UNIVERZA V LJUBLJANI

FAKULTETA ZA DRUŽBENE VEDE

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Parasocialni odnosi in prenos pomena z medijskih osebnosti na tržne znamke

Parasocial Relationships and Meaning Transfer from Media Characters to Brands

Magistrsko delo

Ljubljana, 2013

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to clarify the concept of parasocial relationships (Horton and Wohl 1956) towards media characters and explain the implications of these relationships within the meaning transfer process (McCracken 1989) that occurs when celebrities convey their meaning and values to brands they endorse. We assume that the more intense the parasocial relationship between the media character and the audience member, the higher audience member's affective commitment to the linked brand will be. The factors that influence the development process of parasocial relationships (attachment styles, media consumption level, cognitively and emotionally involving media content and affinity with the media character) and the consequences caused by that processes (commitment – affective, calculative or continuance and normative) were presented and analyzed within the empirical research based on a case (Tina Maze and Milka).

Key words: parasocial relationships, (affective) brand commitment, meaning transfer model, celebrity brand endorsement

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Povzetek

Namen raziskave je pojasniti pojem parasocialnih odnosov (Horton in Wohl 1956) do medijskih osebnosti in razjasniti pomen teh odnosov v razmerju do modela transfera oziroma prenosa pomenov (McCracken 1989), preko katerega se pomeni prenašajo z medijskih osebnosti na tržne znamke. Tekom študije zagovarjamo tezo, da intenzivnejši in globlji je parasocialni odnos med medijsko osebnostjo in članom občinstva (potrošnikom), višja je stopnja (afektivne) zavezanosti do tržne znamke vezane na isto medijsko osebnost (ambasadorja tržne znamke). Dejavniki, ki vplivajo na razvoj parasocialnih odnosov (stili navezanosti, raven medijske potrošnje, kognitivna in emocionalna vpetost v medijske vsebine in afiniteta do medijske osebnosti) ter posledice tega odnosa (zavezanost – afektivna, vztrajnostna in normativna) so predmet proučevanja in analize te naloge ter empirične raziskave, ki temelji na študiji primera (Tina Maze in Milka).

Ključne besede: parasocialni odnosi, (afektivna) zavezanost do tržne znamke, model transfera oziroma prenosa pomenov, zvezdnik kot ambasador tržne znamke

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1 INTRODUCTION

Virtual or real, love or family, intimate or superficial, weak or strong, social or para-social, relationships in all its forms have intrigued researchers from all around the world for centuries. Different relationships are characterised by different characteristics, communication dynamics and needs. However, why do people spend so much effort keeping relationships alive, strengthening them and why is it so easy to destroy a relationship with betrayal, neglect or even insensitivity? What do individuals expect from a relationship and how does someone's personality affect this relationship? There really are a lot of questions that can be postulated regarding various aspects of the relationship formation process.

However, the present thesis focuses only on a small fragment within this vast relationship theory field – parasocial relationships between audience members and celebrities. The aim of this thesis is to clarify the concept of parasocial relationships (Horton and Wohl 1956) towards media characters and explain the implications of these kinds of relationships within the meaning transfer process (McCracken 1989) that occurs when celebrities convey their meaning and values to brands they endorse. The main question accompanying this research is how do parasocial relationships contribute to the meaning transfer process from celebrities to brands and does this affect the commitment to this same brand. Past researches haven't dealt with this aspect, so the focus of the thesis is to propose a new marketing researching field that will help marketing practitioners to understand how to choose the right brand ambassador or even a brand endorser.

The first part of the thesis consists of a theoretical background overview (Chapter 2) divided in three parts. Chapter 2.1 aims to enlighten the parasocial relationship formation process and the differentiation between parasiocial relationships and related concepts (transportation and identification). Additionally, Chapter 2.2 focuses on parasocial relationship key formation determinants and their implications within this process. Attachment styles in audience member's personality structures, average media consumption, cognitively and emotionally involving media contents, audience member's identification with and affinity for the media character are analysed as key factors. Therefore in Chapter 2.3, following the aim of the thesis, a meaning transfer process is analysed by including meanings formed within parasocial relationships to the basic meaning transfer model. Different components of commitment have been

identified by assuming that the intensity of the formed parasocial relationship can influence the affective commitment to the brand linked to the media character (through the meaning transfer process). Accordingly, we will argue that the concept of meaning transfer is, first and foremost, applicable to media characters and audience members through the parasocial relationship process, and only then through this same media character to the brand, as consumed by the same audience members.

The second part of the thesis (Chapter 3) consists of an empirical research based on a local case study – Tina Maze and Milka. Tina Maze is a famous Slovenian World Cup alpine skier and the brand Milka is her general sponsor for almost three years. Firstly, a research model is proposed based on the theoretical background. The self-reporting web-based questionnaire based on Tina Maze's case study was prepared and distributed mainly via social networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) and e-mail in April and May 2013 within the Slovenian population. Five basic hypotheses and two researching questions are tested within two regression models. The population tendency to establish parasocial relationships with Tina Maze and its influence on an (affective) commitment for the brand Milka is examined. The final results and implications for further research are presented in Chapter 4, followed by the results discussion and conclusion of this thesis.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND ITS MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

Various media communication and audience research approaches have been formed during the past decades, all attempting to shed light on the variety of phenomena behind media consumption practices. Jensen and Rosengren (1996, 30)[1] have identified five main research approaches that aim to serve analytical purposes in examining the nexus between mass media and audiences: (1) effect research; (2) the uses and gratifications theory (U&G); (3) literal criticism; (4) cultural studies; (5) reception analysis. Each of these research approaches has greatly contributed, on one hand, to the development and understanding of the communication process between audience members and the mass media, and on the other hand, to the understanding of the construct of media personalities that have, in the past millennium, become social and economic phenomena in their own right. However, media characters no longer only serve the purposes of culture as such, they have also become powerful marketing tools of "meaning transfer"[2] (McCracken 1989) from media characters to brands. Keller et al. (2008, 330) recognize that using well-known and admired people to promote products is a widespread practice, as celebrities[3] tend to attract the audience's attention to a brand and shape its perceptions. The customers base their knowledge of the brand on the famous person.

The theory of parasocial relationships was defined by Horton in Wohl (1956) with the aim of clarifying the influences that shape the audience member's emotions toward media characters, which have become an inherent part of the media texts being consumed. This audience's involvement with media characters and the relationship formed between them can affect the meaning assigned to media characters by audience members. At the same time, this meaning can be transferred to brands when used within a marketing context (McCracken 1989; Keller et al. 2008; Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta 2010). Therefore, parasocial relationships cannot be conceived only as a process that takes place during the consumption of specific media

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[1] The authors presented a typology of audience studies by arguing that a confluence of different traditions could be useful for further theoretical, methodological and empirical developments (Jensen and Rosengren 1996).

[2] McCracken (1989) proposed a meaning transfer model in which meanings pass from celebrity to product and from product to consumer.

[3] "Well-known and admired people", as defined by Keller et al. (2008), can also be thought of as celebrities or media characters - as defined by Horton and Wohl (1956) - which are always media constructs, whose identities are shaped within the greater media landscape.

content, but also has to be examined within the larger context of a persons' social sphere (Giles 2003; Cummins 2004). This aspect of how parasocial relationships may affect the persons' social life also includes the influence this phenomenon has on the persons' perception of brands linked to a specific media characters.

The implications mentioned above will be discussed in this chapter that is divided in three parts. In the fist part a broad appeal is given to the inception of the parasocial relationship theory and all disciplines concerned with this theory. The aim is to enlighten the theoretical background of Horton and Wohl's theory. The second part focuses on key determinants that form these parasocial relationships. Variables, such as attachment styles in audience member personality structures, average media consumption, cognitively and emotionally involving media contents, audience member's identification with and affinity for the media character, are analysed. The final part of the first chapter tries to form a linkage between parasocial relationships and celebrity (or other media characters) endorsement or meaning transfer as marketing tools, assuming that the intensity of the formed parasocial relationship can influence the commitment to the media character, and also the commitment to the brand linked to the media character.

The literature examining parasocial interactions, parasocial relationships and its determinants is vast and this chapter aims to enlighten this somehow mixed field.

2.1 *PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS: theoretical overview*

2.1.1 The background of the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory and the inception of Horton and Wohl's theory

Horton and Wohl's theory of parasocial relationships has been established as an intrinsic concept within the broader uses and gratifications theory,[4] pioneered by Paul L. Lazarsfeld[5] who conceptualized a wide researching program about mass media and how individuals use it.

Consequently, various authors have importantly shaped this research approach. One of these was Herta Harzog (1944) with her research about listeners of radio daytime serials and her findings about their gratifications. From the standpoint of social research, she enlightened the effects of these serials upon the women who have listened to them regularly for various years.[6] Furthermore, Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz's (1974) were two important U&G tradition researchers, they released a volume of essays entitled *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research*.[7] The authors made an overview of the U&G theory that was developed in response to the effect studies, the early audience study approach that gave unconvincing results at that time.[8] Much of U&G research tried to explain what

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[4] Various authors defined parasocial interaction as an important gratification obtained by audience members (Rubin 1981; Rubin 1983; Rubin and McHugh 1987; Perse 1990; Auter 1992; Hoffner 1996; Auter and Lane Jr. 1999; Wong and Fortin 2000; Cummins 2004; Nabi et al. 2006; Greenwood 2008; Wang et al. 2008; Hataway 2008; Greenwood and Long 2009; Bartsch and Viehoff 2010, Greenwood and Long 2011). Therefore, »parasocial interaction has clearly been established as an important determinant of media use and an important concept to be studied from uses and gratification perspective« (Auter 1992, 174). Bartsch and Viehoff (2010) realized that cultivating parasocial relationships serve as a complementary source of social and emotional gratification.

[5] Lazarsfeld made various attempts to circumscribe the research methodology within the field of social research (1941/1972, 1955/1965).

[6] Harzog (1944) found that it is difficult to trace these effects, so she determined three key sources of information that should be examined. First of all, she obtained a systematic knowledge of the serials content through content analysis, secondly, she made a comparative study of listeners and non-listeners, and finally, she examined the structure of the audience and the gratifications derived from daytime serials.

[7] This book represented the basis for the development of the U&G theory by proposing a framework for discussions on the future directions of the theory (Blumler and Katz 1974).

[8] Effect researches focus on various effects that resulted from media usage of various passive individuals with different social background (micro, mezzo, macro) and personal characteristics. U&G represents an upgrade of this theory by the conceptualization of audience members as active and in control of their own media consumption. This theory also emphasizes different needs, habits and interpretative orientations that audience members are aware of, and also the selection process of the media or interpersonal channel that they believe will provide the gratifications they seek (Nabi et al. 2006, 423). Despite the fact that the U&G research approach might be categorized as an early audience study research approach, it is based on a largely accepted social research methodology that is characterised by specific analytical categories that can be explicitly operationalised. Longitudinal empirical researches based on U&G tradition show how the usage of specific type of media content by

are the audience's needs and what gratifications can the media provide. The common focus of these researches were "(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) different patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratification and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones" (Blumler and Katz 1974, 20). Parasocial relationships can be also seen as a gratification obtained, so it is positioned within this researching tradition.

Horton and Wohl (1956) coined the term parasocial relationship while attempting to clarify one of the characteristics of mass media, i.e. the illusion of the existence of a face-to-face relationship between the spectator and the performer.[9] They argued that the conditions of response to the performer are analogous to those in a primary group as the performer is engaged with the spectator (by facing, direct and personal addressing, etc.) and vice versa. "The more the performer seems to adjust his performance to the supposed response of the audience, the more the audience tends to make the response anticipated. This simulacrum of conversational give and take may be called parasocial interaction" (Horton and Wohl 1956).

The existence of media characters is a function of the media world, as they exist for their audiences solely, within the framework of the parasocial relationship.[10] Horton and Wohl (1956) called them »personae«.[11] This relationship is inevitably one-sided, and reciprocity between the two can only be suggested, which is why Horton and

specific individuals within a specific context ensures a determinate gratification for this individual and how this affects the future media consumption practices of this specific individual (Jensen and Rosengren 1996, 315). However, we can still find criticisms against U&G theory, for example, overly individualistic focus, lack of coherent motive typologies, and lack of clarity of its central concepts (Nabi et. al. 2006, 423). U&G represent a social science tradition (also effect researches belong to this tradition) that was consequently followed by other research traditions, manly from the field of humanistic tradition: literal criticism; cultural studies; reception analysis. Nowadays the U&G paradigm is still enjoying steady scholarship interest but we can also find a confluence of all these traditions (ex. cross-cultural, multi-method researches) within the empirical development of this researching field. (Jensen and Rosengren 1996)

[9] Rubin and Step (2000, 639) defined this relationship as quasi-relationship with media personalities, similar to that with social friends. They feel they know and understand the person.

[10] Theran et al. (2010, 276) distinguish between parasocial interaction and parasocial relationships. In particular, they view parasocial interactions as periodic and entertaining, while parasocial relationships are potentially long-term.

[11] "The personae is the typical and indigenous figure of the social scene presented by radio and television. /.../ The spectacular fact about such personae is that they can claim and achieve an intimacy with what are literally crowds of strangers, and this intimacy, even if it is an imitation and a shadow of what is ordinarily meant by that word, is extremely influential with, and satisfying for, the great numbers who willingly receive it and share in it." (Horton and Wohl 1956)

Wohl (1956) described it as an »*illusion of intimacy*«[12] created by the personae. McQuail (1997, 119) thought about parasocial relationships as the phenomena of audience displacement that affects the degree of involvement or attachment, i.e. the commitment to the media character, where it may be empirically difficult to distinguish "real" from "artificial" attachment. Based on Horton and Wohl's (1956) explanation of this difference,[13] numerous attempts at clarifying this thin line have been made (Auter and Palmgreen 2000; Rubin and Step 2000; Giles 2003; Hall et al. 2007; Hataway 2008; Sohn 2011; Schmid and Klimmt 2011). For example, Giles (2003) has examined this issue by applying theories of real social relationships to relationships with media figures. He realised that "if we examine social relationships at a cognitive level, there is no reason why we should not treat parasocial relationships within the same framework" (Giles 2003, 191). Horton and Wohl (1956) argued that the spectators "know" the personae in somewhat the same way they know their chosen friends (through direct observation and interpretation of his appearance, his gestures and voice, his conversation and conduct in a variety of situations), so they are part of a face-to-face exchange rather than a passive observation.

Additionally, Auter and Palmgreen (2000, 79) consequently realised that parasocial interactions only seem like interpersonal social interactions, with two distinct differences: (1) communication is mediated; and (2) the "interaction" is only one-sided.[14] A similar distinction was found by Rubin and Step (2000, 650), who realised that a major difference was that only one of the relational partners actually interacts in a parasocial relationship, even though the other partner might invite interaction. Auter and Palmgreen (2000, 79) have additionally suggested that parasocial interaction is a multidimensional construct, like true social interaction, and that this kind of

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[12] Horton and Wohl (1956) defined several strategies for achieving this illusion of intimacy: the attempt of the personae to duplicate the gestures, conversational style, informal face-to-face gathering, creation of an appropriate tone and patter, the personae also tries to maintain a flow of small talk with the audience, etc. Additionally, the technical devices of the media themselves are exploited to create illusions of intimacy: making the camera be the eyes of the audience (the camera shot can enhance a sense of intimacy).

[13] Horton and Wohl (1956) explained that parasocial relations "may be governed by little or no sense of obligation, effort, or responsibility on the part of the spectator. He is free to withdraw at any moment. If he remains involved, these para-social relations provide a framework within which much may be added by fantasy." The authors additionally emphasize that "the crucial difference in experience obviously lies in the lack of effective reciprocity, and this the audience cannot normally conceal from itself. To be sure, the audience is free to choose among the relationships offered, but it cannot create new ones. The interaction, characteristically, is one-sided, nondialectical, controlled by the performer, and not susceptible to mutual development" (Horton and Wohl 1956).

[14] Previously, Auter (1992, 173) had also identified another difference that consists of a much weaker bond, characteristic of parasocial relationships.

interaction might provide significant insight into the audience – media relationship. Furthermore, Schmid and Klimmt (2011) recently argued that prasocial relationships and real-life social relationships display interesting similarities, but both occupy distinct positions within a person's social network.[15]

Rubin and McHugh (1987) argued that these relationships also resemble interpersonal relationships through the uncertainty about others that is reduced over time by an increased attraction and relationship growth. This increased attraction and relationship growth is possible because the personae offers a continuing relationship.[16] Horton and Wohl (1956) thought about these phenomena as an accumulation of knowledge and intensification of loyalty with the personae that encompasses a progressive and mutual reformulation of spectators' values and aims. "In time, the devotee – the "fan" – comes to believe that he "knows" the personae more intimately and profoundly than others do; that he "understands" his character and appreciates his values and motives" (Horton and Wohl 1956). Considering that this relationship develops over time, each media encounter is important because it can foster parasocial interaction.[17] Auter (1992), Auter and Lane Jr. (1999) and Hataway (2008) argued that strong feelings about characters come only after an audience member has been exposed to a number of parasocial encounters and thereby gains increased attributional confidence about the personality.

But what benefits should the audience gain from such a relationship? Horton and Wohl (1956) realized that these benefits are related to the system of patterned roles

[15] Schmid and Klimmt (2011, 254) realised that "media users can decide autonomously whether they want to establish, continue, or break up a parasocial relationship; they do not have to accept rules and obligations that are inevitably implied in real-life relationships; and parasocial relationships are typically less dynamic than real-life relationships, as most media characters display very stable characteristics and cannot respond individually to the social behaviours of media users like, for example, friends or neighbours do. Therefore, parasocial relationships enable simulated or vicarious social experiences that people may find entertaining without demanding much effort or imposing obligations and responsibilities like real-life relationships". Additionally, they pointed out the importance of media characters as "the relationship with them can help teenagers in constructing their own identity and learn more about social roles and role-compatible behaviour" (Schmid and Klimmt 2011, 254).

[16] A personae's appearance is regular and can be integrated into the routines of daily life. "His devotes 'live with him' and share the small episodes of his public life – and to some extent even of his private life – away from the show. Indeed, their continued association with him acquires a history, and the accumulation of shared past experiences gives additional meaning to the present performance." (Horton and Wohl 1956)

[17] Meanwhile parasocial interactions are conceptualized as "immediate psychological responses of media users to media characters in the moment of exposure" (Schmid and Klimmt 2011, 254), parasocial relationships are "more or less stable, long-term construal media users hold and can access both during and between exposure to messages featuring a media character" (2001, 254). Considering this, parasocial relationships resulted from repeated parasocial interactions over time.

and social situations in which the audience members are involved in their everyday life. An exemplification of the patterns of conduct[18] (those we need to understand and cope with others; and those we must apply to ourselves) is a function of mass media. These findings are consequently linked to Banduras' (1986) Social cognitive theory where individuals learn about the world by observing others. Rosaen and Dibble (2008), for example, analyzed the issue of children's favourite television characters as well as the strength of parasocial relationships with those characters. They kept in consideration Banduras' theory that "the act of engaging in parasocial relationships seems to stem from the fact that individuals learn by observation what is typical of human communication" (Rosaen and Dibble 2008). The education aspects of parasocial interactions were also studied by Renes et al. who realised that viewers have the possibility to develop "pseudo-relationships with leading, efficacious characters, and to learn through these characters" how to deal with different (difficult) situations (2012, 263). An additional educational aspect was enlightened by Papa and Singhal (2009), who realized that parasocial interaction may both support and resist messages of pro-social change that are part of the media text. They found that the impact depends on how the audience members process mass media messages and how strongly held their prior beliefs were in support or opposition to the proposed change.[19]

Horton and Wohl (1956) additionally explained the role of mass media as the opportunity for playing roles to which the spectator has a legitimate claim, but for which he finds no opportunity in his social environment. The authors called this a compensatory function of parasocial relationship, inasmuch as it "provides the socially and psychologically isolated with a chance to enjoy the elixir of

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[18] "The enacted role may be an idealized version of an everyday performance - a 'successful' parasocial approximation of an ideal pattern, not often, perhaps never, achieved in real life. Here the contribution of the persona may be to hold up a magic mirror to his followers, playing his reciprocal part more skillfully and ideally than do the partners of the real world" Horton and Wohl (1956).
[19] A related topic was analyzed by Lee et al. (2010) in their study about the effects of the Korean entertainment-education program, *Open your Eyes*, on the behavioural intention changes for organ donation, specifically by investigating the relationship between the viewers' evaluation on the program characteristics, parasocial interaction, and behavioural intention changes. However, they did not find a significant correlation between parasocial interaction with characters in the program and a mediating role of the program that would lead to behavioural intention changes for organ donations. A similar dichotomy was also found in a Hall et al. (2007) theoretical review regarding the influences of parasocial interaction on individual and social change. Additional researches regarding the link between parasocial interactions and behavioural intention changes should be made in the future.

sociability."[20] Various authors (Shefner-Rogers et al. 1998; Greenwood 2008; Wang et al. 2008) have consequently been studying these variables as key formational elements of parasocial relationships. In their study Wang et al. (2008) found no statistically significant correlation between different types of loneliness and parasocial interaction. On the other hand, in his study Greenwood (2008) proved that parasocial interaction is associated with increased social anxiety, attachment anxiety, negative affect, and with decreased effortful control tendencies. In a subsequent study Greenwood and Long (2009) associated parasocial interactions with various forms of solitude that are not necessarily negative.[21] Shefner-Rogers et al. (1998) similarly fund that parasocial interaction could establish positive role-models for self-efficacy and other values for success. Eyal and Rubin (2003) examined how trait aggression helped explain parasocial interaction with aggressive characters, but they realised that viewer aggression did not predict parasocial interaction. These variables still remain a matter of research.[22]

Horton and Wohl (1956) have focused their theory primarily on audience interaction with the media character, and on the successive phases of deeper relationship involvement. The audience members are, like in any other real relationship, perceived as active co-constructors of the relationship formed within the media text framework, and consequently are not characterised as passive observers and receivers of media messages. However, the conception of this kind of relationship was initially perceived as inherent to television or other traditional media, e.g. print media (Theran et al. 2010; Schmid and Klimmt 2011; Merskin 2011), radio (Armstrong and Rubin 1989;

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[20] Buonanno (2006, 103-104) explained that this "sociability" derives from the compensation value only for socially deprived members of the audience (people who lives in isolation, elders, disabled, marginalized, psychologically disturbed etc.). She also argued that the Horton and Wohl's theory was not accidentally presented in the important psychiatric journal, Psychiatry. However, Buonanno recognized that this non-dialogical communication form is not necessary fictitious and could also be experienced among average people, despite the stigmatic mark of parasocial interaction as a psychic disorder.

[21] Greenwood and Long (2009) investigated how parasocial interaction with media characters and transportation to media programs are related to specific kind of solitude experiences, as well as to the need to belong. They find that solitude experiences such as self-expansion, diversion, and other orientation each contribute to increased parasocial interaction. The results supported both a compensatory and complementary use of media (both positive and negative solitude experiences). However, the authors recognized that although solitude is implicated in "the nature and intensity of individuals' media involvement, as well as in the relationship between belongingness needs and parasocial interaction, it is not "only the lonely" who imaginatively immerse themselves into media narratives and connect with media characters" (Greenwood and Long 2009, 652).

[22] Hataway (2008) noted that many attempts to identify disfunctions that lead to parasocial interaction have been made: »When those dysfunctions failed to materialize in the data, researchers became transfixed by the notion that individuals actively engaged in parasocial interactions for other reasons«.

Auter and Lane Jr. 1999; Rubin and Step 2000; Boehnke et al. 2002, Papa and Singhal 2009) and film[23] (Greenwood and Long 2011; Merskin 2011), but nowadays we cannot dismiss the new powerful media framework that encompasses the internet sphere and various new social media environments. Attempts to measure the correlation between parasocial relationships and the consumption of new media formats have been noted in academic literature (Wong and Fortin 2000; Ballantine in Martin 2005; Thorson and Rodgers 2006; Jin and Park 2009; Kassing and Sanderson 2009; Sanderson and Cheong 2010; Jin 2010; Marwick and Boyd 2011; Keng et al. 2011).

2.1.2 Parasocial relationship and related concepts

There are various theories within the field of media psychology that could be related to the Horton and Wohl's theory of parasocial relationships. Two commonly studied forms of media involvement, transportation into media programs (or narrative worlds) and identification with media characters,[24] were analyzed to shed light on the differences between these theories and the Horton and Wohl's theory of parasocial relations.

2.1.2.1 Transportation

As discussed above, parasocial relation refers to the development of an imagined friendship with the media character that is reminiscent of a real interpersonal relationship. Although the audience members feel they "know" the personae, the attachment is only one-sided. On the other hand, transportation, psychologically similar to parasocial relation, deals with another aspect of the media involvement

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[23] Merskin analysed the teen-targeted vampire novel and film Twilight. He illustrated the process of the prasocial relationship formation with a few examples from the real world, showcasing what happened when the relatively unknown British actor, Robert Pattison, appeared at the King of Prussia, Pennsylvania mall, to promote the then-forthcoming Twilight movie: "When the actor appeared the crowd didn't see an actor. They saw Edward Cullen, the perfect boyfriend" (2011, 173). In another occasion the prasocial relationship become even more intense: "When Mr. Pattison appeared at the Apple store in SoHo one young fan asked him to bite her (2011, 174)". The fan actually thought she was speaking to Edward Cullen, the movie character.

[24] Xu and Yan (2011) released a study where they differentiate the concept of feeling connected via television viewing (FCTV) from the concept of parasocial interaction. They argue that the targets of connection between the two concepts differ: "While connectedness feelings are anchored on realistic relationships, parasocial interaction is fixated on an individual's relation with television characters. This essential difference manifests in different manners these two concepts relate to other variables" (Xu and Yan 2011, 192).

process or exposure state.[25] "For transportation to occur, some narrative world must be created; characters and settings must be evoked, not merely emotions" (Green 2004: 248), whereas parasocial relation relies mainly on emotional connection created between the audience member and the personae.

"Transportation into a narrative world" could be defined as a state of immersion into a story, which incorporates the experience of emotional, perceptual and cognitive absorption into a narrative and theoretically could occur with any text (Green and Brock 2000; Green 2004; Green et al. 2008; Greenwood 2008). It is a process of "entering the milieu of the narrative" (Green et al. 2004, 315). Green and Brock (2000, 701-702) conceived transportation as a "convergent process, where all mental systems capacities become focused on events occurring in the narrative" and these consequences in the inaccessibility of parts of the world of origin. In other words, "the reader loses access to some real-world facts" – on a physical or psychological level – "in favour of accepting the narrative world that the author has created" (Green and Brock 2000, 702): they may lose track of time, fail to notice events going on around them because they are focused on the activity rather than the self, and experience vivid mental images of settings and characters.[26] Green et al. (2008) defined three main components of transportation: (1) cognitive engagement; (2) emotional engagement and; (3) mental imagery. All the dimensions must be combined to produce the transportation effect that is a key mechanism of narrative persuasion (Green et al. 2008).

In their research Green et al. (2008)[27] study the effects of transportation across media and repeated exposure to narratives, assuming that transportation, as a parasocial

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[25] Potter (2009, 24-27) suggested that there are four exposure states when it comes to media exposure: (1) attentional; (2) automatic; (3) transported; and (4) self-reflexive. These states should be differentiated by a qualitatively different experience with the message. Transported state occurs "when people are in the attentional state but then are pulled into the message so strongly that they lose awareness of being apart from the message – they cross over into the transported state". This state is characterized by the loss of the sense of separateness from the message and the track of the audience members' social world surroundings.

[26] Potter's view (2009, 26) differs form Green et al. (2008) in that "whereas Green et al. argue that transportation may aid in suspensions of disbeliefs, which reduces a person's motivation to counter-argue the issues raised in the story, Potters argues that suspension of disbelief is a process that is required in order for the transportation state to be entered and maintained".

[27] Green et al. (2008) provide evidence that repeated exposure to narratives could increase engagement under the right circumstances (e.g. reading and then watching). Repetition under these circumstances generally produced greater transportation. Green (2004) also argued that the extent to which individuals become transported into narrative could be influenced by their previous experience, or pre-existing tendencies to like or sympathize with a particular character (development of a parasocial relation).

relation,[28] may be an ongoing process. The familiarity of a repeated exposure may be comforting because individuals know exactly what to expect and they might also anticipate upcoming moments that they particularly enjoyed the first time (Green et al. 2008, 515). The reconnection with the favourite character could result in a deeper parasocial relation and heighten the emotional engagement component of transportation. Transported individuals (as persons involved in a parasocial relationship) can also establish a bond with media characters and, in some sense, may think about them as if they were real people or even friends (Green et al. 2004).

Greenwood (2008, 416), on the other hand, emphasized that parasocial interaction and transportation are conceptually related as "individuals become increasingly enmeshed in a narrative word, it is likely that they will develop a strong sense of connection or familiarity with characters encountered repeatedly or continuously over time." In his study he examined the links between psychosocial functioning and parasocial interaction with favourite characters and their tendency to transport into media programs. He found that parasocial interaction and transportation tendencies were statistically strongly correlated, suggesting that the two are conceptually overlapping constructs.[29]

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[28] As explained in the previous chapter, parasocial relation is a continuing relationship that could grow because of the audience members' accumulation of knowledge and intensification of loyalty with the personae.

[29] "It stands to reason that individuals with an increased tendency to feel emotionally immersed in media programs and to identify with media characters would also be more likely to form imagined bonds of intimacy with those characters. However, it is important to bear in mind that although related, identifying or experiencing the self *as* a character is not synonymous with experiencing characters as emotionally compelling companions" (Greenwood 2008, 422).

2.1.2.2 Identification

There is a vast range of identifications theories within the psychology field.[30] As the aim of this study is to investigate the causal link between the parasocial relationships with the media character and a commitment to the brand linked to that same media character, we will focus this chapter mainly on the differentiation between identification (with media character and brand), as conceptualized within the media studies field, and parasocial interactions / relationships.

Schuh (2008, 5) identified three types of involvement that are commonly used in examinations of how audiences respond to celebrities: similarity identification,[31] wishful identification[32] and parasocial interaction. However, there is confusion over terminology (Cohen 2001; Schuh 2008). Some researchers conceptualize identification as a construct, incorporating both similarity and wishful identification (Schuh 2008), others define it as a dimension of parasocial interaction (Auter and Palmgreen 2000; Wohlfeil and Whelan 2012), or as an independent phenomena that might occur simultaneously with parasocial interaction (Eyal and Rubin 2003). Parasocial interaction has also been conceptualized by some as an antecedent to identification or an overall sense of involvement (Schuh 2008). We should make a clear distinction between parasocial interaction and identification, although both deal with the audience's media involvement (Hoffner 1996; Cohen 2001; Giles 2003; Podnar 2004; Hall et al. 2007; Schuh 2008; Hataway 2008; Cohen 2009; Tian and Hoffner 2010; Sun 2010).

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[30] Sigmund Freud (1938/2000) was one of the first researchers to introduce the concept of identification to modern sciences. He defined identification as a nonconscious imaginative process that results from psychological pressures due to the Oedipal complex. This is a compensation for the loss of the object – love, jealousy, or mortification. Identification is therefore defined as the first or original emotional attachment to someone else (children with parents). In sum, a person experiences the world through someone else's point of view and to some degree forgets him- or herself. Mead (1934/1977) (following Freud) pointed out that this process is crucial to the socialization of children and the development of personal and social identities through the life cycle. Different authors subsequently applied these classical theories to the field of communication and media studies (see Lasswell, Burke, Kelman and Bandura in Podnar 2004 or Basil 1996).

[31] Similarity identification is usually defined as being able to put oneself into someone else's character or feel to be like the character – feel the same emotions and experience the same events as the character is supposed to be feeling and experiencing. It is often based on similarities in term of salient demographic and personality characteristics (Schuh 2008).

[32] Wishful identification refers to audience member's desire to be like or behave like the media character through the adoption of attitudes or behaviour, a role model or someone else perceived as having admirable qualities (Hoffner 1996; Schuh 2008).

Cohen (2009) explores the parallels and tensions between the concepts of parasocial interaction and identification. Both concepts describe mediated relationships, i.e. ways in which the audience members cognitively and emotionally ("intimately") connect and get involved with images of people they see and hear through mass media, as well as ways in which they consequently understand and interpret the media text (Cohen 2009). However, the concepts are theoretically distinct, as they describe different psychological phenomena and emerge from different intellectual backgrounds. Generally speaking, as opposed to parasocial interaction, when identifying audience members become engaged in the message of the media and discard their role and position as audience members, identification involves an intense, if temporary, merging of the self with the media character. The basis for identification is the unity of identity. An audience member identifies with the media character when he or she assumes, even if for just a moment, a character's identity, and shares his or her perspective, motivations, and goals. Identification thus involves a high level of absorption in the medium and involvement with the medium text (Cohen 2009). McQuail (1997, 119-120) defines identification as putting oneself so deeply in the media character's shoes that one feels the same emotions and loses contact with reality. This may result in a personal "identity loss" and cause an undue dependency on the media.

Within the media studies field, "identification with media characters has generally been understood to denote feelings of affinity, friendship, similarity, and liking of media characters or imitation of a character by audience members" (Cohen 2001). Cohen (2001) defined it as an imaginative process that invokes a response to characters presented within mediated texts. "While identifying with a character, an audience member imagines him- or herself being that character and replaces his or her personal identity and role as audience member with the identity and role of the character within the text" (Cohen 2001). Within the identification process the distinction between self and other is missing and an intense emotional experience is required, compared to parasocial interaction where this distinction is clear as it is necessary for interaction (Hoffner 1996; Cohen 2001; Podnar 2004; Tian and Hoffner 2010; Sun 2010). "Identification leads the audience member to experience the text as if he or she were inside the text, whereas for parasocial interaction to occur, one needs to retain his or her self-identity and interact with the character, thereby maintaining at

least a minimal social distance" (Cohen 2001). Tian and Hoffner (2010) additionally explained that parasocial interaction entails responding to a media persona as a friend or interaction partner, whereas identification involves psychologically merging with the persona, momentarily losing one's self-identity and situational references. Since identification is temporary, it cannot continue outside the mediated contest, but it should facilitate the formation of parasocial bonds and contribute to the development of a parasocial relationship (Tian and Hoffner 2010). It is a "necessary but not sufficient condition for identification" (Sun 2010, 196). "Thus, longer term parasocial relationships may have a stronger influence than identification on viewers' attitudes and behaviour." (Tian and Hoffner 2010, 264)

However, it is also important not to confuse identification with transportation defined above. Both concepts can be seen as ways to describe how "audiences become engaged and involved with media texts" and involve "loss of awareness" and "shift in identity" (Tal-Or and Cohen 2010). "While identification describes a relationship with a specific character, transportation is a more general experience created by the narrative as a whole" (Tal-Or and Cohen 2010, 404).[33] Tal-Or and Cohen distinguish transportation from identification as the first "focuses on the degree of absorption and does not specify what it is in the narrative with which a reader or viewer is engaged", whereas "identification describes a strong attachment to a character indicated by seeing character as positive and adopting his or her goals and perspective on the narrative events" (2010, 406).

The Table 2.1 presented below shows the comparison between the three main concepts analysed in Chapter 2.1.2: transportation, identification and parasocial interaction.

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[33] The concepts of identification and transportation produce a sense of presence in the narrative, but they do so in different ways. "For example, a narrative that features a negative hero may crate strong transportation because it enhances suspense, but a viewer/reader may resist identification with the negative characters" (Tal-Or and Cohen 2010, 404-405). As Tian and Hoffner's study about parasocial interaction and identification with liked, neutral and disliked characters pointed out, audience members "identified more strongly with liked and neutral characters than with disliked characters, and their parasocial relationships were stronger with liked and neutral character than with disliked characters" (2010, 264).

Table 2.1: The comparison of Transportation, Identification and Parasocial Interaction.

	Transportation	Identification	Parasocial Interaction
Nature of process	Cognitive engagement, Emotional engagement and Mental imagery; Loss of awareness; Shift in identity.	Emotional and cognitive; Loss of awareness.	Interactional; (para) social; Audience members retain their self-identity.
Basis	Narrative	Understanding and empathy	Attraction
Positioning of viewer	As character	As character	As self
Associated phenomena	Emotional, perceptual and cognitive absorption in text	Absorption in text, emotional release	Attachment to character and text, keeping company
Theoretical roots	Psychology, Media Studies	Psychoanalysis, Film studies, Social psychology	Psychology, Interpersonal communication, Media Studies

Source: Cohen (2001, 253); Podnar (2004, 61) and Author's research.

2.2   KEY DETERMINANTS OF PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Different factors influence the development process of parasocial relationships and various authors defined different consequences caused by that process. In this chapter selected factors that influence the formation of parasocial relationships will be analysed and categorized into four main clusters: (1) attachment styles of audience members; (2) average media consumption of audience members; (3) cognitively and emotionally involving media content that influences audience member's media consumption practices; and (4) audience member's affinity to the media character.

2.2.1   Attachment styles in audience member's personality structures

The English child psychiatrist and psychoanalyst John Bowlby (1969) and his colleague Mary Ainsworth developed the attachment theory based on the relationship between mother and child. In the post-war decades, especially under the influence of Mrs. Ainsworths' research, Bowlbys' views on child development completely overshadowed psychoanalytic theories and the attachment theory become the central theoretical basis for the development of this research field. Bowlby noted that the

presence of the person (primary caregivers) to whom the child can be attached to is necessary for the child's normal development. This supplanted Freud's theory of instinctive basis of child's development (Erzar and Kompan Erzar 2011). Attachment formed in infancy influenced how people view themselves and others and affect their ability to form close relationships later in life (Bowlby 1969; 2005/1979). "The attachment needs of adults consist of a need for intimacy, a secure base and caregiving, and attachment relationships are these relationships in which we seek to satisfy such needs" (Cohen 1997).

Attachment styles play a fundamental role in how people experience close relationships. According to Bowlby (1969; 2005/1979), a three-category scheme of attachment styles has received the most attention.[34] (1) *Secure individuals*[35] hold a variety of positive expectations that manifest themselves in relational interactions and outcomes. The secure style is based on positive beliefs about the self and others, as well as relationships with others (Cohen 1997; Cole and Leets 1999; Cohen 2004; Greenwood et al. 2008; Greenwood and Long 2011).[36] (2) *Anxious-ambivalent individuals,*[37] probably driven by their fear of being alone and disappointed that their relational partners do not live up to their idealized expectations, are more likely to engage in an extreme range of behaviours, which ultimately lead to relational dissolution. The anxious attachment style is based on an overriding anxiety about separation and abandonment, pessimistic beliefs about self and others, and on a preoccupation with being loved by others - love is transitory, if real at all (Cohen 1997; Cole and Leets 1999; Cohen 2004; Greenwood et al. 2008; Greenwood and

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[34] Once developed, these attachment beliefs are thought to be relatively stable and influence the extent to which people engage in adult relationships (Bowlby 1969). However, Cohen (2004) noted that attachment figures change through the life cycle: from parents during childhood to friends during adolescence to romantic partners in adulthood.

[35] Bowlby and Ainsworth (in Erzar and Kompan Erzar 2011) found that 55-65% of children show a secure attachment to their primary caregivers. These children freely explore the environment in their presence. Separation from caregivers results in different levels of fear, anxiety, but upon the re-connection with them they calm down and react positively.

[36] "People with a secure attachment style are confident and trusting in their relationships with others, and their relationships are characterized by stability, love, security and trust" (Cohen 1997).

[37] Bowlby and Ainsworth (in Erzar and Kompan Erzar 2011) found that 10-15% of children show an anxious-ambivalent or an excessive attachment to their primary caregivers. These children do not like to explore the environment in their presence, but seek to attract their attention. Separation from caregivers results in extreme stress. During the re-connection the children seek and refuse the contact at the same time. This attachment style emphasizes that the children resist calming down despite the presence of caregivers.

Long 2011).[38] (3) *Avoidant individuals*[39] who have a difficult time trusting others often engage in behaviours designed to keep others at a comfortable distance. The avoidant style is based on negative beliefs regarding the self and outcomes of close relationships (Cohen 1997; Cole and Leets 1999; Cohen 2004; Greenwood et al. 2008; Greenwood and Long 2011).[40] Thus, attachment theory can provide a significant framework for understanding how people experience close relationships and interact with significant others.

As media become part of our everyday lives and media usage continues to increase over time, figures from the media and popular culture may act as role models in adolescence (Giles and Maltby 2004), but also earlier or later in our lives. Different authors examined the categories of attachment styles in relation to parasocial relationships (Cohen 1997; Cole and Leets 1999; Cohen 2004; Greenwood et al. 2008; Theran et al. 2010; Greenwood and Long 2011). Cole and Leets (1999) investigated attachment theory as an interpersonal theory utilised to understand how audience members form parasocial relationships with media characters. Relationships with media characters exhibited the three fundamental characteristics of adult attachment (Cole and Leets 1999): (a) individuals will attempt to reduce the distance between themselves and their attachment figure; (b) the presence of the attachment figure should provide a sense of security (i.e. secure base); (c) there should be some form of protest when separation from the attachment figure is imminent.

Evidence in literature (Cole and Leets 1999; Cohen 2004; Theran et al. 2010; Greenwood and Long 2011) suggests that *Anxious-ambivalents* are the most likely to form parasocial bonds, *Avoidants* are the least likely to develop such relationships, and *Secures* are in the middle, with the more mistrusting *Secures* showing a tendency

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[38] "People with an anxious attachment style desire extremely intense relationships and develop a 'clingy' relationship orientation" (Cohen 1997).

[39] Bowlby and Ainsworth (in Erzar and Kompan Erzar 2011) found that 20-25% of children show an avoidant attachment to their primary caregivers. Children will explore their environment without seeking contact with caregivers. They will show minimal signs of agitation during the separation period and only minimal signs of joy during the re-connection (the same reaction to the presence or absence). In general, avoidant attachment style has been linked to rejection of caregivers or elusion of contact.

[40] "People with an avoidant attachment style tend to avoid romantic involvement, and they prefer to spend time alone" (Cohen 1997).

to engage in parasocial interaction.[41] Considering these facts in connection with the research executed previously, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: A correlation between attachment styles within the personality structures of audience members and the intensity of their parasocial relationships with the media character will be determined.

Consequently, we propose three additional hypotheses for testing the three separate attachment styles dimensions:

H1a: Anxious-ambivalent attachment styles will positively affect the intensity of the parasocial relationship formed between audience members and the media character.

H1b: Secure attachment styles will positively affect the intensity of the parasocial relationship between audience members and the media character.

H1c: Avoidant attachment styles will negatively affect the intensity of the parasocial relationship between audience members and the media character.

2.2.2   Average media consumption by audience members

Duration of time spent getting to know and achieving an intimacy with the personae may indeed contribute to form a continuing relationship between the audience members and the personae (Horton and Wohl 1956). Audience members acquire a history ("the accumulation of shared past experiences") regarding this continuing relationship and in time, they "come to believe that they "know" the persona more intimately and profoundly than others do; that they "understand" the character and appreciate his values and motives" (Horton and Wohl 1956).

Various authors have investigated the correlation between the level of exposure to mass media content (primarily with television viewership) and the depth of the parasocial relationship with the media character (Levy 1979; Rubin and McHugh 1987; Auter 1992; Cook 1993; Cole and Leets 1999; Auter and Palmgreen 2000;

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[41] For example, Cohen (2004) shows that audience members who expect to lose their favourite character anticipate negative reactions, similar to those experienced after the dissolution of social relationships in real life. If imaginary relationships with the media character fulfil attachment needs, then their break-up is likely to cause distress, especially among those viewers most vulnerable to separation anxiety. The most negative responses can be expected from *Anxious-Ambivalent individuals*. Similarly, Theran et al. (2010) suggest that parasocial interactions are characteristic of adolescents with an anxious-ambivalent attachment style.

Annese 2004; Cummins 2004; Auter et al. 2005; Park and Lennon 2006; Greenwood 2008; Kim and Long 2012). Horton and Wohl argued that this accumulation of knowledge through time can intensify the bond of intimacy. According to Auter and Palmgreen (2000, 84-85), positive parasocial relationships lead to an increased desire to engage more with media text, which correlates to increased viewing of programming that includes an audience member's favourite personality. "The more positive parasocial relationship with television character a person maintains, the more TV would like to be viewed by that person – in order to engage more often with favourite personalities" (Auter in Palmgreen 2000, 85). Finally, the authors realise that a positive correlation appears to exist between the intensity of television viewing and parasocial relationships. The same connection has been established by Greenwood (2008) in his study about psychological predictors of media involvement. She confirmed that "hours of television typically consumed was linked to increase parasocial interaction" (2008, 419). Cummins (2004) and Auter et al. (2005) got the same result in their studies by arguing that regular exposure to the medium will contribute to the development of stronger parasocial bonds.

Lavy (1979) has proved the existence of a relationship between parasocial interaction and television news exposure[42] while analyzing the Horton and Wohl concept in relation to TV news viewership. In his study he realized that "parasocial relationship develop over time and is based in part on a history of "shared" experiences" (Lavy 1979, 72). This history is also formed through the process of the audience's opinion formation: "The behaviour of the personae during each interaction event helps the viewer to form an opinion about the personae, which the viewer than carries into the next parasiocial event. Each media encounter will foster some degree of parasocial interaction" (Auter 1992).

Cole and Leets additionally confirmed time as the determinant of the process of prasocial relationship formation by relying on uncertainty reduction theory, which holds that "relationships develop over time through a process of increased certainty"

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[42] "People who watch television news engage in varying degrees of parsocial interaction with the news personae. These viewers who find the parasocial relationship particularly attractive or gratifying increase their exposure in order to increase their "contact" with the news personae." (Lavy 1979, 72) Lavy additionally suggested that the intensity of the parasocial relationship should be an important determinant of how much television news is viewed by the audience.

(as uncertainty decreases, liking increases) (1999, 496-497).[43] "With regard to parasocial interactions, as viewers reduce their uncertainty of media personalities, they will receive deeper intimacy with, and liking for, mediated characters" (1999, 497).

Cook (1993), on the other hand, found little or no connection between parasocial interactions and the frequency of TV viewing in his study about parasocial interactions in local TV news, which differs considerably from the findings by the researchers mentioned previously. However, he allows the possibility of a complex link, as the anchors' favourability could also be an important determinant in this process.[44]

Evidence in academic literature suggests that there are different effects and consequences caused by the frequency of media consumption, and we cannot neglect the possibility that the formation of parasocial relationships is in some way influenced by those effects. This leads to the second hypothesis of this thesis:

H2: A higher level of media consumption by audience members encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships with the media character.

2.2.3   Cognitively and emotionally involving media content

Not only is the frequency of media consumption important, the content also plays a major role in the process of parasocial relationship formation. Different media have different interaction potential as media messages can vary in their potential for parasocial interaction – parasociability. "This potential is influenced by the medium's ability to approximate reality and content characteristics such as the dominance of lead figures as well as personae who regularly appear in the program or in other media contexts" (Auter 1992).

Auter (1992) assessed the content variables of parasocial relationships, confirming that subjects viewing more interactive programming scored significantly higher on the Parasocial Interaction Scale proposed by Rubin et al. (1985). He (1992) argued that

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[43] Within uncertainty reduction theory, relationships are established through the "process of learning to predict other's behaviour" (Cole and Leets 1999, 497).
[44] Rubin and McHugh (1987) also cannot find a clear connection between exposure time and parasocial interaction, but they realized that their researching method might have been inadequate (the measure of television exposure).

"content variables contribute to content interactivity level and affect audience parasocial interaction". His study (1992) proposed that breaking the invisible "fourth wall"[45] made programs more involving cognitively[46] and, at the same time, argued that those programs appeared to embody a number of attributes, which should represent increased parasociability. Based on this evidence Auter (1992) found three ways in which the personae break the fourth wall and increase his/her parasociability: (1) by establishing a direct connection with the audience, (2) by addressing the audience at a much more intimate distance, and (3) by directly addressing and adjusting the supposed response so that the persona raises the level of intimacy with the audience, thus raising the interactivity level of the content. Viewers thus feel a higher degree of parasocial interaction during the process of breaking the fourth wall by the personae.

A similar thesis was originally argued by Horton and Wohl (1956) as they suggested that the personae tries as much as possible to eradicate, or at least blur, the line between him (or the program) and the audience: "The persona may try to step out of the particular format of his show and literally blend with the audience". Also, structural variables (e.g. camera shots as "subjective camera" idea where the camera is the eyes of the audience) can affect audience parasocial relationships. The authors reasoned that "technical devices of the media themselves are exploited to create illusion of intimacy" (1956). Meyrowitz (1986) has additionally suggested that the variety of ways a persona can be framed during the program formed a variety of perceived distances to the audience members (model of para-proxemics) – spatial relations between the personae and the audience. These techniques can strengthen parasocial impressions and audience members can become confidants of the personae.

Likewise, other authors assessed the content aspect of parasocial relationships (Cook 1993; Auter and Palmgreen 2000), but without assigning the variable the same central

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[45] Auter and Davis (1991) explained that viewers are eavesdropping on media characters which function within a "three-walled" environment. He defined the "fourth wall" as the imaginary barrier separating characters from the audience, a "transparent one through which the audiences voyeuristically looks" (1991, 165) the media characters, who are not even aware that they have an audience and thus make no direct statements to them. Breaking this convention has been defined as "breaking the fourth wall".

[46] In a previous study Auter and Davis (1991) have already addressed this topic of programs enrichment (entertainment value and content sophistication) by the practice of breaking the fourth wall. They realized that "participation is a primary determiner of interest-involvement" by which "the locus of involvement rests primarily on the viewer" (1991, 170). "Entertainment value and content sophistication appear to be two powerful cognitive indexes of viewer interest in program" (1991, 170).

importance. Auter and Palmgreen (2000) examined affinity, which is a link to something that increases the need to interact (and a need to establish a parasocial interaction). They found a mildly positive correlation between affinity for television and the proposed Audience-Persona Interaction (API) Scale. In his study about parasocial relationships with local TV anchors, Cook (1993) also measured their task attraction, which can be understood as the content variable of the news program. He realised that news teams vary noticeably in their parasocial interaction score on the Parasocial Interaction Scale, as proposed by Rubin et al. (1985) and modified by Allen (1988).

Additionally, Perse (1990) considered the influence of cognitive and emotional involvement as a key determinant within the formation process of parasocial interaction with a local newscaster. She assumed that these two dimensions of audience activity (cognitive and emotional reaction to media) revealed the process of media involvement. She realised that "audience members show cognitive involvement by paying attention, recognizing aspects of the content as familiar or unfamiliar, and relating the content to prior knowledge"[47] (1990, 34), whereas emotional involvement[48] is characterized by emotional responses. This suggests the third hypothesis:

H3: More (cognitively or emotionally) involving media content encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships between audience members and the media character.

Consequently, two additional hypotheses for testing the two separate dimensions are proposed:

H3a: More cognitively involving media content encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships between audience members and the media character.

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[47] Involvement is an active participation in information processing that influence media effects (Perse 1990). Cognitive involvement is shown in the mental processes of attention, recognition, and elaboration (Perse 1990). Kahneman (in Perse 1990) defined attention as the selectivity of response that requires effort and allocation of cognitive capacity. Recognition, on the other hand, compares information to known patterns in long-term memory by categorizing them as (un)familiar. Elaboration begins when information triggers past associations by relating them to existing knowledge and images and attaches connotative and associative meanings. During this step the information is linked mnemonically to similar information, placed in an organizational structure, and responses are rehearsed (Perse 1990).
[48] Emotional reactions may also reveal media involvement. Researchers (view Perse 1990) found different emotional reactions to media content (like soap operas that ranged from disgust, applause, cheers, and sighs; humorous reactions to textbooks; or amusement while watching cartoons).

H3b: More emotionally involving media content encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships between audience members and the media character.

2.2.4 Audience member's identification with and affinity for the media character

Podnar (2004, 60-62) states that parasocial relationships and identification represent two distinct phenomena that may emerge causally or simultaneously. Parasocial relationships only involve the sense of knowing the media character and the imaginary interaction with him or her. Identification, on the other hand, involves the emotions of an audience member who feels that circumstances affecting the media character are also happening to them as well, alongside the pressure to be(come) like the media character. Podnar (2004) argues that parasocial relationships do not include identification; an audience member only interacts with the media character and does not lose his or her identity. However, as argued above, various authors conceptualize identification differently – as a dimension of parasocial interaction (Auter and Palmgreen 2000; Wohlfeil and Whelan 2012), as an antecedent to identification (Schuh 2008) or an independent concept that might occur simultaneously with parasocial interaction (Eyal and Rubin 2003). Consequently, we proposed to explore the variable of affinity, a more general concept that can be applied to the theory of parasocial relationships. Cohen draws a distinction between identification and affinity through the explanation of the relationships between audience members and their favourite characters: those are "more memorable and important, because viewers develop relationships with them" (1999, 329). Whereas identification "leads viewers to share the perspective of a character and to experience the story through their eyes", affinity is more like to leads viewers to create parasocial relations as viewers are more like to think of characters "in terms of liking or affinity" (1999, 329).[49]

Affinity implies that audience members maintain the distance between themselves and the media character, that he or she stays aware of his or her identity and that he or she maintains a personal perspective outside the media text. Auter and Palmgreen (2000, 85) define affinity, e.g. a liking for something, as an increased need to interact, which directly relates to the strength of an interaction relationship. Media research has

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[49] Rubin and McHugh also indicated that "some viewers exhibit great amounts of affinity with the medium and with the character" and these contribute to the formation process of parasocial relationships (1987, 279).

also shown that a person's affinity for the media character is correlated with viewing for companionship and the motives for parasocial interaction (Auter and Palmgreen 2000).

Sood and Rogers (2000) identified three (sub)dimensions of parasocial interaction: (1) affective interaction, (2) cognitive interaction, and (3) behavioural interaction.[50] They based their definition of the first two dimensions (affective and cognitive) on the Rubin and Perse (1987) findings about affinity, reality intention and attention within the parasocial formation process. Affinity is thus defined as "strong liking for media program" (Sood and Rogers 2000, 390) and grater amount of affinity with the medium and with the characters may result in grater parasocial interaction (Rubin and McHugh 1987; Rubin and Perse 1987).

Choen (1999) additionally confirmed that liking (or affinity) for media characters is an important factor in audience members' loyalty to the program: "The more significant characters are those that generate more intense affect and are therefore more memorable" – characters they like most (Choen 1999, 328). Cohen argued that the variable of affinity has proven useful in studying the relationship of viewers to (favourite) characters.[51] He consequently confirmed that "the most common reason associated with choosing favourite characters are attractiveness and personality traits" (1999, 341), both associated also with affinity.[52] Perse (1990) also defined greater affinity as one variable that indicates higher levels of cognitive involvement that is linked to parasocial interaction. This suggests hypothesis four:

H4: A higher affinity for media characters (as felt by the audience members) encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships between audience members and the media character.

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[50] Affective interaction defines as "the degree to which audience members react interpersonally to the character", whereas cognitive interaction is "the degree to which audience members pay careful attention to the educational content" of the media text, reflecting on its meaning and importance. The last dimension, the behavioural interaction, is defined as "the degree to which audience individuals talk about media messages with other audience members and/or with the media characters" (Sood and Rogers 2000, 390).

[51] Cohen defined favourite characters as "the best liked character, the character with which viewers feel close" (1999, 329).

[52] Rubin and McHugh also found that a relationship development with a media persona is "a function of attraction that leads to parasocial interaction" (1987, 289).

2.3 MARKETING AND PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

By identifying the factors (from H1 to H4) that influence the development process of parasocial relationships, let's now address the consequences caused by this process. The findings from the first part of this research will be applied to the theory of meaning transfer from media characters to brands (McCracken 1989; Podnar 2004; Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta 2010). Accordingly, we will argue that the concept of meaning transfer is, first and foremost, applicable to media characters and audience members through the parasocial relationship process, and only then through this same media character to the brand, as consumed by the same audience members.[53] As this field of research is not well investigated empirically, in the Chapter 2.3 we will analyze the theoretical background of endorsement and meaning transfer as marketing tools. Following this first theoretical glimpse into the endorsement marketing sphere, we will try to merge it with the parasocial relationship theory.

2.3.1 Endorsement and meaning transfer as marketing tools

Nowadays, we are living in a world of ever-increasing advertising bombardment where we are exposed to thousands of brand messages everywhere we go (traditional and new mass media, streets, buildings, stores, public transport, etc.). This media saturation causes a numbing effect as people become immune to standard advertising tactics. Marketing researchers are trying to identify various strategies to break through this highly cluttered advertising environment as consumers are becoming more demanding, selective, sophisticated, increasingly educated, and have a variety of products at their disposal due to the intense competition on the markets. Celebrity endorsement was realized as a very popular and efficient strategy in the past decades (and sill is today), as a famous person can "draw attention to a brand and shape the perceptions of the brand by virtue of the interfaces that consumers make based on their knowledge of the person" (Keller et al. 2008, 330).[54]

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[53] According to Lury (2004), brands are always a set of relations between products in time. Stating that a brand is a "set of relations" refers to the fact that it encompasses different kinds of relations, from the relationship between the consumer and product, to the other more abstract relationships with a brand. From this point of view, we can safely assume that parasocial relationships are included in this "set of relations".

[54] In 2009 Marketing Week presented a research emphasizing that more than 55 % of consumers worldwide believe that a star makes a brand stand out. Additionally the research found that one in four say they buy a product because it is promoted by a famous face, 52 % say that a celebrity adds to the

Various researchers have studied the celebrity endorsement influence on consumers' brand choice behaviour and purchase intention[55] (Alsmadi 2006; Lindstrom 2008; Stallen et al. 2010; Lindstrom 2011), the increased recognition, recall of advertised brands, brand awareness, brand image and brand equity[56] (Erdogan 1999; Byrne et al. 2003; Seno and Lukas 2007; Patel 2009; Spry et al. 2011), the enhancement of brand image and consequently the brand equity[57] (Jaiprakash 2008; Abedniya and Zaeim 2011), the potential risk of negative information about the celebrity and their implications on consumers' evaluations of the endorsed brands[58] (Till and Shimp 1998; Erdogan 1999; Erdogan and Drollinger 2008), as well as the high costs of the endorsement process that could be in vain if consumers do not connect the celebrity to the product[59] (Costanzo and Goodnight 2005), and the saturation factor where the endorsers are overexposed to the media with multiple brand endorsements and their

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brand's personality and 68 % of people sat they have difficulty remembering famous endorsers when they promote several brands. Consequently, they noted that the brand managers should also think more strategically about the celebrities they choose and how they are used to promote the brand: With one in four brands globally now using celebrity endorsement, it is becoming a crowded market, too (Riberts 2009). However, celebrities still give an extra edge to the companies for retaining the consumers' attention in the age of intense competition, where registering a position in the consumers' mind space is extremely tough (Dubey and Agrawal 2011).

[55] Stallen et al. (2010) examine why celebrities are more persuasive than non-famous endorsers by the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging methods (neuromarketing sphere). Their results support the hypothesis that "the neural activity found in the medical orbitofrontal cortex represents a transfer of affect from celebrity to product" (2010, 809). Based on these findings the authors confirm that celebrities are more effective endorsers than non-famous individuals. Lindstrom (2008 and 2011) in his neuromarketing researches confirms the power of celebrity endorsement within the process of influencing consumers' brand choice behaviour and purchase intentions.

[56] Byrne et al. (2003) examined the use of celebrity endorsement in the formation of the retail image through the case study (collaboration between Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd. and celebrity chef Jaime Oliver). The successful endorsement campaign confirms that such marketing strategies could become a powerful tool for managing brand equity. Seno and Lukas (2007) elaborated a conceptual framework of how celebrity product endorsement creates equity for both the endorsed product-brand and the endorsing celebrity. They realized that "celebrity endorsement of a product is a potent mechanism for generating both brand equity and celebrity equity" (Seno and Lukas 2007,130).

[57] Jaiprakash (1998) defines a celebrity endorsement as a "form of co-branding, which influences brand image through meaning transfer from the endorser to the endorsed brand. Celebrity-product congruence has a positive impact on brand image, which in turn has a positive impact on brand equity" (2008, 54).

[58] Till and Shimp (1998) examine the impact negative information about the celebrity might have on consumers' evaluation of the endorsed brand. Through three experiments they realized that a "lowered evaluation of the celebrity can lower brand evaluations" (1998, 79). Celebrity's actions affect the derived meaning and when they misbehave their actions are associated with the sponsoring company or the brand (Erdogan and Drollinger 2008).

[59] Costanzo and Goodnight (2005) try to determine if their researching sample could make the brand connection to the celebrity by analyzing their match of professional athletes to the brand and match of not professional athletes to brand. They realize that "celebrity endorsements may not be effective in aiding consumer recall of the brand" and by these results the authors questioned the companies who spend millions on celebrity endorsement (2005, 59). However, their research has a few limitations and additional researches in this area were suggested.

credibility drops for this reason[60] (Tripp et al. 1994; Erdogan 1999; Alsmadi 2006; Patel 2009).

A literature review revealed that there are several models applied to the practice of celebrity endorsement, but the following three are mostly used: (1) source credibility and source attractiveness model (generally named as source models); (2) match-up model or hypothesis; (3) meaning transfer model. The three models were used to discuss the nature and use of celebrity endorsement:

(1) Source credibility and source attractiveness model (generally named as source models):

On one hand, studies in the past several decades have been focused on source credibility as the leverage to achieve communication effectiveness. The model contends that expertise (or knowledge) and trustworthiness are the essential factors leading to the perceived credibility of the message.[61] On the other hand, source attractiveness model was added as the third component of source credibility, where attractiveness (or appearance) refers to the perceived attractiveness of the source and depends on a source's familiarity, likability, similarity and overall attractiveness to the receiver. Muda et al. question the findings form source credibility studies as "they regard the celebrity endorsement process as unidimensional" (2012, 376). Okorie et al. also noted that various attempts to measure the impact of credibility on customers' intentions to purchase indicate "that only 'expertise' had any significant influence" (2012, 143). However, Hakimi et al. found that "once individuals already have a positive feeling about the message that is delivered, even a source that does not have credibility could be more persuasive" (2011, 128). Spry et al. (2011) additionally supported the impact of celebrity credibility on the equity of the endorsed brand.

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[60] Tripp et al. (1994, 543-545) propose a research about the effects of number of products endorsed by the celebrity and number of exposures to the celebrity on consumers' attitude and purchase intention. Their study revelled that multiple product endorsement affect consumers' perceptions, such as "likability and both dimensions of credibility (i.e. expertise and trustworthiness) attenuate" resulting in a negative attitude toward the endorser and the brand.

[61] Expertise is defined as the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions and refers to the knowledge, experience or skills possessed by the endorser. A more expert celebrity has been found to be more persuasive, produces higher recall of the brand and also more intentions to buy the brand. Trustworthiness, on the other hand, refers to the honesty, integrity and believability of an endorser. Both are important determinants of source credibility (Erdogan 1999, 297-298).

Their results suggested that "endorser credibility has an indirect impact on brand equity when this relationship is mediated by brand celebrity" (2011, 882).

(2) Match-up model or hypothesis:

Considering the match-up model or hypothesis, the effectiveness of the message depends on the existence of a congruence or "fit" between the celebrity and the endorsed brand "in terms of characteristic such as image, expertise, attractiveness" (Muda et al. 2012, 377). "The model emphasizes that the physical attractiveness of a celebrity endorser will enhance evaluations of the products characteristics only if the characteristics of the product 'metch-up' with the image conveyed by the celebrity" (Okorie et al. 2012, 144-145). However, Kamins and Gupta (1994) show in their research that match-up goes beyond attractiveness to the more global issue of congruence between spokesperson and product as they realized that higher degree of congruence affected the identification and internationalization process of social influence. Lynch and Schuler additionally noted that, "if the match and perceptual and attitudinal congruence are missing, unfavourable product evaluations will result" (1994, 419). Therefore, it is essential for brand managers to match the brand image to the celebrity image, in order to establish an effective and persuasive message. Hakimi et al. suggested that endorsers are most successful when "there is a strong and positive relationship between the endorser and the target audience" (2011, 120), when this relationship can also be thought of as a parasocial relationship.

(3) Meaning transfer model:

McCracken (1989) explains celebrity endorsement from a cultural perspective as a more general process of meaning transfer. The movement of cultural meaning originates from the society, where this meaning is formed:[62] "Meaning begins as something resident in the culturally constituted world, in the physical and social world constituted by the categories and principles of the prevailing culture. Meaning than moves to the consumer goods and finally to the life of the consumer" (McCracken 1989, 313). This transfer is usually used as an instrument of the advertising system. The meaning, which will be transferred to the brand, must be chosen carefully and it should convey the image, expertise, attractiveness and other essential brand

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[62] The object only gets its own meaning through the operation of symbolic codes and a logical organization of signs that transformed it into a commodity or an object of consumption. Baudrillard emphasizes that "to become an object of consumption, an object must first become a sign" (2005, 218). The meaning is therefore articulated through consumers' practices within a specific society.

characteristics. This meaning is therefore connected to the celebrity who plays a crucial part in a meaning transfer process. McCracken (1989) proposes a three-stage model that explains the process of meaning transfer by the celebrity to the product to the consumer (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Meaning movement and the endorsement process.
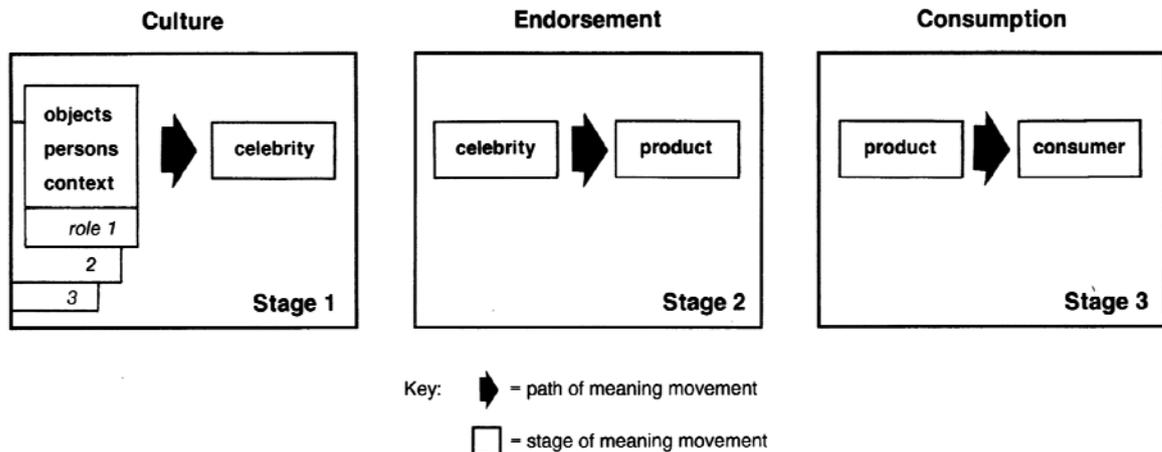
Firstly, the meaning of the celebrity becomes the "added value" within the meaning transfer process as "celebrities have particular configurations of meanings that cannot be found elsewhere" (McCracken 1989, 315).

> *Celebrities 'owe' their meanings because they have created them on the public stage by dint of intense and repeated performance and /.../ each role brings the celebrity into contact with a range of objects, persons and contexts. Out of these objects, persons and contexts are transferred meanings that then reside in the celebrity. (McCracken 1989, 315)*

This is called *Stage 1* where the meaning attributed to the celebrity is defined and linked to the product or brand.

Secondly, the product or the brand must capture all the desired meanings that reside in the celebrity. The brand therefore seeks to transfer the meanings of the celebrity and tune their image. Only after "the consumer sees the similarity between the celebrity and the product he or she is prepared to accept that the meanings in the celebrity (by dint of long and fond acquaintance) are in the product" (McCracken 1989, 316). This is called *Stage 2* where the consumer acquires the brand meanings.

Finally, McCracken (1989, 315-317) realized that consumers are constantly canvassing the object world for goods with useful meanings to furnish certain aspects of the self and the world. The object world gives them access to meanings that can help them to form their personality, lifestyle and offers a vast inventory of possible selves and thinkable worlds. However, there is no automatic transfer of meaning or transformation of self.

> *Consumers must claim, exchange, care for, and use the consumer goods to appropriate the meaning. /.../ The constructed self makes the celebrity a kind of exemplary, inspirational figure to the consumer. Consumers are themselves constantly moving symbolic properties out of the consumer goods into their lives to construct aspects of the self and the world. (McCracken 1989, 317)*

In this *Stage 3* the consumer's role is essential and the meaning transfer process can be completed only by the consumer's adoption of the new meanings.

Many authors have applied the Meaning transfer model to their researches with the aim to study the effectiveness of the meaning transfer of sport or event sponsorships, fashion brands or retailer brands advertising and so on (Byrne et al. 2003; Smith 2004; Peetz et al. 2004; Darnell and Sparks 2007; Carroll 2008; Roy and Ghosh 2008; Jaiprakash 2008; Jain et al. 2009; Patra and Datta 2010). In the following chapters we will apply this model to the parasocial relationships theory by assuming that the pre-existing relationship formed between the audience member (consumer) and the media character (celebrity) affects the meaning transfer process by transferring meanings first from the media character to the consumer and afterwards to the endorsed brand.

2.3.2 Parasocial relationships and brand endorsement

To use Marshall McLuhan's (1964/1994) famous dictum, "the medium is the message", the celebrity is the message and it is not neutral. The brand must consider every aspect that can affect the brand image, and that parasocial relations established between the media character and the audience member (who is also a consumer) are also a part of this process of meaning transfer. Although there have been a few attempts at connecting parasocial relationships with branding or marketing theories (Stephens et al. 1996; Wong and Fortin 2000; Gummesson 2008; Park and Lennon 2004; Podnar 2004; Park and Lennon 2006; Currás-Pérez et al. 2011; Keng et al.

2011; Morin et al. 2012), this field of research is still not well investigated empirically.

Within the relationship marketing theory, Gummesson (2008) defined parasocial relationships as relationships not only to objects but also to symbols, such as brands and other less tangible phenomena. However, he only used parasocial relationships to explain that markets are changing, so parasocial relationships can be used to approach the new issues through relationship marketing strategies (parasocial relationships as the relationships between brands and objects).[63]

Various authors (Stephens et al. 1996; Park and Lennon 2004; Park and Lennon 2006; Park et al. 2011; Currás-Pérez et al. 2011), on the other hand, attempted to link the theory of parasocial relationships and consumer behaviour in the context of selling products (by analyzing television shopping practices). Stephens et al. realized that parasocial relationships are of "great value in the selling of products trough media that offer the opportunity for two-way communication" (1996, 199). However, researchers found a potentially significant negative consequence of such practices, i.e. impulse buying. Park and Lennon realized that "impulsive buying is positively related to parasocial interaction with the hosts" (2004, 142) as "when shoppers feel intimacy with hosts, they tend to make a sudden purchase" (Park et al. 2011, 12). Park and Lennon (2006) also found a positive correlation between personal traits such as parasocial interaction and impulse buying tendency in television setting. Currás-Pérez et al. (2011) viewed parasocial relationships as a way to develop feelings of intimacy with the host as if they were a close friend, with the aim to increase viewing (exposure to the specific genre or programme - teleshopping) in order to maintain the friendship.

Wong and Fortin (2000) consequently applied the theory of parasocial relationships to the on-line interactive shopping environment by proposing a model for exploring the influence of parasocial relationships to on-line consumers' attitudes. They argued that parasocial interaction could be crucial in an on-line shopping environment. The potential moderating effects of parasocial interactions for customers in virtual communities were also analyzed by Keng et al. (2011). They realized that parasocial

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[63] Gummesson (2008) explained parasocial relationships with regard to relationships to corporations, brands and their value propositions or the image they convey.

interactions "provide manufacturers with various marketing strategies for customization of VPEs (virtual product experiences)" (2011, 430).

Nevertheless, Morin et al. realized that "individuals form a deeper sense of friendship and social bonds with people they may not know intimately" (2012, 2), like celebrities. Through the level of parasocial interaction with celebrities they tried to explain the message effectiveness, consumer attitudes, voter perceptions, and behaviour intentions within the celebrity endorsement process.

Podnar (2004) has noted a parallel between meaning transfer from media characters to brands and the formation of parasocial relationships between consumers (as audience members and consumers of media) and media characters. However, while no studies, to the best of our knowledge, have focused on how parasocial relationships can affect the meaning transfer process form celebrity to brand and vice versa, several studies have relied on the meaning transfer process in celebrity endorsement to explain how meanings and associations can be linked in such a process. Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010, 454) suggested that "meaning could transfer not only from the endorser to the brand, but also from the brand to the celebrity", so the meaning transfer is a two-way process (see Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3). In such a process celebrity endorsement is viewed as a form of co-branding (also known as brand bundling or brand alliance) (Seno and Lukas 2007; Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta 2010).

Figure 2.2: One-way meaning transfer in celebrity endorsement.
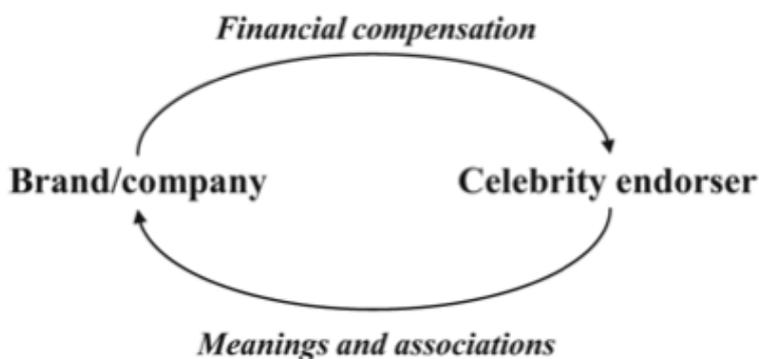
Source: Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010, 454).

Figure 2.3: Reciprocal meaning transfer in celebrity endorsement mediated by endorsement action.

Meanings and associations

Endorsement action

Financial compensation

Brand/company   **Celebrity endorser**

Meanings and associations
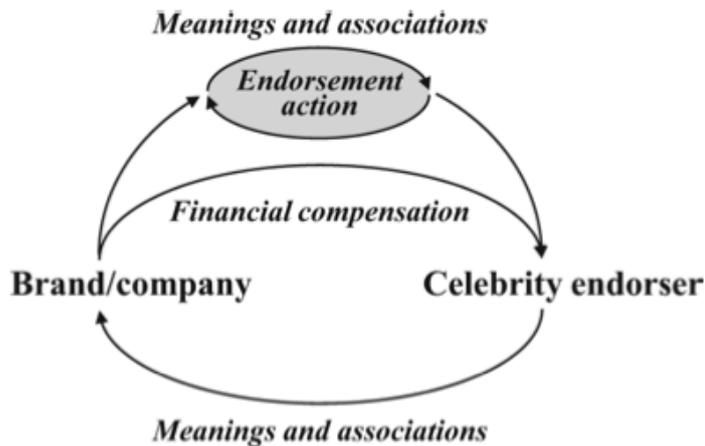
Source: Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010, 456).

"The power of the celebrity endorsement is based on the meanings the celebrity has accumulated in contexts outside the endorsement" (Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta 2010, 454), so pre-existing parasocial relationships should be taken in consideration within this process. Considering that, we propose an extended meaning transfer model originally proposed by Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010) that is presented in Chapter 2.3.3.

2.3.3 Parasocial relationships, consumers' brand commitment and its influence on the meaning transfer process

Aaker (1996) uses a meaningful quote to define brand commitment:

"A brand that captures your mind gains behaviour. A brand that captures your heart gains commitment." (Scott Talgo, brand strategist)

He additionally compared commitment to brand loyalty that should not be taken for granted. The former is defined as emotional or psychological attachment to a brand and reflects the degree to which a brand is firmly entrenched as the only acceptable choice within a product class (Warrington and Shim 2000, 764; Tuškej et al. 2013). Iglesias et al. (2010) additionally defined consumers' commitment as the psychological and economic attachments that a consumer might have toward a particular brand, store or product and is based on their identification with the

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particular brand, store or product. However, there is a more widely accepted definition (also applied to a wider marketing relationships literature) that views consumers' commitment as an attitude that reflects the enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship in the future (Podnar 2004; Bansal et al. 2004; 234; Čater 2006 and 2007; Čater and Čater 2010; Čater et al. 2011). Brand loyalty, on the other hand, reflects the practice of repeated purchases of the same brand over time as well as the consumers' tendency to simplify the decision making process (Warrington and Shim 2000, 764; Tuškej et al. 2013). Iglesias et al. (2010) research also shows that (affective) commitment mediates the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty.[64] Considering this, brand loyalty refers to a behavioural perspective, whereas consumers' commitment to a brand relates to an attitudinal perspective and consequently represents "a better indicator of consumer satisfaction with brand choice" (Warrington and Shim 2000, 764).

Consumers' commitment to a brand represents one of the central concepts in the relationship marketing paradigm (Bansal et al. 2004) and is viewed as a central ingredient of establishing and maintaining long-term relationships (Čater 2006 and 2007). Some researchers approach commitment as a one-dimensional concept, others define it as a complex multi-dimensional construct. While researchers agree on the importance of commitment, there has been disagreement on the nature of the dimensions, as well as inconsistent conceptualisations within the marketing literature (Čater 2006 and 2007, Bansal et al. 2004).[65] Two different models of commitment

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[64] Čater et al. (2011), in line with several other authors, examine behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. "While behavioural loyalty can be defined as the consumer's willingness to continue a relationship with the supplier and repurchase the product, attitudinal loyalty is the level of consumer's attitudinal advocacy and psychological attachment to the supplier" (Čater et al. 2011, 606). In their study Čater et al. (2011) tested how commitment refers to its consequences (behavioural and attitudinal loyalty are defined as consequences of commitment). The study suggested that "affective commitment has the dominant mediating role in understanding customer loyalty, while calculative and normative type of motives seem to be too weak to have a significant influence on a client's repurchase intentions and word-of-mouth in the examined context" (Čater et al. 2011, 620). These findings were supported in a previous B2B study, where Čater and Čater (2010) found that attitudinal and behavioural loyalty depends on affective commitment.

[65] A more consistent conceptualisation of commitment is proposed within the organisational behaviour literature. Various authors have studied organisational commitment. Iverson and Buttigieg (1999) realised that most researchers consider commitment to comprise of two components: attitudinal and behavioural commitment. Attitudinal commitment is the degree of loyalty for the organization (emphasizes an individual's identification and involvement in the organisation), whereas behavioural commitment reflects the process by which individuals link themselves to an organisation and focuses on their actions (Iverson and Buttigieg 1999). Accordingly to Meyer and Allen, Iverson and Buttigieg (1999) viewed attitudinal commitment as a construct of affective, normative and continuance commitment. Affective commitment, in this case, was defined as "employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organisation" (Iverson and Buttigieg 1999, 308).

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conceptualisation are introduced: (1) a two-dimensional model (Tuškej et al. 2013), and (2) a three-dimensional model (Bansal et al. 2004; Čater 2006 and 2007; Čater and Čater 2010; Čater et al. 2011).

A two-dimensional model results from (Tuškej et al. 2013): (1) an emotional attachment to a brand (affective brand commitment) or (2) a need for approval or motivation to comply with normative beliefs and purchase an object (social compliance commitment). Both results are from an attitudinal influence on consumer behaviour and imply high involvement processes (Tuškej et al. 2013).

Based on the organisational behaviour literature Bansal et al. (2004); Čater (2006 and 2007); Čater and Čater (2010) and Čater et al. (2011) proposed a three-dimensional model regardless of the target of commitment – affective, calculative or continuance and normative – that can also be applied to marketing relationship literature. Different levels of each can be present in the relationship (customer-brand, employee-company, company-supplier). Consequently, affective, calculative or continuance and normative commitments are viewed as components[66] (not types) of commitment (Čater 2006, 63-64 and Čater 2007, 374):

(1) Affective commitment:

It "reflects an emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organisation" or brand, whether a force that binds individuals to continue to purchase 'a brand' because they "want to" (Bansal et al. 2004, 236-238). This attachment due to liking and identification is based on the intention to maintain and strengthen the relationship between the customer and the brand (Čater 2006, 65-66; Čater and Čater 2010, 1322; Čater et al. 2011, 606). Affective commitment originates from "identification, common values, attachment, involvement and similarity", consumers therefore continue the relationship because they like and enjoy the brand (supplier or provider) – positive affect toward the brand (supplier or provider) is established (Čater 2006, 66; Čater 2007, 374-375; Čater and Čater 2010, 1322).

Continuance (or calculative) commitment was defined as "commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organisation", and normative commitment as an "employee's feelings of obligation to remain with the organisation" (Iverson and Buttigieg 1999, 308). "Employees with strong affective commitment remain because they feel they *want to*, those with strong normative commitment remain because they feel they *ought to*, and those with strong continuance commitment remain because they feel they *need to*" (Meyer in Iverson and Buttigieg 1999, 309).

[66] "All these components of commitment pertain to psychological states but they originate from different motivations for maintaining relationship" (Čater 2006, 63-64 and Čater 2007, 374).

(2) Calculative or continuance commitment:

Calculative or continuance commitment represents a cost-based attachment[67] or a force that binds individuals to continue to purchase 'a brand' because they "have to" (Bansal et al. 2004, 236-238). This attachment is based on instrumental reasons and is developed in the presence of high switching costs or a perceived lack of alternatives. Calculative or continuance commitment bind the consumer to the brand (or employee to the company; or company to its partners) as a constraining force out of a need and reflects some kind of negative motivation for continuing the relationship (Čater 2006, 64-65; Čater 2007, 375; Čater and Čater 2010, 1322; Čater et al. 2011, 606).

(3) Normative commitment

Normative commitment represents an individual's feelings of obligation[68] or a force that binds individuals to continue to purchase 'a brand' because they feel they "ought to" (Bansal et al. 2004, 236-239). This attachment due to felt obligations (duty, moral imperatives) is based on the internalisation of normative pressures that are used before or after entering the relationship. Customers stay in the relationship because they feel they ought to – this is their obligation or duty (Čater 2006, 66-67; Čater 2007, 375; Čater and Čater 2010, 1322-1323; Čater et al. 2011, 606).

Researchers (Bansal et al. 2004; Čater 2006 and 2007; Čater and Čater 2010; Čater et al. 2011) found that affective commitment creates the strongest positive intention to maintain and strengthen the relationship and consequently this dimension is considered a matter of study within this research.

As introduced in the previous chapter, celebrities have already established meanings and associations (author's remark: also formed during pre-existing parasocial relationships) that form their image and influence the meaning transfer model (proposed by Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta 2010). However, we assume that there is also a pre-existing consumers' (affective) commitment to the brand. In this thesis we suggest that affective commitment could be enhanced (or weakened) by the celebrity endorsers' added value (meanings and associations), since the new meanings

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[67] "Consumers believe that they cannot end a relationship because of economic, social, or psychological costs" (Bansal et al. 2004, 238).
[68] "Normative commitment develops through socialisation when individuals internalize a set of norms concerning appropriate behaviour" (Bansal et al. 2004, 239).

and associations are transferred back to the customers' minds through the new brand messages. The combined meanings and associations derived from the endorsement process (also affected by pre-existing parasocial relationships), therefore, should affect the customers' affective commitment to the brand. The proposed theoretical model (see Figure 2.4) introduces the audience members or customers; their pre-existing parasocial relationships with the celebrity endorser; and their affective commitment to the brand to the meaning transfer process proposed by Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010) and derived from McCracken's (1989) original meaning transfer model.

Based on the proposed theoretical model, hypothesis five is defined:

H5: The more intense the depth of the parasocial relationship between the media character and the audience member, the higher the audience member's affective commitment to the brand linked to the same media character will be.

However, the two remaining dimensions of commitment (calculative or continuance commitment and normative commitment) should not be ignored as possible results within the meaning transfer process. Considering these two additional commitment dimensions in relation to the intensity of the parasocial relationship between the media character and the audience member, the following two research questions are proposed:

RQ1: How is the intensity of calculative or continuance commitment related to the intensity of the parasocial relationship between the media character and the audience member?

RQ2: How is the intensity of normative commitment related to the intensity of the parasocial relationship between the media character and the audience member?

Figure 2.4: Pre-existing parasocial relationships (between audience members/consumers and a the celebrity endorser) affecting the reciprocal meaning transfer in celerity endorsement mediated by endorsement action.

Brand messages
(combining meanings and associations derived from the endorsement process)

Meanings and associations

Endorsement action

Financial compensation

Brand/company

Celebrity endorser

Audience members / consumers

Meanings and associations (formed during a pre-existing parasocial relationship)

Parasocial relationship

Affective commitment to the brand
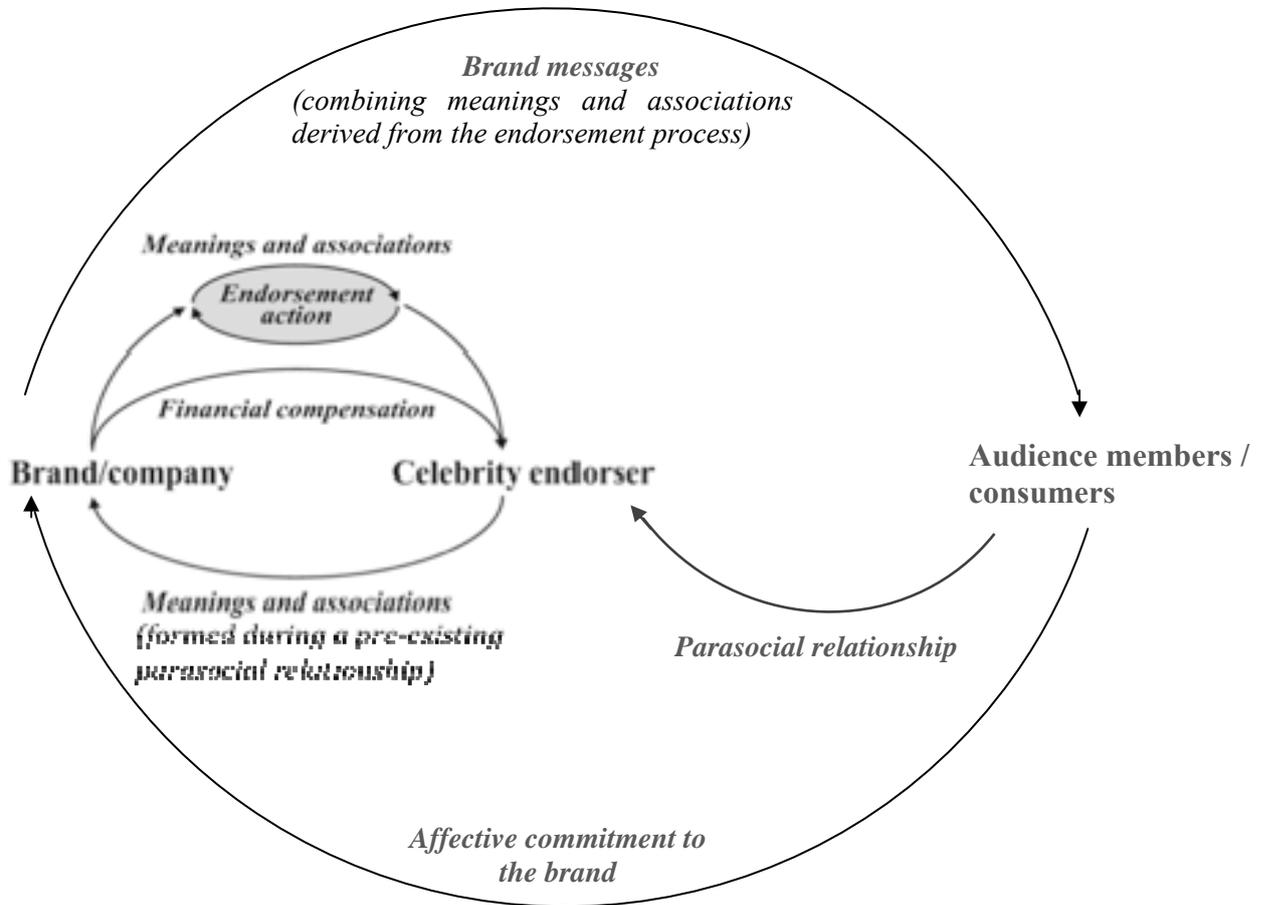
Source: Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010, 456) and Author's research.

3 MULTI-DIMENSIONAL MODEL OF CAUSAL CORRELATIONS BETWEEN INTENSITY OF PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEDIA CHARACTERS AND BRAND COMMITMENT

The purpose of the proposed theoretical review was the conceptualization of parasocial relationships in relation to media characters or celebrities, who are also the key formation element within the process of brand endorsement. Therefore, we can find two different research theories (parasocial relationships and brand endorsement) that are based on different theoretical backgrounds (media psychology, media studies, audience research, social relations theories, strategic brand management, relationship marketing, consumer psychology, etc.) within the proposed review. Based on these theories, celebrities (media characters) are viewed as powerful marketing tools of meaning transfer (from celebrities to brands), however these celebrities are also affected by pre-existing parasocial relationships that have to be taken into consideration within this meaning transfer process. Futermore, we assume that through this meaning transfer process, parasocial relationships could affect the consumer's (affective) commitment to the brand, as well. The potential connection between formed parasocial relationships (between customers and media characters or celebrities) and the process of meaning transfer to brand and its influence on consumer's affective commitment (V6 and V6a) to the brand linked to the media character is illustrated in the proposed multi-dimensional research model (see Figure 3.1).

To test the proposed research model, the factors that influence the development process of parasocial relationships and the consequences caused by that processes were identified and analyzed (presented in Chapter 2.2.). The factors that influence the formation of parasocial relationships (V5) were categorized into four main clusters: (1) attachment styles of audience members (V1); (2) media consumption level of audience members (V2); (3) involvement with media content (V3); and (4) audience member's affinity to the media character (V4).

Commitment to the brand linked to the media character, divided into three main dimensions (affective (V6a), calculative or continuance (V6b) and normative commitment (V6c)), was included in the model by assuming that the more intense the depth of the parasocial relationship between the media character and the audience

member, the higher the audience member's affective commitment to the brand linked to that same media character will be (H5a). The potential formation of calculative or continuance commitment and normative commitment to the brand linked to the media character is also presented in the proposed research model (RQ1 and RQ2).

Figure 3.1: Multi-dimensional research model of causal correlations between intensity of parasocial relationships with the media character and commitment to the brand linked to that same media character.
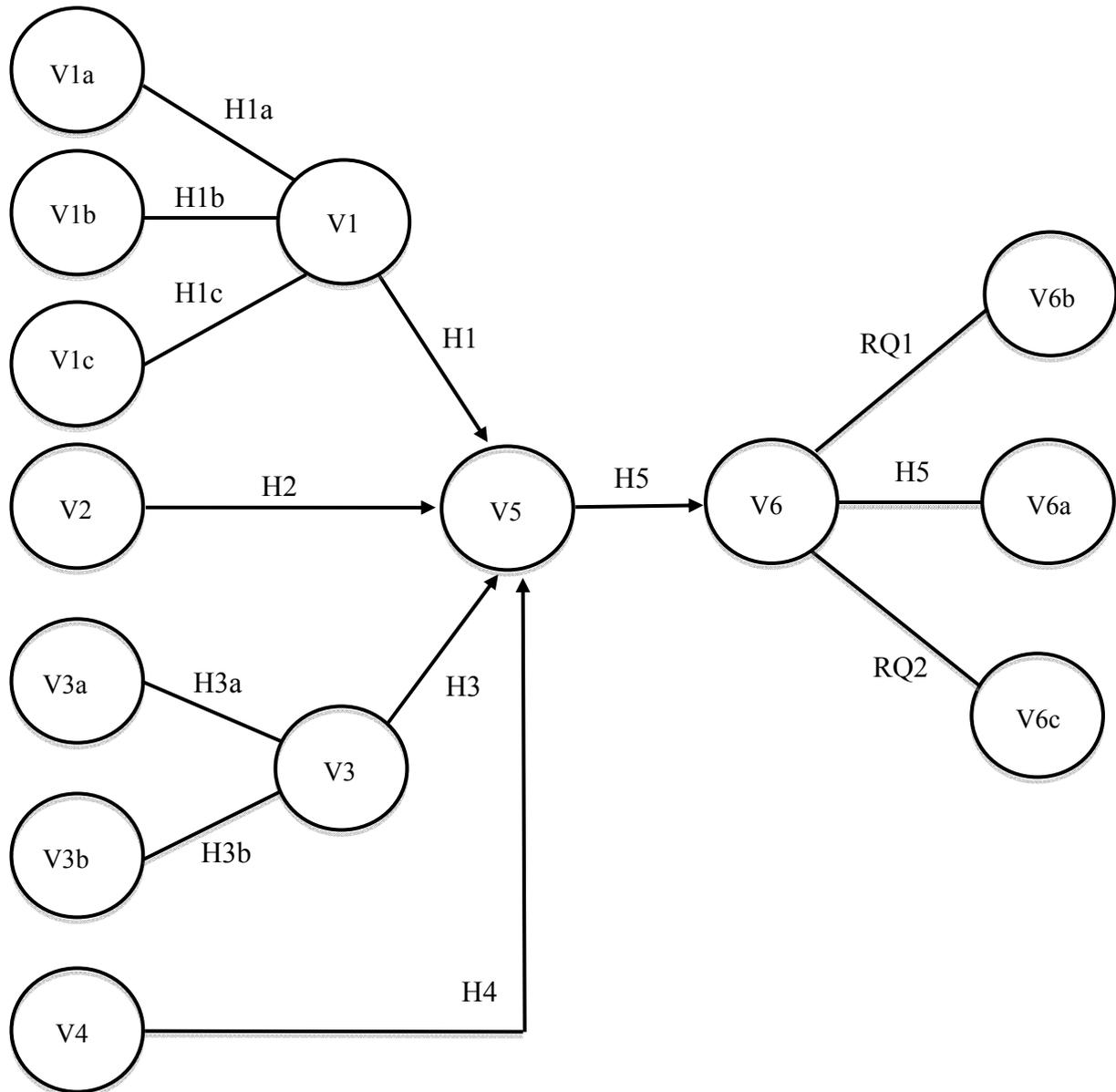
Note: V1 – Attachment styles; V1a – Anxious-ambivalent attachment style; V1b – Secure attachment style; V1c – Avoidant attachment style; V2 – Media consumption level; V3 – Level of involvement with media content; V3a – Level of cognitive involvement with media content; V3b – Level of emotional involvement with media content; V4 – Affinity level with the media character; V5 – Parasocial interaction intensity; V6 – Commitment to the brand linked to the media character; V6a – Affective commitment to the brand linked to the media character; V6b – Calculative or continuance commitment to the brand linked to the media character; V6b – Normative commitment to the brand linked to the media character.

3.1 METHODOLOGY

Parasocial relationships theory can be conceptualized within the Uses & Gratification research framework that is based on social sciences research methodology, which utilises both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This study is based on a quantitative research method to test the proposed research model with five basic hypotheses and two researching questions.

3.1.1 Measurement development

The self-reporting questionnaire was prepared based on scales developed on the basis of operationalizations from past researches. Scales were further modified and adapted based on the pilot study conducted within 15 Slovenian respondents in March and April 2013. Within the pilot study the respondents were first asked to self-recall their favourite media character and link it to specific media content (TV, radio, print, internet, social media). Then they were asked to self-recall a brand that is endorsed by this media character.[69] No limits were specified in this self-recall step, so the participants were free to focus on their own favourite media character without interferences. Afterwards, the participants were asked to keep in mind this favourite media character for the rest of the questionnaire. Participants who did not recall their favourite media character and the brand could not be included in the analysis. However, the participants of the pilot study found it difficult to choose one media character and even more difficult to self recall a brand endorsed by the chosen media character. A second pilot study (15 respondents) revealed that a case study method is more appropriate as all the participants succeeded in finishing the questionnaire.[70] Due to the results gathered from the pilot studies a case study approach was used for the purpose of this research.

The self-reporting questionnaire was divided into six parts:

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[69] The method of self-recall is consistent with previous research about parasocial relationships (Cohen 1997; Cole and Leets 1999; Rubin and Step 2000; Cohen 2004; Greenwood 2008; Rosaen and Jayson 2008; Greenwood and Long 2009; Theran et al. 2010).

[70] The case study method is consistent with previous research about parasocial relationships (Allen 1988; Perse 1990; Auter 1992; Cook 1993; Shefner-Rogers et al. 1998; Sood and Rogers 2000; Eyal and Rubin 2003; Cummins 2004; Auter et al. 2005; Kassing and Sanderson 2009; Lee et al. 2010; Schmid and Klimmt. 2011; Wohlfeil and Whelan 2012).

The first part of the questionnaire consists of two close questions that are related to the specific case study – Tina Maze & Milka.

Question one: "Did you know that Tina Maze endorses the brand Milka (as brand ambassador she uses and promotes Milka in various commercials)?"

Question two: "Do you use/buy this brand?"

The respondents who could recognize the link between the famous character and the brand were considered relevant for this research (question one). However, only the respondents who confirmed the use of the brand (question two) could be considered when testing the main hypothesis (H5) that assumes that the more intense the depth of the parasocial relationship between the media character and the audience member, the higher the audience member's affective commitment to the brand linked to that same media character will be. The same sample of respondents was used for answering the two additional researching questions (RQ1 and RQ2).

The second part of the questionnaire consists of one ***Attachment styles*** scale (independent variables V1a, V1b and V1c) and was introduced to the respondents as the part that regards their own attitudes and behaviours when forming close relationships with others. Attachment theory states that bonds formed with the caregivers in the first few years of life influence how people view themselves and others and affect their ability to form close relationships later in life (Bowlby 1969; Bowlby 2005/1979). Three main attachment patterns or styles are analyzed in this study in relation to parasocial relationships: (1) Secure attachment style, (2) Anxious-ambivalent attachment style and (3) Avoidant attachment style. Several measuring scales for attachment styles have been developed through the past decades. The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) was used for the purpose of this study (testing H1a, H1b, H1c and H1, Chapter 2.2.1.). Collins and Read (1990) officially developed AAS by adapting the three-item scale proposed by Hazen and Shaver (1987)[71] into a series of

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[71] Hazen and Shaver (see Collins and Read, 1990) proposed a 3-item questioner to measure adult attachment styles: "Which of the following best describes your feelings?":
1. Secure – I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.
2. Avoidant – I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.

18-items, 6 for each attachment style.[72] An adapted AAS scale that includes 15-items, 5 for each attachment style, was used for the purpose of this study. Respondents marked their agreement with the statements that measure adult attachment styles ("Secure", "Anxious" and "Avoidant") by using 5-pint Likert scales from *not at all characteristic* (1) to *very characteristic* (5). Sample scale items for Secure attachment style (S) are (1) "*I am comfortable depending on others*" and (2) "*I know that others will be there when I need them*". Sample scale items for Anxious-ambivalent attachment style (Ax) are (1) "*I am not sure that I can always depend on others to be there when I need them*" and (2) "*I often worry that my partner does not really love me*".[73] Sample scale items for Avoidant attachment style (Av) are (1) "*I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others*" and (2) "*People are never there when you need them*".

The third part of the questionnaire consists of one ***commitment*** scale (dependent variables V6a, V6b and V6c), but only the respondents who answered affirmatively to the second open question (*"Do you use/buy this brand?"*) within the first part of the questionnaire were asked to complete this third part (otherwise they skipped to the fourth part of the questionnaire). This part was introduced to the respondents as the part that regards their own attitudes and behaviours versus the proposed brand (Milka).

There are different conceptualizations of commitment (one-dimensional concept vs. two- or multi-dimensional construct) within the marketing literature, so different scales were proposed by various authors (Bansal et al. 2004; Čater 2006 and 2007; Čater and Čater 2010; Čater et al. 2011; Tuškej et al. 2013). Within the present study

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3. Anxious/Ambivalent – I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like them to. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.

[72] Collins and Read (1990) defined three dimensions (Depend, Anxiety, and Close) that are composed of items from more than one of the original attachment style. The first factor (Depend) contained items concerning the extent to which subjects could trust others and depend on them to be available when needed. The second factor (Anxiety) consisted of items reflecting anxiety in relationships, such as fear of being abandoned and not being loved. The third factor (Close) contained items regarding the extent to which subjects were comfortable with closeness and intimacy. The authors (1990, 650) argued that "when exploring relations between attachment and other variables of interest, a dimensional scale helps determine which component of attachment most strongly contributes to a particular relation". Additionally they assure a relatively easy transition from dimensions to styles, both conceptually and statistically. Collins and Read (1990) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .69 for Close, .75 for Depend, and .72 for Anxiety, which demonstrates AAS reliability and validity.

[73] The respondents were asked to answer the partner related questions by considering an actual relationship or a past relationship or the vision of a future relationship.

consumers' commitment to a brand is defined as a three-dimensional model (affective, continuance or calculative and normative as three components of commitment). Affective brand commitment, continuance or calculative commitment and normative commitment were measured (testing H5, Chapter 2.3.3.) by using an adapted Čarter (2006) commitment 12-items scale (4 for each brand commitment type) scale.[74] Respondents marked their agreement with the statements using 5-pint Likert scales from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The sample scale item for affective brand commitment is (1) "*I like Milka, that's why I continue to use it.*", for continuance brand commitment it is (2) "*It would be difficult to find a replacement for Milka, so I continue to use it*", and for normative brand commitment it is (2) "*I feel a sense of duty to Milka, so I continue to use it*".

The fourth part of the questionnaire consists of one open question for measuring the *media consumption level* (independent variable V2) and two scales for measuring the *cognitive and emotional involvement* (independent variables V3a and V3b) of the audience members with the media contents. This part was introduced to the respondents as the part that regards media consumption practices in general and practices regarding media contents where the chosen media character appears (Tina Maze).

Media exposure or average consumption level is often measured rather simply: "the number of days in the last week a newspaper was read", "hours in the last week a TV was watched", "the number of films attended in the last month", and so on (Rubin et al. 2009/2004, 40-41). For the purpose of this study (testing H2, Chapter 2.2.2.), where wider range of media (TV, radio, print, internet, social media, etc.) are assessed, the following open question was postulated: "*How many hours per day (approximately), do you spend using various media (TV/film/video contents, radio, print, internet, social media, etc.)?*".

Cognitive and emotional involvement is shown in the mental processes of attention, recognition, and elaboration of information, followed by emotional responses to the specific media content (Perse, 1990). Cognitive involvement was measured (testing H3a, Chapter 2.2.3.) using Perse's (1990) adapted 15-items scale proposed to measure

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[74] Čarter (2006) developed her scale based on Kumar et al. (see Čarter 2006) scale who developed the indicators for all three components of commitment on the basis of Allen and Mayer's scale (see Čarter 2006) drawn for organizational psychology. Furthermore, Čarter demonstrated its validity and reliability in her future researches (see Čater 2007; Čater and Čater 2010; Čater et al. 2011).

attention, recognition, and elaboration scores for a specific content (government news report).[75] The scale was adapted from 15 items to 6 items, 2 for each mental processes dimension. Respondents considered 6 statements that asked about their cognitive involvement with the media content where the proposed media character appears. Respondents marked how often each statement described their typical thoughts or feelings using 5-pint Likert scales from *very often* (1) to *never* (5). The sample scale item for the attention dimension of cognitive involving content is (1) *"I pay close attention to the media content where Tina Maze appears"*. The sample scale item for the recognition dimension of cognitive involving content is (2) *"I understand the sports rules of the disciplines where Tina Maze competes"*. The sample scale item for the elaboration dimension of cognitive involving content is (3) *"I often think about Tina Maze and her Ski Championships"*.

Emotional involvement was measured using an adapted Perse (1990) 15-items scale proposed to measure the intensity of anger, happiness, and sadness for a specific content (news report).[76] For the purpose of this study a modified Perse's 15-items scale is proposed. Emotional involvement was assessed with a reduced 4-items scale, measuring respondents' intensity of experiencing anger, happiness and sadness (following Perse), as well as experiencing (added) emotions of fear and surprise in specific media context. This decision draws on considerable agreement between the conclusions of different theoretical approaches in cognitive psychology (e.g. Power and Dalgeish 2008, 70-73).[77] Respondents considered 4 statements that asked about their emotional involvement with the media content where the proposed media character appears. Respondents marked how often they shared the feelings expressed

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[75] Perse (1990) measured attention with a five-item scale adapted from Cegala's (1981) attentiveness dimension of the interaction involvement scale. The items assessed attention to visual and audio aspects of the news programs (Cronbach alpha = .89). Recognition (Perse 1990) was assessed with five items drawn from statements created by Carramone (1983) and from Graber's (1988) discussion of news story recognition - items reflected understanding of local television news stories (Cronbach alpha = .83). Elaboration (Perse 1990) was measured with five items that concern relating the news information to previous knowledge (Cronbach alpha = .85).

[76] Twelve of the statements Perse (1990) proposed were drawn from Davitz (1969). Perse (1990) additionally created three items that were more explicit measures of the three emotions: "I feel happy", "I feel angry", and "I feel sad". Perse (1990) measured happiness with five items scale (Cronbach alpha = .81), anger with five items scale (Cronbach alpha = .86), and sadness with five items scale (Cronbach alpha = .88).

[77] This agreement extrapolates a widely accepted core list of so-called basic emotions, considering appraisal scenarios of an emotional subject, distinctive universal signals of experiencing emotions, distinctive physiology and a few other criteria. Lists of basic emotions, derived from contemporary theory and psychological research, in most cases consist of six emotions (anger, happiness, sadness, fear, surprise and disgust) that are consequently included as items in this research regarding emotionally involving media content (e.g. Power and Dalgeish 2008, 70-73).

in the statements using 5-pint Likert scales from *very often* (1) to *never* (5). Sample scale items for emotionally involving content are (1) *"I am happy when Tina Maze wins a Ski Championship;"* and (2) *"I get angry or sad when Tina Maze loses a Ski Championship"*.

The fifth part of the questionnaire consists of one scale for measuring the ***affinity for the media character*** (independent variable V4) and one scale for measuring the ***intensity of the parasocial relationship between the media character and the audience members*** (dependent/ independent variable V5). This part was introduced to the respondents as the part that regards their affinity to and relationship with the proposed media character (Tina Maze).

Affinity is conceptualised as the attitude of audience members toward the media character that reflects the importance they assign to it – one's attachment to the media character. According to Rubin et al. (2009/2004, 367-370), affinity is based on uses and gratification studies and is often used as a predictor variable for viewing outcomes such as parasocial interaction. Adaptations of Television Affinity Scale (TAS), originally proposed by Greenberg (Greenberg in Rubin et al. 2009/2004, 367-370), are used in most recent studies. The scale has been used reliably with different samples – Cronbach alphas for the five-item scale range from .79 to .93 – and have faced validity (Rubin et al. 2009/2004, 367-370), consequently the measurement of this variable for testing H4 (see Chapter 2.2.4.) in this is study is also based on an adapted five-item TAS. Respondents marked their agreement with the statements using 5-pint Likert scales from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Sample scale items are (1) *"I often watch Tina Maze and her Championships"*; (2) *"If I couldn't watch Tina Maze and her Championships, I would really miss it"*; and (3) *"Watching Tina Maze and her Championships is an important part of my time spent for watching sports events"*.

On the other hand, parasocial relationships concept refers to a one-sided interpersonal relationship or friendship by a media consumer with a media character. While parasocial interaction is restricted to the duration of media exposure, parasocial relationships reflects more long-term responses to personae, like a two-sided friendship that exists beyond initial face-to-face communication sequence (Schramm and Hartmann 2008). Repeated parasocial interactions are consequently able to constitute a parasocial relationship. Rubin et al. (1985) originally proposed a 20-item

PSI (Parasocial interaction) Scale that was subsequently adapted by various researches (Rubin et al. 2009/2004, 273-277; Auter and Davis 1991). The PSI scale has been used reliably – .93 Cronbach alpha for the 20-item scale – and have faced validity (Rubin et al. 2009/2004, 273-277). Consequently, the measurement of this variable in this is study (testing H5, Chapter 2.3.3.) is also based on this scale.[78] The scale was reduced from 18-items to 6-items in order to look at PSI with a proposed media character (Tina Maze). Respondents marked their agreement with the statements using 5-pint Likert scales from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Sample scale items are (1) *"I respect and consider Tina Maze's expertise opinion (e.g. sport advices), also while making my own mind regarding this specific topic."*; (2) *"I feel sorry for Tina Maze when she makes a mistake"*; (2) *"When I'm following Tina Maze through the media, I feel as I am part of her story (her success could be my success / national success)"*.

A set of demographic questions represents the **sixth and final part** of the questionnaire.

3.1.2 Data collection and sample

The research based on a case study and the data was collected via web-based questionnaire among Slovenian population. Brickman Bhutta (2012) suggested that, in some contexts, Facebook (or other social networks)[79] might be a useful tool for exploratory work,[80] like the present study. Moreover, as Internet penetration rate

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[78] Schramm and Hartmann (2008) recently proposed the PSI-Process-Scale as an alternative for researchers who want to assess parasocial processes that take pace throughout TV exposure. The new scale aims to measure the intensity of parasocial processes independent of liking or disliking of the personae. The term "parasocial processes" is defined as "the degree to which the individual interacts psychologically with a media character" and is composed of "users' cognitive, affective, and behavioural response to depicted media characters" (Schramm and Hartmann 2008, 387-388).
A new Experience of Parasocial Interaction (EPSI) scale was also proposed by Hartmann and Goldhoorn (2011). The scale aims to explore users' illusionary experience of being engaged in real social interaction with the media character during exposure.
However, the originally proposed 20-item PSI Scale remains the most used scale in this researching field due to its reliability and validity.
[79] This kind of sampling has similar strengths and limitations as other forms of web-based researches. See Brickman Bhutta (2012).
[80] Various researchers had taken into consideration the value of social networks as e-research platforms (Ackland 2009; Mouw and Verdery 2012; Brickman Bhutta 2012; Tuškej et al. 2013). Social networks have important implications for social science network research that still has to be explored.

continues to increase,[81] web-based samples become increasingly representative considering the population of interest and the research question (Brickman Bhutta 2012). Following this method, the present questioner was web-based and was distributed mainly via social networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) and e-mail in April and May 2013. Survey respondents were collected using a nonprobability sampling frame. Snowball or network sampling[82] was selected as the best solution to spread the questionnaire locally. Each of the respondents was asked to forward the questionnaire to his or her friends who know the media character presented in the questionnaire – Tina Maze.

Case study: Tina Maze and Milka

Tina Maze is a famous Slovenian World Cup alpine skier and after the great season of 2013 she was recognized as the best alpine skier in Slovenia. She won a silver medal in giant slalom at World Championships 2009 and two Olympic silver medals in giant slalom and super G. In 2013 she acquired a world championship silver medal in super combined and a title of world champion in giant slalom and an overall third place in FIS world cup (beating the previous Hermann Maier record).[83] The brand Milka is her general sponsor and this brand has been endorsed by Tina Maze for at least three years.[84]

The self-reporting questionnaire was adapted and distributed within the Slovenian population by including the Tina Maze's case study. The tendency of the population to establish parasocial relationships with Tina Maze and its influence on (affective) commitment for the brand Milka was examined.

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[81] Internet penetration in Europe is approximately 63.2 % (June 30, 2012). Source: The European Internet Stats.

[82] Snowball sampling and respondents-driven sampling (RDS), also known as chain referral sampling and network sampling, are the common sampling frames for studying hard-to-find populations (Bernard 2013). Once few respondents were indentified, I asked these people to: (1) list others in the population; (2) spread the questionnaire to those who might be included in the population.

[83] See Tina Maze's official web page.

[84] Tina Maze's quote about Milka from her official web page: "What can we even say about the sweetest pleasures that come to life when we are enjoying a piece of this most tender milk chocolate by the name Milka. Millions of people around the world find it simply irresistible, including myself, because I can`t imagine a life without it. There is nothing better for relaxing after a hard day than a piece of this chocolate dream."

3.2   EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS: Tina Maze and Milka case study

3.2.1 Sample characteristics

A total of 508 respondents were in the sampling pool, but only 343 completed the questionnaire, indicating a response rate of around 68 %. However, only the respondents who answered positively to the first two questions in the questionnaire[85] were considered relevant for the purpose of this study. 94,2 % of the respondents knew that Tina Maze is a brand ambassador for Milka (see Table 3.1) and 85,1 % consume this brand (see Table 3.2). Additionally, few respondents (10) were not included in the final analysis due to inadequate completion of the questionnaire. Taking all this in consideration, the final sample of respondents used in the present study was 282 respondents (n=282).

Table 3.1: Celebrity-brand recall.

Did you know that Tina Maze endorses the brand Milka (as brand ambassador she uses and promotes Milka in various commercials)?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	YES	323	94.2	94.2	94.2
Valid	NO	20	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Tina Maze-Milka 2013; n=343.

Table 3.2: Brand consumption.

Do you use/buy this brand?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	YES	292	85.1	85.1	85.1
Valid	NO	51	14.9	14.9	100.0
	Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Tina Maze-Milka 2013; n=343.

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[85] Question one and two: "Did you know that Tina Maze endorses the brand Milka (as brand ambassador she uses and promotes Milka in various commercials)?" and "Do you use/buy this brand?".

The analyzed sample (n=282) consisted of 78 % female and 22 % male. 51,4 % of respondents aged between 21 and 30 years, 28,4 % of respondents aged between 31 and 40 years, while 11,3 % of respondents aged over 41 years, and 8,9 % of respondents aged less than 20 years (see Table 3.3). Such younger age structures are characteristic for web researches and in this case it seems consistent with the general Slovenian web population.[86]

Table 3.3: Age distribution of survey respondents.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Less than 20 years	25	8.9	8.9	8.9
	21 - 30 years	145	51.4	51.4	60.3
	31 - 40 years	80	28.4	28.4	88.7
Valid	41 - 50 years	15	5.3	5.3	94.0
	51 - 60 years	11	3.9	3.9	97.9
	61 - 70 years	5	1.8	1.8	99.6
	over 71 years	1	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Tina Maze-Milka 2013; n=282.

Respondents were well educated. 41,9 % of respondents completed secondary education, and 53,5 % have postsecondary education or a university degree (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Education structure of survey respondents.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Elementary school or less	13	4.6	4.6	4.6
	Secondary school (2-3 years)	20	7.1	7.1	11.7
	Secondary school (4 years)	98	34.8	34.8	46.5
	Tertiary degree (2 years)	16	5.7	5.7	52.1
Valid	University degree – 1st level	31	11.0	11.0	63.1
	University degree – 2nd level	92	32.6	32.6	95.7
	Master degree	7	2.5	2.5	98.2
	Doctorate-level degree	5	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Tina Maze-Milka 2013; n=282.

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[86] Source for comparison: The European Internet Stats and Raba interneta v Sloveniji (Internet use in Slovenia).

Respondents were mainly employed (57,4 %). 25,9 % of the respondents were students, 13,1 % were unemployed, 2,8 % were retired, and 0,7 % indicated that they were on a maternity leave (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Employment structure of survey respondents.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Student	73	25.9	25.9	25.9
	Employed (full time/part-time, self employment, etc.)	162	57.4	57.4	83.3
	Unemployed	37	13.1	13.1	96.5
	Retired	8	2.8	2.8	99.3
	Other: maternity leave	2	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Tina Maze-Milka 2013; n=282.

Respondents were mainly in a relationship (48,9 %). 27,3 % of the respondents were single and 20,9 % were married. Only a small percentage of the respondents were divorced (2,1 %) or widowed (0,7 %) – see Table 3.6.

Table 3.6: Marital status of survey respondents.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Married	59	20.9	20.9	20.9
	In a relationship	138	48.9	48.9	69.9
	Divorced	6	2.1	2.1	72.0
	Widowed	2	.7	.7	72.7
	Single	77	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Tina Maze-Milka 2013; n=282.

This sample structure over represents younger and better-educated females in comparison to the total Slovenian population. However, the sample seems consistent with the general Slovenian web population.

3.2.2 Verification of measuring instruments

All constructs in the research model were measured using 5-pint Likart scales: from *not at all characteristic* (1) to *very characteristic* (5); or from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5); or from *very often* (1) to *never* (5).

Attachment style is a three-dimensional variable, so respondents were asked to indicate their characteristics (related to the three attachment styles) on a 15-items scale (5 for each attachment style). Existing measures were adapted (Collins and Read 1990) to suit the purpose of the present study. However, even if Collins and Read (1990) demonstrated the reliability and validity of their scale, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients in the present study question its reliability. The reliability analysis revealed that scores were reliable only on Anxious-ambivalent measures (Cronbach's alpha = 0,709), while the reliability for the remaining two dimensions could not be demonstrated (Cronbach's alpha = 0,461 for Avoidant attachment style, and Cronbach's alpha = 0,484 for Secure attachment style).[87]

Commitment is also a three-dimensional variable, so respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with various statements (related to the three commitment dimensions) on a 12-items scale (4 for each commitment dimension). Existing measures were adapted (Čarter 2006) to suit the purpose of the present study.[88] The reliability analysis revealed that scores were reliable for Affective commitment (Cronbach's alpha = 0,832), which is the main dimension taken into consideration with the present study. The high Cronbach's alpha coefficient for Affective commitment demonstrates a very good correlation between the items in the proposed scale.

Four indicators for Normative and Continuance commitment (two for each variable) were omitted from the analysis due to the unusual kurtosis and skewness values that define the shape of a probability distribution. Since the list of scale items per variable were restricted to two items, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for Normative

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[87] Two items were deleted from the scale to adjust the scale reliability (Anxious-ambivalent and Secure attachment style were measured with 4-items each, while Avoidant attachment style was used as proposed). The deleted items were: "I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others" (Av) and "I want to merge completely with another person (my partner)" (Ax). 13-item Attachment styles scale was considered part of this study.

[88] Additionally, Čarter demonstrated its validity and reliability in her future researches (see Čater 2007; Čater and Čater 2010; Čater et al. 2011).

(Cronbach's alpha (2-items scale)[89] = 0,586) and Continuance commitment (Cronbach's alpha (2-items scale)[90] = 0,426) could not demonstrate their reliability.[91] However, if we consider the original 4-items scales, the Cronbach's alpha for Normative commitment would be 0,726 and the reliability of the proposed scale could be confirmed. Regarding Continuance commitment, the highest Cronbach's alpha coefficient could be calculated for a 3-items scale: Cronbach's alpha = 0,663 – which is still an acceptable value, especially for an only 3-items scale. Despite the higher Cronbach's alpha coefficients for large items scales, only two items could be considered in the analysis to assure a standard normal distribution.

Involvement of the audience members with the media contents is a two-dimensional variable, conceptualized as cognitive and emotional involvement (measured separately by two scales). Cognitive involvement (three-dimensional variable) was measured on a 6-items scale (adapted from Perse 1990) where the respondents were asked to indicate their cognitive involvement with the media content where the proposed media character (Tina Maze) appears. Scores on the 6-items Cognitive involvement scale was demonstrated to be very reliable (Cronbach's alpha = 0,853). The high Cronbach's alpha coefficient for Cognitive involvement demonstrates a very good correlation between the items in the proposed scale.

Emotional involvement, on the other hand, was measured on a separate 4-items scale (also adapted from Perse 1990) where the respondents were asked to consider 4 statements about their emotional involvement with the media content where the proposed media character (Tina Maze) appears. The reliability analysis revealed that scores were reliable for the emotional dimension (Cronbach's alpha = 0,797) of involvement of the audience members with the media contents as well. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for Emotional involvement demonstrates a good correlation between the items in the proposed scale.

Affinity for the media character is a one-dimentional variable, measured by an adapted 5-item scale originally proposed by Greenberg (Greenberg in Rubin et al.

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[89] The omitted items for Normative commitment were: "I would feel guilty if I dropped Milka for another brand" and "I feel a sense of duty to Milka, so I continue to use it".

[90] The omitted items for Continuance or Calculative commitment were: "It would be difficult to find a replacement for Milka, so I continue to use it" and "Changing Milka would cost me too much (time and energy for choosing a new brand), so I continue to buy it".

[91] "If you have a long list of scale items, the chances are good of getting a high alpha coefficient" (Bernard 2013, 293). For example, "an interitem correlation of just 0,29 produces an alpha of 0,80 in a set of 10 items" (Bernard 2013, 293).

2009/2004, 367-370). The scale has been used reliably with different samples (Rubin et al. 2009/2004, 367-370) – Cronbach alphas for the five-item scale range from .79 to .93 – and the adapted scale have faced validity also in the present study (Cronbach's alpha = 0,884). The high Cronbach's alpha coefficient in this case demonstrates a very good correlation between the items in the proposed scale.

Intensity of the parasocial relationship between the media character and the audience members is a one-dimentional variable measured by an adapted 6-items PSI (parasocial interaction) scale, originally proposed by Rubin et al. (1985) and subsequently adapted by various researches (Auter and Davis 1991; Rubin et al. 2009/2004, 273-277). The PSI scale has been used reliably (Rubin et al. 2009/2004, 273-277) – .93 Cronbach alpha for the 20-item scale – and the adapted scale have also been validated in the present study (Cronbach's alpha = 0,862). The high Cronbach's alpha coefficient for Parasocial interaction demonstrates a very good correlation between the items in the proposed scale.

3.2.3 Hypotheses testing with linear regression models

The linear multiple regression method was used in the hypotheses testing phase. Two models were proposed and analyzed. Model 1 was based on the parasocial relationship formation process and tested hypotheses H1 – H4. Model 2, diversely, tested the potential effect of the formed parasocial relationship with a media character on (affective) brand commitment when this brand is linked to the same media character - hypothesis H5 and researching questions RQ1 – RQ2.

Both models match the required linear regression assumption – linear relationship between dependent and independent variables, normality of the error distribution, independence of the errors (no autocorrelation among residuals - Durbin-Watson test) and homoscedasticity (constant variance) of the errors. There is also no significant multicollinearity despite some moderate correlation between predictors (VIF - variance inflation rates - for the predictors are not higher than 3).[92]

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[92] See Bastič (2006, 30 - 32) - required linear regression assumption.

Model 1: Testing hypotheses H1 – H4

Hypotheses tested in Model 1 are presented in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Hypotheses tested in Model 1.

Hypotheses
H1: A correlation between attachment styles within the personality structures of audience members and the intensity of their parasocial relationships with Tina Maze will be determined.
H1a: Anxious-ambivalent attachment styles will positively affect the intensity of the parasocial relationship formed between audience members and Tina Maze.
H1b: Secure attachment styles will positively affect the intensity of the parasocial relationship between audience members and Tina Maze.
H1c: Avoidant attachment styles will negatively affect the intensity of the parasocial relationship between audience members and Tina Maze.
H2: A higher level of media consumption by audience members encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships with Tina Maze.
H3: More (cognitively or emotionally) involving media content encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships between audience members and Tina Maze.
H3a: More cognitively involving media content encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships between audience members and Tina Maze.
H3b: More emotionally involving media content encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships between audience members and Tina Maze.
H4: A higher affinity for Tina Maze (as felt by the audience members) encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships between audience members and Tina Maze.

Source: Author's research.

Based on the reliably analysis, two variables were excluded from the model – Secure and Avoidant attachment style. Consequently, hypotheses H1b and H1c could not be supported. To test the remaining hypotheses within Model 1, standard scores (z-scores) were calculated to assure a standard normal distribution of the sample.

Model predictors (constants or independent variables):

- Anxious-ambivalent attachment styles (V1a),

- Media consumption level (V2),

- Level of cognitive involvement with media content (V3a),

- Level of emotional involvement with media content (V3b),

- Affinity level with Tina Maze (V4).

Model dependent variable: Parasocial interaction intensity (V5).

Results for Model 1 are presented in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8: Linear regression Model 1.

		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Significance
Model predictors (Constant):		Dependent Variable: Parasocial interaction intensity		
Anxious-Ambivalent attachment styles (AS)		.070*	2.012	.045
Media consumption level		.017	.503	.615
Level of involvement with media content	Cognitive	.215***	3.849	.000
	Emotional	.323***	6.694	.000
Affinity level with Tina Maze		.372***	5.983	.000
Model Summary				
R = .820 R^2 = .672 Adjusted R^2 = .666 F = 113.198 Sig. = .000				

Source: Survey Tina Maze-Milka 2013; n=282.
***ρ<0,001 ** ρ<0,01 * ρ<0,05

Model 1 (see operationalized model, Figure 3.2), with the dependent variable parasocial interaction intensity, is statistically significant at a minimum probability of error (p = .000). Model predictors (constants or independent variables) explain 66 % of variance. Standardized coefficient beta is not statistically significant only with the variable media consumption level (ß = .017; p = .615) and, for instance, hypothesis 2 (H2) cannot be supported. Additionally, despite statistical significance of the variable Anxious-Ambivalent attachment styles (ß = .070*; p = .045), the positive correlation with the dependent variable is very weak, and consequently, a hypothesis 1a (H1a) cannot be supported. Thus no correlation with attachment styles dimensions was demonstrated, so hypothesis 1 (H1) cannot be supported.

Figure 3.2: Operationalized model 1.
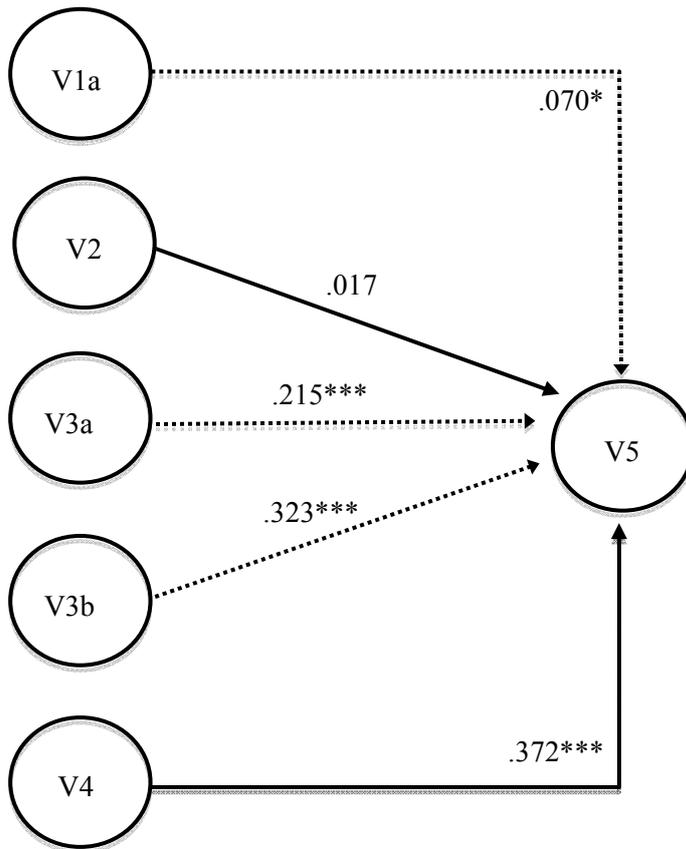
Note: V1a – Anxious-ambivalent attachment style; V2 – Media consumption level; V3a – Level of cognitive involvement with media content; V3b – Level of emotional involvement with media content; V4 – Affinity level with Tina Maze; V5 – Parasocial interaction intensity.

On the other hand, a significant positive correlation could be demonstrated between the dependent variable parasocial interaction intensity and the independent variables level of cognitive (ß = .215***; p = .000) and emotional involving (ß = .323***; p = .000) media content. Hypotheses $H3a_0$ and $H3b_0$ cannot be supported and consequently we can assume that more cognitively involving media content (H3a) and more emotionally involving media content (H3b) encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships between audience members and the media character, in this case Tina Maze.[93] A significant positive correlation was also found between

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[93] A corrected model 1a was tested by replacing V3a (level of cognitive involvement with media content) and V3b (level of emotional involvement with media content) with a compute variable for the level of involvement with media content (V3 – compute). Model 1a, with the dependent variable parasocial interaction intensity, is statistically significant at a minimum probability of error (p = .000). Model predictors (constants or independent variables – V1a, V2, V3 and V4) explain 66% of variance. The results for H1, H2 and H4 remain similar to those in model 1. A significant positive correlation was found between the dependent variable parasocial interaction intensity and the independent variable level of involvement with media content (ß = .492***; p = .000). Hypothesis $H3_0$ cannot be supported

the dependent variable parasocial interaction intensity and the independent variable affinity level with Tina Maze (β = .372***; p = .000). Hypothesis $H4_0$ cannot be supported, thus we can assume that a higher affinity for Tina Maze (as felt by the audience members) encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships between audience members and the media character – Tina Maze (H4).

Model 2: Testing hypothesis H5 & RQ1 – RQ2

Hypothesis tested in Model 2 is presented in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9: Hypothesis tested in Model 2.

Hypothesis
H5: The more intense the depth of the parasocial relationship between Tina Maze and the audience member, the higher the audience member's affective commitment to Milka (the brand linked to the same media character) will be.

Source: Author's research.

To test the hypothesis H5 within Model 2, standard scores (z-scores) were calculated to assure a standard normal distribution of the sample.

Model predictor was the variable parasocial interaction intensity (in this case viewed as independent variable, V5), whereas affective commitment for Milka represents the model dependent variable (V6a). Results for Model 2 are presented in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10: Linear regression Model 2.

	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Significance
Model predictors (Constant):	Dependent Variable: Affective commitment		
Parasocial interaction intensity	.232***	3.994	.000
Model Summary			
R = .232 R^2 = .054 Adjusted R^2 = .051 F = 15.953 Sig. = .000			

 Source: Survey Tina Maze-Milka 2013; n=282.

***$\rho<0{,}001$ ** $\rho<0{,}01$ * $\rho<0{,}05$

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and consequently we can assume that more (cognitively or emotionally) involving media content encourages the formation of more intense parasocial relationships between audience members and the media character, in this case Tina Maze.

Model 2 (see operationalized model, Figure 3.3) with the dependent variable affective commitment (for Milka) is statistically significant at a minimum probability of error ($p = .000$). However, model predictor (constants or independent variable parasocial interaction intensity) explains only 5 % of variance. A significant positive correlation could be demonstrated between the dependent variable affective commitment for the Milka brand and the independent variable parasocial interaction intensity with Tina Maze ($\beta = .232^{***}$; $p = .000$). Hypothesis $H5_0$ cannot be supported, thus we can assume that the more intense the depth of the parasocial relationship between Tina Maze and the audience member, the higher the audience member's affective commitment to Milka (the brand linked to the same media character) will be (H5).

Additionally, two researching questions regarding the two remaining commitment[94] components were postulated:

RQ1: How is the intensity of calculative or continuance commitment related to the intensity of the parasocial relationship between the media character and the audience member?

RQ2: How is the intensity of normative commitment related to the intensity of the parasocial relationship between the media character and the audience member?

However, based on the reliability analysis, the two variables were excluded from the model – calculative or continuance commitment and normative commitment. The two researching questions remain a matter of concern for theory as for future empirical research.

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[94] Within the present study consumers' commitment to a brand is defined as a three-dimensional variable (affective, continuance or calculative and normative as three components of commitment).

The operationalized models 1 and 2 combined are presented in Figure 3.3:

Figure 3.3: Operationalized model 1 & 2 combined.

V1a

V2

V3a

V3b

V4

V5

V6a

.070*

.017

.215***

.323***

.372***

.232***
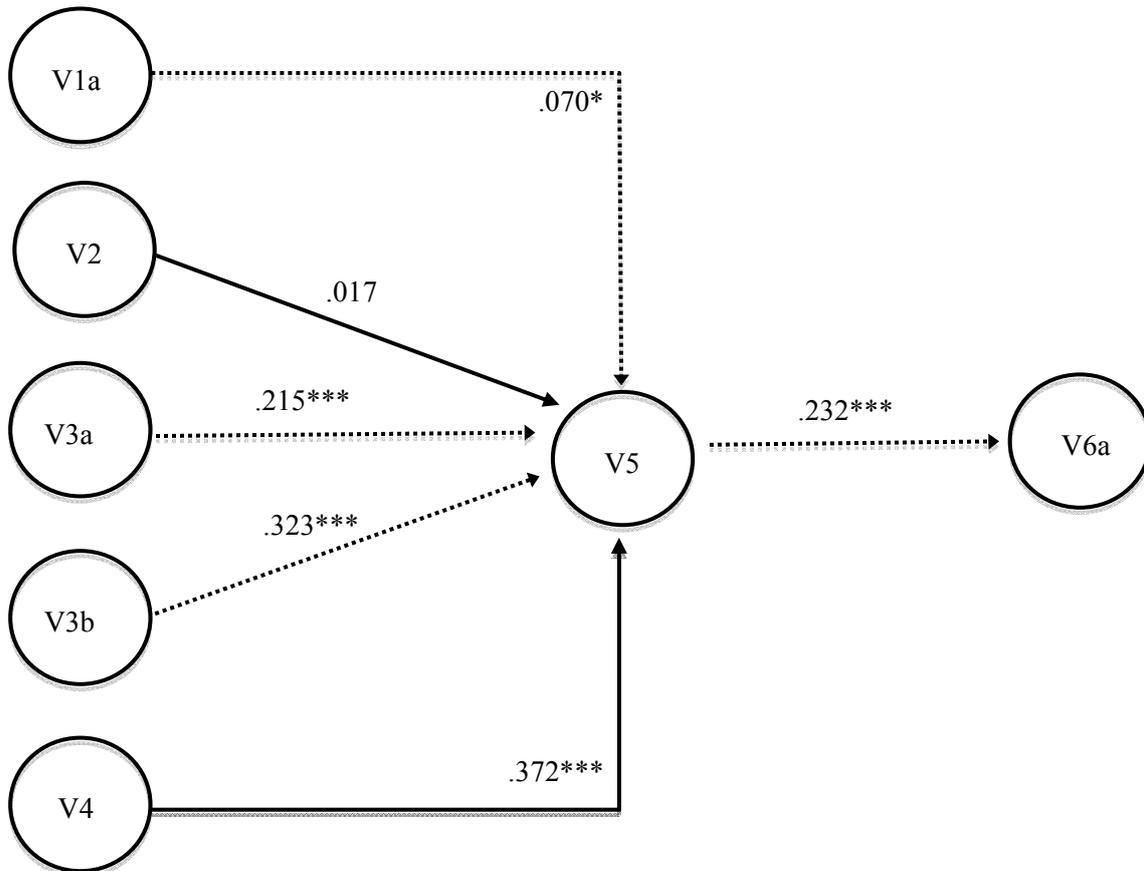
Source: Survey Tina Maze-Milka 2013; n=282.
Note: V1a – Anxious-ambivalent attachment style; V2 – Media consumption level; V3a – Level of cognitive involvement with media content; V3b – Level of emotional involvement with media content; V4 – Affinity level with Tina Maze; V5 – Parasocial interaction intensity; V6a – Affective commitment to the brand Milka linked to Tina Maze.

3.2.4 Discussion

The findings of this case study indicate that the nature of the formation process of parasocial relationships with the tested media character (Tina Maze) significantly and positively correlates with the two main predictors (Model 1). The first statistically significant predictor within Model 1 is the level of involvement with media content, which is a two-dimensional construct – cognitive and emotional involvement. Both dimensions were demonstrated as statistically significant in correlation with parasocial interaction intensity with the tested media character (Tina Maze) and showed consistency with previous research (Horton and Wohl 1956; Meyrowitz 1986; Perse 1990; Auter 1992; Cook 1993; Auter and Palmgreen 2000). The second statistically significant predictor within Model 1 is the affinity level that the audience members have with the analyzed media character (Tina Maze) and is also positively correlated with parasocial interaction intensity with the same media character. This correlation also shows consistency with previous research (Rubin and Perse 1987; Rubin and McHugh 1987; Perse 1990; Cohen 1999; Auter and Palmgreen 2000; Sood and Rogers 2000).

However, attachment styles and media consumption level were not supported as significant predictors of Model 1 in the present study. Various authors (Bowlby 1969; Cohen 1997; Cole and Leets 1999; Cohen 2004; Greenwood et al. 2008; Greenwood and Long 2011; Erzar and Kompan Erzar 2011) successfully demonstrated that attachment theory can provide a framework for understanding how people experience close relationships and interact with significant others. Evidence in literature (Cole and Leets 1999; Cohen 2004; Theran et al. 2010; Greenwood and Long 2011) suggests that *Anxious-ambivalents* are the most likely to form parasocial bonds, *Avoidants* are the least likely to develop such relationships, and *Secures* are in the middle, with the more mistrusting *Secures* showing a tendency to engage in parasocial interaction. Since hypothesis H1 (nor H1a, H1b or H1c for the separate attachment styles dimensions) within this study cannot be supported, most probably due to the unsuitable measuring instrument, this correlation will remain a matter of concern for further empirical research.

Many authors have investigated the correlation between the level of exposure to mass media content (primarily with television viewership) and the depth of the parasocial

relationship with the media character (Levy 1979; Rubin and McHugh 1987; Auter 1992; Cook 1993; Cole and Leets 1999, Auter and Palmgreen 2000; Annese 2004; Cummins 2004; Auter et al. 2005; Park and Lennon 2006; Greenwood 2008; Kim and Long 2012). Horton and Wohl argued that this accumulation of knowledge through time can intensify the bond of intimacy (inherent characteristic of parasocial relations). However, there is inconsistency within evidence in literature regarding the correlation between the intensity of media consumption and parasocial relationships. A few authors found that regular exposure to the medium will contribute to the development of stronger parasocial bonds (Lavy 1979; Auter 1992; Cole and Leets 1999; Auter and Palmgreen 2000, Cummins 2004; Auter et al. 2005; Greenwood 2008), while others found little or no connection between the two variables (Rubin and McHugh 1987; Cook 1993). Since hypothesis H2 within this study cannot be supported, most probably due to the changing habits of media consumption practices within the past few years, this correlation will remain a matter of concern for further empirical research.

Another noteworthy finding within this study is that a statistically significant positive correlation was found between parasocial interaction intensity with Tina Maze and the audience member's affective commitment to Milka (brand endorsed by Tina Maze). As proposed by Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010), celebrities have already established meanings and associations (formed also during pre-existing parasocial relationships) that form their image and influence the meaning transfer from celebrities to brands. The present case study suggested that affective brand commitment could be enhanced by parasocial relationships formed between the audience members and the analyzed celebrity endorser trough this meaning transfer process (proposed by McCracken 1989, redefined by Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta 2010).

However, further research should lead to a more clear explanation on how meanings and associations are transferred with the support of those parasocial relationships. Additionally, the two remaining dimensions of commitment (calculative or continuance commitment and normative commitment) should not be ignored as possible results within the meaning transfer process, thus future empirical research should consider these possible correlations.

4 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Horton and Wohl (1956) developed the parasocial relationships theory while attempting to clarify one important mass media characteristic, i.e. the existence of an illusionary face-to-face relationship between the spectator and the performer. It is inevitably a one-side relationship where reciprocity between the two can only be suggested. This concept was subsequently applied to numerous media communication and audience researches during the past decades, all attempting to shed light on media consumption practices, especially those regarding the communication process between audience members and media characters. The present thesis focused precisely on this particular type of relationships (i.e. parasocial relationships) by attempting to merge it with another important researching field within marketing studies, i.e. brand endorsement and the theory of meaning transfer from media characters to brands (McCracken 1989; Podnar 2004; Keller et al. 2008; Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta 2010).

The factors that influence the development process of parasocial relationships and the consequences caused by that processes (affective commitment) were presented and analyzed within a present case study (Tina Maze and Milka). Three statistically significant predictors of parasocial relationships were identified (cognitive and emotional involvement media content and affinity with the media character), whereas two predictors could not be confirmed as significant (attachment styles and media consumption level), remaining a matter of concern for further empirical research.

However, the aim of this thesis was to clarify the existence of a correlation between parasocial interaction intensity and the audience member's affective commitment, as well as its implications for the meaning transfer process originally defined by McCracken (1989). The process of meaning transfer explains celebrity endorsement from a cultural perspective and is based on the movement of cultural meanings that originate within the society where meanings move from consumer goods (brands) to the consumer (McCracken 1989). Within the present thesis, McCracken's meaning transfer model (subsequently redefined by Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta 2010) is applied to the parasocial relationships theory by assuming that the pre-existing (parasocial) relationships formed between the audience member (consumer) and the media character (celebrity) affects this same process by transferring its meaning first

from the media character to the consumer and afterwards to the endorsed brand. A statistically significant positive correlation was found within the present study that confirms that the more intense the depth of the parasocial relationship between the media character (Tina Maze in our case) and the audience member, the higher the audience member's affective commitment[95] to the brand (Milka in our case) linked to the same media character will be.

It stands to reason that audience members with an increased tendency to form intense parasocial relationships and imagined bonds of intimacy with their favourite media characters would also be more likely to commit to a brand that is endorsed by this same media character. However, this field of research has not been well investigated empirically and the present study is only our first attempt to shed light on the potentials of merging the theory of parasocial relationships to the complex endorsement marketing sphere. There are still a lot of questions that have to be answered within future empirical researches, starting with a more clear explanation of how meanings and associations are transferred with the help of those parasocial relationships and how parasocial relationships are related to consumers' brand identification, etc.

Marketing researchers are constantly trying to identify various strategies to break through the highly cluttered modern advertising environment and celebrity endorsement has been realized as a very popular and efficient strategy in the past decades. The findings of the present study could help marketing practitioners to choose the right celebrity endorser and to identify the key communication massages that could promote their brands, based on the meanings and associations derived from the meaning transfer process (and the pre-existing parasocial relationships formed between the audience member – consumer – and the media character – chosen celebrity). Such marketing strategies could become powerful tools for managing brand equity and build strong brands in the future.

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[95] Consumers' commitment to a brand represents one of the central concepts in the relationship marketing paradigm (Bansal et al. 2004) and is viewed as a central ingredient of establishing and maintaining long-term relationships (Čater 2006 and 2007). Affective commitment creates the strongest positive intention to maintain and strengthen the relationship. Consequently, this dimension was considered a matter of study within this research (Čater 2006 and 2007; Čater and Čater 2010; Čater et al. 2011 and Bansal et al. 2004).

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6 POVZETEK

Teorijo parasocialnih odnosov sta razvila avtorja Horton in Wohl (1956) z namenom, da bi razjasnila pomembno značilnost množičnih medijev, tj. obstoj navideznega medsebojnega ('face-to-face') odnosa med gledalcem oz. članom občinstva in medijsko osebnostjo. Omenjeni odnos je po njuni definiciji vsekakor enosmeren, vzajemnost med članom občinstva in medijsko osebnostjo pa je lahko le nakazana, kar sta avtorja definirala kot 'iluzija intimnosti' (*'illusion of intimacy'*). Parasocialni odnosi so tako kvazi-odnosi, ki se oblikujejo med člani občinstva in medijskimi osebnostmi, v veliki meri pa spominjajo na socialne odnose, kjer so člani občinstva velikokrat prepričani, da medijsko osebnost poznajo zelo intimno, kljub temu, da je ta intimnost le enostranska in navidezna. V zadnjih desetletjih so koncept parasocialnih odnosov številni avtorji vključili v teorije medijskih študij in študij občinstva z namenom dodatno razjasniti prakse medijske potrošnje, predvsem vidik vzpostavljanja odnosov med člani občinstva in medijskimi osebnostmi. V nalogi skušamo koncept parasocialnih odnosov dodatno povezati z novim področjem raziskovanja, in sicer marketinškimi teorijami zvezdnikov kot ambasadorjev tržnih znamk[96] ter s teorijo transferja oziroma prenosa pomenov[97] z medijskih osebnosti na tržne znamke (McCracken 1989; Podnar 2004; Keller et al. 2008).

V prvem delu naloge se osredotočamo na štiri dejavnike, ki jih različni avtorji prepoznavajo kot ključne v procesu razvoja parasocialnih odnosov: (1) stili navezanosti članov občinstva; (2) povprečna raven medijske potrošnje članov občinstva; in (3) kognitivna in emocionalna vpetost članov občinstva v medijske vsebine; (4) afiniteta članov občinstva do medijske osebnosti.

Teorijo navezanosti (stili navezanosti kot prvi dejavnik preučevanja) je razvil angleški otroški psihiater in psihoanalitik John Bowlby (1969) skupaj s sodelavko, ameriško psihologinjo Mary Ainsworth. Teorija temelji na odnosu med starši (primarni skrbniki) in otrokom, pri čemer je prisotnost določene osebe, na katero se otrok lahko naveže, ključnega pomena za otrokov normalni razvoj. Bowlby (1969; 2005/1979) ugotavlja, da se v tej fazi oblikuje specifičen stil navezanosti, ki

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[96] V angleški marketinški literaturi se uporabljata predvsem izraza »brand endorsement« in »brand ambassadors«.

[97] V angleški marketinški literaturi se uporabljajo predvsem izrazi »meaning transfer«, »image transfer« in »brand associations transfer«.

zaznamuje način, na katerega bodo otroci navezovali odnose skozi vse življenje, tudi kot odrasli. Bowlby (1969; 2005/1979) opredeljuje tri ključne oblike ali stile navezanosti: (1) varni *(Secure)*; (2) izogibajoči *(Avoidant)*; in (3) rezistentno/ambivalentni *(Anxious-ambivalent)*. Varni stil navezanosti temelji na pozitivnem odnosu do sebe in drugih (Cohen 1997; Cole in Leets 1999; Cohen 2004; Greenwood et al. 2008; Greenwood in Long 2011). Osebe, ki izoblikujejo izogibajoči stil navezanosti, težko zaupajo drugim ljudem in težijo k ohranjanju določene distance v odnosu do drugih, pri čemer ti odnosi pogosto temeljijo na negativnem zaznavanju sebe in drugih, vpletenih v ta odnos (Cohen 1997; Cole in Leets 1999; Cohen 2004; Greenwood et al. 2008; Greenwood in Long 2011). Rezistentno/ambivalentni stil navezanosti pa zaznamuje osebe, ki jih v prvi vrsti vodi strah pred tem, da bi ostali sami, pri čemer jih ta strah in anksioznost glede ločitve od druge osebe pogosto pripelje do vzorcev obnašanja, ki kasneje povzročijo razpad odnosa (Cohen 1997; Cole in Leets 1999; Cohen 2004; Greenwood et al. 2008; Greenwood in Long 2011).

Teorija navezanosti postavlja pomembno ogrodje za razumevanje odnosov, ki jih ljudje oblikujemo s pomembnimi drugimi. V času, ko mediji prevzemajo vse pomembnejšo vlogo v našem vsakdanu, pa postajajo tudi medijske osebnosti del skupine pomembnih drugih oz. vedenjski vzorniki, s katerimi oblikujemo določene odnose (Giles in Maltby 2004). Različni avtorji so preučevali povezave med stili navezanosti in parasocialnimi odnosi (Cohen 1997; Cole in Leets 1999; Cohen 2004; Greenwood et al. 2008; Theran et al. 2010; Greenwood in Long 2011). Ugotovitve različnih študij (Cole in Leets 1999; Cohen 2004; Theran et al. 2010; Greenwood in Long 2011) kažejo, da so rezistentno/ambivalentni *(Anxious-ambivalents)* najbolj nagnjeni k oblikovanju parasocialnih odnosov, medtem ko izogibajoči *(Avoidants)* tvorijo tovrstne odnose bistveno redkeje. Varni *(Secures)* predstavljajo nekakšno sredino, pri čemer se k oblikovanju parasocialnih odnosov nagibajo nekoliko bolj nezaupljivi »varni«. Glede na obstoječo literaturo smo v nalogi oblikovali naslednje hipoteze:

H1: Stili navezanosti članov občinstva vplivajo na intenziteto parasocialnih odnosov, ki jih člani občinstva tvorijo z medijsko osebnostjo.

S tremi dodatnimi hipotezami pa smo želeli preveriti vpliv posameznega stila navezanosti na proces oblikovanja parasocialnih odnosov:

H1a: Rezistentno/ambivalentni *(Anxious-ambivalent)* stil navezanosti pozitivno vpliva na intenziteto parasocialnih odnosov, ki jih člani občinstva tvorijo z medijsko osebnostjo.

H1b: Varni *(Secure)* stil navezanosti pozitivno vpliva na intenziteto parasocialnih odnosov, ki jih člani občinstva tvorijo z medijsko osebnostjo.

H1c: Izogibajoči *(Avoidant)* stil navezanosti negativno vpliva na intenziteto parasocialnih odnosov, ki jih člani občinstva tvorijo z medijsko osebnostjo.

Višja **raven medijske potrošnje članov občinstva** (drugi dejavnik, predmet preučevanja) in vzpostavljanje intimnosti z medijsko osebnostjo lahko pripomoreta pri oblikovanju dolgoročnega (parasocialnega) odnosa med člani občinstva in to medijsko osebnostjo. Člani občinstva namreč nabirajo znanje (skupne pretekle izkušnje) in posledično pričnejo verjeti, da "poznajo" medijsko osebnost bolj intimno kot jo poznajo drugi oz. popolnoma "razumejo" medijski lik (Horton in Wohl 1956).

Različni avtorji so raziskovali povezavo med ravnijo medijske potrošnje članov občinstva (primarno TV gledanost) in intenzivnostjo parasocialnih odnosov z medijskimi liki (Levy 1979; Rubin in McHugh 1987; Auter 1992; Cook 1993; Cole in Leets 1999; Auter in Palmgreen 2000; Annese 2004; Cummins 2004; Auter et al. 2005; Park in Lennon 2006; Greenwood 2008; Kim in Long 2012). Izsledki raziskav niso enotni, kljub temu pa nakazujejo, da obstajajo različne posledice medijske potrošnje, pri čemer ne moremo zanemariti vpliva na oblikovanje parasocialnih odnosov. To nas je vodilo k oblikovanju druge hipoteze:

H2: Višja raven medijske potrošnje članov občinstva vpliva na oblikovanje bolj intenzivnega parasocialnega odnosa med člani občinstva in medijsko osebnostjo.

Poleg ravni medijske potrošnje pa ima pomembno vlogo pri oblikovanju parasocialnih odnosov tudi vsebina. Različni mediji imajo namreč različne potenciale za vzpostavljanje interakcije (sposobnost medijske vsebine, da ponudi realistično izkušnjo, ipd.). **Kognitivna in emocionalna vpetost članov občinstva v medijske vsebine** predstavljata tretji dejavnik, ki je predmet preučevanja v tej nalogi.

Horton in Wohl (1956) sta predstavila različne načine, na katere lahko vsebina vpliva na intenzivnost parasocialnih odnosov, pri čemer izpostavljata predvsem prvoosebno nagovarjanje članov občinstva s strani medijske osebnosti (tanjšanje meje med medijskim programom ter realnim svetom) in strukturne dejavnike (posnetki od blizu

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oz. posnetki kamere, kjer gledalec opazuje dogajanje skozi oči medijske osebnosti ipd.). Številni avtorji (Meyrowitz 1986; Perse 1990; Auter 1992; Cook 1993; Auter in Palmgreen 2000) so nato preučevali vpliv kognitivne in emocionalne vpetosti članov občinstva v medijske vsebine na proces oblikovanja parasocialnih odnosov. Perse (1990) je izpostavila dve dimenziji aktivnosti članov občinstva (kognitivna in emotivna reakcija na medijsko vsebino), pri čemer člani občinstva izkazujejo kognitivno vpetost v medijsko vsebino prek usmerjanja pozornosti, prepoznavanja vsebine kot domače in s povezovanjem vsebine s predhodnim znanjem, medtem ko emotivno vpetost v medijske vsebine zaznamuje zlasti emocionalna reakcija na vsebino. Dognanja iz literature so nas vodila k postavitvi tretje hipoteze:

H3: Višja (kognitivna ali emotivna) vpetost članov občinstva v medijske vsebine vpliva na oblikovanje bolj intenzivnega parasocialnega odnosa med člani občinstva in medijsko osebnostjo.

Z dvema dodatnima hipotezama smo preverjali vpliv posamezne dimenzije vpetosti v medijske vsebine:

H3a: Višja kognitivna vpetost članov občinstva v medijske vsebine vpliva na oblikovanje bolj intenzivnega parasocialnega odnosa med člani občinstva in medijsko osebnostjo.

H3b: Višja emotivna vpetost članov občinstva v medijske vsebine vpliva na oblikovanje bolj intenzivnega parasocialnega odnosa med člani občinstva in medijsko osebnostjo.

Zadnji, četrti dejavnik formacije parasocialnih odnosov, ki je predstavljal predmet poučevanja te naloge, je **afiniteta članov občinstva do medijske osebnosti**. Različni avtorji (Rubin in McHugh 1987; Rubin in Perse 1987; Cohen 1999; Sood in Rogers 2000; Auter in Palmgreen 2000; Eyal in Rubin 2003; Podnar 2004; Schuh 2008; Wohlfeil in Whelan 2012) ločujejo afiniteto od identifikacije, pri čemer definirajo identifikacijo z medijsko osebnostjo kot proces, kjer član občinstva deli z medijsko osebnostjo enako perspektivo in gleda zgodbo skozi oči te medijske osebnosti. Afiniteta se od identifikacije razlikuje v tem, da član občinstva samostojno spremlja zgodbo (ohranja distanco do medijske osebnosti, ohranja svojo identiteto in osebno perspektivo izven medijskega teksta), vendar čuti do medijske osebnosti določeno stopnjo všečnosti oz. afinitete. Afiniteto avtorji v nadaljevanju preučujejo v kontekstu

parasocialnih odnosov, pri čemer ugotavljajo, da afiniteta vpliva na višji nivo kognitivne vpetosti v medijske vsebine in posledično tudi na višjo intenzivnost parasocialne interakcije z medijsko osebnostjo. To nas je vodilo k četrti hipotezi:

H4: Višji nivo afinitete članov občinstva do medijske osebnosti vpliva na oblikovanje bolj intenzivnega parasocialnega odnosa med člani občinstva in medijsko osebnostjo.

V **drugem delu naloge** preučujemo posledice parasocialnih odnosov v povezavi z modelom prenosa pomenov z medijskih osebnosti na tržne znamke (McCracken 1989; Podnar 2004; Halonen-Knight in Hurmerinta 2010). Literarni pregled je pokazal, da obstajajo trije prevladujoči modeli, ki so predmet preučevanja študij zvezdniških ambasadorjev tržnih znamk: (1) model verodostojnosti in model privlačnosti vira (generično imenovani tudi modeli virov – "source models", saj izpostavljajo pomen vira, ki prenaša sporočilo na tržno znamko, npr. kredibilnost ali verodostojnost, privlačnost medijske osebnosti ipd.); (2) model ujemanja (izpostavlja pomen ujemanja sporočil, ki jih prenaša medijska osebnost, in sporočil, ki jih želi komunicirati tržna znamka); (3) model prenosa pomenov. Slednjemu v nalogi posvečamo več pozornosti in ga definiramo kot ključni model, skozi katerega lahko teoretično pojasnimo pomen vzpostavljanja parasocialnih odnosov v fazi, ko se pomen prenaša z medijske osebnosti na tržno znamko. Pri tem ugotavljamo, da se parasocialni odnosi z določeno medijsko osebnostjo oblikujejo skozi čas; v trenutku, ko določeno tržno znamko povežemo s to medijsko osebnostjo, pa že obstajajo oblikovani parasocialni odnosi med to medijsko osebnostjo in člani občinstva, ki so istočasno tudi potrošniki tržnih znamk. Nekaj avtorjev je že raziskovalo povezavo med parasocialnimi odnosi in tržnimi znamkami (Stephens et al. 1996; Wong in Fortin 2000; Gummesson 2008; Park in Lennon 2004; Podnar 2004; Park in Lennon 2006; Currás-Pérez et al. 2011; Keng et al. 2011; Morin et al. 2012), vendar predstavlja naloga prvi poskus povezovanja parasocialnih odnosov s teorijo prenosa pomenov in proučevanja vpliva, ki ga imajo parasocialni odnosi na (afektivno) zavezanost do tržne znamke.

Zavezanost potrošnikov do tržne znamke v nalogi ločujemo od lojalnosti do tržne znamke in jo definiramo kot namero posameznika, da ohrani odnos do tržne znamke, ki jo ceni, tudi v prihodnosti. Različni avtorji (Warrington in Shim 2000; Podnar 2004; Bansal et al. 2004; Čater 2006 in 2007; Čater in Čater 2010; Čater et al. 2011; Tuškej et al. 2013) opredeljujejo različne dimenzije zavezanosti, vendar se v nalogi

osredotočamo na definicijo, ki temelji na treh dimenzijah zavezanosti (delitev izvira iz študij, ki preučujejo pripadnost oz. zavezanost znotraj teorij organizacij in organizacijskega komuniciranja): (1) afektivna zavezanost; (2) vztrajnostna zavezanost; in (3) normativna zavezanost. Različni avtorji (Bansal et al. 2004; Čater 2006 in 2007; Čater in Čater 2010; Čater et al. 2011) so potrdili, da afektivna zavezanost najmočneje vpliva na ustvarjanje pozitivne namere za ohranjanje in dodatno utrjevanje določenega odnosa, zato se naloga osredotoča prav na to dimenzijo zavezanosti. Na podlagi teoretičnih ugotovitev smo tako oblikovali zadnjo, peto hipotezo:

H5: Intenzivnejši parasocialni odnos med medijsko osebnostjo in članom občinstva vpliva na višjo stopnjo afektivne zavezanosti do tržne znamke, vezane na isto medijsko osebnost.

Poleg tega v nalogi postavljamo še dve dodatni raziskovalni vprašanji, s katerima želimo odgovoriti na vprašanje, kako parasocialni odnosi vplivajo na preostali dve dimenziji zavezanosti, tj. na vztrajnostno in normativno zavezanost:

RV1: Kako je intenzivnost parasocialnega odnosa med medijsko osebnostjo in članom občinstva povezana s stopnjo vztrajnostne zavezanosti do tržne znamke, vezane na isto medijsko osebnost.

RV1: Kako je intenzivnost parasocialnega odnosa med medijsko osebnostjo in članom občinstva povezana s stopnjo normativne zavezanosti do tržne znamke, vezane na isto medijsko osebnost.

Dejavniki, ki vplivajo na razvoj parasocialnih odnosov (stili navezanosti, raven medijske potrošnje, kognitivna in emocionalna vpetost v medijske vsebine in afiniteta do medijske osebnosti) ter posledice tega odnosa (zavezanost – afektivna, vztrajnostna in normativna) so predmet proučevanja v empirični raziskavi (**tretji del naloge**), ki temelji na študiji primera (Tina Maze in Milka). Tekom študije zagovarjamo tezo, da intenzivnejši in globlji kot je parasocialni odnos med medijsko osebnostjo in članom občinstva (potrošnikom), višja je stopnja (afektivne) zavezanosti do tržne znamke, vezane na isto medijsko osebnost (ambasadorja tržne znamke). Raziskavo smo izvedli na podlagi spletnega anketnega vprašalnika (distribucija preko e-maila in družbenih omrežij), v Sloveniji, v času od aprila do maja 2013. V anketi je sodelovalo skupno 508 respondentov, vendar jih je le 343

uspešno zaključilo vprašalnik v celoti. Kljub temu smo pri analizi upoštevali zgolj tiste vprašalnike, kjer so respondenti odgovorili pozitivno na prvi dve vprašanji[98] (poznavanje Tine Maze in Milke – študija primera): 94,2% vprašanih je vedelo, da je Tina Maze ambasadorka tržne znamke Milka, 85,1% vprašanih pa poleg tega tudi uporablja/kupuje omenjeno tržno znamko. Končni vzorec, obravnavan v nadaljnji analizi, je predstavljalo 282 anketirancev (n = 282). Za testiranje hipotez smo uporabili metodo (multiple) regresijske analize. Rezultat sta dva statistično značilna regresijska modela. Prvi model je testiral dejavnike, ki vplivajo na formacijo parasocialnih odnosov, medtem ko je drugi model preverjal povezanost med parasocialnimi odnosi in (afektivno) zavezanostjo do tržnih znamk.

Ugotovitve študije primera so pokazale, da lahko potrdimo tri statistično značilne dejavnike v procesu formacije parasocialnih odnosov (regresijski model 1): kognitivno ter emocionalno vpetost v medijske vsebine (H3, H3a in H3b) in afiniteto do medijske osebnosti (H4). Prvi dejavnik, raven vpetosti v medijske vsebine, smo definirali kot dvodimenzionalni konstrukt kognitivne in emocionalne vpetosti (Perse 1990). Statistično značilno korelacijo med obema dimenzijama in procesom formacije parasocialnih odnosov lahko potrdimo, kar je skladno s preteklimi študijami na tem področju (Horton in Wohl 1956; Meyrowitz 1986; Perse 1990; Auter 1992; Cook 1993; Auter in Palmgreen 2000). Drugi statistično značilen dejavnik v procesu formacije parasocialnih odnosov je raven afinitete do medijske osebnosti, ki prav tako sovpada s preteklimi študijami (Rubin in Perse 1987; Rubin in McHugh 1987; Perse 1990, Cohen, 1999; Auter in Palmgreen 2000; Sood in Rogers 2000). Pri dveh dejavnikih pa ne moramo potrditi statistično značilne povezave s procesom formacije parasocialnih odnosov (gre za stile navezanosti – H1 in raven medijske potrošnje – H2), zato ostajata predmet nadaljnjega raziskovanja.

Osrednji namen raziskave je bil razjasniti obstoj povezave med parasocialnimi odnosi in zavezanostjo članov občinstva (potrošnikov) do tržne znamke ter posledično prepoznati pomen omenjenih odnosov v procesu prenosa pomenov z medijske osebnosti na tržno znamko (McCracken 1989; Halonen-Knight in Hurmerinta 2010). Na podlagi izsledkov študije in drugega regresijskega modela smo tako potrdili hipotezo (H5), da intenzivnejši in globlji kot je parasocialni odnos med medijsko

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[98] Q1: Ali ste vedeli, da je Tina Maze ambasadorka tržne znamke Milka (uporablja in oglašuje tržno znamko Milka ipd.)?
Q2: Ali uporabljate oz. kupujete tržno znamko Milka?

osebnostjo in članom občinstva (potrošnikom), višja je stopnja (afektivne) zavezanosti do tržne znamke, vezane na isto medijsko osebnost (ambasadorja tržne znamke). Parasocialne odnose lahko tako vpeljujemo v model prenosa pomenov (McCracken 1989; Halonen-Knight in Hurmerinta 2010), kjer se pomeni (na katere vplivajo tudi predhodno oblikovani parasocialni odnosi) prenašajo z medijskih osebnosti na tržne znamke.

Delo tako predstavlja prvi poskus povezovanje teorije parasocialnih odnosov z marketinškimi teorijami ambasadorjev tržne znamke in modelom prenosa pomenov z medijskih osebnosti na tržne znamke, pri čemer odpira tudi številna nova vprašanja za nadaljnje raziskovanje, zlasti pojasnila, kako parasocialni odnosi vplivajo na prenos pomenov in kakšni so pri tem drugi vplivi na tržno znamko (npr. identifikacija s tržno znamko).

SUPPLEMENT A: Vprašalnik – parasocialni odnosi in tržne znamke (slovenska različica)

Q1 - Ali ste vedeli, da je Tina Maze ambasadorka tržne znamke Milka (uporablja in oglašuje tržno znamko Milka, ipd.)?

DA
NE

Q2 - Ali uporabljate oz. kupujete tržno znamko Milka?

DA
NE

SKLOP 1 - Sledi prvi sklop vprašanj, ki se nanašajo na vas in vaše dojemanje sebe.

Q3 - Spodaj je naštetih nekaj trditev, ki se nanašajo na vas in vaše dojemanje sebe. Pri vprašanjih, ki se nanašajo na partnerja/ico, lahko upoštevate sedanjo, preteklo ali vizijo prihodnje zveze (označena z *). Za vsako trditev prosim označite polje, ki najbolje opredeljuje vaše lastnosti. Če je trditev za vas *zelo značilna*, označite polje 5. Če je *značilna*, označite polje 4. Če je *niti značilna niti neznačilna*, označite polje 3. Če je *neznačilna*, označite polje 2. Če je *zelo neznačilna*, označite polje 1.

	Zelo neznačilno (1)	Neznačilno (2)	Niti značilno niti neznačilno (3)	Značilno (4)	Zelo značilno (5)
Težko si dovolim, da sem odvisen/a od drugih.					
Ljudje niso nikoli prisotni, ko jih potrebujem.					
Drugi ljudje se mi pogosto ne približajo v tolikšni meri, kot bi si želel/a.					
Pogosto me je strah, da me bo partner/ica zapustil/a.*					
Težko popolnoma zaupam drugim ljudem.					
Nisem prepričan/a, da se lahko vselej zanesem na ljudi, da bodo prisotni, ko jih bom potreboval/a.					
Pogosto me skrbi, da me parter/ica v resnici ne ljubi.*					
Rad/a bi, da bi bila s partnerjem/ico kot eno.*					
Relativno preprosto se lahko približam drugim ljudem.					
Navadno me ne skrbi, če se mi kdo želi približati.					
Neprijetno se počutim, ko se mi nekdo preveč približa.					
Ne predstavlja mi težave, če so drugi odvisni od mene.					
Parter/ica bi pogosto rad/a, da bi bil/a bolj intimen/a z njim/njo, kot si sam/a želim biti.*					

	Zelo neznačilno (1)	Neznačilno (2)	Niti značilno niti neznačilno (3)	Značilno (4)	Zelo značilno (5)
Nimam težav, če sem odvisen/a od drugih.					
Zaupam, da bodo drugi ljudje prisotni, ko jih bom potreboval/a.					

SKLOP 2: *Odgovarjajo le tisti, ki so pritrdilno odgovorili na Q1 in Q2, sicer preskočijo na SKLOP 3.*

V nadaljevanju vas prosim, da odgovorite na dva sklopa vprašanj, ki se nanašajo na tržno znamko Milka.

Q4 - Spodaj je naštetih nekaj trditev, ki se nanašajo na tržno znamko Milka. Za vsako trditev prosim označite polje, ki za vas najbolj drži. Če se *zelo strinjate,* označite polje 5. Če se *strinjate*, označite polje 4. Če se *delno strinjate in delno ne strinjate*, označite polje 3. Če se *ne strinjate*, označite polje 2. Če se *nikakor ne strinjate*, označite polje 1.

	Nikakor se ne strinjam (1)	Ne strinjam se (2)	Delno se strinjam, delno se ne strinjam (3)	Strinjam se (4)	Zelo se strinjam (5)
Rad/a imam Milko, zato nadaljujem z uporabo le-te.					
Milko uporabljam zato, ker ni druge možne izbire.					
Še naprej želim uporabljati Milko, saj mi je všeč to, kar predstavlja.					
Počutil/a bi se krivo/ega, če bi zamenjal/a Milko za drugo čokolado.					
Milkou porabljam zato, ker bi mi zamenjava (izbira druge znamke) vzela preveč časa in energije.					
Še naprej želim uporabljati Milko, ker mi tekne in sem z njo zadovoljen/a.					
Čutim se dolžnega/o, da še naprej uporabljam Milko.					
Težko bi bilo prenesti investicijo (čas, energija, trud, itn.), ki sem jo naredil/aob izbiri Milke, na drugo čokolado, zato nadaljujem z uporabo le-te.					
Tudi če bi dobil/a boljšo ponudbo druge čokolade (npr. ugodna cena), menim, da ni prav, da prekinem z uporabo Milke.					
Prijetno se počutim ob uporabi Milke, zato jo želim še naprej uporabljati.					
Čeprav bi bilo v mojo korist, bi bilo nečastno zamenjati Milko za drugo čokolado.					
Ostajam pri uporabi Milke, ker jo je pretežko zamenjati zaradi pomanjkanja dobrih alternativ. Sicer bi razmislil/a o zamenjavi čokolade.					

SKLOP 3 - Sledi tretji sklop vprašanj, ki se nanaša na vaše spremljanje medijev na splošno oz. spremljanje medijskih vsebin, kjer nastopa Tina Maze.

Q6 - Koliko ur na dan (v povprečju) uporabljate različne medije (TV/film/video vsebine, radio, tisk, internet, družbena omrežja itn.)?

	Ur/dan
TV/film/video vsebine	
Radio	
Tisk	
Internet (spletne strani, forumi, blogi, ipd.)	
Družbena omrežja (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, ipd.)	

Q7 - Spodaj je naštetih nekaj dodatnih trditev, ki se lahko nanašajo na vašo vpetost v medijske vsebine, kjer nastopa Tina Maze. Za vsako trditev prosim označite polje, ki za vas najbolj drži. Če je to *zelo pogosto,* označite polje 5. Če je to *pogosto*, označite polje 4. Če je to *včasih*, označite polje 3. Če je to *redko*, označite polje 2. Če ni to *nikoli*, označite polje 1.

	Nikoli (1)	Redko (2)	Včasih (3)	Pogosto (4)	Zelo pogosto (5)
Zelo pozorno spremljam medijsko vsebino, kjer se pojavlja Tina Maze.					
Ne želim zamujati medijskih vsebin, kjer nastopa Tina Maze.					
Razumem športna pravila disciplin, v katerih nastopa Tina Maze.					
Sedaj že prepoznam prizorišča (npr. imena smučišč), kjer nastopa Tina Maze.					
Pogosto razmišljam o medijski vsebini (npr. prenosih tekem), kjer nastopa Tina Maze.					
Razmišljam o zgodbi Tine Maze in kako se njena zgodba povezuje z drugimi stvarmi, ki jih poznam (povezava na moje življenje).					

Q8 - Spodaj je naštetih nekaj dodatnih trditev, ki se lahko nanašajo na vašo čustveno vpetost v medijske vsebine, kjer nastopa Tina Maze. Za vsako trditev prosim označite polje, ki za vas najbolj drži. Če je to *zelo pogosto,* označite polje 5. Če je to *pogosto*, označite polje 4. Če je to *včasih*, označite polje 3. Če je to *redko*, označite polje 2. Če ni to *nikoli*, označite polje 1.

	Nikoli (1)	Redko (2)	Včasih (3)	Pogosto (4)	Zelo pogosto (5)
Počutim se srečno/ega ob zmagi Tine Maze.					
Postanem jezen/a ali žalosten/a, če Tina Maze izgubi tekmo.					
Strah bi me bilo za Tinino zdravje, če bi se ji med tekmo pripetila nesreča.					
Tina Maze me vedno znova preseneča.					

SKLOP 4 - Zadnja dva sklopa vprašanj se nanašata na vaš odnos do Tine Maze in na vaše spremljanje Tine Maze.

Q9 - Spodaj je naštetih nekaj trditev, ki se nanašajo na vašo čustveno navezanost na Tino Maze. Za vsako trditev prosim označite polje, ki najbolje opredeljuje vašo stopnjo strinjanja. Če se *zelo strinjate*, označite polje 5. Če se *strinjate*, označite polje 4. Če se *delno strinjate in delno ne strinjate*, označite polje 3. Če se *ne strinjate*, označite polje 2. Če se *nikakor ne strinjate*, označite polje 1.

	Nikakor se ne strinjam (1)	Ne strinjam se (2)	Delno se strinjam, delno se ne strinjam (3)	Strinjam se (4)	Zelo se strinjam (5)
Pogosto spremljam Tino Maze in njene tekme.					
Če ne bi mogel/a spremljati Tine Maze in njenih tekem, bi to pogrešal/a.					
Spremljanje Tine Maze je zelo pomemben del mojega siceršnjega spremljanja športnih vsebin.					
Brez težav bi prenehal/a spremljati Tino Maze in njene tekme.					
Športne vsebine brez novic o Tini Maze bi bile dolgočasne.					

Q10 - Spodaj je naštetih nekaj trditev, ki se nanašajo na vaše spremljanje Tine Maze. Za vsako trditev prosim označite polje, ki najbolje opredeljuje vašo stopnjo strinjanja. Če se *zelo strinjate*, označite polje 5. Če se *strinjate*, označite polje 4. Če se *delno strinjate in delno ne strinjate*, označite polje 3. Če se *ne strinjate*, označite polje 2. Če se *nikakor ne strinjate*, označite polje 1.

	Nikakor se ne strinjam (1)	Ne strinjam se (2)	Delno se strinjam, delno se ne strinjam (3)	Strinjam se (4)	Zelo se strinjam (5)
Strokovno mnenje Tine Maze spoštujem in mi pogosto pomaga pri oblikovanju lastnega mnenja (npr. športni nasveti).					
Sočustvujem s Tino Maze, ko ta napravi napako.					
Ko spremljam Tino Maze, se počutim kot del njene zgodbe o uspehu (npr. njena zmaga je tudi moja zmaga oz. zmaga vseh Slovencev).					
Rad/a primerjam svoja razmišljanja z razmišljanji in opredeljevanji Tine Maze.					
Rada gledam/poslušam/berem novice o Tini Maze.					
Rad/a bi osebno spoznal/a Tino Maze.					
Tino Maze dojemam kot staro prijateljico.					

SKLOP 5 - Prosim, da odgovorite še na zadnji sklop demografskih vprašanj.

Q11 - Spol:

Moški
Ženski

Q12 - V katero starostno kategorijo spadate?

Manj kot 20 let
21 do 30 let
31 do 40 let
41 do 50 let
51 do 60 let
61 do 70 let
71 let in več

Q13 - Kakšna je vaša najvišja dosežena formalna izobrazba?

Osnovna šola ali manj
Poklicna šola (2 ali 3 letna strokovna šola)
Štiriletna srednja šola
Višja šola
Visoka šola - prva stopnja
Univerzitetna izobrazba ali bolonjska druga stopnja (bolonjski magisterij)
Znanstveni magisterij
Doktorat

Q14 - Kakšen je vaš zaposlitveni status?

Dijak ali študent
Zaposlen (v javnem/neprofitnem/realnem sektorju, za poln/polovični delovni čas,
avtorska pogodba, samozaposlen ipd.)
Brezposeln
Upokojenec
Drugo - navedite:

Q15 - Kakšen je vaš zakonski stan?

Poročen
V izven zakonski skupnosti ali v razmerju
Ločen
Ovdovel
Samski

SUPPLEMENT A.1: Questionnaire – parasocial relationships and brands (English version)

Q1 - Did you know that Tina Maze endorsed the brand Milka (as brand ambassador she uses and promotes Milka in various commercials)?

YES
NO

Q2 - Do you use/buy Milka?

YES
NO

PART 1 - Here is the first set of questions about yourself and your attachments.

Q3 - Here are some statements you may make about yourselves. Partner related questions (marked by *) should be answered by considering an actual relationship or a past relationship or the vision of a future relationship. For each statement, please mark the answer that best expresses your own characteristics. If it is *very characteristic* for you, mark a 5. If it is *characteristic*, mark a 4. If it is *neither characteristic nor uncharacteristic*, mark a 3. If it is *uncharacteristic*, mark a 2. If it is *very uncharacteristic*, mark a 1.

	Very uncharacteristic (1)	Uncharacteristic (2)	Neither characteristic nor uncharacteristic (3)	Characteristic (4)	Very characteristic (5)
I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others.					
People are never there when you need them.					
I find others are reluctant to get as close as I would like them to.					
I often worry my partner will not want to stay with me.*					
I find it difficult to trust others completely.					
I am not sure that I can always depend on others to be there when I need them.					
I often worry that my partner does not really love me.*					
I want to merge completely with another person (my partner).*					
I find it relatively easy to					

	Very uncharacteristic (1)	Uncharacteristic (2)	Neither characteristic nor uncharacteristic (3)	Characteristic (4)	Very characteristic (5)
get close to others.					
I do not often worry about someone getting close to me.					
I am uncomfortable when anyone gets too close.					
I am comfortable having others depend on me.					
Often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.*					
I am comfortable depending on others.					
I know that others will be there when I need them.					

PART2 – *Complete only if you answered affirmatively to Q1 & Q2, otherwise skip to PART 3.*

The second set of questions regard the brand Milka.

<u>Q4 - Here are several statements about Milka. For each statement, please mark the answer that best expresses your feelings toward this brand. If you *strongly agree* with the statement, mark a 5. If you *agree*, mark a 4. If you *agree some and disagree some*, mark a 3. If you *disagree*, mark a 2. If you *strongly disagree*, mark a 1.</u>

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree some and disagree some (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I like Milka, that's why I continue to use it.					
It would be difficult to find a replacement for Milka, so I continue to use it.					
My decision to remain a buyer of this brand is based on my attraction to the things Milka stands for.					
I would feel guilty if I dropped Milka for another brand.					
Changing Milka would cost me too much (time and energy for choosing a new brand), so I continue to buy it.					
I want to remain a buyer of this brand because I genuinely enjoy Milka.					
I feel a sense of duty to Milka, so I continue to use it.					
It would be difficult to neglect or transfer the costs I already paid for Milka (time, energy, etc.) and change it for another brand. Therefore I continue to use it.					

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree some and disagree some (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Even if I receive a better proposal from another brand (e.g. good price), it does not feel right to leave Milka.					
Because I like Milka I want to remain its user.					
Even if it were to my advantage, I feel it would be dishonourable if I change Milka.					
Right now, using Milka is a matter of necessity since no feasible alternatives exist. Otherwise I would consider leaving.					

PART3 - This part of the questionnaire refers to your media consumption practices in general and practices regarding media contents where Tina Maze appears.

Q6 - How many hours per day (approximately), do you spend using various media (TV/film/video contents, radio, print, internet, social media, etc.)?

	Hours per day
TV/film/video contents	
Radio	
Print	
Internet (web pages, forums, blogs, etc.)	
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)	

Q7 - Here are some statements you may make about your involvement with the media content where Tina Maze appears. For each statement, please mark the answer that best expresses your typical thoughts or feelings. If it is *very often* for you, mark a 5. If it is *often*, mark a 4. If it is *sometimes*, mark a 3. If it is *rarely*, mark a 2. If it is *never*, mark a 1.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Very often (5)
I pay close attention to the media content where Tina Maze appears.					
I do not want to miss parts of the media content where Tina Maze appears.					
I understand the sports rules of the disciplines where Tina Maze competes.					
I recognize the ski areas where Tina Maze competes.					
I often think about Tina Maze and her Ski Championships.					
I think about Tina Maze's story of success and how it relates to other things I know (my life).					

Q8 - Here are some additional statements you may make about your emotional involvement with the media content where Tina Maze appears. For each statement, please mark the answer that best expresses your typical thoughts or feelings. If it is *very often* for you, mark a 5. If it is *often,* mark a 4. If it is *sometimes*, mark a 3. If it is *rarely*, mark a 2. If it is *never*, mark a 1.

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Very often (5)
I am happy when Tina Maze wins a Ski Championship.					
I get angry or sad when Tina Maze loses a Ski Championship.					
I am afraid when Tina Maze falls during a Ski Championship.					
Tina Maze often surprises me.					

PART4 - The last two sets of questions refer to your relationship with Tina Maze.

Q9 - Here are several statements about your own feelings for Tina Maze. For each statement, please mark the answer that best expresses them. If you *strongly agree* with the statement, mark a 5. If you *agree*, mark a 4. If you *agree some and disagree some*, mark a 3. If you *disagree*, mark a 2. If you *strongly disagree*, mark a 1.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree some and disagree some (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I often watch Tina Maze and her Championships.					
If I couldn't watch Tina Maze and her Championships, I would really miss it.					
Watching Tina Maze and her Championships is an important part of my time spent for watching sports events.					
I could easily do without Tina Maze and her Championships.					
Sport news will not be the same without Tina Maze.					

Q10 - Here are several additional statements about your own feelings towards George Clooney. For each statement, please mark the answer that best expresses them. If you strongly agree with the statement, mark a 5. If you agree, mark a 4. If you agree some and disagree some, mark a 3. If you disagree, mark a 2. If you strongly disagree, mark a 1.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree some and disagree some (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I respect and also consider Tina Maze's expertise opinion (e.g. sport advices) while making my own mind regarding this specific topic.					
I feel sorry for Tina Maze when she makes a mistake.					
When I'm following Tina Maze through the media, I feel as I am part of her story (her success could be my success / national success).					
I like to compare my ideas with Tina Maze's ideas.					
I look forward to watch/listen/read about Tina					

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree some and disagree some (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Maze.					
I would like to meet Tina Maze in person.					
I feel Tina Maze is like an old friend.					

PART5 - Please, compete this last part of demographic questions.

Q11 - Gender:

Male
Female

Q12 - Age:

Less than 20 years old
10 - 20
21 - 30
31 - 40
41 - 50
51 - 60
61 - 70
more than 71 years old

Q13 - Indicate highest education attained:

Elementary school or less
Secondary school (2-3 years)
Secondary school (4 years)
Tertiary degree (2 years)
University degree
Master degree
Doctorate-level degree

Q14 - Indicate your employment status:

Student
Employed (full time/part-time, self employment, etc.)
Unemployed
Retired
Other:

Q15 - Marital status:

Married
In a relationship
Divorced
Widowed
Single