



Beyond the Screen: Celebrities and their Influence on Consumer Purchase Intentions in Sri Lanka.

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ABSTRACT

The majority of researches have looked in to how celebrity endorsers affect consumers' propensity to buy. In respect to the fairness cream market in the Sri Lanka, this study enables marketers to gain a deeper understanding of celebrity endorsement and reveals the impact of celebrity endorsement indicators on purchase intention. The study is a descriptive one that looks at the Sri Lanka fairness cream market to see how endorser features affect purchase intention. A solid foundation for identifying each and every study variable was supplied by the literature review. Data were gathered from customers in the Sri Lanka using a structured questionnaire. For this study, the researcher connected 250 respondents. Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis were used to analyze the data and derive conclusions. It is found that the celebrity endorsements have an effect on consumers' intentions to buy cosmetics products mainly fairness cream, as well as on indications of celebrity endorsements including perceived credibility, perceived expertise, perceived trustworthiness, and perceived congruity have positive relationship with customers intention to buy.

Keywords: Celebrity endorsement, perceived attractiveness, perceived trustworthiness, perceived expertise, perceived congruity, purchases intention.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations must consistently introduce innovative products that align with customer trends, lifestyles, and expectations to remain competitive in today's dynamic and challenging business market (Sharma & Kumar, 2023). Advertising, as the most popular and effective means, is employed to enhance brand awareness and influence consumers to make product purchases (Bragg et al., 2016). The evolving business climate has necessitated marketers to employ diverse marketing methods to achieve organizational objectives. Celebrity endorsement has become a widely adopted marketing strategy by many organizations to fulfill their marketing goals (Aziz et al., 2013). Marketers invest substantial amounts annually in celebrity endorsement contracts, believing in the effectiveness of celebrities as spokespeople for their products or brands. Despite the high costs and associated risks, this advertising approach is prevalent in today's world. In contemporary advertising and communication management, celebrity endorsement has become an ubiquitous tool (Sudjawoto et al., 2023). Consumers aspire to emulate the lifestyles of their favorite celebrities, significantly impacting their purchasing behavior towards endorsed brands. This, in turn, enhances the market share of the endorsed brand and contributes to organizational profitability (Rivaroli et al., 2021). The presence of celebrities significantly influences customers in choosing such brands during shopping, as individuals seek to use products or brands endorsed by their beloved celebrities for a sense of

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resemblance (Madhusanka, 2017; Khan & Maheswari, 2023).

Over the years the use of celebrities in advertisements is a highly impact ful and desired technique, recognized for its ability to gain attention, desire, focus, and interest from the target market (Muruganantham and Kaliyamoorthy, 2009). When executed correctly, an advertising strategy that features credible celebrities as spokespersons positively shapes the image of the advertised brand, creating a favorable brand association that sets a company's products apart from competitors, as indicated in (Senavirathne & Kumaradeepan, 2020). Celebrity endorsement has witnessed an increase in recent years (Pradhan et al., 2016; Khan and Maheswari, 2023). The primary goal of incorporating celebrities in advertising is to generate publicity and draw attention to the brand, influencing consumer perceptions based on their knowledge of the endorsing celebrity (Spry et al., 2011).

In today's economy, advertisements stand out as a crucial medium for manipulating public opinion. The advertising plays a vital role in achieving business objectives for both advertising channels and the industry at large (Deepana and Vani, 2023). Companies strategically manipulate conscious and unconscious variables in consumers' minds through advertisements, aiming to persuade them to make purchases. This study is grounded in the premise that Sri Lankans are significantly influenced in their product choices and purchases by recalling advertisements (Madhusanka, 2017).

Globalization has attracted numerous foreign businesses to the Sri Lankan market. The majority of consumer goods in Sri Lanka are promoted by artists, film stars, singers, cricketers, and athletes. Businesses, civil society organizations, and government agencies in Sri Lanka invest substantial amounts in celebrity endorsements. Cosmetics, and especially fairness cream brands, are more likely to be purchased due to celebrity endorsements compared to other Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs). Firms selling fairness cream brands in Sri Lanka leverage both world-renowned celebrities and local celebrities for endorsements. Given these considerations, the researcher aims to explore "The impact of Celebrity endorsements through advertisements on the purchase intention of fairness cream consumers in Sri Lanka."

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Celebrity and Characteristics of a celebrities

Celebrities are recognized as highly influential communication models capable of significantly impacting customer purchase intent. Moreover, it is asserted that source-based elements are predominantly derived from the celebrity's image. These qualities possessed by endorsers can shape consumers' perceptions of the brand. Notably, credibility and attractiveness are highlighted as key components within the source-based factors, as suggested by Dissanayake and Ismail (2015). Marketers attach great importance to the credibility of celebrities in advertising. Advertisements featuring a credible celebrity can render customers less sensitive to the brand's costs, securing a prominent place for the brand in consumers' minds (Aziz et al., 2013).

A celebrity, typically an individual of widespread recognition, requires no introduction due to consistent media attention, maintaining a perpetual presence in headlines (Grewal et al., 2018). Scholars such as Erdogan (1999), Wiedmann and Mettenheim (2020), and Russell & Rasolofoarison (2017) posit that advertisers leverage celebrities because they possess the ability not only to capture consumers' attention but also to convey the appeals and favorable perceptions associated with the celebrity onto the brand itself.

Considerable research has extensively explored the characteristics of celebrities. While earlier studies tended to concentrate on either source credibility or source attractiveness, as observed in the work of Simmers, Damron-Martinez, and Haytko (2009), Ohanian (1990) introduced three fundamental attributes of celebrities: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. For the purpose of this research, scholars such as

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Hassan and Jamila (2014) have identified four key determinants of celebrity endorsement, namely attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and congruity.

Perceived trustworthiness, as defined by Cristina, Sergio, and Javier (2021), pertains to the extent to which consumers perceive the endorser as honest and possessing integrity. In the context of celebrity trustworthiness, it can be characterized as the perceived "willingness to make valid assertions" by the celebrity. According to the source credibility model, the attribute of trustworthiness plays a pivotal role in influencing consumers' attitudinal changes (Sudjawoto, et al., 2023).

A celebrity endorser perceived as trustworthy is more likely to impact consumers' views and behavioral intentions, exerting greater persuasive power. Consequently, the trustworthiness of a celebrity is a critical element, as consumers are more susceptible to influence by someone they trust. Moreover, studies have demonstrated that a celebrity's trustworthiness positively affects consumer perceptions and purchase intent (Veen and Song, 2014).

Perceived attractiveness, as explained by (Wiedmann and Mettenheim, 2020), refers to the degree to which a person's physical traits are deemed visually appealing. Beyond physical attributes, other authors, such as Kumar & Ramana (2019), assert that the endorser's attractiveness extends to encompass a desirable lifestyle and intellectual abilities. Research on source attractiveness suggests that physically attractive celebrities have a positive impact on consumer behavior and attitudes compared to less attractive counterparts. Additionally, the physical attractiveness of celebrity endorsers has been found to positively influence consumers' purchase intentions (Cristina, Sergio, and Javier, 2021). Hussain (2020) further argue that the attractiveness of the communication source enhances the impact of the endorser's conveyed message, considering physical characteristics such as beauty, elegance, and class.

Perceived expertise, according to Grewal et al., (2018), denotes an individual's level of knowledge and can be defined in terms of experience, understanding, and problem-solving skills in a specific field. Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) define endorser expertise as the perceived knowledge, comprehension, and applicable abilities of the endorser. Celebrity expertise is derived from their ability to provide information based on experience, aptitude, or training. The more experienced a celebrity is, the more effective they are perceived to be. Negative advertising may not affect a celebrity's expertise but can have an adverse impact on credibility and believability (Siddiqui & Ahmed, 2018). Considering an endorser's expertise implies their capability to make accurate assertions (Dissanayaka et al., 2017).

Perceived congruity, as identified by Chung and Cho (2017), manifests when the relevant traits of the spokesperson (endorser) align with the relevant attributes of the brand or endorsed product. This congruence is crucial in generating positive feedback, as it signifies that the product is genuinely used or endorsed by the celebrity. Recognizing the celebrity as a fitting match for the product is vital to avoid wasteful spending, as observed in the study on brand-celebrity matching by Pradhan et al., (2016). Consumers associate the brand with their personality, peers, family, or celebrities, emphasizing the importance of congruence in brand endorsements.

Purchase Intention

Numerous studies have explained the connection between customer attitudes towards advertising and their intention to make a purchaseHassan & Jamila, (2014)). The primary measure of customers' behavioral intention often revolves around their inclination to make a purchase (Pradhan et al., 2016). However, as noted by Schimmelpfennig (2020), even in instances where a buyer holds a highly favorable sentiment towards a particular brand, they frequently may not translate this positive attitude into a concrete purchase intention. In a similar vein, the absence of a specific intention to make a purchase alongside a positive attitude diminishes the likelihood of an actual purchase. Consequently, consumer behavior does not



necessarily dictate that customers will execute the act of purchasing solely based on their behavioral inclination; rather, a product is only purchased when there is a genuine desire to make the purchase.

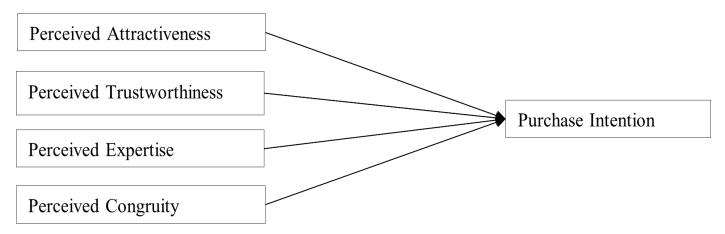
METHODOLOGY

Using a cross-sectional research approach, data is collected at a single point in time to gain insights into consumer perceptions. Primary data is gathered through surveys distributed among consumers in Sri Lanka, while secondary data is derived from academic literature, industry reports, and relevant studies to provide a solid theoretical foundation. The target population includes diverse consumers across Sri Lanka, and a sample is selected using a convenient sampling technique and data were collected using online questionnaires. For analysis, the SPSS software is utilized, employing statistical techniques like regression analysis and correlation to uncover patterns and relationships between celebrity endorsement factors and consumer purchase intentions. This comprehensive and ethical methodology aims to reveal valuable insights into how celebrity endorsers impact consumer behavior in the Sri Lankan market.

Conceptual Framework

(Hassana and Jamila, 2014) constructed their model relying on the groundwork laid by Ohanian (1990). In this model, Hassana and Jamila exclusively incorporated four celebrity endorsement indicators. The research framework applied in this study is aligned with Hassana and Jamila's established research model.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Adapted and modified from (Hassan and Jamila, 2014)

The proposed hypotheses in this study are grounded in established theories and empirical evidence within the field of marketing and consumer behavior. The attractiveness hypothesis posits that consumers are likely to be positively influenced by the physical appeal of celebrity endorsers, as previous research by Priyankara et al., (2017) and Cristina, Sergio, and Javier (2021) has shown that visual attractiveness plays a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes. Trustworthiness, as conceptualized by Cristina, Sergio, and Javier (2021), is crucial in building a credible relationship between the celebrity endorser and the consumer, leading to a positive impact on purchase intentions. The expertise hypothesis is drawn from Hussain (2020) definition of endorser expertise, suggesting that consumers are more inclined to trust and act on the recommendations of endorsers perceived to have relevant knowledge and abilities. Lastly, the congruity hypothesis is informed by the work of Hassan & Jamila (2014), emphasizing that a strong alignment between the celebrity endorser and the endorsed product positively influences consumer perceptions and, consequently, purchase intentions. By aligning these hypotheses with existing literature, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics between celebrity endorsers and consumer purchase intentions.

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Based on the above conceptual framework, the following hypotheses were developed

H₁: There is a significant positive relationship between the perceived attractiveness of the endorsement message and consumer purchase intention.

H₂: There is a significant positive relationship between the perceived trustworthiness of the endorsement message and consumer purchase intention.

H₃: There is a significant positive relationship between the perceived expertise conveyed in the endorsement message and consumer purchase intention.

H₄: There is a significant positive relationship between the perceived congruity between the endorsement message and consumer purchase intention.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Characteristics of Respondents

All individuals selected as survey participants and designated as respondents demonstrated a considerable level of awareness regarding celebrity endorsements in advertisements. Out of the total 250 respondents, approximately 40% were male, while 60% were female. A predominant portion of the respondents, constituting 40% of the overall sample, fell within the average age range of 23-28 years. Furthermore, the majority of participants belonged to the income group below Rs. 50,000, with 110 respondents representing 44% of the total. Additionally, a significant portion, accounting for 78.4% of respondents, held a graduate-level education. In terms of the profession associated with fairness cream brands, a majority fell under the "other" category, encompassing 58.4% or 146 respondents.

Validity

The extent to which a research instrument accurately gauges its intended measurements is referred to as the validity of the tool (Hair et al., 1989). Validity reflects the level of objectivity in the research findings. Accordingly, the deployment of a research tool, such as a questionnaire, becomes essential for the precise quantification of the study's concepts (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This instrument comprehensively addresses the experimental concept and assesses whether the outcomes align with all criteria stipulated by the scientific research methodology (Hair et al., 1989).

Table 4.1: validity

KMO	Bartlett's test of sphericity	Average variance explained (AVE)
>.5	Sig < 0.5	> .5

(Source: Sekeran & Bougue, 2013)

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values, indicative of the suitability of the data for factor analysis, for the variables perceived attractiveness (0.952), perceived trustworthiness (0.808), perceived expertise (0.789), perceived congruity (0.893), and purchase intention (0.741) are notably high. These values suggest that the dataset possesses a high degree of adequacy for extracting meaningful patterns and relationships among the specified variables.

Additionally, the significance values for all these variables are reported as 0.000. This extremely low p-

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume VIII Issue III March 2024



value (0.000) signifies the statistical significance of each variable. In practical terms, this implies that the observed relationships among Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Congruity, and Purchase Intention are highly unlikely to be mere chance occurrences. The low significance values affirm the strength of the collected data, strengthening the credibility of conclusions drawn from the analysis of these variables.

Reliability Analysis for Inter-item Consistency

As per Hair et al., (1989), reliability pertains to the consistency of research findings and is characterized as a measurement producing consistent results with repeated values). It assesses a study's dependability, precision, reproducibility, and uniformity. The two primary methodologies for appraising the consistency of an instrument involve the split-half method and the inter-item consistency method. Cronbach's Alpha measures an instrument's inter item consistency, gauging the positive correlation among its items. The closer Cronbach's alpha is to 1, the higher the internal consistency reliability (Sekeran and Bougue, 2013).

Based on the analysis of data, the Cronbach's Alpha values for the variables perceived attractiveness (0.926), perceived trustworthiness (0.867), perceived expertise (0.940), perceived congruity (0.815), and Purchase Intention (0.842) signify high internal consistency reliability. Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of how well the items within each variable positively correlate with one another. In this context, the values approaching 1 indicate a strong internal consistency, suggesting that the items within each variable are reliably measuring the same underlying construct. Furthermore, the significance values for all these variables are reported as 0.000. This extremely low p-value (0.000) emphasizes the statistical significance of each variable.

Correlation Analysis

The magnitude of the relationship between two variables is determined through the correlation coefficient method, which additionally discerns whether a positive or negative association exists between two intervals or a variable. To investigate the correlation between celebrity endorsement indicators and consumer purchase intention of fairness cream brands, a correlation analysis was executed. A hypothesis, formulated based on a comprehensive review of literature and a conceptual framework, aimed to evaluate the association between independent and dependent variables. Consequently, correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationships proposed in the hypothesis for each set of independent and dependent variables separately.

Table 4.2: Correlation Analysis Variable

Correlations	Perceived	Perceived	Perceived	Perceived
Correlations	Attractiveness	Trustworthiness	1	Congruity
Purchase intention	0.782**	0.757**	0.860**	0.812**

Source: (Survey Data, 2022)

The correlation values between perceived attractiveness, perceived trustworthiness, perceived expertise, perceived congruity, and purchase intention are noteworthy, all showing statistical significance at the 0.000 level. Perceived attractiveness demonstrates a strong positive correlation of 0.782 with Purchase Intention. This implies that as consumers perceive a celebrity endorser as more attractive, their intention to purchase the endorsed product increases significantly. Results of perceived trustworthiness suggests that consumers are more inclined to purchase a product when they perceive the celebrity endorser as trustworthy. The statistical significance at the 0.000 level emphasizes the reliability of this association. Further, perceived expertise implies that consumers are more likely to consider purchasing a product when they perceive the celebrity endorser as possessing expertise in the relevant domain. Finally, perceived congruity indicates that

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume VIII Issue III March 2024



when consumers perceive a congruence between the celebrity endorser and the endorsed product, their intention to purchase significantly increases.

Hypothesis Testing

Investigating the influence of celebrities on the purchase intention of fairness cream brands in Sri Lanka aligns with the primary objective of this research. The study has identified four specific goals intended to be achieved. To address these objectives, four hypotheses were formulated and subsequently tested. The examined hypotheses are as follows:

Table 4.3: Hypothesis testing result

	Hypothesis	B (Coefficients)	Sig.	Result
Perceived Attractiveness	H ₁	0.158	0.007	Accepted
Perceived Trustworthiness	H_2	0.520	0.000	Accepted
Perceived Expertise	Н3	0.095	0.342	Rejected
Perceived Congruity	H_{4}	0.198	0.023	Accepted

(Source: Survey data, 2022)

The significance level (P value) serves as a criterion to determine the strength of the relationship between variables. A P value greater than 0.05 is considered indicative of an insignificant relationship, while a P value lower than 0.05 suggests a significant relationship. In the context of all hypotheses tested, involving perceived attractiveness, perceived trustworthiness, and perceived congruity, the P values were found to be lower than 0.05. Consequently, it can be inferred that there is a discernible impact of celebrity endorsement on the purchase intention of fairness cream brands in Sri Lanka.

However, when considering the significance value of perceived expertise, which is noted as 0.342 and exceeds the 0.05 threshold, the relationship between expertise and consumer purchase intention is identified as insignificant. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no substantial effect of expertise on the purchase intention of fairness cream brands in Sri Lanka, based on the results of hypothesis testing.

CONCLUSIONS

This research study is primarily aimed at addressing the question, "How does celebrity endorsement influence the purchase intentions of fairness cream consumers in Sri Lanka?" The study seeks to identify the specific aspects of the proposed model that are more likely to exert an impact on the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention in Sri Lanka. The study population consisted of 250 respondents, representing fairness cream consumers in Sri Lanka. The primary goal was to examine the influence of celebrity endorsements on consumers' purchase intentions in the Sri Lankan context.

In this study, independent variables namely perceived attractiveness, perceived trustworthiness, perceived expertise, and perceived congruity were selected. The dependent variable, purchase intention, was identified based on prior research. The research derived four hypotheses from the existing literature, which were evaluated using correlation and regression analyses. Additionally, four hypotheses were formulated to achieve the study's objectives. Both simple and multiple regression analyses were employed, utilizing the four independent variables and consumer intention to purchase as the dependent variable.

Correlation analysis was utilized to establish the relationship between the four independent variables and the dependent variable. In the Sri Lankan context, customer purchase intentions were found to have a positive

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume VIII Issue III March 2024



correlation with perceived attractiveness, perceived trustworthiness, and perceived congruity, while perceived expertise exhibited a weaker positive correlation with consumer purchase intentions.

Celebrity endorsements, involving well-known individuals, provide brands with an effective means to appeal to a broad audience (Deepana and Vani, 2023). Such endorsements contribute to increased brand attractiveness and believability among the general public (Sudjawoto et al., 2023). Perceived trustworthiness was identified as the most influential factor in a consumer's decision to purchase fairness cream brands endorsed by celebrities (Khan and Maheswari, 2023). The study highlights the considerable impact that celebrity endorsements can have on consumer perceptions and purchasing behavior, especially in a context like Sri Lanka

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The outcomes of this study bear significant implications for marketing professionals, especially those engaged in the promotion of fairness cream brands or similar products. In the realm of celebrity endorsements, marketing practitioners are advised to make strategic choices based on the trustworthiness and attractiveness of celebrities. The research underscores the substantial influence of trustworthiness on consumer purchase intentions. Thus, aligning with trustworthy celebrities in advertising endeavors has the potential to augment the efficacy of marketing strategies. Considering the profound impact of trustworthiness on consumer purchase intentions, marketers are encouraged to prioritize campaigns that accentuate the trustworthy image of both the celebrity endorser and the endorsed fairness cream brand. Additionally, leveraging the attractiveness of celebrities can further amplify the overall appeal of the product.

It is essential to recognize that the research findings are specific to the Sri Lankan market. Therefore, marketing practitioners should meticulously consider the cultural nuances and preferences of the local audience. A profound understanding of the cultural context aids in the selection of celebrities who resonate well with the target demographic and align with their values. Maintaining consistency in the messaging and portrayal of the celebrity endorser is paramount. Marketing campaigns should ensure that the chosen celebrity consistently embodies the desired image, thereby reinforcing trustworthiness and attractiveness over time. Moreover, the research highlights the importance of aligning the endorsed product with the celebrity's image. Marketing professionals should dedicate time and effort to ensuring that the celebrity's persona seamlessly aligns with the attributes of the fairness cream brand, fostering a sense of congruity that resonates with consumers. Although expertise did not emerge as a significant factor in the Sri Lankan context, marketers are urged to perpetually monitor and assess the impact of celebrity expertise in different markets. The significance of this dimension may fluctuate, and remaining attuned to evolving consumer preferences is imperative for effective marketing strategies.

DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Expanding upon the present research findings, there are several promising avenues for future exploration in the realm of celebrity endorsements and consumer behavior within the Sri Lankan context. Comparative studies should be conducted to scrutinize the influence of celebrity endorsements on consumer purchase intentions in Sri Lanka relative to other cultures or regions. This comparative analysis aims to unveil cultural nuances in these relationships, providing valuable insights for marketers to customize strategies effectively. To comprehend the enduring effects of celebrity endorsements on consumer behavior, a longitudinal study is recommended. This approach would enable an examination of how consumer perceptions and purchase intentions evolve over an extended period following exposure to fairness cream brands endorsed by celebrities. Distinguishing between various categories of celebrities, such as actors, athletes, and influencers, is crucial for understanding their distinct impacts on consumer behavior. This

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume VIII Issue III March 2024



categorization can guide marketers in selecting the most suitable endorsers tailored to the nature of their products.

Given the escalating influence of digital platforms and social media, a thorough investigation into the effects of online celebrity endorsements in Sri Lanka is warranted. This inquiry should explore how influencers on platforms like Instagram or YouTube shape consumer perceptions and influence purchase intentions. A comprehensive exploration of the repercussions of negative incidents involving celebrity endorsers, such as scandals or controversies, on consumer perceptions and brand credibility is essential. This line of inquiry can shed light on the resilience or susceptibility of celebrity endorsements amidst adverse events. An investigation into potential variations in responses to celebrity endorsements among diverse consumer segments in Sri Lanka is recommended. Understanding the distinct preferences and perceptions of different consumer groups can empower marketers to tailor their strategies effectively, maximizing impact within varied demographic segments.

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