The relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase decisions

Abstract. This paper aims to study the impact of celebrity endorsements on purchase intention in Saudi Arabia. Questionnaire was developed using three independent variables Celebrity’s Attractiveness, Expertise Trustworthiness and one dependent variable i.e., customer’s Purchase Intensions. Data was collected using online questionnaire tool i.e., UDQuest. 117 respondents participated in the survey. Survey results shows that Celebrity’s attractiveness plays a pivotal role in shaping customer’s purchase intentions.

1 Introduction

Nowadays, most well-standing organizations are moving forward to increase their deep focus on the best advertising tools for effective marketing of their goods and services. That is why the concept of celebrity endorsement has emerged as a great tool for advertising. The concept of celebrity endorsement is becoming one of the greatest practices for organizations desiring to widely promote their brands and seek sustainable success. The method of celebrities’ endorsement aims to attract a huge audience in terms of their buying decisions, political and cultural attitudes, and lifestyle patterns with the expectation that the audience will follow them by buying the products as the celebrities were using them in their real life. However, most of the studies related to the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements were implemented in Western countries, in both traditional and social media terms. Thus, a noticeable gap has been created between the studies on Saudi Arabian culture since few of them were intended to measure the factors influencing the celebrities’ endorsements for effective advertising or to explore how this concept affected consumers’ buying decisions. Therefore, this gap needs to be filled with more studies and efforts related to this area, with a better understanding of which celebrities are perceived as more influencers in Saudi Arabia’s society.

2 Literature review

Celebrity endorser is defined as “any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement”. In

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employed marketing approach today, a review of studies finds that research examining this strategy has mostly focused on consumers’ perceptions of celebrity endorsement efficacy in conventional television and print media and she mentioned some of the studies such as “(e.g., Aggarwal-Gupta & Dang, 2009; Arsena, Silvera, & Pandelaere, 2014; Aureliano-Silva, Lopes, De Lamônica Freire, & da Silva, 2015; Banytė, Stonkienė, & Piligrimienė, 2011; G. E. Belch & Belch, 2013; Bhatt, Jayswl, & Pate, 2013) and she stated that most of these investigations were carried out in the West, in countries like the United States, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Brazil, Lithuania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, or in the East, in countries like Australia, Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Thailand. This concept of celebrity endorsement according to [27, 31] has been viewed as great method in advertising since long time and the strongest appearance of social media has provided those traditional celebrities with different multiple forms to endorsement which has led to changes in the brand attitude and purchase intentions apart from mere attention value of the celebrities. Celebrity endorsement becomes prominent, and it was largely regarded as a successful strategy for product branding and marketing enhancement. Consumers buy into celebrity hype as well as stores, agents, and companies buy into celebrity hype for attractive endorsements based on the studies conducted by [27, 31].

In the early 1800’s, the concept of celebrity endorsement appeared “when Queen Victoria’s laundress was used to endorse Glenfield Patent Starch and Mark Twain’s face appeared on a bag of flour and two different kinds of cigar boxes” [22]. On the other hand, the United States is where contemporary celebrity advertising began. Due to the availability of mass media and the growth of commodity culture as stated by [22, 28], this practice has grown substantially in other regions of the world during the last several decades. Celebrities become popular figures because of the widespread distribution of newspapers, radio, and television. Meanwhile, the commodity culture has converted celebrities’ public investigations commodities and desired objects. According to a recent estimate, celebrities appear in around 25% of all television and print commercials in the United States, stated by [22, 35]. Other nations that have embraced celebrity endorsements include New Zealand, South Korea, Turkey, and India (Money et al., 2006). Authors (Kilburn, 1998)[22] stated that celebrities are extremely popular in Japan with local and foreign celebrities appearing in more than 70% of all advertisements. Similar issue is witnessed in Malaysia, despite the lack of statistics to prove the prevalence of the practice.

2.1 Theoretical framework

Celebrities’ endorsements have been tested throughout different studies by different models, implied that to choose the right celebrity for effective advertising the companies’ products and image, there are various models intended to measure the relationship between the celebrity and the product such as Source Credibility, Source Attractiveness, TEARS, The Elaboration Likelihood Model, and Meaning Transfer Model. The Source credibility model was established on 1950s by Carl Hovland and Walter Weiss and it was mainly related to investigate how the positive traits of the communicators will affect the receivers to accept the message according to [31] and the scale for measuring the credibility for the endorser was then developed by (Ohanian, 1990) and it was including three main factors: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. Attractiveness which is the first element of that model has been proved even in the education field as the authors (Bull and Stevens, 1979 and Clifford and Walster, 1973) who noticed that the students with better physical appearance will get better grades that implies the physical appearance has an important role and influence on the effectiveness of the communicator’s messages and attitudes. Besides the attractiveness, the sources who are perceived as trustworthy can lead to change in the attitude as concluded by McGinnies and Ward (1980). Hence, many authors included trustworthiness scale in their.
studies. Expertise which is the third element in the source credibility model implies that attitudes and source credibility are positively impacted by knowledge, or the level of experience and understanding of the source. Figure (1) illustrated the main three components of Source credibility model which was developed by Ohanian (1990) with variables or scales of each component.

Fig. 1. Source Credibility Model by Ohanian (1990)

2.2 Influence of celebrity endorsement on customer’s purchase intention

When a balance is maintained between the product and the celebrity, the best and most successful endorsement is achieved. Also, when marketers assign a celebrity to a product or brand, they are effectively giving it a personality entity. As a result, adopting a celebrity is a very intelligent decision that should be based on various factors such as appearance, appeal, and popularity.

Furthermore, the study developed by concluded that in the context of brand communication, the source credibility is claimed to directly influence the consumers’ purchase intention. However, according to the researchers, they said that the high level of a recognized personality will achieve a great endorsement appeals than those endorsement by non-celebrities. Therefore, the concept of celebrity endorsement has been growing strongly nowadays as one of greatest marketing practices and the key to successful brand communication tool. Moreover, they said the most celebrity endorsements were appealed to the women, especially in the cosmetics field. However, due to increased media use for advertising companies, the fragmented situation has worsened. As a result, the company must come up with novel strategies to cut through the congestion and communicate effectively with customers and this may be accomplished by leveraging celebrities to support the company’s brand in advertising to break through the clutter.

Although celebrity endorsement is costly, a variety of organizations and businesses are ready to pay for the significant endorsement contained in well-known personalities. Thus, celebrities with a well-attractiveness expertise trustworthiness similarity familiarity likeability dependable honest sincere reliable trustworthy skilled qualified knowledgeable experienced expert...
Celebrity’s attractiveness and purchase decision

It is known that a celebrity with a known name, face, voice, and fan base may draw a lot of attention from a large number of audience and help a business grow significantly. The source attractiveness model, proposed by McCracken (1985) and composed of four main areas: familiarity, likeability, similarity, and attractiveness. The author Ohanian (1990) stated that the success of this celebrity message in the advertisement would be based on the customer’s familiarity, likability, similarity, and attractiveness. Moreover, the celebrity’s attractiveness was one of the components of the source credibility model proposed by Howland et al. (1953). However, the author stated that when the receivers found themselves familiar with the message source and like the source, then the message becomes effective and accepted. Also, Baker et al. (1977) and Clow et al. (2006) said that the process of consumers’ buying behavior could be modified in a positive way by including the physical attractiveness of celebrities, and these visible factors of the advertisement create a sense of attractiveness and increase the customer’s positive attitude toward purchase intention. Therefore, the marketers would be selecting the celebrities with physical attractiveness to increase brand awareness, which enhances the customers’ good feedback.

Celebrity’s trustworthiness and purchase decision:

Trustworthiness, which is an element from the source credibility model proposed by Howland et al. (1953), is essential for the advertisement process as the celebrity needs to be a successful endorser. The celebrity’s trustworthiness is considered as a primary element for the brand acceptance and the customer’s purchase decisions if this celebrity does not really use the brands they are endorsing. This creates a credibility gap. However, Goldsmith et al. (2000) claimed that the source credibility model was not suitable for the trustworthiness element and stated that “Celebrities who display these traits might be used in business advertising to appeal to customers but remains problematic.

Celebrity’s expertise and purchase decision:

Celebrity’s expertise, which is also an element from the source credibility model proposed by Howland et al. (1953), is related to the person’s knowledge, skills, and experience. Based on the study conducted by 34-38, which was directed to celebrity-based endorsements in the FMCG sector, it revealed that the customer will give priority to expertise, trustworthy recommendations in evaluating any advertisement for personal care products like hair care, oral care, and fragrances.

Individual differences in celebrity endorsements:

Earlier research has concluded that women tend to believe more in endorsement advertisements than men 17-21. Women believe that a product promoted by those celebrities will improve their appearance, and they agree that celebrity endorsers ensure the quality of the products they promote. Women also think that products from celebrity endorsement commercials are of higher quality than those from commercials without endorsement.

Another study revealed that men and adults between the ages of 18 and 34 are the most likely to interact with celebrities through digital activities such as commenting on celebrity blogs, becoming “friends” of a celebrity on a social networking site, and passing a celebrity link, photo, or video to others online. As people become older, their interest in celebrities begins to wane 21.

Local Cultural Context:

Nowadays, Saudi Arabia’s culture is experiencing huge developments and movements in its advertisement and social media concepts unlike in the previous years as stated by the authors 24-27. Moreover, new rules, regulations, and even new festivals efforts were taken place in Saudi Arabia to reflect its new direction and goals.
2030 vision which has been established by Prince Mohammed bin Salman since the year of 2016. The concept of celebrity endorsement and social media influencers were significantly influencing the Saudi society and the Saudi culture has been responding to these changes by accepting them. Therefore, all of these implies that the Saudi Arabia Culture is open to any other cultures and religions without any boundaries or restrictions. According to the articles of (Han & Shavitt, 1994), (Hofstede, 1984), and [27]. Prince Mohammed bin Salman is doing an effort to build a good relationship with outside countries, and this can be noticed recently as Saudi Arabia are having many conferences and festivals. Besides, he was having close meetings with the founder of Facebook platform Mark Zuckerberg, Cisco and Microsoft, and the innovators of Silicon Valley; All of this relationships with those innovators is to build high-tech sector with the purpose of achieving the strong and effective vision of 2030. As a results, achieving these vision 2030’s goals of establishing a high-tech sector lead Saudis to be actively engaged in the social media platforms significantly and to be closely attached to the celebrities and influencers all around the world. The author [27] stated that, in a collective society where participation, harmony, and respect for social hierarchy are fundamental values, celebrities who are widely known and reflect society’s shared values may be viewed as more credible and influential. The intention of celebrity endorsement is for individuals who follow a celebrity on social media to recognize the company, make purchases, and support a cause. Moreover, the outcome variables of celebrity endorsement are a positive attitude toward brand identification, buying decisions, and cause support. In addition, advertising agencies are recently building a strong presence in Saudi Arabia through using this type of advertisement by national or local celebrities for endorsements to attract Saudi’s customers.

Hypothesis Development:

Based on earlier studies following hypothesis was developed:

\[ H_1: \] There is a significant impact of celebrity’s attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise on consumer’s purchase decision.

3 Research methodology

Population and Sample size:
The study’s target population was those who are exposed to local advertisements and watch TV in Saudi Arabia, or at least those studying marketing subjects. The data was collected from different regions of Saudi Arabia, such as Jubail, Dammam, Khobar, Dhahran, and others. Therefore, the sample size was thought to be between 400 and 1000 business students, faculty, staff, marketing professionals, and other people who understand the concept of a celebrity.

Sampling methodology:
The purpose of this study is to investigate which factors influence celebrity endorsements in Saudi Arabia, so it would be more beneficial to use the stratified sampling technique. In this technique, the population was divided into smaller groups known as “strata” and these strata were established based on shared attributes, such
a percentage of the population in comparison to the size of the stratum. According to stratified sampling aims to eliminate the likelihood of human bias in the selection of samples to be included in the study. As a result, assuming there is little missing data, stratified sampling provides researchers with a sample that is truly representative of the population being investigated. Besides, it enables making statistical inferences (generalizations) from the sample to the whole population, which is needed for validity that is more external.

One hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed to the research population, and one hundred and seventeen questionnaires have been received.

Questionnaire development:
The questionnaire was developed based on earlier studies on celebrity endorsements, and it will mainly focus on testing the influence of the source credibility model, which was conducted by Pornpitakpan (2003) and Ohanian (1990) based on five-point scales which range from Not important to very important, where both focused on studying the influence of the source credibility on the consumer’s purchase intention, and both suggested three important elements of the credibility of a source for the advertisements, which are: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. However, according to the handbook of marketing scales, each credibility dimension composed of five semantic differential items; Attractiveness composed of (attractive, classy, elegant, handsome, and beautiful); Trustworthiness composed of (honest, reliable, sincere, trustworthy, and dependable); and Expertise composed of (experienced, expert, knowledgeable, qualified, and skilled).

Moreover, other aspects of this study that was investigated, such as respondents’ attitudes towards celebrity endorsements and purchase intentions based on the three dimensions of the credibility scales, besides age and individual differences. In addition, the respondents were asked to suggest and rank which Arab and international celebrities they follow and why they are following them besides, they were encouraged to select the celebrity’s types that they usually endorse based on five-point scales ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Lastly, the questionnaire structure will include different sections including respondent understanding towards celebrity endorsements (based on the three credibility dimensions); respondents’ purchase intentions; and respondent’s demographic data.

Validity:
A scouting sample of thirty questionnaires measured the correlation coefficients between each question in one field and the whole field to determine the questionnaire’s internal consistency. Table below show each field item's correlation coefficient and p-value. As shown in the table, the p-values are less than 0.05 or 0.01, so the correlation coefficients of this field are significant at \( \alpha = 0.01 \) or \( \alpha = 0.05 \), indicating that the paragraphs of this field of study are consistent and valid to measure what they were set for.

Table 1. Reliability and Variability of Independent Variable (Celebrity Endorsement)

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<th>Constructs</th>
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|                            | ... sincere | \[ \begin{array}{c} \text{.663}  \\
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|                            | ... trustworthy | \[ \begin{array}{c} \text{.829}  \\
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Celebrity Endorsements: Expertise

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Reliability:

Test reliability was accomplished using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient using SPSS program. Cronbach's alpha measures consistency. Higher Cronbach's alpha values indicate more internal consistency. Each questionnaire field's Cronbach's Alpha was computed. Table below provides Cronbach's Alpha for each questionnaire field and overall. Cronbach's Alpha ranged from 0.834 to 0.874. This range is regarded high; it assures the reliability of each questionnaire field. The questionnaire's Cronbach's Alpha is 0.869, indicating high reliability. The given questionnaire was valid, reliable, and suitable for population sample distribution.

Table 2. Reliability and Variability of Dependent Variable (Purchase Intensions)

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Data collection: The authors stated that the multivariate analysis method would be useful not only for the analytical prospect, but also for the data designing and collection for problem solving and decision making. Therefore, this study was employing this concept of analysis to investigate which factors have the more influence on the purchase intention of Saudi customers who they are exposed to the celebrity endorsement. Furthermore, according to the multivariate analysis book by Joseph et al. (2015), the aim of this approach is to explain which set of variables results in one variable. Therefore, in this study, the variables were divided into two parts, which are independent and dependent variables. In this study, the dependent variable was the resultant outcome, which results from serious changes in the set of variables. So, this variable was the purchase intention that resulted from the independent variables of the celebrity endorsement process. Moreover, independent variables were those factors that led to the influence on the dependent variable, which in this study was the three scales of the source credibility model: trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise to...
measure its impact on the dependent variable, which is purchase intention. Highlighting the proposed model which was established based on previous studies and the scales developed by Ohanian (1990). However, the researchers (Soneji, D., Riedel, A., & Martin, B., 2015) conducted research in which respondents were encouraged to take an online survey through an email invitation since it was a convenient, simple, and time-saving method. Therefore, this study used an online survey to collect data on factors influencing the efficacy of celebrity endorsements in Saudi Arabia, especially in the eastern region. Furthermore, respondents were contacted via various social media platforms such as Twitter, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn. The survey was distributed in English language. Depending on the above, there were two sources for data collection: primary data and secondary data. The secondary data relied on different sources such as textbooks, scientific journals, magazines, and theses accessed through universities' libraries in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, research papers, articles, and reports related to the research topics, and online resources related to the research topics. The main tool for primary data was the designed questionnaire, as mentioned previously, which was analysed throughout the study.

Data Analysis: The authors Joseff et al. (2015) of the multivariate analysis book stated that the purpose of multivariate analysis is to analyse the multiple variables in a single or set of relationships. However, in this analysis, several processes were used for the purpose of good decision-making and testing the variables. As the survey was the technique employed in this study, the validity and reliability of that survey need to be checked. As a result, the survey's scales were used from the previous literature. Accordingly, the research focused on the modification of the questionnaire design, through distributing the questionnaire to pilot study. The purpose of the pilot study was to test and prove that the questionnaire questions are clear to be answered in a way that help to achieve the target of the study. The questionnaire was modified based on the results of the pilot study, and the analyses were carried out in different phases, and the data was checked and cleaned after each phase for the purpose of eliminating incomplete cases. Moreover, the data was analysed using SPSS to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions. One hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed to the research population and one hundred and seventeenth questionnaires are received. The sample size must be adequate and adhere to the guidelines given by the college administration, so the questionnaire may be administered for another round to reach the identified sample size. Moreover, the analysis could include a comparison of means to explore the differences between demographic groups such as gender, young adults, and education, etc. In addition, it might test the relationship that exists between the different variables or factors that lead to successful advertising and purchase decisions.

4 Analyses and findings

Multiple linear regression model was used with celebrity’s attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise as independent variable and consumer’s purchase decision as dependent variable “Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise” together. The Multiple Correlation Coefficient $R = 0.498$ and an adjusted $R^2 = 0.228$. This means that 22.8% of the variation in purchase decision is explained by all independent variables together “Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise.” For the variable “Attractiveness”, the $t$-test $= 4.798$, the $P$-value (Sig.) = 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05, hence this variable is statistically significant. Since the indication of the test is positive, then there is a significant positive effect of the variable “Attractiveness” on “purchase decision.” The remaining variables “Trustworthiness and Expertise” are not significant since the $P$-value for each > 0.05.
Table 3. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

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<th>Variable</th>
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As a result of the above analysis, which supports the previous studies conducted by Carl Hovland and Walter Weiss (1950), (Shannon, 2015), and (Ohanian, 1990) which focused on the three elements of the Source credibility model and stated that the positive characteristics of the communicators will motivate consumers to believe the message. Furthermore, the study developed by [15] concluded that in the context of brand communication, the source credibility is claimed to directly influence the consumers' purchase intention.

5 Conclusion and recommendations

In today's marketing strategies, which are intended to assist brands successfully position their products, celebrity endorsements have evolved as the most widely used technique. The purpose of this strategy is to attract a massive audience by having a well-known celebrity endorse the product. The results of the multiple linear regression model found that there is a significant relationship between the dependent variable “purchase decision” and the independent variables “attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise.” where F = 12.399, Sig. = 0.000, and celebrity’s attractiveness plays a pivotal role in shaping customer’s purchase intentions where t-test = 4.798, the P-value (Sig.) = 0.000. Thus, these results support the previous studies conducted by Carl Hovland and Walter Weiss (1950), Shannon (2015), and Ohanian (1990). The second question was to understand the differences across demographic groups with respect to their attitudes toward the influence of Saudi celebrity endorsement on their purchase decisions based on gender and age differences. As a result of T-test = 4.803 > T-critical = 1.98 and p-value = 0.000 < 0.05, the female group was more influential in terms of gender differences. Hence, this result supports the study conducted by Lazar (2020). Moreover, the result of the T-test = 0.535 < T-critical = 1.98 and the p-value = 0.594 > 0.05 show that the younger group was more influential in terms of age differences, which supports the study conducted by leading media agency Mediaedge:cia (MEC).

Recommendations. In today’s marketing strategies, which are intended to assist brands successfully position their products, celebrity endorsements have evolved as the most widely used technique. The purpose of this strategy is to attract a massive audience by having a well-known celebrity endorse the product. The results of the multiple linear regression model found that there is a significant relationship between the dependent variable “purchase decision” and the independent variables “attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise.” where F = 12.399, Sig. = 0.000, and celebrity’s attractiveness plays a pivotal role in shaping customer’s purchase intentions where t-test = 4.798, the P-value (Sig.) = 0.000. Thus, these results support the previous studies conducted by Carl Hovland and Walter Weiss (1950), Shannon (2015), and Ohanian (1990). The second question was to understand the differences across demographic groups with respect to their attitudes toward the influence of Saudi celebrity endorsement on their purchase decisions based on gender and age differences. As a result of T-test = 4.803 > T-critical = 1.98 and p-value = 0.000 < 0.05, the female group was more influential in terms of gender differences. Hence, this result supports the study conducted by Lazar (2020). Moreover, the result of the T-test = 0.535 < T-critical = 1.98 and the p-value = 0.594 > 0.05 show that the younger group was more influential in terms of age differences, which supports the study conducted by leading media agency Mediaedge:cia (MEC).
known celebrity present the products, so that the audience will buy the product just like the celebrities do when they use it in real life. In comparison to Western countries, where extensive amounts of research have been conducted, Saudi Arabia needs more efforts and studies to fill this gap. This technique can be studied by different researchers to deepen their knowledge and increase awareness of the advertising channels to select the right celebrity for the right product to support. The first recommendation is to have a clear personal profile/background of the customers (respondents), such as their generation and trends within that generation, as this will expand the researcher's and marketer's understanding of how to be close to the customers' perceptions since people's living patterns and styles change from one generation to another. In addition, Saudi Arabia is experiencing strong growth in the economy, infrastructure, and technology sectors. The second recommendation is to combine the source credibility model with other celebrity endorsement models, such as the meaning transfer model, in which celebrities' characteristics and qualities become attached to the product being endorsed and are then transferred to the customers' minds, meaning that the celebrity will create the meaning of the product through their characteristics, either their physical appearance, trustworthiness, or experience, such as "attractive," "reliable," "experienced," etc. As a result, these qualities are linked to the products or brands that will stick in the customers' minds and be easily remembered. To conclude, this type of study needs to be conducted in different stages with a flexible duration for a better understanding of the target segment, considering the mental state of respondents to avoid bias. Besides, future researchers can use different methods of collecting the data from respondents, such as interviews, focus groups, or social media monitoring, as these techniques of collection reduce the possibility of bias and increase respondents' opinions and feelings regarding the celebrity endorsing a product or brand.

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