

Celebrity Endorsement and Social Media Influencer Marketing: Case Study in Ho Chi Minh City

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KEYWORDS

Brand attitude,
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source credibility,
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ABSTRACT

The endorsement of celebrity has been demonstrated effectively in many researches, but still underestimated in social media influencer marketing. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and social media influencer marketing in influencing consumer behavior. By utilizing the Source Credibility Model and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), this research conducts a conceptual framework to examine how perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness of celebrities and influencers impact consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. An empirical study and PLS-SEM method was employed to analyze data collected from 368 adequate respondents to test the hypothesized relationships. Results show that attractiveness and expertise have positive impact on brand attitude, hence increase the intention to purchase. Findings contribute to identify factors that improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of endorsements, as well as proposing an integrative approach to combine traditional and influencer marketing efforts. This study also supplies to academic discourse in marketing and provides practical implications for brand managers navigating the evolving consumer landscape.

1. Introduction

Digital media advertising and endorsements from celebrities significantly sway consumers' decisions to purchase. The resources available for digital marketing give businesses a strategic advantage in attracting customers and sparking their interest in products. Studies show that celebrity endorsements serve as a vital marketing tool for affecting consumer-buying intentions via digital platforms (Kushwaha et al., 2020). When digital marketing practices functioned as a bridging factor, the indirect effect of celebrity

endorsements on buying intentions was also significant (Schimmelpfennig & Hunt, 2020). By investing heavily in endorsements, companies strive to capitalize on the qualities of the endorsers to attract a wide audience (Kushwaha et al., 2020). Besides capturing and maintaining interest in a product or brand, the popularity of celebrities also aids in enhancing recall rates among consumers (Kushwaha et al., 2020). Furthermore, recent research indicates that celebrity endorsements elicit positive responses and actions from consumers (Kushwaha et al., 2021).

Only a few researchers have aimed to investigate

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the effects of influencer marketing on different facets of consumer behavior (Godey et al., 2016; Lim et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Additionally, marketers face a challenge in choosing between domain expert influencers and appealing celebrity figures (Hill, 2018). From an academic perspective, not much research has focused on comparing the effectiveness of the two types of endorsers, making this an important addition to the existing body of literature (Schouten et al., 2019). There is also a lack of thorough research regarding how influencer marketing affects the bond between consumers and brands (Schouten et al., 2019).

A limited number of studies have provided valuable frameworks for analyzing the elements related to influencer marketing that affect consumer purchase intentions (Singh, 2021). In line with this perspective, this paper investigates if the frameworks associated with celebrity endorsements, such as the credibility and attractiveness models, can be adjusted to identify the traits related to social influencers. This study aims to evaluate both the practical and theoretical data to see if the features that contribute to the success of celebrity endorsements can also be applied to gauge the effectiveness of social influencers. There are discussions about how social influencers impact purchasing intentions, perceptions, and public opinions about them; nonetheless, there is a lack of research focused on identifying the qualities that social influencers need to enhance their social marketing success. Additionally, considerations regarding followers and the content produced by social influencers will be explored in the context of previous research. Following that, to fill these research gaps, this study conducts this empirical research to answer these questions:

- (1) How do celebrity endorsements influence brand attitude and consumer purchasing intention?
- (2) How do consumers perceive the authenticity of traditional celebrities compared to social media influencers?
- (3) What can an integrated approach to celebrity endorsement and influencer marketing to maximize brand attitude?

2. Literature review

2.1. Social media influencer marketing

Research has shown that social media influencers view their promotional activities as highly trustworthy (De Veirman et al., 2017). Earlier studies have revealed that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) can significantly affect consumers' purchasing intentions when the information comes from a reliable source (Rosario et al., 2016). This aligns with other studies that highlight the importance of a brand's credibility as a major influence on consumers' buying intention.

Social media influencers are described as contemporary independent endorsers who shape how audiences view brands through blogs, tweets, and various platforms (Freberg et al., 2011). These influencers are present across multiple digital platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, among others (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Trivedi, 2018; Kumar et al., 2018). Marketing research has established a significant correlation between engagement levels and the development of attitudes toward a brand (Trivedi, 2018). White (2014) observed that millennials prioritize their experiences and relationships with brands more than previous generations. This study explores how endorsements from influencers shape brand perception and subsequently affect online purchasing intentions.

Ajzen & Fishbein (1980) proposed the theory of reasoned action (TRA) to present the elements of behavioral intentions. Following that, attitude of consumer to a brand is considered as one of critical attribute to determine the intention to purchase (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Karjalainen et al. (2016) discovered that the affection consumer toward a brand is a stronger indicator of the relationship between the consumer and brand than other emotional aspects like brand attitude or preference. Batra et al. (2012) suggested that beloved brands are difficult to replace, creating feelings of dissatisfaction when they are unavailable, with consumers often willing to pay extra for these preferred brands (Thomson et al., 2005). Thakur et al. (2016) claimed that brands earn consumers' admiration through excellent performance, which helps build a positive reputation. Cho (2011) stated that respect for a brand attitude can lead to goodwill toward the seller. Kapferer (2012) noted that highly regarded brands lower perceived risk for consumers during purchase decisions. Based on the aforementioned literature, this study aims to explore the effect of brand attitude affection on purchasing intentions, leading to the following hypothesis:

H1: Brand attitude has positive impact on purchase intention

2.2. Celebrity endorsement

A celebrity endorser is defined as "any individual who possesses public recognition and utilizes that recognition to promote a consumer product by appearing alongside it in an advertisement" (McCracken, 1989; Seno & Lukas, 2007). Research outlines five unique components that characterize celebrity product endorsement. These five aspects are divided into two main categories: factors related to the source and those associated with management. Source-related factors encompass the trustworthiness of celebrities (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Ohanian, 1990) and their physical appeal (Singh, 2021). The model of source credibility can be split into two parts: skill

and reliability, while the attractiveness of the source consists of familiarity, appeal, and similarity (Erdogan, 1999; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Priyankara et al., 2017).

Trustworthiness and Expertise

The Source Credibility Model for endorsing celebrities consists of two key elements: knowledge and trustworthiness. Erdogan (1999) explains that knowledge refers to how a communicator is viewed as a reputable source of valid information. This pertains to the expertise, experience, or talents that an endorser possesses. Thus, when a celebrity exhibits strong knowledge in their area, it enhances their persuasive power and encourages buyers to consider the advertised product or service. Influential figures on social media act as knowledgeable experts since they are adept at providing valuable insights. They cultivate devoted audiences by establishing trust among their followers through honesty, dependability, and authenticity. Erdogan (1999) pointed out that trustworthiness relates to how an audience views an endorser's truthfulness, moral principles, and credibility. A research study by Weerasiri & Wanninayake (2009) revealed that among 175 individuals surveyed, 52% indicated that they emphasized the trustworthiness of celebrities when making choices about purchases. In this aspect, the main influencing factors include authority gained from expertise and uniqueness, trust as a critical element of meaningful connections alongside belief in the integrity and reliability of an influencer, and a natural liking or empathy towards a person.

H2: Trustworthiness has positive impact on brand attitude

H3: Expertise has positive impact on brand attitude
Attractiveness

According to McGuire (as cited in Seiler & Kucza, 2017), the impact of a message and advertising through testimonials is shaped not only by how trustworthy the source is but also by how appealing it is, which plays a crucial role in stereotype classification. The model of source attractiveness consists of familiarity, liking, and similarity (Erdogan, 1999; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Priyankara et al., 2017). Similarity refers to the perceived resemblance between the message sender and the audience. Familiarity arises from prior knowledge of the source gained through experience, while likability stems from an appreciation for the source's appearance and behavior. Attractiveness is broader than mere physical charm; it also includes various positive attributes that consumers may link to a celebrity endorser. The goal of the researchers was to investigate how a good-looking expert influencer affects consumers' views on brands in the realm of electronics (Trivedi & Sama, 2020). Based on the analysis, the hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Attractiveness has positive impact on brand attitude

Celebrity-brand congruence

The alignment between celebrities and products, which is part of managing celebrity endorsements, can also be seen as a characteristic linked to influencers. To improve product marketing, companies need to carefully select the most fitting influencer who demonstrates significant value as a leader in their field (De Veirman et al., 2017). The challenge for businesses is to find an influencer who can effectively convince consumers to buy a particular product and whose online image matches the type of product or promotional message they intend to share (De Veirman et al., 2017; Muk, 2013). This concept is explained in the matching hypothesis, which highlights the correspondence between a celebrity and a product. Thus, from the perspective of a social media influencer, how they present themselves on these platforms affects the purchasing decisions of their followers.

H5: Celebrity-brand congruence has positive impact on brand attitude

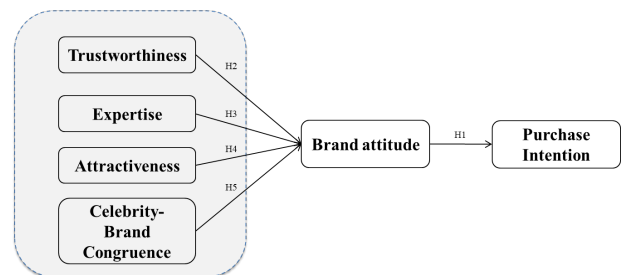


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

The hypotheses development contributed a proposed research model (Figure 1) that represents the relationship among six latent constructs. In detail, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and celebrity-brand congruence play as antecedences of the brand attitude. Brand attitude mediates antecedences to the outcome of the model, purchase intention.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling

This study employs a quantitative research approach, focusing on the population of Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). HCMC is biggest city of Vietnam where has a diversity, tech-savvy, and young population to highly engage with celebrity. Moreover, HCMC also is an excessive zone for celebrity to nurture their reputation with rapidly growing media and entertainment industry (Nguyen, 2021). Convenience sampling method was utilized to gather data efficiently from participants who meet the inclusion criteria of being exposed to celebrity endorsements or influencer marketing. To enhance the convenience for respondents, this study employed the web-based surveys that were allocated

via mostly social media platforms. While convenience sampling may limit generalizability, it is suitable for this exploratory research to obtain a diverse sample efficiently.

Data will be collected using a structured survey instrument featuring a 5-point Likert scale (1-totally disagree, 5-totally agree). The measurement scales apply Likert scale to evaluate variables such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, celebrity-brand congruence, brand attitude, and purchase intention. This scale ensures consistency and granularity in capturing respondents' attitudes and behaviors. The measurement scale was developed based on the research findings of Erdogan (1999), Trivedi (2018), De Veirman et al. (2017), and Singh (2021) with observations (Table 2). After the data collecting in the period of last three month in 2025, a total of 368 valid samples consistently were recorded and available for the next stage of data analysis. The sample characteristic confirmed the representativeness of demographic feature that showed the similar allocation of population (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample characteristic

Demographic variables	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	167	45.38%
	Female	193	52.45%
	Others	8	2.17%
Age	under 18	25	6.79%
	18 - 25	89	24.18%
	26 - 35	105	28.53%
	36 - 45	134	36.41%
	over 45	15	4.08%
Marital status	Single	190	51.63%
	Married	143	38.86%
	Others	35	9.51%
Education level	Under Bachelor	83	22.55%
	Bachelor	178	48.37%
	Master degree	92	25.00%
	PhD	14	3.80%
	Over PhD	1	0.27%
Occupation	Unemployed	16	4.35%
	Freelancer	89	24.18%
	Students	120	32.61%
	Owner	64	17.39%
	Office staff	79	21.47%

3.2. Measurement model evaluation

The sample size attempted 368 respondents to ensure statistical validity and reliability. Partial Least

Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze the valid data. PLS-SEM is an advanced statistical technique well-suited for analyzing complex models with latent constructs, allowing for the simultaneous examination of multiple relationships (Hair et al., 2021). This method helps to test the proposed hypotheses and evaluate the direct and indirect effects of celebrity endorsements and influencer marketing on consumer behavior. The results provide empirical evidence to support or refine the theoretical framework and offer actionable insights for marketers. The analysis process was divided into two stages. Stage one evaluated the measurement model by testing reliability and validity. Stage two evaluated the structural model by bootstrapping technique to test hypotheses and propose the model quality.

4. Data analysis and results

First, this study measures the indicator reliability by estimating the outer loading values. Table 2 shows that all factor loadings are higher than threshold of 0.708; hence all observations of measurement scale guarantee the quality (Hair et al., 2016).

Next, the study evaluates the reliability of the scale on SMART-PLS through two main indexes: Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Although CR value in many cases is more favorite over Cronbach's Alpha, this study still utilizes both indexes to maximize the reliability (Hair et al., 2016). Cronbach's Alpha of all constructs exceeds the standard of 0.7 with ranging from 0.771 to 0.899 and CR values of all construct also are higher than 0.7 (Table 3). From the results of two indexes, the reliability of measurement model is assured (Henseler & Sarstedt, 2009).

The following stage is measuring the validity of the model. To assess the convergent validity, the study trust on the average variance extracted index (AVE) with a scale achieves convergent validity if the AVE exceeds the threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2016). Table 3 shows the range of AVE from 0.676 to 0.797, consequently all constructs satisfy the convergent validity testing. To test the discriminant validity, this study proposes the performance of Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2016). HTMT is considered as a value of two latent variables that is calculated following the formula of Figure 2. Following that, HTMT coefficient between the indicators of both latent variables should be as small as possible than the geometric mean cross-correlation coefficients. Henseler et al. (2013) propose the threshold for discriminant value is 0.85. Table 4 shows that all the HTMT values are lower than 0.85, therefore all pair of variables of measurement model are guaranteed the discriminant validity.

Table 2. Measurement scales

Observations	Sources	Coding	Factor Loading
Attractiveness (ATTRA)			
<i>Celebrities are very attractive</i>	Erdogan (1999)	ATTRA1	0.907
<i>Celebrities have good appearance</i>		ATTRA2	0.897
<i>Celebrities are very beautiful</i>		ATTRA3	0.875
Brand Attitude (BRATT)			
<i>I have a favorable opinion of this brand</i>	Trivedi (2018)	BRATT1	0.812
<i>This brand offers products/services of high quality</i>		BRATT2	0.907
<i>This is a brand I prefer over others in the market</i>		BRATT3	0.832
<i>This brand has a good reputation in the market</i>		BRATT4	0.862
Celebrity-brand congruence (CEBR)			
<i>The celebrities and the brand are a good match</i>	De Veirman et al. (2017)	CEBR1	0.886
<i>The values of the celebrities align with the values of the brand.</i>		CEBR2	0.872
<i>The messaging of celebrities is consistent with the brand's identity.</i>		CEBR3	0.915
Expertise (EXPER)			
<i>celebrities 'sharing is helpful</i>	Erdogan (1999)	EXPER1	0.795
<i>celebrities 'sharing help me to reduce the perceived risk</i>		EXPER2	0.872
<i>Information that celebrities share is greater detail</i>		EXPER3	0.815
Purchasing Intention (PURINT)			
<i>I am likely to purchase products/services recommended by celebrities</i>	Singh (2021)	PURINT1	0.807
<i>I would consider buying products/services promoted by these celebrities</i>		PURINT2	0.84
<i>The endorsement by these celebrities increases my intention to purchase</i>		PURINT3	0.922
<i>I would introduce for my friend to buy these products/services</i>		PURINT4	0.892
Trustworthiness (TRUST)			
<i>My favorite celebrities are trustworthy</i>	Erdogan (1999)	TRUST2	0.774
<i>My favorite celebrities are reliable</i>		TRUST3	0.853
<i>My favorite celebrities are honest</i>		TRUST4	0.901
<i>My favorite celebrities are dependable</i>		TRUST1	0.751

Table 3. Reliability and convergent validity results

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
ATTRA	0.873	0.876	0.922	0.797
BRAAT	0.876	0.884	0.915	0.729
CEBR	0.871	0.900	0.920	0.794
EXPER	0.771	0.778	0.867	0.686
PURINT	0.889	0.898	0.923	0.751
TRUST	0.845	0.961	0.892	0.676

$$HTMT_{ij} = \frac{Cor_{ij}}{\sqrt{Cor_i \times Cor_j}}$$

Figure 2. Heterotrait-Monotrait formula
(Henseler et al., 2016)

where:

HTMT_{ij}: HTMT value of latent variable pair i and j

Cor_{ij}: average of correlation coefficients of all observed variable pairs of latent variables i and j

Cor_i: average of correlation coefficients of observed variable pairs of latent variables i

Cor_j: average of correlation coefficients of observed variable pairs of latent variable j

Next, to test the hypotheses, this study developed

the analysis to evaluate the structural model (Table 5). In this process, P-values, Original sample, and 97.5% confident interval bias corrected (CIBC) were employed to assess hypothesis (Hair et al., 2022). Results reveal that the path of CEBR → BRAAT and TRUST → BRAAT are not significant because of P-values higher than 0.05. Thus, Hypothesis H1 and H4 are rejected. Contrastingly, the other paths of BRAAT → PURINT, EXPER → BRAAT, and ATTRA → BRAAT are supported due to the P-values lower than 0.05. Moreover, there is no zero value in the 97.5 % confident interval bias corrected range of each relationship. Original samples also are higher than zero that means three hypotheses H5, H2, and H3 are significant.

Finally, this study evaluates the quality of structural model by using R-square, f-square, and out-of sample

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	ATTRA	BRAAT	CEBR	EXPER	PURINT	TRUST
ATTRA						
BRAAT	0.315					
CEBR	0.331	0.184				
EXPER	0.293	0.504	0.163			
PURINT	0.248	0.546	0.073	0.67		
TRUST	0.301	0.168	0.092	0.28	0.404	

Table 5. The hypotheses testing

	O	M	D	T	P	CIBC	Markup
H1: TRUST → BRAAT	0.042	0.052	0.044	0.939	0.348	[-0.064, 0.115]	Not significant
H2: EXPER → BRAAT	0.359	0.359	0.045	7.922	0.000	[0.270, 0.445]	Significant
H3: ATTRA → BRAAT	0.162	0.160	0.057	2.857	0.004	[0.053, 0.274]	Significant
H4: CEBR → BRAAT	0.073	0.076	0.049	1.485	0.138	[-0.030, 0.165]	Not significant
H5: BRAAT → PURINT	0.487	0.489	0.041	11.763	0.000	[0.400, 0.563]	Significant

Note: O: Original sample; M: Sample Mean, D: Standard deviation; T: T-statistics; P: P-values; CIBC: 97.5% confident interval bias corrected.

Table 6. The quality of Structural model

Endogenous constructs	SSO	SSE	Q ²	R ²	Exogenous constructs	f ²
BRAAT	1472	1249.673	0.151	0.213	ATTRA	0.027
					CEBR	0.006
					EXPER	0.148
					TRUST	0.002
PURINT	1472	1218.825	0.172	0.238	BRAAT	0.312

predictive power Q-square indexes (Henseler et al., 2013; Hair et al., 2016). Table 6 indicates that ATTRA, CEBR, EXPER, and TRUST variables could explain 21.3% the variation in BRAAT. And BRAAT can explain 23.8% the variation of PURINT. To test the importance of an independent variable on the dependent variable, this study uses f-square values. In detail, TRUST and CEBR almost do not have impact on BRAAT with f-square of 0.002 and 0.006, respectively. ATTRA and EXPER have low impact on BRAAT with the effect sizes of 0.027 and 0.148, respectively. BRAAT has average impact on PURINT with the effect size of 0.312. According to out-of-sample predictive power, results show the model has predictive accurateness but those are quite weak level with Q-square values lower than 0.2 (Henseler et al., 2013; Hair et al., 2016).

5. Implications

5.1. Theoretical implications

The research contributes to the theoretical understanding of marketing communication by integrating the Source Credibility Model and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). It extends these frameworks by applying them to the context of celebrity endorsements and influencer marketing, addressing gaps in how these strategies impact consumer behavior. Aligning with the research finding of Karjaluoto et al. (2016) and Batra et al. (2012), this study reconfirmed the linear correlations among brand attitude and purchasing intention following the supporting of TRA theory. Furthermore, source credibility model enlarges a novel frame of antecedences that become inputs of the process of TRA. The connection of two theories donates to extend their contribution to up-to-date marketing studies that are particularly concerned by digital marketing and social media influencers. This integration raises questions for further researches

to investigate the evolving nature of trust in digital marketing. Following that, the customers' trust may be adjusted when they become more familiar to influencer marketing, particularly source credibility dimensions.

The celebrity-brand congruence has not significant on brand attitude, this argues with the findings of De Veirman et al. (2017) in the context of celebrity endorsement. This illogicality highlights the necessity for additional exploration to discover the frontier circumstances under which celebrity-brand congruence affects brand attitude. The findings expand the original theoretical building for brand attitude concept when combines with source credibility with two dimensions: Expertise and attractiveness. Although trustworthiness has positive impact on customer's intention to buy (Weerasiri & Wanninayake, 2009), brand attitude with social media influencer framework could eliminate this dimension to conduct the research. The study also offers a nuanced exploration of the interplay between expertise, attractiveness, and consumer intent (Trivedi & Sama, 2020), advancing theoretical discourse on the effectiveness of digital marketing paradigms. The findings enlarge the frameworks for celebrity endorsement and influencer marketing fields. By addressing a critical gap in the literature, this study gives more understanding of how using celebrity endorsement to enhance customer attitudes on purchasing intention.

5.2. Practical implications

This study offers practical guidance for marketers in designing and implementing effective promotional strategies. It highlights the importance of aligning the choice of endorsement type (celebrity or influencer) with target audience preferences and brand goals. By leveraging insights into perceived celebrity endorsement, marketers can craft campaigns that resonate more deeply with consumers. Moreover, the findings will assist brands in balancing traditional and digital marketing efforts, optimizing resource allocation, and enhancing overall engagement.

Take advantages of social media influencer development, marketers can utilize the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement through enhancing their attractiveness and expertise to appeal customer nurturing their intention to purchase. Furthermore, brand attitude could be improved by creating attractive appearance with informative content in the platform of social media. Based on knowing deeply the specific dimensions of source credibility that impact on the customer behavior, an influencer marketing campaigns could be effectively built for many brands to adapt their potential customer.

6. Conclusion

By empirical research, this study explored several contributions for the field of celebrity endorsement marketing that combines social media influencer attributions. In detail, celebrity endorsement has impact positively on purchasing intention through the relationship with brand attitude. Thus, celebrity could play as an influencer in the social media platforms to become a innovative approach for brands to expand their product/services. Taking advantages of the development of social media influencers marketing, celebrities also improves their impact and spreads out reputation on Internet society. Several research opportunities can be seen for further researchers with some limitation that should be fulfilled in the future. First, this study just focused on only one social media influencer attribute, brand attitudes. In the future, researcher should explore many other attributes such as: brand engagement, brand attachment, and brand equity. Second, the sample size only is concentrated in HCMC, Vietnam - an Asia country. Further research should expand the study in other market out of Asian. Last, the approach of the source credibility theory to support celebrity endorsement was quite long-standing. Further research should adapt other theory to test new model on the field of celebrity endorsement.

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