

CELEBRITIES ENDORSING IT, WHY SHOULD I BUY IT?

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Abstract

Celebrity endorsement distinguishes brands, influencing potential customers' perceptions of quality, instilling trust, and strengthening the link between brands and customers. The current research looks at the effect of celebrity endorsement on cosmetics brand purchase intent on Indian females. This research topic incorporates and integrates the source credibility theory and the S-O-R model that examines the impact of perceived quality and brand trust as moderated-mediating factors influencing the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention. A quantitative technique was used to evaluate and assess the hypothesized model based on 347 female respondents from India's metropolitan cities. The PLS-SEM findings show that celebrity endorsement has a considerable impact on purchase intention and the impact of the moderator and mediator variables on the link between the independent and dependent variables, which are statistically significant. The present study sheds new insights on the theoretical and practical contribution of the study to marketers and brand practitioners of cosmetics brands.

Research paper

Keywords: Celebrity endorsement; Purchase Intent; Brand-Trust; Perceived quality

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Introduction

Celebrity endorsement significantly impacts a company's bottom line and improves visibility, familiarity, and memory a brand may have due to its relationship with credible sources (ElHedhli et al., 2021). Celebrity endorsement refers to the promotion of a company's products by celebrities. Because of the notion that the value connected with a celebrity is transferred to the business and creates a unique image in the eyes of buyers, celebrity endorsement is one of the most important marketing strategies in India, and people begin to place their trust in approved brands that are also used by their favorite celebrities, resulting in good feedback (Kwajaffa et al., 2020). Customers are keener to notice celebrity-endorsed products and can easily recall the product (Rengarajan & Sathya, 2014). Celebrity endorsement results in high revenue; thus, marketers choose them to advertise their products, and it has become a popular way to create brands and improve a company's image. The corporation uses the celebrity's attributes and qualities to create an analogy with the product's specialty to position them in the eyes of potential customers (Jeganathan Gomathi Sankar & Indhuja, 2021).

Marketers should be cautious when choosing a celebrity to endorse their products since one lousy decision might lose revenue and the morality and ethical standard of the company's image in customers' eyes. Collaborating with the right persona to spread the brand's awareness is a win-win scenario, but it may also backfire if celebrities affiliated with the brand engage in questionable actions that could harm the brand's image (Munyoro & Nhevere,

2019). As a result, if companies want to sustain their position and operate in a way that contributes to their survival and competitive advantage, they must rethink their performance and properly deliver their commitments (Tajpour et al., 2018).

Celebrities are the most effective approach for marketers in India to get out to customers who follow their favorite celebrities. Consumers' trust in them encourages them to select and ultimately purchase products endorsed by their favorite celebrities (Phelps, 2018). Celebrity endorsement has remained one of the most utilized promotional tactics for brands. Celebrity endorsements have grown by 23% in the first half of 2021. Film stars accounted for more than 85% of advertising from celebrity professions, followed by sports personalities (The Financial Express, 2021).

The current study aims to add to the existing knowledge on celebrity endorsement and purchasing intent. First, a new theoretical model is created by combining source credibility and the S-O-R model. Second, this study will show how perceived quality and brand trust work as mediators and moderators in the link between celebrity endorsement and customer buying intent regarding the Indian cosmetics industry. Because of the cosmetic industry's rapid expansion and growth and Indian customers' rising demand for cosmetics due to demographic increase, improving socioeconomic conditions, and large-scale development of the digital and manufacturing sectors (Media India Group, 2021), it is critical for marketers to identify the main areas to focus on in order to drive customers' buying intent and establish trust in their brands.

Brand Trust is the most crucial aspect in converting trust into long-term loyalty, and customers do not hesitate to recommend that specific brand to their friends and families (Rageh Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). Customers loyal to a brand are also willing to spend a higher price for products they trust, encouraging them to buy and form long-term connections with brands (Nejati et al., 2011; Green, 2012; Aydin et al., 2014). Customers' perceptions of a brand result from subconscious thoughts that determine product quality based on what they see, feel, and hear. Some researchers have even examined whether the perceived quality is a predictor of brand loyalty and one of the most critical determinants in repurchase behavior (Tsiotsou, 2006).

Furthermore, no previous research had investigated brand trust as a moderator of celebrity endorsement and consumer buy intent. The current study can help marketers better understand female customers' choices of cosmetic brands, how women perceive quality, and establish confidence in specific brands (Radovic Markovic et al., 2012). As a result, marketers can detect and analyze marketing strategy flaws and devise a novel approach to maintain a competitive advantage in a highly competitive market. Consumers buy what they trust as they continue to experiment with new products and brands based on their perceptions of the quality and trustworthiness of brands. Celebrity endorsement is just one way to market products and attract customers' attention; what matters more is how people judge a brand's quality and develop trust to stay loyal to the brand they trust the most, which helps companies maintain competitive advantage and loyal customers at the same time (Salamzadeh, 2015). As a result, the main aim of the research is to how perceived

quality and brand trust moderate and control and reinforce the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intent by integrating source credibility and the S-O-R model.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Source Credibility Theory

According to this theory, receivers of message trust the source when it seems credible to them (Belknap, 1954). Source credibility represents three characteristics of the source, i.e., expertise when the source has knowledge about the products and can easily persuade potential customers towards buying the products. Attractiveness represents when the source is elegant, beautiful, and attractive enough to incline potential buyers towards accepting the source's information as reliable. Trustworthiness represents receivers' trust and acceptance of the sender's information (RoobinaOhanian, 1990). Previous research has demonstrated that higher message agreement is induced by source expertise and trustworthiness, and Audiences rely on endorsers with a high level of expertise and trustworthiness (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018).

On the other hand, Source attractiveness works through two mechanisms: identification and internalization. Because of the identification process, when a source is associated with a brand, the consumer is drawn to the source and has a positive attitude about the product. The internalization mech-

anism, which causes customers to evaluate things depending on the attractiveness of the source, is responsible for the persuasive effect. (ElHedhli et al., 2021).

A credible source can persuade potential buyers to purchase specific products/services (Zhang et al., 2014). Customers are more inclined to believe information received from a reputable source and consider their message more authentic; thus, celebrities are chosen as the credible source of information in the present study.

S-O-R Model

According to S.O.R. (Stimulus -Organism-Response) theory, organisms are instigated by external stimuli that initiate internal cognitive and affective evaluation, resulting in behavioral response (Cheung et al., 2021). The consumer's assessment of a brand's quality is a subjective process influenced by external stimuli and internal response (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019).

In the present study, stimulus or external factor is conceptualized as the celebrity's credibility (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness) that instigates individuals' response towards the brand's choice. Organism or internal processes that intermediate between external and final responses are conceptualized as perceived quality. Finally, response towards the stimuli is conceptualized as an intention to buy specific cosmetics brands. According to this model, customers sentiments play an essential role in responding to environmental stimuli (Hetharie et al., 2019). Thus, in the present research, ce-

lebrity endorsement is the environmental stimuli, perceived quality is the mediator or organism, and purchase intention is the behavioral response of customers towards endorsed brands.

Celebrity endorsement & perceived quality

Customers create an intangible perception of product quality following a careful assessment known as perceived quality (Keller, 2008; Radović-Marković et al., 2013). Also, according to some researchers, perceived quality is "the customer's perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service concerning its intended purpose relative to alternatives" (Aaker, 1991). Brands backed by celebrities have a more significant impact than brands endorsed by non-celebrities, and they establish a strong product perception (Rachbini, 2018). Customers trust brands supported by their favorite celebrities because they assume the brands recommended by celebrities will be of excellent quality (Sabir et al., 2014).

Celebrities associated with brands pretend to be the way they are because of brands they are endorsing to make an impression on customers' minds and build a strong perception of products (Jamil & Hassan, 2014). If a celebrity builds confidence for products in potential customers' eyes, it improves customers' perceived quality level in customers' minds (Sabir *et al.*, 2014; Muda et al., 2017). Customers are inclined towards those brands with a high perceived quality that influences the willingness of customers to buy the products, which inversely maintains a unique position of brands in a competitive market (Evans, 1981; Hellofs and Jacobson, 1999).

H1: celebrity endorsement has a positive impact on perceived quality

Perceived quality and purchase intention

Perceived quality is the customers' perceptions of the added value to products and services rather than their actual quality (Bhuan, 1997; Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived quality adds value to the brand and gives a reason to customers to buy specific products by distinguishing the brand from other competitive brands (Asshidin et al., 2016).

Customers distinguish products based on perceptions of overall performance and brand names (Asshidin et al., 2016). Some studies even showed perceived quality as the crucial factor impacting customer satisfaction that results in purchase decisions (Szymanski and Henard, 2001). The current research examines how consumers assess the quality of celebrity-endorsed cosmetic products and how this influences their purchasing decisions.

H2: Perceived Quality has a positive impact on Purchase Intention

Celebrity endorsement and purchase intention

Consumers associate a pleasant feeling with the brand endorsed by a credible source, which boosts their desire to purchase it over others (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019). When a brand and a celebrity's attributes or personality go hand in hand, consumers feel more connected and attracted, which

increases their desire to buy (Khan et al., 2019; Ebrahimi et al., 2021). Customers are more likely to remember products advertised by celebrities than those advertised by non-celebrities, and they make more informed purchase decisions (Rengarajan and Sathya, 2014). Customers adopt the values they adore in celebrities (Ronay & VonHippel, 2010) and are attracted to purchasing those brands endorsed by their favorite celebrities (Ohanian, 1991).

One of the most critical dimensions of celebrities, i.e., expertise, is considered to be influential in persuading customers and impacting customer purchase intention (Nart and Kanibir, 2009; Banyté et al., 2011). They are followed by physical attractiveness, especially in cosmetic products (face creams, soaps, hair colors, etc.) that capture customers' minds (Dix et al., 2010). Customers are also influenced and persuaded by celebrity and product match-up, as they begin to predict that celebrities are also consuming those products (Kahle & Homer, 1985).

H3: The association between celebrity credibility and intent to buy is mediated by perceived quality.

H4: Celebrity-endorsed brands have a positive impact on consumer buying intent.

Brand trust as a moderator

Brand Trust is "the willingness of the consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function" (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Trust in a brand determines a customer's attitude and buying intention towards

it(Al-Debei et al., 2015). Information related to brand usage patterns and stories reduces asymmetrical information and uncertainty that create trust by creating value(Mammadli, 2021). Not only does trust enhance purchase intent, but it also improves the quality of customer-brand relationships (Moslehpour et al., 2021).

The more trust customers' have in a brand, the more likely they will buy it (Delgado-Ballester & Luis Munuera-Alemán, 2001). Some researchers have concluded that the personal attributes of the source endorsing the brand have a significant impact on enhancing the confidence in a brand (Lassoued & Hobbs, 2015). When a famous person affiliated with the brand endorses it, trust grows. Building brand trust aims to create a long-term sustainable advantage for the brand in a fiercely competitive market (Ha, 2004). Trust in a brand also strengthens the relationship between two parties and creates a long-term association between a brand and consumer (Liu et al., 2012).

If a brand fulfills the expectations of a customer's minimum requirement, the trust in the brand continues to be maintained. Still, when unable to meet the customers' expectations, they will become distrustful and suspicious about the brand (Lau & Lee, 1999). Brand trust influences purchase decisions and have a favorable effect on buying decisions, lowers the risk of ambiguity, and enhances the intention to buy. Some researchers have concluded that the rate of purchase intention and repurchase behavior grows with increased brand trust (Chinomona et al., 2013; Sanny et al., 2020).

The above literature review forms below mentioned hypotheses:

H5: The association between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention is moderated by brand trust, with relationships being stronger when brand trust is higher and vice versa.

Figure 1 shows the current research study's research model based on a literature review.

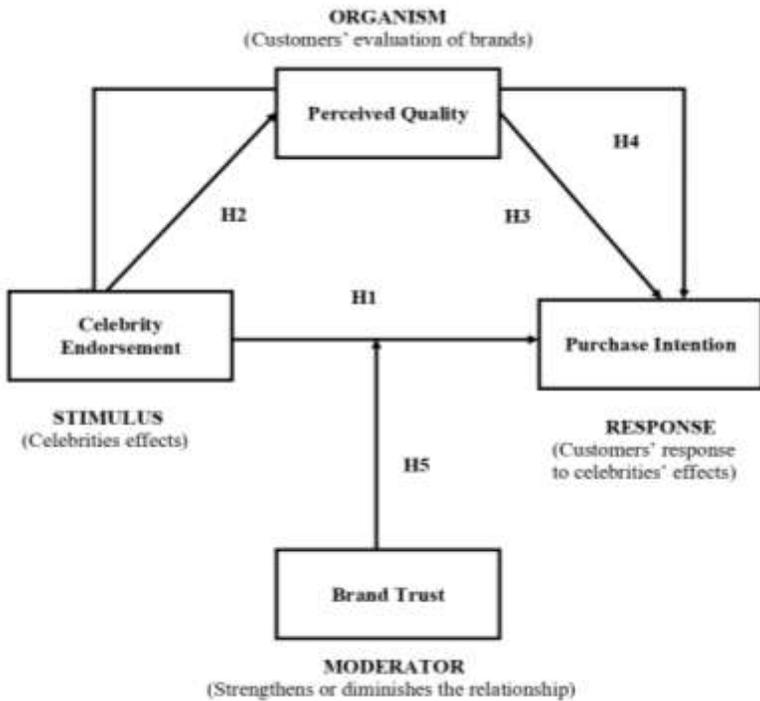


Figure 1. Research Model

Methodology

Measures

The present research measurement items are taken from previously validated research studies, and a total of 21 items are adopted to measure four constructs and are assessed using 5 points Likert scale (1- "strongly disagree" to 5 – "strongly agree"). Celebrity endorsement, Perceived Quality, Purchase Intention, and Brand Trust are the four constructs in the study model, abbreviated as **C.E., P.Q., P.I., and B.T.**

(1) Source credibility - For the measurement of celebrities' credibility (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness), the questionnaires are adopted and modified as per the current study from (McCracken, 1989; Roobina Ohanian, 1990; Rashid et al., 2002).

(2) Perceived quality- For measuring perceived quality, the questionnaires are adopted from previously validated studies (Spry et al., 2011).

(3) Brand Trust- To show the impact of moderators on the association between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention, the questionnaires are adopted and modified from previously validated studies (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003; Li et al., 2008).

(4) Purchase intention- To explore the impact of independent, mediator, and moderator variables on dependent variables, the questionnaires are adopted (Tingchi Liu & Brock, 2011).

Sampling Procedure

The authors have applied the non-probability sampling method by using the convenience sampling technique to collect data from Indian female respondents as it is convenient to collect data online through different social media platforms (Facebook, what's app, Instagram.) (Radović-Marković et al., 2019; Salamzadeh et al., 2019; Bouzari et al., 2021). Initially, 21 questions were administered in a survey questionnaire and provided to 30 female respondents to ensure the comprehensiveness of questions. Questions were modified based on feedback from the small group, and the survey was then sent to the sample group to gather and analyze the response.

Descriptive Statistics

SPSS v.25 is used for descriptive analysis. **Table 1** reflects the demographic profile of 347 female respondents. The respondents' age ranges from 20 to 40 years old and above. The highest percentage (40.6%) of respondents fall into the age group of 20-24, and then 34.3% of respondents were in the age group of 25-29 years old, 11.8 % respondents were in the age group of 30-34 years old, 11.2% respondents in the age group of 35-39 years old remaining 2% respondents were in the age group 40 and above. Respondents were asked to choose an occupation, and the Table below shows that 34.6% of respondents were students, 51.3% were working professionals, 9.2% were businesswomen, and 4.9% of respondents chose "others" as an occupation.

Table 1. Respondents' profiles (n=347)

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-24	141	40.6
25-29	119	34.3
30-34	41	11.8
35-39	39	11.2
40 and above	7	2
Total	347	100
Occupation		
Student	120	34.6
Working professionals	178	51.3
Businesswoman	32	9.2
Other	17	4.9
Total	347	100

Results

The smart PLS-SEM technique is employed to test the research model and hypothesis testing because of its ability to assess the link between constructs with numerous items and focus on endogenous variables (Jöreskog and Wold, 1982; Henseler, 2017). Smart P.L.S. is a statistical method that relaxes the rigorous normality assumption and is suited for the mediation or moderation model. It may also be used to evaluate existing theories in an exploratory manner (Joseph F.Hair et al., 2019; Ringle et al., 2020). The analysis of data includes the study of the outer model to check reliability and validity, and research of the inner model to test the variance of exogenous variables and to test the hypothesis by running the Bootstrapping method and finally running the blindfolding technique to check the predictive relevance of the structural model.

Measurement Model

Factor loadings, convergent validity, and internal consistency were examined to assess the quality of the outer model (Joseph F. Hair et al., 2019). The results of the outer model show that the factor loadings of most of the indicators are above the cut-off value of 0.7 (Joseph F. Hair et al., 2019). Out of 21 items, five items were deleted due to low factor loading. The deleted items are CE5, CE6, PI1, PI2, and PQ4 & BT4, as clearly shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Factor Loadings of constructs

CON-STRUCTS	Celebrity endorsement	Perceived quality	Brand trust	Purchase Intention
CE1_	0.813			
CE2_	0.841			
CE3	0.771			
CE4_	0.785			
PQ1_		0.761		
PQ2_		0.84		
PQ3_		0.82		
PQ5_		0.796		
BT1_			0.779	
BT2_			0.885	
BT3_			0.828	
BT5_			0.766	
BT6_			0.853	
PI3_				0.857
PI4				0.807
PI5				0.882

Reliability and convergent validity

Construct reliability determines how consistent a reflective item or group of reflective items measures what it claims to measure (Straub et al.,

2004). As described in **Table 3**, Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, composite reliability, and Average Variance Extracted are calculated to assess convergent validity (Jr et al., 2017). Cronbach's Alpha and Composite reliability are used to test internal consistency, and the findings are > 0.7 , indicating that the variables are reliable (Nunnally, 1975). Also, AVE (grand mean value of squared loadings) and factor loadings indicate the convergent validity of constructs, and AVE meets the accepted value, i.e., > 0.5 . According to the below Table, all indicators are reliable and capable of explaining the variables in the current study (Bagozzi & Singh, 1991).

Table 3. Convergent reliability of constructs

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	Composite reliability	AVE
Celebrity Endorsement	0.817	0.822	0.879	0.645
Perceived Quality	0.819	0.826	0.88	0.648
Brand Trust	0.881	0.891	0.913	0.678
Purchase Intention	0.808	0.823	0.886	0.722

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity shows how every construct differs from other constructs in the theoretical framework (Scholar, 2018). According to some researchers, discriminant validity should be investigated using HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) method, with cut-off values of 0.85 and 0.90, suggesting the formation of discriminant validity between two reflective constructs. Thus, below **Table 4** presents all values of the HTMT (Heterotrait-monotrait) ratio are below the critical importance of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2014)

Table 4. Assessment of Discriminant Validity (HTMT<0.85)

Con-struct	Brand Trust	Celebrity endorse-ment	Purchase Inten-tion	Perceived qual-ity
B.T.				
C.E.	0.527			
P.I.	0.437	0.584		
P.Q.	0.381	0.529	0.696	

Note: BT-Brand Trust, C.E.- Celebrity Endorsement, P.I.- Purchase Intention, P.Q.- Perceived Quality

Structural model

Following the measurement model's analysis, the structural model's validation is reported using the coefficient of determination, i.e., R^2 , t-values, and p-values using bootstrapping with resampling of 5000 (Hair et al., 2019).

R^2 values determine the model's accuracy, and the R^2 value of purchase intention is 0.400, and perceived quality is 0.190, both of which are higher than the threshold of 0.10 (Falk and Miller, 1992). Finally, t-values and p-values assist in examining the direct link between Celebrity Endorsement, Perceived Quality, and Purchase Intention. Firstly, we investigated the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable, followed by the relation of the mediating variable to the dependent variable, to analyze the significant relationship between all these variables.

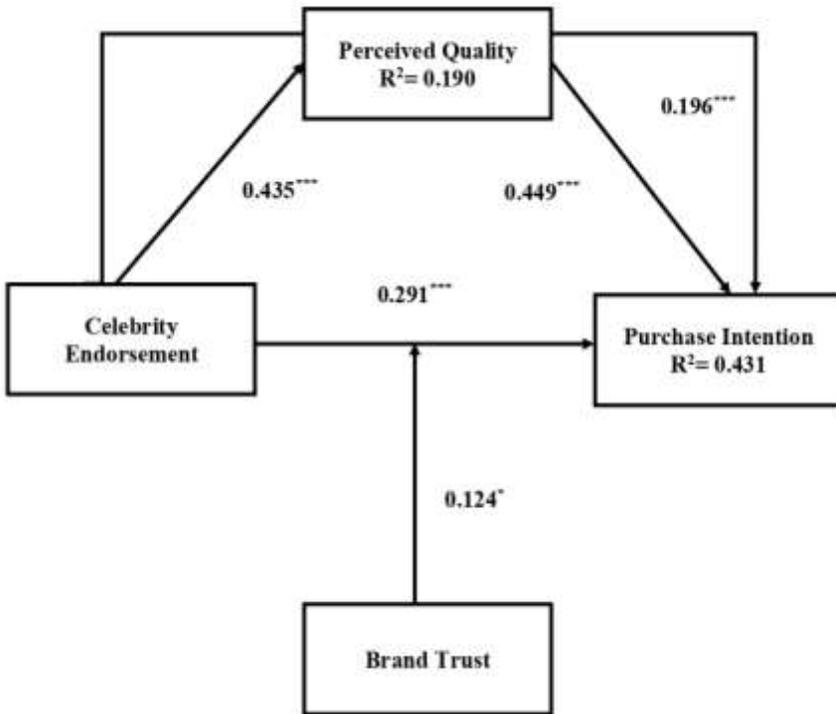


Figure 2. Structural Model

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Coefficient of determinants (R²) and Effect size

The next step in structural model evaluation is to explain the predictive power of the structural model, as reflected in **Table 8**. The first step is to calculate variance (R²) and see if a latent dependent variable substantially affects independent variables. Perceived quality has an R² value of 0.19, which

explains a small variance, and Purchase intention explains average variance with an R^2 value of 0.431.

Also, calculation on the f^2 value aids in the R^2 determination of endogenous variables. The f^2 value ranging from "0.02, 0.15, and 0.35" represents "small, medium, and large effects" of exogenous latent variables (Biometrika, 1974). Thus, the f^2 value of CE > PI is 0.115, CE > PQ is 0.234 and CE > PI is 0.272, explaining moderate effects.

Predictive Relevance (Q²)

Furthermore, to examine the model's predictive significance, the blindfolding technique is employed (Biometrika, 1974). The first step is to look at the Q^2 value produced for endogenous variables. Any value above 0 shows in-sample predictive power (Hair et al., 2020). The Q^2 for Perceived Quality is 0.12, and the Q^2 value of Purchase Intention is 0.295, as shown in **Table 6**. Thus, showing moderate in-sample predictive power (Hair et al., 2020). Furthermore, the variance inflation factor (V.I.F.) of predictor' variables is >5, indicating no multicollinearity in the inner model.

Global Goodness of Fit (GoF)

Global goodness of fit is used to determine the overall predictive power of the model and calculated by the below formula:

$$\text{GoF} = \sqrt{AVE} \times \sqrt{R^2} = \sqrt{0.67325} \times \sqrt{0.431} = 0.538$$

The goodness of fit for the present model was 0.53 that shows good explaining power (GoF_{small}= 0.10, GoF_{Medium}= 0.25, GoF_{Large}= 0.36) (Wetzels et al., 2009).

Another significant criterion for evaluating the goodness of fit is the SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Residual) and NFI (Normed Fit Index) values. The value of the SRMR index should not be less than 0.08, and the value for the NFI index should be closer to 1 (J.Hair et al., 2017). The results below show the model fitting and cross-validation.

Table 5. Model fitting values

Fit Summary	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.063	0.072
NFI	0.840	0.843

VAF Test

V.A.F. test was used to investigate the mediating role of perceived quality in the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention. The below formula calculates the V.A.F.:

$$VAF = (a \times b) \div (a \times b) + c$$

- a. The value of the independent variable and mediator coefficient path is 0.432.
- b. The value of mediator and dependent variable path coefficient is 0.449.
- c. The value of the independent and dependent variable path coefficient is 0.196.

By putting the value of a, b, & c in the V.A.F. formula, the value obtained is 0.49, indicating partial mediation's role for perceived quality construct.

Table 6. Predictive Power of Structural Model

Constructs	R²	Q²	f²(effect size)	V.I.F.
Perceived Quality	0.190 <small>(small)</small>	0.120 <small>(moderate)</small>	-	-
Purchase Intention	0.431 <small>(moderate)</small>	0.295 <small>(moderate)</small>	-	-
C.E.> P.I.	-	-	0.115 <small>(small)</small>	1.414
C.E.> P.Q.	-	-	0.234 <small>(moderate)</small>	1.000
P.Q.> P.I.	-	-	0.272 <small>(moderate)</small>	1.270
C.E.* B.T.>PI	-	-	0.030 <small>(small)</small>	1.005

Hypothesis testing

The hypothesis designed in the study, tested by using the value of t-statistics and p-value. Hypothesis accepted based on t-statistics value > 1.96 and p-value < 0.05. Thus, Below **Figure 2 & Table 7** is obtained by using Smart-PLS to test the significance level of variables and suggested that all hypothesis designed are supported with t value > 1.96 at p-value < 0.05.

Thus, **Table 7** summarized as:

1. Celebrity endorsement has a positive impact on purchase intent.
2. Celebrity Endorsement has a positive impact on perceived quality.
3. Perceived quality has a positive impact on Purchase Intention.
4. Perceived quality has a positive mediation effect on the association between celebrities endorsed brands and Customers' purchase intention.
5. Brand trust positively impacts the association between celebrity-endorsed brands and customers' purchase intention.

Table 7. Test Result of Path Coefficient

Hypothesis	Path	Direction of Relation	Path coefficient	Decision
H1	CE -> PI	Positive	0.291***	Supported
H2	CE -> PQ	Positive	0.435***	Supported
H3	PQ -> PI	Positive	0.449***	Supported

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Additionally, mediating role and total effects are also calculated with the help of the bootstrapping method, as represented in **Table 8**. It shows that the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention via perceived quality is statistically significant at a p-value of 0.000. The moderation effect of brand trust, as reflected in **Table 9**, is also statistically significant at a p-value of 0.039.

Table 8. Test Results of Structural Indirect, Direct and Total Effects

Exogenous Variable	Endogenous Variable	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Celebrity Endorsement	Purchase Intention	0.291***	0.196***	0.487***
Perceived Quality		0.449***		0.449***
Celebrity Endorsement	Perceived Quality	0.435***		0.435***

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 9. Test Results of Moderation Effect

Path	Moderating Effect	Decision
CE*BT -> PI	0.124*	Supported

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Discussion

The present study develops a conceptual model by integrating source credibility and the S-O-R model in the Indian context. Based on previous literature, it illuminates the significant impact of celebrity endorsement on Indian female customers and their purchase behavior. It also explores the impact of perceived quality as mediating variable and Brand trust as moderating variable on the association between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention. Increased beauty product use in India, particularly among women, has spawned new trends and provided cosmetics companies with substantial potential. As a result, the effort of this present study contributes to the current body of knowledge in the following ways:

First, the research sheds light on celebrities' role and their effects on customers' purchase intention. The results show a statistically significant effect of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention, which aligns with previous studies (Parayitam et al., 2020), but in contradiction with the result of (Singh & Banerjee, 2018). Thus, if the source is trustworthy, beautiful, and knowledgeable, the audience begins to associate the source's attributes with the brand, resulting in favorable behavior and predisposition toward that brand.

Second, the results show a significant impact of celebrity endorsement on customers' perceived quality of brands; this shows that information offered by well-known face seem more reliable and relevant to customers that result in the impression of higher quality of products, and so celebrity endorsing it

is regarded as a quality indicator (Khan et al., 2021). Furthermore, the findings reveal a significant direct and indirect effect of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention mediated by perceived quality, demonstrating that the endorser's characteristics play a critical role in instilling a positive perception of product quality in customers' minds, leading them to purchase a specific product. These findings corroborate prior research findings that demonstrate endorsers influence perceived quality and generate brand loyalty for a brand in the minds of buyers (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019).

Also, the present study aimed to highlight the relationship between celebrities endorsed brands and the intention to purchase using brand confidence/trust as a moderating variable. Not many studies show brand confidence/trust as the moderator for prominence and the will to buy (Febrian & Fadly, 2021). The results show a statistically significant impact of brand trust as a moderator. The study results can be helpful to marketers to broaden the insight to decide which areas they should invest more energy in, drive new business and increase market receptiveness. Also, consumers now have various brand choices, and brand trust could be a competitive differentiator that impacts customers' attitudes towards a particular brand.

Theoretical implications of the study

The present study adds value to the existing literature as it shows that the relationship between the independent variable (celebrity endorsement) and mediating variable (perceived quality) is stronger than the direct relationship between the independent (celebrity endorsement) and dependent variable

(purchase intention). Thus, marketers and practitioners of cosmetic brands in India can benefit from these implications as they can focus more on enhancing the credibility of celebrities through exposure and maintaining continuous communication through different advertising platforms (T.V., social media apps, magazines, etc.) (Radovic Markovic & Salamzadeh, 2018) that can develop and improve the positive perceived quality of brands in the minds of potential customers.

Second, the present research has extended the S-O-R model by including the specific antecedents of celebrity endorsement and analyzed the direct, indirect, and total effects of antecedents on purchase intention with perceived quality as a mediator and investigated the effect of brand trust as a moderator between source credibility and purchase intention. Celebrities act as external stimuli that can instigate the organism (potential buyers) to respond positively or negatively towards the selection and preference of cosmetic brands. Thus, marketers should pay attention to those celebrities who are attractive, famous, reliable, and trustworthy to maintain customers' trust and develop positive perceptions towards the quality of products that could lead them to buy specific brands.

Third, the inclusion of brand trust as a moderator in the S-O-R model shows significant interaction between celebrity effects and purchase intention. This reveals that confidence in the brand plays a vital role in maintaining the status quo and competitive advantage. Thus, marketers should emphasize maintaining the customers' trust in the brand to enhance their purchase & repurchase behavior. It is evident from the study that celebrities' credibility

plays a significant role in developing positive perceived quality and strengthening trust in a brand; thus, marketers should choose the right celebrity who can maintain the right image in the minds of customers and are expert and possess the proper knowledge about the products.

Practical implications of the study

Due to the abundance of cosmetics brands, it is difficult to stand out uniquely and get into customers' minds, so marketers must employ the appropriate method to be recognized. People are increasingly likely to follow and adopt the lifestyles of their favorite celebrities as social media usage rises. People are more likely to buy goods supported by their favorite celebrities if they have more significant interaction with them, so marketers and advertisement practitioners should choose the right person to advertise their brand, someone who has a positive public image, is trustworthy, attractive, knowledgeable, and can easily persuade potential customers to buy the products. In addition, the marketers and practitioners need to consider whether the public image of celebrities could fit into the brand image or not.

Marketers should also be aware that one celebrity supporting multiple products can potentially change people's perceptions of brands and cause them to lose trust in them, leading to customers switching to a competitor. As a result, marketers must carefully spend in various forms of marketing to generate more revenues and remain competitive in a highly competitive industry. Marketers should provide only as much information as is necessary while remaining truthful. This will assist consumers in making an easy decision to

purchase a product while also maintaining brand trust, which is one of the most critical factors in bolstering the relationship between celebrity credibility and customer purchasing intent. Thus, managers of brands should focus on collaborating with the right celebrity to maintain a stronghold over their potential targets and position their brands in customers' minds to enhance their buying decision. Furthermore, the manager may want to consider developing techniques for increasing brand trust, such as providing after-sale services, preserving client intimacy, promoting reliable items, producing irreplaceable value, and ensuring that messages are consistent.

Conclusions

This study focused on the impact of celebrities on the Indian market, specifically on female customers' attitudes toward evaluating and trusting different cosmetics brands, which leads them to choose and purchase a specific brand over another. Based on 347 Indian females, the study's findings confirm that celebrities' credibility (attractiveness, expertise & trustworthiness) play a significant role in developing and maintaining the positive perceived quality of brands in the minds of Indian female customers. Additionally, the results show that trust in a brand has a statistically significant moderating effect on the association between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention. Considering research findings and subsequent discussion, both marketers and academics would be interested in exploring novel ways to choose the right face to market and improve the satisfying experience of cosmetics users in the future.

Limitations and future research

The research also has certain limitations; firstly, as we can see, the R^2 value of purchase intention is 0.431, which means celebrity endorsement, perceived quality, brand trust jointly explained only 43.1% variance in purchase intention, indicating 56.9% variance in the intent of purchase explained by factors not included in the study. Future investigations could identify the constructs that define the remainder of the variance in purchase intentions, such as brand attitude, personality, customer satisfaction, and para-social relationships. If specified and included in the study, these factors can help marketers better understand their customers' purchasing intentions to grow their customer base and maintain their competitive advantage. Furthermore, because this current study only focuses on female beauty products, future studies should include other industries, with both male and female populations contributing significantly to the existing literature.

Second, we studied the behavior of the female population in India's metropolitan cities toward cosmetic brand buying intent; in the future, both male and female population behavior in urban and rural areas could be studied to explore the impact of intervening factors that drive customers' buying intent, as cosmetic products are no longer restricted to metro and mini metro areas but are equally available in rural areas due to expansion in demographic growth and social and economic trends.

Third, as various social media platforms emerge, marketers have more opportunities to endorse their brands by celebrities and social media influencers who are more connected (Moghadamzadeh et al., 2020; Tajpour et al.,

2021 a,b). Future research could also investigate the differences in the impact of well-known celebrities and social media influencers on customers' purchasing intentions.

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