

Factors Influencing the Purchase Decision of Celebrity Endorsement Products in Zhejiang

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that influence Zhejiang Chinese consumers' decision to purchase celebrity endorsed products. The source attractiveness model, the source credibility model, and the meaning transfer model were reviewed to identify the important factors in this current study. The researcher used an online questionnaire to survey 389 respondents who live in Zhejiang Province and have purchased celebrity-endorsed products. Besides, this study used convenience sampling and snowball sampling to analyze 389 data sets. Multiple Linear Regression was utilized to examine the extent to which the four independent variables (attractiveness, credibility, trustworthiness, and reliability of celebrity) influence the dependent variable (consumers' purchase decision). In this current study, the results showed that celebrities' attractiveness, credibility, and reliability made Zhejiang Chinese consumers buy celebrity-endorsed products. The key recommendations were suggested to improve consumers' purchase decisions regarding celebrity-endorsed products accordingly.

Keywords: Purchase Decision, Celebrity Attractiveness, Celebrity Credibility, Celebrity Trustworthiness, Celebrity Reliability

JEL Classification Code: M37, G41, A14, D12

1. Introduction

Nowadays, with the continuous development of mass media, celebrity endorsement has become common for companies or brands to promote their products, which is a way to enhance the added value of advertising by associating a product brand with the characteristics of a celebrity. With the development of the economy and the increasing competition in the market, the acceptance and trust of a product in the market is crucial to its brand image and marketing strategy, so more and more businesses are choosing celebrities as product endorsers. To make the message in an ad more effective for consumers, a company or brand chooses to hire a celebrity to promote their brand or product (Abhishek & Sahay, 2016). Consumers can easily identify products by the image of well-known brands (Poghosyan, 2015).

Basically, celebrity endorsements are now one of the popular ways to promote products in the United States and elsewhere (Kok Wei & Li, 2013). For example, according to Choi and Berger (2010), about 20% of TV ads are the star-endorsed in the U.S., while retailers and other companies spend about 10% of their money on celebrity endorsed product advertisements for promoting their products. Although the history of celebrity endorsement in China is relatively short, celebrity endorsement has become a very common form of advertising in China today (Huang, 2012). Enhancing brand image and building brand trust through celebrity endorsements is one of the common methods marketers use (Erdogan et al., 2001).

Celebrity endorsement is an effective marketing strategy. Consumers will idealize their favorite celebrities and, to some extent, will perceive the products endorsed by celebrities as having high quality. After Rajasekar (2018) research, it has been found that celebrity endorsements play an important role in brand image building in consumers' minds and ultimately

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influence their buying behavior. Marketers pay great attention to the use of these strategies. This current study measures the influence of celebrity endorsements and consumer buying decisions, consumers' perceptions of the endorsers, and how these perceptions will influence their buying decisions, in the case of Zhejiang province, China.

2. Literature Review

Three key models are closely related to the purchase decision toward the celebrity endorsed products.

2.1. Source Attractiveness Model

One explanation of source attractiveness is conditioned reflex. When the advertising endorser is constantly associated with the brand, its charisma is transmitted to the brand. McGuire (1985) proposed the source attractiveness model, who argued that similarity and familiarity between both the sender and the receiver could affect the transmission of the message. In the identification process, when the receiver receives a message from the source of attractiveness, he or she identifies with the celebrity endorser (Cohen, 1972). Through this process, it can be found that attraction can influence the effectiveness of celebrity endorser's messaging (Cohen, 1972). According to Erdogan (1999), consumers with a good perception of a celebrity see an attractive celebrity. Pleasant appearance is only one of the attractive traits. It also includes factors such as a good lifestyle and personality. Debevec and Kernan (1984) also demonstrated that attractive celebrities are more likely to influence consumers' values.

2.2. Source Credibility Model

About the source credibility model, Hovland & Weiss (1953) argues that the effectiveness of the message is determined by the celebrity endorser's level of expertise in his or her field of expertise and the celebrity's trustworthiness. Ohanian (1990) is further studied this model. The source credibility model shows that products with a high level of credibility cause consumers to purchase more than products with a low level of credibility, which is of greater significance (Abbas et al., 2018). So, there is a need to support brands to switch and use resources or celebrities that make consumers more credible (Abbas et al., 2018). In the selection of celebrities, the company or brand needs to focus on the aspect of celebrity credibility because celebrities rely on the public to gain credibility, so no guarantee using celebrity endorsements will make the company successful. Among the N. Ahmed et al. (2014) results, celebrities with higher credibility will enable consumers to improve their purchasing decisions. Therefore, it follows that even if the celebrity is famous or popular if the public does not believe in him, there is no way to influence its purchase decision (N. Ahmed et al., 2014). The study conducted by Aziz et al. (2013) states that there is a positive correlation between consumer sentiment towards advertising, product and purchase decision, and celebrity credibility.

2.3. The Meaning Transfer Model

In 1989, McCracken proposed a model, the meaning transfer model. The model was designed to illustrate how celebrities use the effects of their advertising to attract consumers to make purchases. The model assumes that the celebrity represents a set of meanings to the consumer by providing cultural meanings such as personality, characteristics, and lifestyle (Ifeanyichukwu, 2016). Therefore, the model represents the transfer of the cultural meanings of celebrities to products and from products to consumers. Celebrities all have unique cultural meanings that they have acquired through their careers, which are transferred to the product when consumers encounter the celebrity's endorsed product. Eventually, they try to embody the meaning by purchasing the endorsed product (McCracken, 1989). The company should decide on how to choose an endorser based on the product's characteristics (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). It is an important decision for the company to choose a

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celebrity to endorse the product, which is in line with the product's characteristics. By choosing a celebrity endorser that matches the product's characteristics, consumers will trust the celebrity endorser more, and recognition of products will be better (Seiler & Kucza, 2017).

Based on these three models, key factors that influenced purchase decisions are identified: celebrity attractiveness, celebrity credibility, celebrity trustworthiness, and celebrity reliability.

2.4. Purchase Decision

The actions that consumers perform or take after buying and consuming a product are known as consumer behavior, and before making a purchase decision, consumers (each person, the household, or organization) engage in a decision-making process to determine whether they need the product or service (Armstrong et al., 2014). And the consumer conducts a decision in one of several alternative choices is called a purchase decision (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). According to Ebert et al. (2016), a study of the decision-making process that people undertake when buying and consuming products is a study of consumer behavior. Solomon (2011) defines the core of consumer behavior as the consumer's decision making, but the risk or novelty of a product's purchase can greatly affect the consumer's perception of the product, which can influence how the consumer chooses the product or influence the consumer's judgment in making a purchase decision.

2.5. Celebrity Attractiveness

The use of an endorser allows consumers to see the physical attractiveness of a celebrity and show their other strengths, such as excellent athletic ability, a healthy lifestyle, and good character (Maulani & Pratama, 2019). The concept of attractiveness means attractiveness from the physical aspect and personal characteristics, such as having good psychological, personality, and artistic talents (Erdogan, 1999). A study by Ha and Lam (2016) found that celebrity attractiveness will cause consumers to be more willing to buy and will make the ad more attractive. Tielung and Lombo (2014) argue that as marketers, to win the youth market, it is important to consider the importance of celebrity endorsements, as celebrity attractiveness is one of the important factors in young people's purchasing decisions. Suppose the consumer perceives that the celebrity has a high attractiveness, high credibility and that the celebrity's image matches the product, which are positive factors of consumers' purchase decisions (Zafar & Rafique, 2012).

2.6. Celebrity Credibility

The credibility of a celebrity endorser generally consists of three aspects: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990). Consumers believe that a celebrity endorser with expertise and knowledge of the brand will be an indicator that will help them judge the brand's products' credibility. It also suggests that factors such as expertise, knowledge, and other factors will help celebrities develop good credibility and help improve the brand image in consumers' minds (Hovland et al., 1953). The study by Ahmed et al. (2014) demonstrates that a celebrity endorser's credibility can be a very important influence on the consumer purchase of a particular product and improves the brand image of the endorser. Consumers' willingness to buy can be complicated by a celebrity's credibility, as consumers will learn a lot about a celebrity based on many ways (Rajasekar, 2018). The results of the study by Aziz et al. (2013) showed a positive correlation between celebrity credibility and consumer willingness to buy.

2.7. Celebrity Trustworthiness

Celebrity trustworthiness is made up of honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness (Erdogan et al., 2001). In other words, this refers to the truthfulness of what the endorser says in the advertisement or the objectivity of the endorser's opinion about the

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product. When consumers do not want to make too many rational judgments about the content of advertising messages or do not have much time to do so, they prefer to listen to the opinion of a credible professional before making a choice (Zhang et al., 2018). The public perceives celebrities as trustworthy (Goldsmith et al., 2000). According to Erdogan et al. (2001), integrity is made up of the factors of integrity, credibility, and honesty of the celebrity, the target consumer sees or perceives the celebrity as the message that is being conveyed. Carvalho (2012) defines credibility as the celebrity's willingness to make an effective statement about the product endorsed by the celebrity. It may also be related to material attractiveness and consumer sources. Some studies have found that if a celebrity endorses more and more products, then consumer trust and the impression of the brand decrease, affecting consumer purchase decisions (Kowalczyk, 2011). Through Seiler and Kucza's (2017) research, it can be determined that celebrity trustworthiness is paramount in determining consumers' attitudes towards brands, which in turn influences purchase intentions. Through research, Sertoglu et al. (2014) argue that celebrity endorsers' trustworthiness significantly affects purchase intentions.

2.8. Celebrity Reliability

Celebrity reliability is a positive trait, and people rely on the perceived reliability of their sources to judge the influence of the information they receive. The reliability of a celebrity depends primarily on how well the celebrity is portrayed to consumers in their personal professional and public spheres. A study by Goldsmith et al. (2000) states that consumers often see celebrities as a reliable source of information about the companies or products they endorse. Using reliable celebrity endorsers can help consumers build the brand image and influence their decisions when buying in stores (N. Ahmed et al., 2014). Friedman and Friedman (1979) noted that when advertisements promote products with high emotional or social risk, consumers will perceive the use of celebrity endorsements as more reliable than the use of non-celebrity endorsements. Mookerjee (2001) supports the argument that reliability regarding the source of consumers' decisions about their purchases is derived from celebrity endorsements. Companies use celebrities based on public recognition, so companies need to focus on celebrity reliability when choosing endorsers because it is positively correlated with consumers' willingness to buy (N. Ahmed et al., 2014). It has also been found that celebrity reliability affects consumer perceptions of advertised products and that celebrity endorsement in advertising boosts product sales and purchases, with people preferring to buy products when they are endorsed by a celebrity (D. R. R. Ahmed et al., 2015).

3. Research Methods and Materials

The researcher developed the conceptual framework from the aforementioned three models and previous research with similar independent variables: Celebrity Attractiveness, Celebrity Credibility, Celebrity Trustworthiness, and Celebrity reliability. The conceptual framework connects those independent variables and a dependent variable: the consumer's purchase decision of celebrity endorsement products.

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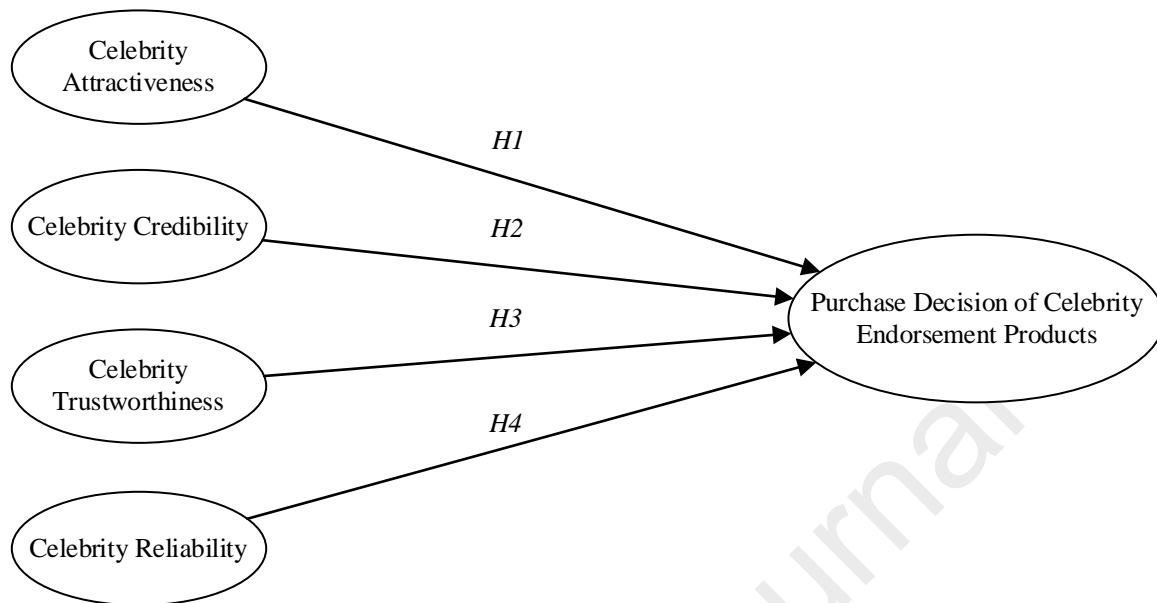


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

H_{1o}: Celebrity attractiveness does not impact customer purchase decisions of celebrity endorsement products.

H_{1a}: Celebrity attractiveness impacts customer purchase decisions of celebrity endorsement products.

H_{2o}: Celebrity credibility does not impact customer purchase decisions of celebrity endorsement products.

H_{2a}: Celebrity credibility impacts customer purchase decisions of celebrity endorsement products.

H_{3o}: Celebrity trustworthiness does not impact customer purchase decisions of celebrity endorsement products.

H_{3a}: Celebrity trustworthiness impacts customer purchase decisions of celebrity endorsement products.

H_{4o}: Celebrity reliability does not impact customer purchase decisions of celebrity endorsement products.

H_{4a}: Celebrity reliability impacts customer purchase decisions of celebrity endorsement products.

3.1. Methodology

For the purpose of this study, the researcher selected as a target population of Chinese people who live in Zhejiang Province and have purchased celebrity endorsed products. The data were collected through the online platform. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling were used for the sampling procedure. Descriptive analysis of demographic factors and multiple linear regression analysis for hypotheses testing were utilized.

3.2. Reliability Test

According to Cronbach (1951), if the Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.6, the variable used can be considered reliable. In this study, all variables had Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.7. Therefore, it is reliable to proceed using these questions in a comprehensive survey.

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Table 1: Pre-Testing Result (N=30)

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
<i>Dependent Variable</i>		
Purchase Decision	.843	4
<i>Independent Variable</i>		
Celebrity Attractiveness	.808	4
Celebrity Credibility	.712	4
Celebrity Trustworthiness	.895	4
Celebrity reliability	.905	4

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Demographic Profiles

The researchers collected 389 data from 389 respondents living in Zhejiang Province who have purchased celebrity-endorsed products. The researchers used an online questionnaire to collect primary data from 389 consumers in Zhejiang Province, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic Information of respondents (N=389)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	155	39.8%
Female	234	60.2%
<i>Age</i>		
Under 22 years old	61	15.7%
22-39 years old	183	47.0%
40-54 years old	98	25.2%
Over 55 years old	47	12.1%
<i>Monthly Income (US \$)</i>		
Less than 500	154	39.6%
501-1,050	123	31.6%
1,051-1,600	70	18.0%
1,601-2,150	28	7.2%
More than 2,150	14	3.6%

In Table 2, most of the respondents were female, with 234, accounting for 60.2%. In contrast, males accounted for 39.8%, with 155 respondents. The largest respondents were between 22-39 years old, with 183 respondents at 47%. There were 154 respondents with monthly incomes less than 500 US dollars, 39.6% of the respondents.

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4.2. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 3 shows that the R-squared value is 0.467, which indicates that 46.7% of the variation in purchase decision can be explained by the independent variables in this study, including celebrity attractiveness, celebrity credibility, celebrity trustworthiness, and celebrity reliability. Therefore, a further 53.3% of the variation in the impact of consumer purchasing decisions on celebrity-endorsed products is attributable to other independent variables.

Table 3: Model Summary from Multiple Regression Analysis

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.684	.467	.462	.58036

According to **Table 4**, the significant values for celebrity attractiveness, celebrity credibility, and celebrity reliability are less than 0.05, which means that a celebrity's attractiveness, credibility, and reliability have a statistically significant impact on consumers' purchase decisions. The significant value of a celebrity's trustworthiness is greater than 0.05, which indicates that a celebrity's trustworthiness has no significant impact on consumers' purchase decisions. The researcher can interpret the standardized beta as follows: when the celebrity's credibility increases by 1 unit, consumers will increase their decision to purchase the celebrity-endorsed product by 45.3%, followed by celebrity attractiveness and celebrity reliability, which are 20.4%, 16.6%, respectively.

Table 4: Multiple Linear Regression Results

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significant value	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Celebrity Attractiveness	.237	.050	.204	4.774	.000	.760	1.315
Celebrity Credibility	.502	.048	.453	10.429	.000	.735	1.361
Celebrity Trustworthiness	.051	.033	.059	1.532	.126	.935	1.070
Celebrity Reliability	.187	.051	.166	3.630	.000	.664	1.506
a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' purchase decision of celebrity endorsement products							

Akinwande et al. (2015) argue that, theoretically, the use of suppression variables in a regression model is allowed when the variance inflation factor (VIF) is less than 5. That is when the strength of the multicollinearity in the model does satisfy the condition. In this study, the VIF for celebrity attractiveness, celebrity credibility, celebrity trustworthiness, and celebrity reliability were 1.315, 1.361, 1.070, and 1.506, respectively, and their values were all less than 5, so in a sense, this means that all the independent variables are not highly correlated with each other, and there is no multicollinearity problem.

4.3. Hypothesis Testing Results

According to

Table 5, the significant values of attractiveness, credibility, and reliability are less than 0.05. Therefore, the hypotheses celebrity attractiveness (H1), celebrity credibility (H2), and celebrity reliability (H4) are supported. Moreover, the significant value of trustworthiness is greater than 0.05, so the hypothesis of celebrity trustworthiness (H3) is rejected. According to the standardized coefficient beta, celebrity credibility is the most influential factor in consumers' purchasing decisions for celebrity-endorsed products, followed by celebrity attractiveness and celebrity reliability.

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Table 5: Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypotheses	Significant value	Standardized Beta	Result
Celebrity Attractiveness	.000	.204	Support
Celebrity Credibility	.000	.453	Support
Celebrity Trustworthiness	.126	.059	Reject
Celebrity Reliability	.000	.166	Support
Note: Significant value < 0.05			

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to investigate which personal characteristics of celebrities will influence consumers' purchasing decisions and thus help more companies to select the right endorsers for their products in the future. The researcher developed the relevant conceptual framework from a comprehensive literature review on related models and previous studies. Then four independent variables were identified: Celebrity Attractiveness, Celebrity Credibility, Celebrity Trustworthiness, and Celebrity reliability. From Table 5, it can be concluded that celebrity attractiveness (H1), celebrity credibility (H2), and celebrity reliability (H4) have a significant impact on consumers' decision to purchase celebrity-endorsed products. However, unlike the findings of previous studies, celebrity trustworthiness (H3) has no statistically significant impact on consumers' decision to buy a celebrity-endorsed product, which may be due to the perception that celebrities are not always trustworthy, leading to distrust of the products they endorsed. The researcher believe that the above results are strongly related to the development of the modern economy. Many businesses choose to invite celebrities with a certain fan base to endorse their products to increase product sales. The results show that attractive celebrities increase product sales, and consumers are more likely to buy products endorsed by celebrities who are more credible and reliable. However, some celebrities exaggerate the quality or efficacy of their products for the high endorsement fees, which leads to a certain number of sales, but at the same time, the products purchased by consumers do not match the propaganda of the endorser, thus making more and more consumers believe that some celebrities are not very trustworthy.

5.1. Recommendations

This study's results can be beneficial for companies or brands in China to create new suitable strategies for consumers. It was found that celebrity attractiveness, celebrity credibility, and celebrity reliability are the factors that influence consumers' decision to buy celebrity endorsed products. Therefore, brands or companies should choose more attractive, credible, and reliable celebrities to endorse and promote their products, enhancing their brand image and gaining greater market share. The researcher suggests a few critical recommendations based on the low mean score of each variables' survey questions that influence purchase decisions supported by hypotheses testing. The first factor is celebrity credibility. It is also the strongest factor influencing consumers' purchasing decisions for celebrity-endorsed products. Brands or companies should focus on choosing more credible celebrity endorsers and looking for ways to improve celebrity credibility. It is best to choose the celebrity endorser wisely based on whether he or she has good credibility. The second strongest factor is celebrity attractiveness. Consumers are influenced by celebrity attractiveness when they buy products endorsed by celebrities. The company or brand needs to find ways to increase the attractiveness of the celebrity endorser. Therefore, choosing an endorser with a higher appeal will attract more consumers to buy the product. Moreover, the last factor is celebrity reliability. The company or brand needs to find ways to improve the quality of the product or service to improve the endorser's reliability.

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5.2. Limitations

In this current research, the researchers used both convenience sampling and snowball sampling. The researcher found that this study's results may not represent the entire population.

5.3. Further Studies

Further research can be extended to other provinces to survey consumers who are interested in purchasing products endorsed by celebrities. Based on the R-squared, the researchers found the value to be 0.467 (46.7%), which shows that the independent variables chosen for this study only affect 46.7%, still 53.3% of the value will be affected by other factors. So further research should consider other influencing factors, such as the product's quality, the celebrity's expertise, and the consumers' attitude towards celebrity endorsement.

Since the range of celebrities in this study was not specific and may include celebrities from other countries such as Korea, Japan, and the United States, the scope of the study is not precise enough. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on celebrities of a particular nationality in further research.

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