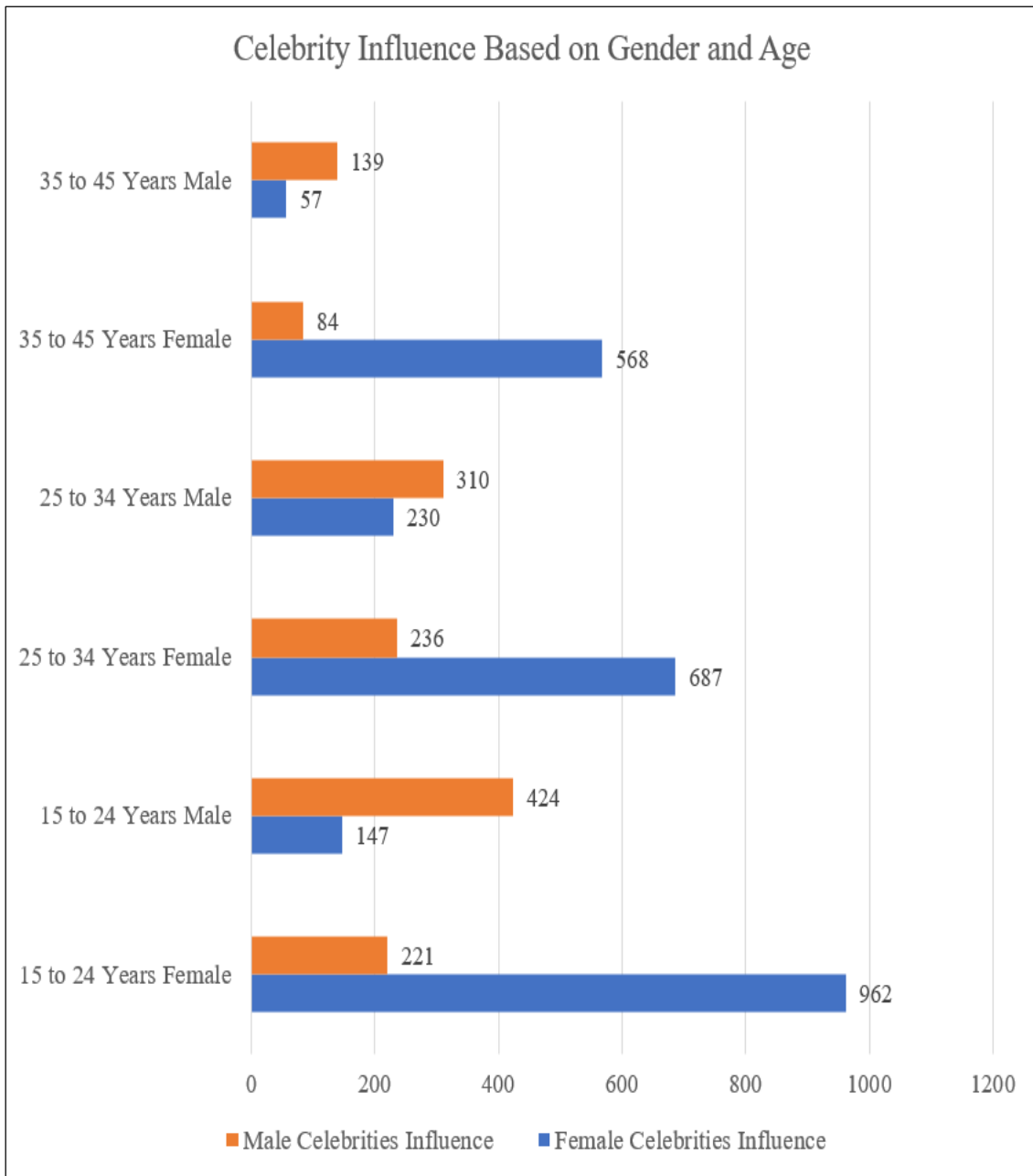


Figure 4. Gender-Based Results Chart (Grouped by Age)

Results related to the influence of celebrities based on age are shown in Figure 5.

Anova: Single Factor - (Influence of Celebrities on Male Consumers, Age 15-24)						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	518.439189	1	518.4391892	4.682301319	0.032101427	3.905942146
Within Groups	16165.5811	146	110.7231581			
Total	16684.0203	147				

Anova: Single Factor - (Influence of Celebrities on Female Consumers, Age 15-24)						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	3612.375	1	3612.375	13.77596181	0.000289663	3.904201877
Within Groups	39333.4605	150	262.2230702			
Total	42945.8355	151				

Anova: Single Factor - (Influence of Celebrities on Male Consumers, Age 25-34)						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	38.5542169	1	38.55421687	4.04065291	0.046055806	3.898786791
Within Groups	1564.81928	164	9.541580958			
Total	1603.37349	165				

Anova: Single Factor - (Influence of Celebrities on Female Consumers, Age 25-34)						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	1374.33108	1	1374.331081	8.846171903	0.003437589	3.905942146
Within Groups	22682.3919	146	155.3588486			
Total	24056.723	147				

Anova: Single Factor - (Influence of Celebrities on Male Consumers, Age 35-45)						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	160.095238	1	160.0952381	4.71132287	0.035958159	4.084745733
Within Groups	1359.2381	40	33.98095238			
Total	1519.33333	41				

Anova: Single Factor - (Influence of Celebrities on Female Consumers, Age 35-45)						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	1985.22034	1	1985.220339	4.617142919	0.03373247	3.922879362
Within Groups	49876.2034	116	429.9672706			
Total	51861.4237	117				

Figure 5. ANOVA Results for Influence of Celebrities Based on Age

P-value for (Influence of Celebrities on Male Consumers, Age 15-24) test is less than 0.05, and *F*-value (4.68) is more than the *F*-critical value (3.90), which shows that the variance is significantly different. *P*-value for (Influence of Celebrities on Female Consumers, Age 15-24) test is less than 0.05, and *F*-value (13.77) is more than the *F*-critical value (3.90), which shows that the variance is significantly different. *P*-value for (Influence of Celebrities on Male Consumers, Age 25-34) test is less than 0.05, and *F*-value (4.04) is more than the *F*-critical value (3.89), which shows that the variance is significantly different. *P*-value for (Influence of Celebrities on Female Consumers, Age 25-34) test is less than 0.05, and *F*-value (8.84) is more than the *F*-critical value (3.90), which shows that the variance is significantly different. *P*-value for (Influence of Celebrities on Male Consumers, Age 35-45) test is less than 0.05, and *F*-value (4.71) is more than the *F*-critical value (4.08), which shows that the variance is significantly different. *P*-value for (Influence of Celebrities on Female Consumers, Age 35-45) test is less than 0.05, and *F*-value (4.61) is more than the *F*-critical value (3.92), which shows that the variance is significantly different.

Thus, from the results shown, hypothesis H3 is supported.

4.4 Influence Related to Product Type

Question Q1 asks if there is a dependency between the type of product and the impact of the influencer; to answer that question, the data of celebrities who had at least one influence on the participated consumers were filtered, and the results are shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6. Statistics of Celebrities Who had at Least One Influence

Number of Celebrities	Total Number of Influences	Average
120	4065	34

Zhu and Zhang (2010) measured popularity as the above average compared to the rest of the data set in the same period. Referring to the average in Table 6, the popular celebrities who had 34 or more influences on the participated consumers were selected. The total number was 33 celebrities, then the celebrities who got the majority (more than 50%) of their total influence on one product type only were filtered, and the result is shown in Table 7 below:

Table 7. Popular Celebrities with More than 50% of Their Influence on One Product Type

	Restaurant/Cafe/Shop	Internet Website/Mobile App	Chemical/Medical Products	Services/Investment	Electrical/Manual/Plastic Products	Furniture/Decoration/Building	Perfumes/Cosmetics	Clothes/Accessories	Medical/Training Center	Food/Kitchen Tools	Tourism/Entertainment Activity
Abdulrahman AlShehri	80.5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	19.5%
Areej AlAbdullah	5.4%	82.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1.5%	10.8%	0%	0%	0%
Mohammed AlMousa	28.8%	12.1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	59.1%
Raghad Days	75.5%	10.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10.2%	0%	0%	4.1%	0%

It can be seen that there are influencers who have more impact on specific product type; however, they only represent 12.1% of the total number of the popular celebrities.

Thus, the answer to question Q1 is that the dependency between the type of product and the impact of the influencer is rare.

4.5 Reason for Purchase

Referring to the last question of the survey, “What was the main reason that supported your purchase decision?” the results are shown in Table 8 below:

Table 8. Statistics of Reason for Purchase

Answer	Count	Rate
Looks of the celebrity	26	6.7%
Presentation	147	38.0%
Providing enough information	176	45.5%
Popularity	38	9.8%

It can be seen that 45.5% referred to “Providing enough information” as the most selected reason that influenced the participants’ purchase decision; the next was the presentation of the celebrity, which took 38.0%, while the last two choices, “Popularity” and “Looks of the celebrity,” took only 9.8% and 6.7%, respectively.

5.1 Discussion and Recommendations

The main objective of this research paper is to explore the impact of social media influencer and advertisements on consumer purchase decision. Out of the 387 participants, male participants stated that they were more impacted by male influencers, while female participants stated that they were more impacted by female influencers. The age of the consumer didn’t affect that. Regarding the product type, only few influencers have appeared to have more impact on specific product type. The research also suggests that physical attractiveness and popularity of influencer have minor impact on the customer’s purchase decision, while presentation and providing enough information about the product have major impact on the customer’s purchase decision.

Consumers' buying intentions were found to be positively influenced by compelling social media influencers. The Social Learning Theory (Bandura & Walters, 1963) suggests that behavior is acquired from the environment through an observational learning process. The importance of Social Role Theory cannot be overstated. Males in Eastern cultures may be viewed as more powerful, but women may be perceived as more caring and may be expected to take up the role of housewife on their own (Dainton & Zelle, 2008). In that scenario, if the product is a kitchen equipment, a female influencer may be perceived as having more experience and so being more trustworthy in her promotional actions than a male influencer.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

This study has limitations that can be addressed by future researches. First, in this research the sample is taken through convenience sampling method, which is not that reliable because of the potential bias in data gathering. Second, due to the shortage of time, a small sampling was used, which may have affected the objective of the survey-collected data, so the results cannot be generalized to the whole population of social media users in Saudi Arabia. Third, the number of influencers is limited compared to the total number of influencers who have impact on social media users in Saudi Arabia. Fourth, the study was done in an online environment, so the trustworthiness of the data collected might be a concern.

5.3 Directions for Future Research

In view of the above limitations, future research should take into consideration the impact of social media influencer advertising on both genders from more participants. In addition, probability sampling technique is suggested for the future research for the purpose of enhancing the validity and generalization of the research results. It is also possible that the study be reproduced with a bigger and more diverse sample of people from different parts of the world.

5.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate influencer endorsement in social media and consumer purchase intent in Saudi Arabia based on gender, age, and product type.

The results indicated that male influencers are impacting male consumers more than female consumers, while female influencers are impacting female consumers more than male consumers. Regarding age, the results indicated that the age of the consumer does not affect the gender-based influence results.

In addition, the results indicated that only few influencers had more impact on specific product type, so the impact of the influencer based on product type is not common.

It is recommended for the companies to find influencers who are having a lot of impact on a specific product type that matches the product they want to promote, and to select the influencer based on the customers they are targeting, if companies are targeting female customers, they should look for popular female influencer, and if they are targeting male customers, they should look for popular male influencer.

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APPENDIX 1

List of Influencers:

Female Influencers		Male Influencers	
About Her	Hayoonah	Abdulaziz AlKassar	Ibrahim AlDossari
Adwaa AlDakheel	Her Majesty	Abdullah AlGefari	Ibrahim Basha
Afnan AlBatel	Israa AlHajri	Abdullah AlHusain	Ibrahim Saleh
Afnan AlNamlah	Kholood and Ameen	Abdullah AlJomah	Mishal AlEsbani
Ahlam AlShamsi	Lana AlFaraj	Abdulrahman AlShehri	Mohammed AlHamdan
AlAnood Bader	Lujain AlOmran	Abu Jarkal	Mohammed AlMousa
Aliya AlUbaid	Malak AlHusaini	Abu Jufain	Mohammed Bakr
Amal AlAwadi	Mariam Husain	Alaa Anbar	Mohammed Sal
Areej AlAbdullah	Model Roz	AlSehli	Mujrem Games
Asia	Nojoud Bint Mishal	Andreh AlEmlag	Salman Khalid
Bashayer	Norah AlOmairi	Azazi	Tariq AlHarbi
AlShaibani	Nuha Nabeel	Bander Sultan	Yagoub BuShehri
Bibi Abdulmuhsen	Nusrah AlHarbi	Fahad Sal	Yaser AlQahtani
Dalal AlDoub	Ohood AlYahya	Faihan	Zayid AlSaleh
Dana AlTewairish	Raghad Days	Fayiz AlMalki	Ziyad AlAmri
Daniya AlShafie	Rawan BinHusain	Hamoosh	Ziyad AlShehri
Dareen AlBayedh	Reem Abdullah	Hisham AlHowaish	
Farah AlHadi	Reem AlSuwaidi		
Fatima Almoumen	Roua AlSaban		
Fouz AlFahad	Sara AlWadani		
Ghadeer Ashoor	Shojoon AlHajri		
Hala AlJeraid	Waad		
Hala Hala	Waad Makeup Artist		
Halima Boland			
Hanadi AlKatheeri			

List of Additional Influencers Provided by Participants:

Additional Female Influencers		Additional Male Influencers	
Ameerah	May AlTuwaijri	Abadi Gadri	Faris AlTurki
Arwa AlOmrani	Nawal Abdullah	Abdulrahman	Khalid Khalawi
Arwa Dhl	Nawal for Shopping	AlSadhan	Majed AlSabah
Dr. Arwa AlDelaan	Nuha AlBabtain	Aboodi Bad	Mansour AlReqaibah
Dr. Hind	Reem Shoshita	Abu Fahad	Mohammed
Eleven Blog	RoRo	Abu Norah AlAjlan	AlMaimoni
Enas AlHenti	Sanah	Ahmed Show	Mohammed AlQahtani
Ghadah	Sh Blog	Anas AlAmri	Mohammed BaZiad
AlGhenaiman	The Daily Walk	Azdy	Muree
Hanan		Bader Allami	Showeel
		Chef Abu Meshari	Thinayan Khaled
		Dahran	Twin AlEnizy
		Ezz Bin Fahad	Youcef
		Faisal AlSaif	Yousef AlSudais

APPENDIX 2

The Survey (Sample of Questions)

The survey asked for the place so as to know if the respondent is in Saudi Arabia or not. It also requested to specify the gender (Female/Male).



Personal Information

Location? *

Saudi Arabia

Out of Saudi Arabia

Sex? *

Female

Male

Survey Screenshot (Translated) – Personal Information

The survey also requested the respondent to specify his/her age group:

- Less than 15 Years
- 15 to 24 Years
- 25 to 34 Years
- 35 to 45 Years
- More than 45 Years

Age? *

Less than 15 Years

15 to 24 Years

25 to 34 Years

35 to 45 Years

More than 45 Years

Survey Screenshot (Translated) – Age

The main survey questions were in the form of numeric tables, columns of product type and rows of influencers; the participant had to insert the number of times he/she bought that product or used that service after hearing about it from that influencer.

	Restaurant/ Cafe/ Shop	Internet Website/ Mobile App	Chemical/ Medical Products	Services/ Investment	Electrical/ Manual/ Plastic Products	Furniture/ Decoration / Building	Perfumes/ Cosmetics	Clothes/ Accessories	Medical/ Training Center	Food/ Kitchen Tools	Tourism/ Entertainm ent Activity
About Her	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Ibrahim AlDossari	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Ibrahim Basha	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Ibrahim Saleh	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Survey Screenshot (Translated) – Number of Times Influenced

If the participant had any other influencers not included in the list, he/she could use this section to add those influencers and fill the related products and services accordingly.

Name of Additional Celebrity

You can add any other celebrities you follow (not mentioned above) by typing their names here then by putting the related numbers for them accordingly

Celebrity - A

Celebrity - B

Celebrity - C

Celebrity - D

	Restaurant/ Cafe/ Shop	Internet Website/ Mobile App	Chemical/ Medical Products	Services/ Investment	Electrical/ Manual/ Plastic Products	Furniture/ Decoration / Building	Perfumes/ Cosmetics	Clothes/ Accessories	Medical/ Training Center	Food/ Kitchen Tools	Tourism/ Entertainm ent Activity
Celebrity - A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Celebrity - B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Celebrity - C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Celebrity - D	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Survey Screenshot (Translated) – Adding Additional Influencers

At the end, the participant had to specify the main reason that supported his/her purchase decision:

- Looks of the celebrity.
- Presentation.
- Providing enough information.
- Popularity.

What was the main reason that supported your purchase decision? *

Looks of the celebrity

Presentation

Providing enough information

Popularity

Send

Survey Screenshot (Translated) – Reason for Purchase