Celebrity Endorsement and Consumer Purchase Intentions

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Abstract

Due to the cluttering of advertisements, it has become extremely difficult for marketers to get the attention of consumers. Marketers across the world are now relying on celebrity endorsements. Advertising messages endorsed by celebrities provide a higher degree of appeal, attention and recall than those endorsed by non-celebrities. Many earlier studies have measured the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and there is limited evidence on the effect of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention. Thus, the aim of this study is to measure the effect of credibility, attractiveness and congruency on purchase intention. The sample size for this study was 150 and the sampling approach was purposive. The study found that the strongest predictor of purchase intention was congruency followed by credibility and attractiveness.

Keywords: Celebrity endorsement, Celebrity attractiveness, Consumer purchase intention.

Introduction

Consumers are exposed to stimuli every day due to which it has become extremely difficult for marketers to get consumers attention and create unique value proposition (Thomson, 2006). Celebrity endorsement can help firms create a positive attitude towards brands and purchase intentions (Ranjbarian, Shekarchizade, & Momeni, 2010). Thus, marketers are using celebrity endorsement more extensively thereby increasing the overall costs of marketing (Sabir, Safdar, Junaid, Naima Khurshid, & Shahnawaz, 2014). Media explosion in recent years have projected and promoted celebrities to such

an extent that they are being followed across the world. This has also further enhanced their demand (Choi & Rifon, 2007).

Both firms and consumers benefit from celebrity endorsement strategy. Consumers watching their idols in advertisements get a feeling of security and association. They believe that since their idols have recommended the brands/products therefore they will be of a high quality (Sabir et al., 2014). Consumers have a tendency to associate themselves with the celebrity; therefore, buying those products make them feel like them. From a marketing perspective, this creates brand

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awareness and brand personality (Mikuláš & Světlík, 2016). Multiple endorsements dilute the image of the endorsers. If a celebrity loses his image or his status, these could adversely affect the products or brands. Furthermore, celebrities might become scandalous. In these situations, companies have two options. They could formally announce their disassociation with celebrity or hope that the brand will not affected negatively due to the changing image of the celebrity (Jamil & Rameez ul Hassan, 2014). Hence, the objective of the study is to measure the effects of attractiveness, credibility and congruency on purchase intention.

Literature Review

Celebrity Endorsement

An individual with a high public recognition and the one who uses the same by appearing in advertisements to influence consumer attitude towards a brand is known as a celebrity endorser (Ranjbarian et al., 2010). Studies have validated that these endorsements enhance both the credibility of commercials and attitude towards brands including purchase intention (Zahaf & Anderson, 2008). Factors that consumers like to see in the celebrity are authenticity, proficiency and cordiality (Choi & Rifon, 2007).

Celebrity endorsements are used widely across the globe. Products and brands are now being endorsed by various celebrities such as athletes, film actors and pop singers (Byberg, Hansen, & Basic, 2015). In this context Nike, Gap and Pepsi have been successful by employing Tiger Woods, Sarah

Jessica Parker and Madonna for endorsing their products (Edwards, 2013).

Studies have found that celebrity endorsements are an effective tool for enhancing brand image and creating differentiation in local and international markets (Roll, 2015a, 2015b). However, for celebrity endorsements to be effective it is necessary to have a synergy between celebrity image and brand image (McCracken, 1989). Thus, it could be concluded that if the right criteria is used for selecting endorsers, their endorsements will play a significant role in creating awareness, increasing sales and creating differentiation (Jamil & Rameez ul Hassan, 2014; Mikuláš & Světlík, 2016; Roll, 2015b)

Theoretical Grounding

The conceptual framework for this study comprises of three independent variables, which are credibility (truthfulness, and expertise), attractiveness, and congruence. The dependent variable is purchase intention. The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1, and the literature support for the hypothesized relationships is discussed in the subsequent sections.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
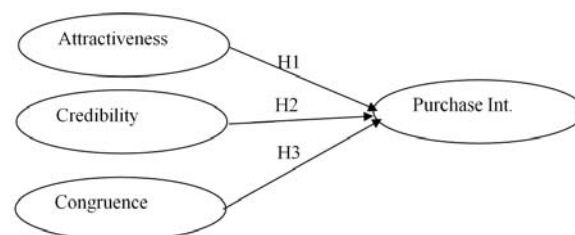
Attractiveness and Purchase Intention

The attractiveness of the celebrity is a prime factor in the context of celebrity endorsement (Rifon, Jiang, & Kim, 2016). Attractiveness includes characteristics like facial features and other physical attributes (Mikuláš & Světlík, 2016). Research has found that attractive endorsers have a strong impact on brand image than non-attractive endorsers (Wei & Lu, 2013). Attractive models are also more effective in changing consumers attitude towards products, especially if the products are related to enhancing attractiveness (McCabe, Vail III, Arndt, & Goldenberg, 2014). People tend to relate product attributes to the attractiveness of the celebrity (Malik & Sudhakar, 2014). Attractive as compared to non-attractive celebrities receive a positive response from consumers. Attractive endorsers are considered more reliable, trustworthy and credible by people (Erdogan, 1999).

Marketers also emphasize on using attractive models in both print and electronic media. Some studies have revealed that marketers while selecting celebrities give more preference to physical attractiveness and less to their communication skills (Abirami & Krishnan, 2015a). Several studies have found that celebrity attractiveness has a positive influence on consumer attitude towards purchase intention (Abdurrahman & Osman, 2017; Chang, O'Boyle, Anderson, & Suttikun, 2016; Ong & Ong, 2015). Thus, it has been hypothesized that:

H_1: Celebrity attractiveness has a positive impact on consumers purchase intention.

Credibility and Purchase Intention

The credibility of the spokesperson in an advertisement plays a significant role in convincing the audience to consider the product for use. Audience pays attention to the spokesperson whom they like, know, and have expertise on the product which a celebrity has endorsed (Hung, 2014). Consumer perception of the credibility of endorsers depends on expertise, knowledge and trust (Mikuláš & Světlík, 2016). Credibility has both cognitive and positive effects on intention to purchase. Additionally, trust is also an aspect of credibility which helps in reducing the adverse effects of a brand. The credibility of the endorsers further increase if they happen to have the same ethnicity, personality of the target group (Jamil & Rameez ul Hassan, 2014).

Source credibility not only induces trial but also helps in forming a long term relationship with the customers (Hung, 2014). The two components of credibility, that is, expertise and trust positively affect brand attitude that leads to a favorable purchase intention (Mikuláš & Světlík, 2016). Expertise also has a strong influence on attitude towards products and brands. Additionally, if endorsers have expertise and credibility the impact will be even stronger on attitude towards purchase intention. Several studies have validated the positive effect of source credibility on purchase intention (Hung, 2014; Jamil & Rameez ul Hassan, 2014; Mikuláš & Světlík, 2016). Thus, it has been hypothesized:

H_2: Celebrity credibility has a positive impact on consumers purchase intention.

Product Match-up and Purchase Intention

Product congruency also known as product match-up refers to synergy between celebrity personality and attributes of the endorsed brands. The greater the synergy between the two the higher will be the effectiveness of communicated messages (Erdogan, 1999; Erdogan & Baker, 1999).

The congruency between the messages and brands helps in generating positive consumer responses that leads to a positive brand image and increases purchase intention. Consumers must decode the messages in such a manner that they are able to see a link between the brand and the celebrity. Otherwise, messages will become ineffective and confusing for the consumer (Jamil & Rameez ul Hassan, 2014).

Several studies have found that consumers perceived match-up between a celebrity and a brand positively affects attitude towards purchase intention (Abirami & Krishnan, 2015b; Escalas & Bettman, 2015; Mishra, Roy, & Bailey, 2015; Wright, 2016). Thus, it has been hypothesized that:

H_3: Congruency between celebrity characteristics and product features has a positive impact on purchase intention.

Methodology

Procedure:

Students of two private business schools were selected for survey purposes. These students in classroom environment were first shown the Q-mobile advertisement endorsed by Pakistani cricketer Shahid Afridi. Subsequently, the questionnaire was disturbed to them for collecting the data. Student participation in the survey was on a voluntarily basis. They were also informed that their identities would remain confidential.

Population

The population of this study are the students attending business schools in Karachi. The reason for selecting this population is that they are well versed with the terminologies used in this study.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study is 150 which is more than 120 suggested for a framework comprising of four variables (Sekaran, 2006). Moreover, the study adopted the purposive sampling technique.

Scale and Measure

The questionnaire used in this study has two sections. Section 1 comprises of six questions related to demographics. Section 2 has 17 questions adopted from established scales. The questions are based on the five point Likert scale. The summary of the adopted constructs is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Constructs		
Construct (Items)	Authors	Reliability
Attractiveness (5)	(Ohanian, 1990)	.76 to .83
Credibility (5)	(Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999)	.75 to 84
Congruence (4)	(Erdogan, et. al., 2001)	76 to 89
Pur. Intention (3)	(Dodds, et. al., 1991)	.75 to .85

Data Analysis

After coding the data, preliminary tests for normality, reliability and validity were conducted. The hypothesized model was tested through multiple regression and subsequently each hypothesis was tested through simple regression.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Univariate normality of the constructs was examined through skewness and kurtosis analyses. Table 2 depicts the descriptive statistics.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics				
Construct	Mean	Std. Dev.[1]	Sk.[2]	Kr.[3]
Attractiveness	4.73	1.38	-.45	-.38
Trustworthiness	4.19	1.45	-.28	-.39
Expertise	4.17	1.49	-.25	-.65
Congruence	4.12	1.04	.23	.37
Pur. Intention	3.59	1.68	-.18	-1.04

1. Std. Deviation, 2. Skewness, 3. Kurtosis

Table 2 shows that attractiveness (M= 4.73, SD= 1.38) has the highest Skewness (-0.45) followed by trustworthiness (M= 4.19, SD= 1.45), expertise (M=4.23, SD= 1.56), congruence (M=4.12, SD=1.04) and purchase intention (M=3.59, SD=1.68). On the other hand, the highest Kurtosis (-1.04) is for purchase intention (M=3.59, SD=1.68), and the lowest kurtosis (.37) is for congruence (M=4.12, SD=1.04). All the Skewness and Kurtosis values are within the desired range, therefore, it can be inferred that the constructs do not violate the conditions for univariate normality (Bryman, 2015).

Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of all constructs was investigated through Cronbach's alpha. The summarized results are presented in Table 3:

Table 2.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis			
	Alpha[1]	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attractiveness	0.82	4.73	1.38
Trustworthiness	0.88	4.19	1.45
Expertise	0.87	4.17	1.49
Congruence	0.65	4.12	1.04
Purchase Int.	0.64	3.59	1.68

1. Cronbach's Alpha

Table 3 shows that reliability of trustworthiness (α=0.88, M=4.19, SD=1.45) is highest, followed very closely by expertise (α=0.86, M=4.17, SD=1.49), attractiveness (α=0.82, M=4.73, SD=1.38), congruence (α=0.65, M=4.12, SD=1.04) and purchase intention (α=0.64, M=3.59, SD=1.68). All the calculated values of Cronbach's alpha are greater than 0.60 which confirms the internal consistency of the constructs (Bryman, 2015).

Bivariate Correlations

To examine multi-collinearity, distinctiveness and uniqueness of the adopted constructs bivariate correlations

analysis was carried out. Table 4 shows the bivariate correlations.

Table 4: Bivariate Correlations					
Construct	1	2	3	4	5
Attr.[1]	1				
Trw.[2]	0.56	1			
Exp.[3]	0.50	0.55	1		
Cong.[4]	0.48	0.50	0.51	1	
Pur. Int.[5]	0.30	0.33	0.31	0.51	1

1. Attractiveness, 2. Trustworthiness, 3. Expertise, 4. Congruence, 5. Purchase Int.

Table 4 shows that the correlation (r=.56) was highest between trustworthiness and attractiveness. On the other hand, the lowest correlation (r=.30) was between purchase intention and attractiveness. Since each of the relationships ranged between 0.30 to 0.90, therefore it confirms that the constructs have no issue of uniqueness, distinctiveness and multi-collinearity (Bryman, 2015).

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was carried out through Varimax Rotation to ascertain the theoretical relationships of the indicator variables with the constructs. Table 5 shows the results.

Table 5: EFA Results				
	KMO[1]	BST[2]	VE[3]	Items
Attractiveness	0.73	163.75	65.13	4
Trustworthiness	0.84	305.29	69.10	5
Expertise	0.82	307.32	68.40	5
Congruence	0.61	83.489	65.59	5
Purchase Intention	0.64	74.44	64.55	4

1. Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Test, 2. Bartlett's Sphericity Test (P<0.05), 3. Variance Explained

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) for all the constructs is greater than 0.6, and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity for all the constructs were significant at the 5% level of significance. Additionally, the total variance explained is at least 0.60 (Bryman, 2015) confirming the theoretical relationships of the indicator variables and constructs.

Construct Validity

Construct validity was ascertained through convergent and discriminate validity analyses (Kline, 2010) which are discussed in the following sections:

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity measures the convergence of each item in relation to the construct. Table 6 shows the summarized results.

Table 6: Convergent Validity				
	Mean	Std. Dev	VE[1]	Reliability
Attractiveness	4.73	1.38	65.13	.82
Trustworthiness	4.19	1.45	69.10	.88
Expertise	4.17	1.49	68.41	.87
Congruence	4.12	1.04	65.59	.65
Purchase Intention	3.59	1.68	64.33	.64

1. Variance Explained

Table 6 shows that the reliability of each construct was greater than .65 and variance explained for each factor is greater than .60. The analysis confirms that the construct fulfills the requirement of convergent validity (Bryman, 2015).

Discriminant Validity

Uniqueness and distinctiveness of the adopted constructs was examined through discriminant validity analysis. The results are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Discriminant Validity					
Constructs	1	2	3	4	5
Attractiveness	0.81				
Trustworthiness	0.31	0.83			
Expertise	0.25	0.30	0.83		
Congruence	0.23	0.25	0.26	0.81	
Purchase Int.	0.09	0.11	0.10	0.26	0.80

Since the square root of variance-explained (diagonal line) is greater than the square of each pair of correlation, it confirms that the data fulfills the requirement of discriminant validity.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The effect of independent variables on the dependent variable was investigated through multiple regression analysis. The summarized results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Multiple Regression Results			
Model	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		.993	.323
Attractiveness	-.077	-.723	.471
Trustworthiness	.103	.879	.382
Expertise	.098	.927	.356
Congruence	.367	3.274	.001

Dependent variable: Purchase Intention ($R^2 = 0.210$, $F (4, 150) = 7.164$, $P < 0.05$)

The results indicate that the predictors variables explain 21.2% of the variance in the dependent variable (R2=0.210). Although the overall model fitted well, the effect of only congruence was significant.

Hypothesis 1

The hypothesis attractiveness positively affects purchase intention was tested through simple regression. The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Regression Results

	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		4.337	.000
Attractiveness	.201	2.160	.000

Dependent variable is Purchase Intention, (R^2=0.04, F (1,112) =4.666, p<.05)

The results show that attractiveness explains 12% of the variance toward purchase intention (R^2=0.12, F (1,150) =16.64, p<.05). Additionally, attractiveness has a statistically significant positive effect on purchase intention.

Hypothesis 2

The hypothesis credibility positively effects purchase intention was tested through simple regression. The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Regression Results

	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		3.184	.002
Credibility	.361	4.080	.000

Dependent variable is Purchase Intention (R^2=0.12, F (1,150) =16.64, p<.05)

The results shows that credibility explains 12% of the variance in purchase intention (R^2=0.12, F (1,150) =16.64, p<.05). Additionally, credibility has a statistically significant positive effect on purchase intention.

Hypothesis 3

The hypothesis congruency positively affects purchase intention was tested through simple regression. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Regression Results

	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		1.152	.252
Congruency	.441	5.163	.000

Dependent variable is Purchase Intention, (R^2=0.194, F (1,150) =26.66, p<.05)

The results show that congruency explains 19.4% of the variance toward purchase intention (R^2=.194, F (1,150) =26.66, p<.05). Additionally, congruency has a statistically significant positive effect on purchase intention.

Discussion of Results

The results and their relevance to earlier literature is discussed in the following sections

Hypothesis 1

The results presented in Table 9 suggests that attractiveness has a positive effect on purchase intention. Prior research indicates that attractive celebrity endorsers have a greater impact on brand image than non-attractive endorsers (Wei & Lu, 2013). Attractive models are also more effective in changing consumers attitude towards products and especially if the products are related with physical beauty (McCabe et al., 2014). Attractive celebrities are able to receive positive attitude from consumers compared to less attractive individuals. Attractive endorsers are considered more

reliable, trustworthy and credible by people (Erdogan, 1999). Hence, marketers give emphasis to using attractive models in both print and electronic media. Several studies found that the celebrity attractiveness positively influences consumer attitude towards purchase intention (Abdurrahman & Osman, 2017; Chang et al., 2016; Ong & Ong, 2015).

Hypothesis 2

The results presented in Table 10 suggests that credibility has a positive effect on purchase intention. Source credibility not only induces trial but also helps in forming a long term relationship with customers (Hung, 2014). Both expertise and trust positively effects brand attitude that leads to favorable purchase intention (Mikuláš & Světlík, 2016). Expertise is a key driver of positive attitude towards products and brands. In addition, if endorsers are experts and have consumer trust the impact will be even higher on attitude towards purchase intention. Several studies have validated the positive effect of source credibility on purchase intention (Hung, 2014; Jamil & Rameez ul Hassan, 2014; Mikuláš & Světlík, 2016)

Hypothesis 3

The results presented in Table 11 suggests that attractiveness has a positive effect on purchase intention. Synergy between celebrity personality and brand attributes are necessary for effective communication (Wright, 2016). This congruency between the source of the message and the brand helps in generating a positive response that also increases brand image and purchase intention (Jamil & Rameez ul Hassan, 2014). Several studies have found that consumers perceived match-up of brand and celebrity enhances message recall and retention which positively affects attitude towards purchase intention (Abirami & Krishnan, 2015b; Escalas & Bettman, 2015; Mishra et al., 2015; Wright, 2016).

Conclusion

Marketers are concerned about creating a unique value proposition for attracting new customers and retaining old ones. Thus, they heavily rely on communication strategies for creating awareness, attracting new consumers and retaining old ones. The findings of the study revalidates the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement for achieving these objectives. Although all the three predictors had a significant effect on purchase intention, the strongest was congruence. Thus, this study has revalidated the need for synergy between celebrity personality and brand features for effective communication and positive attitude towards brand and purchase intention. Attractiveness and credibility were found to be significant but weak predictors; therefore, they must only be used in communication strategies for relevant product categories.

Limitations and Future Research

This research was carried out in selected private business schools of Karachi. The respondents had adequate knowledge of the terminologies used in the study

and belonged to various income groups. Future studies could be carried out in other demographic groups and in other cities of Pakistan. The effect of low and high involvement products were not considered in this study. Future studies could compare the effects of them on the variables used in the study.

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