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Attributes of Celebrity Endorsers and Their Influence on University Students' Intention to Purchase Fashion Products

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Abstract:

Marketers have been using celebrity endorsement in their efforts to attract consumers towards their products. Benefits of celebrity endorsement include increasing awareness of the advert; capturing attention; and making adverts more memorable to consumers. However, there has been a debate as to what characteristics celebrities should possess for their endorsement to have a positive outcome on consumer purchase intention. This study has analyzed the attributes of celebrity endorsers and their effect on the University students' intention to purchase fashion products in Iringa, Tanzania. The study used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and regression analysis using Structural Equation Modelling. Attractiveness, expertise and congruence were found to make a positive and statistically significant contribution to the prediction of consumer purchase intention ($\beta=0.384$, $p=0.009$), ($\beta=0.342$, $p=0.003$) and ($\beta=0.373$, $p=0.006$) respectively.

Keywords: Celebrity endorsement, celebrity credibility, product-celebrity congruence

1. Introduction

Frequently consumers are exposed to images and voices in radio, television magazines, newspapers, billboards and websites. Designing of those radio and televised adverts is a challenge to marketers who must design adverts which can attract consumers' attention by breaking through the clutter of other commercials, announcements and network promotions. In order to achieve this, one of the commonly used marketing strategies is the use of celebrities for endorsement of products and services. Indeed, as consumers are bombarded with too many advertising messages, they simply tend to skip them by flipping through the magazines and newspapers or viewing TV. But even when they try to ignore the ads, the glamour of a celebrity seldom goes unnoticed (Giridhar, 2012).

Existing literature and anecdotal evidence shows that most of the fashion brands are endorsed by celebrities such as singers, sports-persons, young models, actors and actresses. There are many benefits for using such celebrities including: increasing awareness of the advert; capturing attention; and making adverts more memorable to consumers (Misra & Beatty, 1990; Tellis, 1998). It is argued that with celebrities, consumers may be willing to pay more attention to watch the advert featuring them. Also, some consumers believe that if a celebrity is willing to use a particular product/service, then it is likely that the product/service is of high quality (Ladkoo & Ismael, 2018; Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001).

Studies done in USA, Europe and Asia have concluded that celebrities who endorse fashion products should be attractive, trustworthy, possess expertise in the area and should be congruent with the products being endorsed (Misra & Beatty, 1990; Jackson, 2018; Knoll & Matthes, 2017). However, there is a dearth of knowledge on the attributes of celebrities and their effect on consumer purchase intention in Tanzania. This study investigates the attributes of celebrity endorsers and their influence on University students' intention to purchase fashion products in Iringa, Tanzania. It tries to understand the characteristics that celebrities should have for an effective endorsement of fashion products in Tanzania. Understanding the attributes of celebrities and their influence on consumer purchase intention will inform relevant marketers on appropriate choices of such celebrities for the adverts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Celebrity Endorsement

A celebrity endorser is a person who can grab public attention and arouse public interest. It has been argued that celebrities are more effective than other forms of endorsers. By getting famous people to represent a product or service, it

could gain a higher degree of attractiveness, believability, and recall when comparing with unknown endorsers (Kambitsis, Harahousou, Theodorakis, & Chatzibeis, 2002).

Studies on celebrity endorsement have focused mainly on two sets of factors characterizing celebrity product endorsement: the first is the source credibility stream of research, which is about source based factors such as celebrity attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness (Kahle & Homer, 1985, Jackson, 2018, Ladkoo & Ismael, 2018); and the second is the congruence studies, popularly known as 'match-up' studies, which is about management based factors such as celebrity-product congruence (Till & Busler, 1998, Jackson, 2018).

2.2. The Source Attractiveness and the Source Credibility Models

It has been proposed that the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement very much depends on the endorser's perceived attractiveness and perceived credibility, which is about trustworthiness and expertise (Knoll & Matthes, 2017). Erdogan (1999) indicated that a source perceived as highly credible is more effective and persuasive than a less credible one, as well as inducing a more positive change of attitude towards the brand or product and more changes in behaviour.

2.2.1. Attractiveness

Studies have revealed that attractive endorsers tend to be more effective in product promotion and grabbing consumers' attention (Till & Busler, 1998; Knoll & Matthes, 2017). A celebrity spokesperson's physical attractiveness has a positive impact on brand recall, attitude towards the brand, and purchasing intent (Jackson, 2018). However, marketers are cautioned that attractiveness is mainly significant for brands related to physical appearance (Kamins, 1990). Accordingly, we make the following hypothesis:

- H1: Celebrity endorser's attractiveness has a positive and significant contribution on University students' intention to purchase fashion products.

2.2.2. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the endorser's honesty, credibility, and integrity, as perceived by the target. Celebrity with high trustworthiness would be easier trusted by the customer (Ermeç, Catli, & Korkaz, 2014). In other words, if the communicator is perceived as highly trustworthy, the opinionated message would be considered as more persuasive and effective in producing attitude change. Akram, Nazam, Mubeen, & Rabbich (2017) argue that celebrities who have already endorsed several kinds of products would be viewed as less trustworthy than those who have endorsed only one product. Hence, we make the following hypothesis:

- H2: Celebrity endorser's trustworthiness has a positive and significant contribution on University students' intention to purchase fashion products.

2.2.3. Expertise

Expertise refers to the extent to which the endorser is perceived as a valid source of information (Akram, Nazam, Mubeen, & Rabbich, 2017). It is the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertion, a source of useful and creditable advice to the consumer. Consumers could be persuaded if the celebrity endorsers had professional product knowledge (Silvera & Austad, 2004). It is a matter of determining whether the advertising target perceives the endorser as having a certain level of experience, knowledge, and know-how that makes their recommendation of a product and/or brand credible. Jackson (2018) found that the perceived expertise of the spokesperson was consistently related to respondents' likelihood to purchase the product. Some researchers even believed that the endorser with expertise might be more potent than those who only have physical attractiveness (Till & Busler, 1998). We therefore make the following hypothesis:

- H3: Celebrity endorser's expertise has a positive and significant contribution on University students' intention to purchase fashion products.

2.3. Celebrity-Product Congruence

The congruence studies have delved into the similarities between the product or brand and the celebrity and are popularly known as the 'match-up' hypothesis. The match-up hypothesis states that for an advertisement featuring a celebrity to be effective on the consumers, there should be congruence or 'match-up' between the celebrity and the product advertised (Knoll & Matthes, 2017). Celebrity-product congruence commonly implies a convergence between the image conveyed by a celebrity and the characteristics of the product that he/she endorses (Misra & Beatty, 1990). It is argued that celebrity endorsement can be effective if the characteristics of the celebrity match with the attributes of the product.

In their study, Misra & Beatty (1990) concluded that the memorization rate of an advertisement increases when the celebrity and the brand are matched. Jackson (2018) supports the hypothesis stating that the message transmitted by the celebrity and the one transmitted by the brand must be congruent to insure a stronger persuasion. In this study, we make the following hypothesis:

- H4: A high degree of congruence between celebrity and product has a positive and significant contribution on University students' intention to purchase fashion products.

2.4. Conceptual Framework

The study assesses the influence of celebrity attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and product-celebrity congruence on consumers' intention to purchase fashion products in Tanzania. The model is given in Figure 1 below.

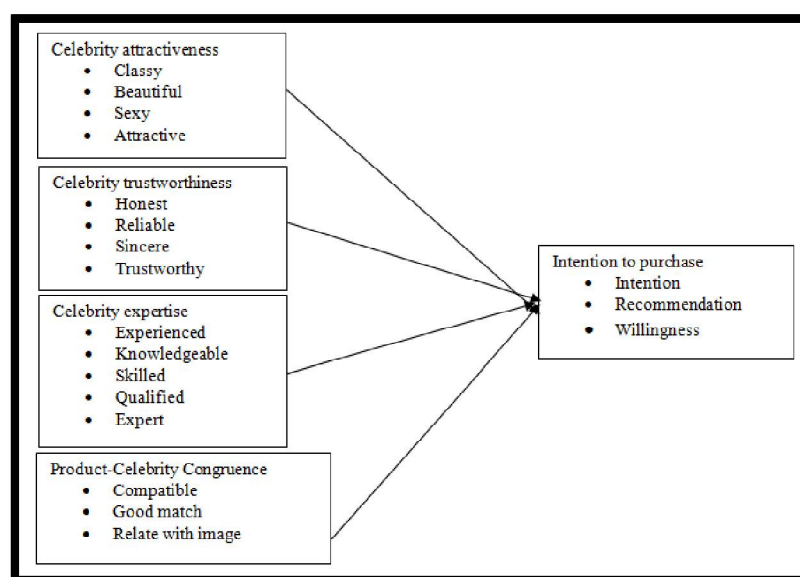


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework,
Adopted from (Ermeç, Catli, & Korkaz, 2014)

3. Study Methods and Process

3.1. Methods and Data

A field survey was conducted in 2021 to test the hypotheses. The data was collected from a sample of students of the University of Iringa. Students are not only exposed to the media, and thus to celebrity advertisements, but also at their age the celebrity becomes more of an idol or role model. Hence, no issues of data quality were expected as a result of using a sample of University students. A total of 160 questionnaires were distributed, of which 150 usable questionnaires were obtained from respondents. The questionnaire consisted of questions on demographic characteristics such as sex, age and year of study and six-point Likert scale items (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree) on celebrity attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, product-celebrity congruence and consumer purchase intention.

3.2. Analytical Techniques and Process

The following analyses were conducted; reliability test by using Cronbach's alpha test, Confirmatory Factor Analysis and regression analysis using Structural Equation Model. Cronbach's alpha test was conducted using SPSS 20 and the Structural Equation Model was conducted using AMOS 20. Before testing the way, the exogenous variables (celebrity attractiveness, celebrity trustworthiness, celebrity expertise, and product-celebrity congruence) influence the endogenous variable (consumer purchase intention), reliability and validity of the scale were tested.

To confirm the validity of the scale Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was run. Through the use of Structural Equation Model (SEM), CFA was conducted to determine how the model used fits the data collected. The path diagram (Figure 2) displays the standardized regression weights (factor loadings) for the construct and its observed variables. The squared multiple correlation coefficients describing the amount of variance the construct accounts for in the observed variables are also displayed in the path diagram. All the standardized regression weights (factor loadings) were above 0.60 indicating strong relationship between the construct and items measuring the construct.

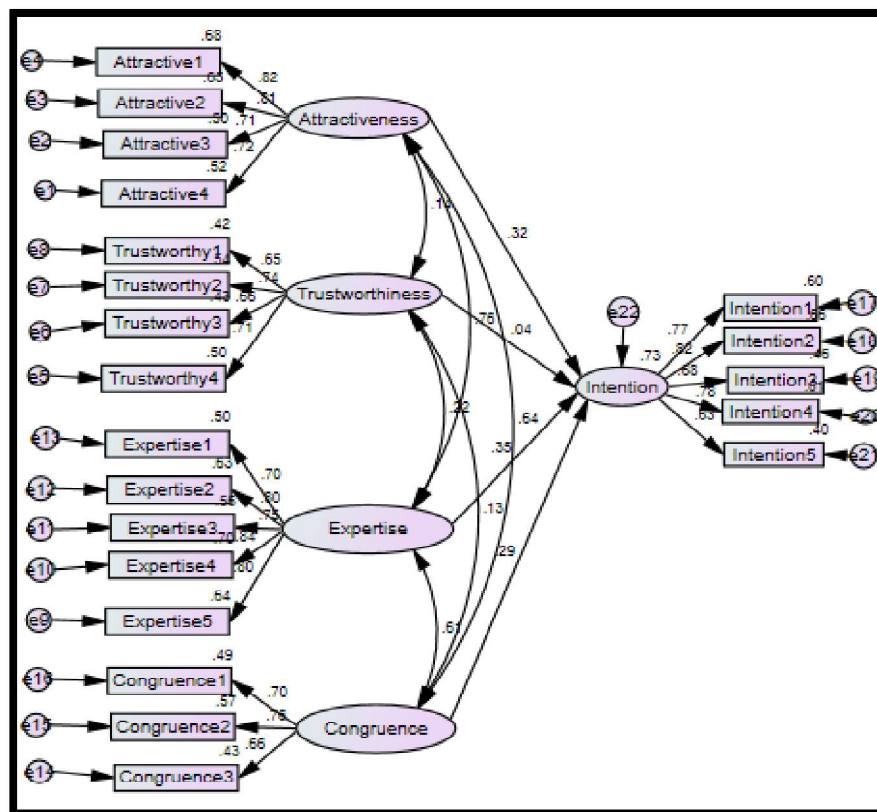


Figure 2: Path Diagram of Standardized Estimates

The validity of the data was tested both through convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity takes measures that are supposed to be measuring the same construct and shows that they are related. Conversely, discriminant validity shows that the two measures that are not supposed to be related are in fact, unrelated.

	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Congruence	Attractive	Trustworthy	Expertise
Congruence	0.618	0.338	0.758	0.838			
Attractive	0.720	0.570	0.861	0.637	0.859		
Trustworthy	0.690	0.281	0.786	-0.133	-0.142	0.615	
Expertise	0.525	0.346	0.892	0.611	0.755	-0.217	0.831

Table 1: Discriminant Validity and Convergent Validity

In order to test the convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) was calculated. It is recommended that, for convergent validity, AVE should be greater than 0.5 for all the constructs. This convergent validity test indicated that all the constructs had AVE of above 0.5. In order to test the discriminant validity, the maximum shared variance (MSV) was calculated. It is recommended that, for discriminant validity, MSV should be less than AVE. This discriminant validity test indicated that all the constructs had MSV that is less than its related AVE (Table 1).

After test for the validity of the data and fitness of the model, Cronbach's alpha (α) test was conducted to estimate the reliability of the predictor and outcome variables. Specifically, the internal consistency among the items measuring the afore-mentioned constructs of attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, congruence and consumer purchase intention was tested. The most agreeable limit is Cronbach's alpha 0.7. This reliability test indicated that all the constructs had Cronbach's α of above 0.7 (Table 2). Thus, the survey instrument had high internal consistency and therefore was considered as very reliable.

Construct	Number of Items	Alpha	Variable Type
Attractiveness	4	0.849	Predictor
Trustworthiness	4	0.781	Predictor
Expertise	5	0.883	Predictor
Celebrity-Product congruence	3	0.740	Predictor
Purchase Intention	3	0.854	Outcome

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Test Results

4. Results and Analysis

The number of male respondents was slightly higher (55.3%) than female respondents (44.7%) which corresponds to the sex composition of students at the University of Iringa whereby 58% of students are male and 42% are

female. Most of the respondents were from the age group of 18-28 years (84.7%) which corresponds to the overall age structure of the students at the University of Iringa. Respondents were evenly split between first year, second year and third year classes (Table 3).

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	83	55.3
	Female	67	44.7
Age	18-28 years	127	84.7
	29-39 years	23	15.3
Education Level	First year	47	31.3
	Second year	53	35.4
	Third year	50	33.3

Table 3: Sample characteristics

The fit indices (Table 4) show how the model fit the data collected. The fit indices obtained were as follows; $\chi^2 = 204.7$, $df=179$ ($p=0.000$), hence $\chi^2/df=1.14$ which is within the acceptable threshold level. The Comparison Fit Index (CFI = 0.983) is above 0.9; RMSEA (0.031) is less than 0.08 and NFI (0.877) all indicating that the model fits the data collected.

Fit Indices	Acceptable Threshold Level	Obtained Indices
Absolute Fit		
χ^2		204.7
Df		179
$\frac{\chi^2}{df}$	Less than 5	1.14
RMSEA	<0.08 = Good Fit	0.031
Incremental Fit		
NFI	>0.8	0.877
CFI	>0.9	0.983

Table 4: Fit indices

The results of the multiple regressions (Table 5) indicated that the four predictors explained 73.3 percent of the variation in consumer purchase intention ($R^2 = .733$). Attractiveness, expertise and congruence were found to make a positive, and statistically significant contribution to the prediction of consumer purchase intention ($\beta=0.384$, $p=0.009$), ($\beta=0.342$, $p=0.003$) and ($\beta=0.373$, $p=0.006$) respectively. Trustworthiness was not statistically significant ($\beta= 0.068$, $p=0.502$).

			β	S.E.	C.R.	P
Intention	<---	Attractiveness	.384	.147	2.615	.009
Intention	<---	Trustworthiness	.068	.101	.671	.502
Intention	<---	Expertise	.342	.115	2.983	.003
Intention	<---	Congruence	.373	.135	2.775	.006

Table 5: Unstandardized Regression Weights

Attractiveness, expertise and congruence were significant and positive meaning that the increase of these factors will lead to the increase of consumer purchase intention. Thus, hypotheses H1, H3 and H4 were supported.

Trustworthiness was not a significant factor for consumer purchase intention. Hence, hypothesis H2 was not supported. These findings on celebrity trustworthiness are contrary to what other studies have found in other countries (Ermece, Catli, & Korkaz, 2014; Akram, Nazam, Mubeen, & Rabbich, 2017). It might be because trust may be viewed differently in different contexts. Anecdotal evidence and our own observation show that celebrities in Tanzania are not consistent in the way they endorse products. Most of them are appearing in many adverts which sometimes even contradict each other.

5. Conclusions

The results of the hypotheses tests indicated that consumers' perceptions of the celebrity attractiveness, expertise and celebrity-product congruence positively contribute to the prediction of consumer purchase intentions. Celebrities need to be chosen carefully. Marketers may use the findings to select celebrity endorsers who will create positive purchase intentions from customers. This study uses a sample of 150 students from just one University, and hence cannot be generalized to the entire Tanzanian context.

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