

Endorser Credibility as a Driver of Consumer Attitude and Purchase Intention: A S-O-R Framework

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Received:25-04-2026, Accepted: 30-05-2026
DOI Number: 10.5281/zenodo 21002613

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the effects of the perceived attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of celebrity endorsers used in advertisements on brand attitude, as well as the effect of brand attitude on purchase intention, within the framework of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model. Data were collected from 260 consumers through a survey, and structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the proposed research model. The results indicate that the perceived attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of celebrities have direct, significant, and positive effects on brand attitude. Furthermore, brand attitude was found to have a direct, significant, and positive effect on purchase intention. The findings are discussed in relation to the relevant literature, and theoretical and managerial implications are presented.

Keywords: Celebrity Endorsers, Endorser Credibility, Brand Attitude, Purchase Intention, S-O-R Model

JEL Code: M31, M37, D91

1. Introduction

In contemporary marketing strategies, the use of celebrity endorsers in advertising and promotional activities plays a key role in brands gaining a competitive advantage (Erdogan, 1999). Today, brands in many sectors, from banking to jewelry, clothing to cosmetics, food and beverage to automotive and e-commerce platforms, aim to influence consumer perception by featuring celebrities in their advertisements. This practice is not limited to promoting products; it also has the potential to build the brand's corporate image and establish credibility in the eyes of the consumer (Annis, 2021); celebrities transfer value to the brand through their popularity, influence, and image, increasing the brand's attractiveness and trustworthiness and mediating the establishment of an emotional bond between the consumer and the brand (Thomson, 2006). This strategic approach has become an important tool for brands to create awareness in the minds of consumers and develop positive perceptions of their products (Aksoy et al., 2021). Furthermore, it has been empirically demonstrated that the perceived trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise of celebrities are

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important in influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors, affecting purchasing decisions, and transforming perceptions (Ohanian, 1990; Till & Busler, 2000). In this context, it is observed that these three fundamental characteristics strengthen brand attitude and ultimately increase purchase intention (Jun, 2023; Dholakiya, 2025); therefore, it can be said that strategies based on celebrity use play a critical role in brands gaining prestige, strengthening brand image, and increasing sales performance.

The main objective of this study is to examine the effects of the perceived attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness dimensions of celebrities on brand attitude and the process by which this attitude evolves into purchase intention within the framework of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model. The originality of the study lies in its positioning of celebrity endorser characteristics as stimuli initiating the process, brand attitude as the organism representing the consumer's internal evaluation process, and purchase intention as the response, an output of the mental process, rather than focusing on direct relationships between variables (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

Another contribution of the study is the positioning of brand attitude not only as an outcome variable but also as an intermediary mechanism in the process leading to purchase intention. The structural framework of the study is built upon Ohanian's (1990) three-dimensional Source Credibility model, analyzing the causal links between these dimensions and purchase intention through a multidimensional model (Ohanian, 1990; Spears & Singh, 2004).

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

S-O-R Model

The S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model is a fundamental theoretical framework that explains how environmental factors affect individuals' internal states and how this interaction translates into ultimate behaviors (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). The S-O-R model assumes that a stimulus undergoes a series of processes within the organism before leading to a response (Jacoby, 2002). The model describes a process in which environmental factors (stimulus) influence individuals' internal states (organism) and consequently their approach/avoidance behavior (response). In the S-O-R model adapted by Mehrabian and Russell, the stimuli refer to the effects that awaken the individual (Eroglu et al., 2003). This model, frequently used in marketing literature, provides a strong foundation for understanding how marketing stimuli shape consumers' attitudes toward a brand and how these attitudes evolve into behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention (Eroglu et al., 2003). Particularly in studies using celebrities, the characteristics of the source act as a stimulus, while the perceptual processes the consumer develops toward this source represent the organism, and the final purchase decision represents the response (Chan et al., 2013).

Source Credibility and Source Attractiveness Model

In communication and marketing sciences, two fundamental theoretical frameworks explaining the persuasiveness and effectiveness of a message on the recipient are the Source Credibility and Source Attractiveness Models (McGuire, 1985; Ohanian, 1990). These models play a critical role in understanding the influence of celebrities on brand attitude and purchase intentions (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999; Aksoy et al., 2021). Both models provide a theoretical foundation for marketing strategies by explaining how the perceived characteristics of the source affect the message acceptance process (McCracken, 1989; Sertoglu et al., 2014).

Source Credibility Model

The Source Credibility Model is one of the cornerstones of communication research and was developed through the Yale studies on source credibility conducted by Hovland and Weiss (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Byberg, 2015). This model suggests that the persuasive effect of a message depends largely on the perceived credibility of the source conveying it. The model addresses credibility in two basic dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness. Expertise refers to the perception that the source possesses the knowledge, skills, experience, or qualifications related to the subject (Ulkhay et al., 2016), while trustworthiness represents the perception that the source is honest, sincere, objective, and reliable. Advertisers generally benefit from this characteristic by choosing celebrities who are perceived as trustworthy, credible, and sincere. A source with high credibility reduces the receiver's resistance to the message and significantly increases the likelihood of the message being accepted (Shimp, 1997). The Source Credibility model argues that information from a reliable source changes the recipient's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors through a process of internalization, and that this effect is permanent over time (Yolaçan & Özeltürkay, 2018).

Source Attractiveness Model

The Source Attractiveness Model was developed by William J. McGuire (1985) as a complementary framework to the Source Credibility Model (Muda et al., 2014). This model explains message effectiveness through how attractive the source is perceived by the target audience, and its basic mechanism is the identification process. Identification means that the recipient accepts the message as a result of wanting to resemble the source or establish a relationship with it (Um & Jang, 2020). The basic dimensions of the Source Attractiveness Model are the perceived similarity, likeability, and familiarity of the source. The concept of attractiveness is a broad one, encompassing not only physical appearance but also other admirable qualities such as intelligence, personality, traits, lifestyle, or athletic abilities (Yıldırım, 2014; Erdogan, 1999). A celebrity perceived as attractive is considered more effective in positively influencing consumer attitudes and beliefs, especially when it comes to low-involvement products or products related to personal image (Byberg, 2015). While attractiveness is often associated with physical appearance, encompassing qualities such

as beauty, grace, and style (Ohanian, 1990; Amos et al., 2008), it also includes other admirable qualities such as intellectual abilities, personality traits, lifestyle, or athletic abilities (Erdogan, 1999).

Integrated Approach: Ohanian's Three-Dimensional Scale

In the field of marketing and advertising, there has been a need for an integrated approach that combines the dimensions of these two models in order to measure the influence of celebrities more comprehensively and empirically (Sertoglu et al., 2014). In response to this need, Ohanian (1990) created the three-dimensional scale used to measure the perceived effectiveness of celebrities, which is the most widely accepted scale today (Ulkhay et al., 2016). Ohanian's model combines the expertise and trustworthiness dimensions derived from Source Credibility with the attractiveness dimension derived from source attractiveness in a single structure. This synthesis is the most widely accepted comprehensive theoretical framework developed in marketing and advertising literature to measure the influence of celebrities (Avcı & Yıldız, 2019; Bagheri, 2023; Onurlu et al., 2022). This scale emphasizes that not only attractiveness but also expertise and credibility are critical for celebrities. This three-dimensional structure provides marketing executives with an evidence-based framework for which characteristics to prioritize in celebrity selection.

3. Hypothesis Development and Research Model

Perceived Attractiveness of Celebrities and Brand Attitude

In marketing literature, brands extensively utilize the physical and social characteristics of celebrities as strategic tools to differentiate their products and attract consumer attention in a highly competitive environment (Wang et al., 2017). The attractiveness dimension, considered within the framework of the source attractiveness model, refers to the entirety of the celebrity's physical beauty, elegance, style, and lifestyle elements, directly affecting the persuasive power and acceptability of the advertising message (Yavuz & Özüpek, 2025). Empirical studies show that brands represented by an attractive celebrity or influencer develop a positive brand attitude, which is a more positive overall evaluation by consumers (Kemeç & Yüksel, 2021; Vidyanata et al., 2018). In this process, consumers identify with the source they find attractive, transferring their admiration and empathy toward the source to the brand, and through a kind of attractiveness halo effect, they perceive the brand as more desirable and high-quality (Dwivedi et al., 2015).

Especially on platforms like Instagram, where visual content is prominent, the physical attractiveness and aesthetic presentations of influencers strengthen the emotional bond with followers and improve attitudinal responses toward the brand (Yavuz & Özüpek, 2025). Although some sectoral studies show that the direct effect of attractiveness on brand attitude is limited compared to other dimensions such as credibility or expertise, the general academic trend is that the external appearance and likeability of the source significantly increase emotional evaluations toward the brand (Bhatt et al., 2013; Regina & Anindita, 2022). An attractive celebrity not only increases interest in the

advertisement but also creates a positive attitudinal change by elevating the brand's image to a more prestigious position in the consumer's mind (Wang et al., 2017; Putri & Roostika, 2021).

Within the framework of the S-O-R model, the environmental stimuli individuals are exposed to shape their emotional and cognitive evaluation processes. The physical attractiveness of celebrities functions as a strong emotional stimulus for consumers and contributes to the formation of positive perceptions toward the brand. The capacity of attractive sources to attract attention and create positive emotional associations can make consumers' brand evaluations more positive. In this context, attractiveness is expected to have a significant effect on brand attitude. Based on theoretical and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is developed:

H₁: The perceived attractiveness of celebrities has a significant and positive effect on brand attitude.

Perceived Expertise of Celebrities and Brand Attitude

The perceived expertise of celebrities represents the level of knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience a message source possesses regarding the advertised product class and subject matter (Ohanian, 1990). Expertise directly influences brand attitude by creating a credible signal in the consumer's mind about the brand's quality and performance (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990; Jeng, 2016). Messages from an expert source enable recipients to integrate the conveyed information into their value structures through the internalization process; this leads to a higher level of confidence in the functional benefits promised by the brand (Sertoglu et al., 2014; Putri & Roostika, 2021). Empirical findings show that expertise is a quality that directly affects the level of persuasion of consumers, positively impacting brand attitude by increasing belief in the validity of the claims made by the source (Bhatt et al., 2013). It is noted that, especially in product categories requiring technology and functionality, the perception of a celebrity's expertise can play a more dominant role than physical attractiveness in improving overall brand attitude (Wang et al., 2017; Sudradjat & Wahid, 2019). Studies show that advertisements featuring expert celebrities result in higher recall rates for products compared to those featuring non-experts, and that consumers perceive such sources as more reputable and persuasive (Speck et al., 1988; Wang et al., 2017). The perception of expertise minimizes pre-purchase uncertainty and risk perception by supporting the validity of the solutions offered by the brand, which in turn positively reinforces brand attitude, the sum of rational and emotional responses developed toward the brand (Giri & Alfaruqi, 2023; Lod & Tessa, 2020).

When evaluated within the scope of the S-O-R model, the perceived expertise of celebrities stands out as a significant cognitive stimulus. Sources with a high level of expertise influence consumers' information processing processes, enabling them to develop more rational and trust-based evaluations of the brand. This shapes the individual's internal evaluation process (organism), contributing to the positive formation of brand attitude. In light of the above considerations, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H₂: The perceived expertise of celebrities has a significant and positive effect on brand attitude.

Perceived Trustworthiness of Celebrities and Brand Attitude

The perceived trustworthiness of celebrities refers to the degree to which consumers accept the honesty, sincerity, and credibility of a message source (Ohanian, 1990). The perceived trustworthiness of celebrities is a reflection of how honest, sincere, and credible consumers find the message source (Putri & Roostika, 2021; Ulkhaq et al., 2016). This dimension, a fundamental component of the Source Credibility model, shapes attitudinal responses toward the brand by determining the degree to which consumers accept advertising messages. Information from a trustworthy source creates a foundation for the acceptance of brand promises with higher credibility (Yıldırım et al., 2014; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018; Dwivedi et al., 2015).

Empirical findings demonstrate that as the image of honesty and trustworthiness toward the source increases, it significantly improves attitudes, which are overall evaluations of the brand (Bhatt et al., 2013; Vidyanata et al., 2018). Especially in service sectors such as airlines, the trustworthiness dimension has been identified as the most dominant and decisive factor in improving brand attitude, surpassing other elements such as physical appeal and expertise (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018; Wang et al., 2017). Consumers believe that a brand endorsed by a trustworthy celebrity is more reputable, credible, and desirable, and this perception leads to a relatively lasting and positive overall evaluation of the brand (Karahan, 2022; Chekima et al., 2020).

In the context of the S-O-R model, trustworthiness is considered one of the most critical stimuli that reduces consumer perceived risk. A trustworthy celebrity positively influences the internal evaluation process (organism) by making the consumer find the message more persuasive. This contributes to the development of a stronger and more positive attitude toward the brand. Therefore, trustworthiness is expected to have a significant impact on brand attitude. Drawing on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: The perceived trustworthiness of celebrities has a significant and positive effect on brand attitude.

Attitude Toward the Brand and Purchase Intention

In consumer behavior literature, brand attitude is defined as a set of enduring, one-dimensional, and general evaluations that a consumer develops toward a particular brand (Spears & Singh, 2004). Within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Theory of Reasoned Action, positive attitudes toward a brand are considered important and reliable predictors of purchase intention, reflecting consumers' likelihood and conscious planning to buy that brand (Ajzen, 1991; Aksoy et al., 2021; Al-Mu'ani et al., 2023). A positive brand attitude differentiates the brand from its competitors in the consumer's mind, making it the primary choice in the purchase decision process.

This, in turn, reinforces the desire to purchase as the consumer internalizes the benefits provided by the brand (Avcı & Yıldız, 2019; Regina & Anindita, 2022; Oktaviani & Narsih, 2023).

Many empirical studies have shown that celebrity endorsement supports a statistically significant, strong, and positive relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention (Wang et al., 2017; Sarioğlu, 2023; Trissetianto & Wibowo, 2024). Research conducted in many different sectors shows that consumers' emotional attachments to a brand, such as sympathy and trust, directly increase their plans to try and purchase the product (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018; Barcelon, 2022; Krishnakumar & Tamilarasi, 2023). Brand attitude not only creates a direct impact but also plays a critical mediating role in transforming the characteristics possessed by celebrities into behavioral action, minimizing consumers' pre-purchase risk perception (Yıldırım et al., 2014; Karahan, 2022; Ciornea et al., 2022).

According to the S-O-R model, an individual's internal evaluation processes (organisms) are the most important determinants of final behavioral responses. Brand attitude expresses the consumer's overall evaluation of the brand and is a fundamental internal variable that directly affects purchase intention. It is widely accepted in the literature that individuals with a positive brand attitude are more likely to purchase the relevant brand. Accordingly, it is expected that brand attitude will have a significant and positive effect on purchase intention. From the above theoretical perspective, the following hypothesis is derived:

H₄: Attitude toward the brand has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention.

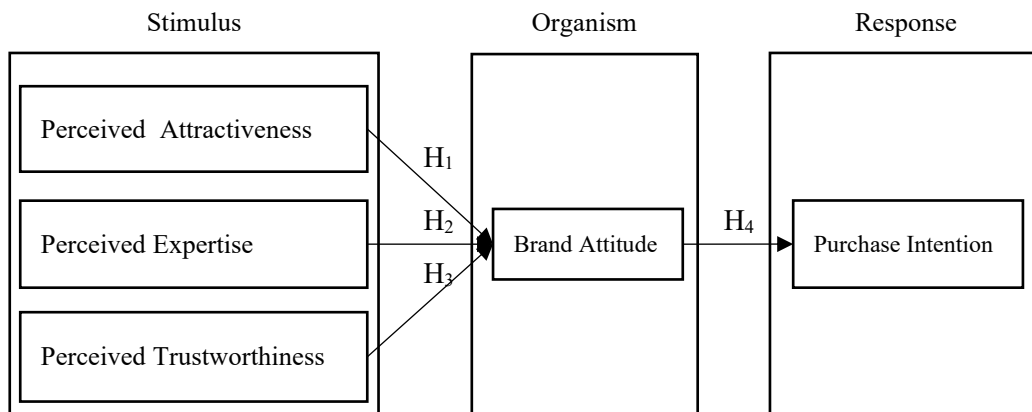


Figure 1. Research Model

4. Methodology

Scales and Questionnaire Design

For this study, the questionnaire method was used as the data collection method. All items in the questionnaire were adapted from scales whose validity and reliability have been proven in the

literature and which have been used in various studies. These include the attractiveness scale (Wang et al., 2017), the expertise and trustworthiness scales (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018), the attitude scale (Brett et al., 2008; Mitchell & Olson, 1981), and the purchase intention scale (Atta et al., 2024).

To ensure linguistic and conceptual equivalence, the questionnaire was translated using the forward–backward translation procedure recommended for cross-cultural research. Initially, the original English version of the instrument was translated into Turkish with the support of academic experts in branding and consumer behavior. Subsequently, the Turkish version was independently translated back into English to assess consistency and semantic accuracy. The original and back-translated versions were then carefully compared to identify and eliminate any inconsistencies, ambiguities, or distortions of meaning. Minor revisions were made where necessary to enhance clarity, contextual appropriateness, and conceptual equivalence between the two language versions. Following this process, the finalized Turkish questionnaire was administered to respondents to collect data.

Target Audience and Sample

The target population of this study is individuals aged 18 and over. Data was collected from 260 consumers using a questionnaire. The sample size of 260 individuals is more than 10 times the total number of scale items in the questionnaire of this study and meets the minimum sample size criteria (Hair et al., 2009). A sample size of 200 individuals is a reasonable sample size for factor analysis (Wilson VanVoorhis & Morgan, 2007) and structural equation modeling (SEM) (Siahaan & Thiodore, 2022; Sivo et al., 2006). Since the sample size of this study is more than 200 individuals, it should be considered a sufficient sample size for applying factor analysis and SEM.

Common Method Variance

In this study, potential common method variance (CMV) was assessed using both the correlation matrix approach and Harman’s single-factor test. First, following the correlation matrix method, the correlation coefficients between all constructs were found to be below the critical threshold of .90, indicating that CMV is unlikely to be a serious concern (Bagozzi et al., 1991). Additionally, Harman’s single-factor test was conducted by loading all measurement items into an unrotated exploratory factor analysis. The results revealed that a single factor accounted for 37.23% of the total variance, which is below the commonly accepted threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Rodríguez-Ardura & Meseguer-Artola, 2020). This finding suggests that no single factor dominated the variance. Taken together, the results of both analyses indicate that common method variance does not pose a serious threat to the validity of the findings in this study.

5. Results

Participant Profile

As shown in Table 1, among the 260 participants, the numbers of men (n=160; 61.5%), those aged 34-41 (n=70; 26.9%), those who are married (n=171; 65.8%), high school graduates (n=126;

48.5%), public employees (n=69; 26.5%), and those with a monthly income between 5001-10000 TL (n=77; 29.6%) were higher.

Table 1. Profile of participants

Gender	f	%	Marital Status	f	%
Female	100	38.5	Single	89	34.2
Male	160	61.5	Married	171	65.8
Total	260	100.0	Total	260	100.0
Age	f	%	Monthly Income	f	%
18-25	42	16.2	<5000 TL	65	25.0
26-33	61	23.5	5001-10000 TL	77	29.6
34-41	70	26.9	10001-15000 TL	47	18.1
42-49	53	20.4	15001-20000 TL	44	16.9
≥50	34	13.1	20001-25000 TL	12	4.6
Total	260	100.0	>25000 TL	15	5.8
			Total	260	100.0
Education Level	f	%	Occupation	f	%
Primary/Secondary School	24	9.2	Self-Employed	59	22.7
High School	126	48.5	Public Employee	69	26.5
Associate/Bachelor's Degree	93	35.8	Housewife	59	22.7
Master's/PhD	17	6.5	Worker	43	16.5
Total	260	100.0	Retired	30	11.5
			Total	260	100.0

Validity and Reliability Analysis

Table 2 presents the results of the statistical analysis regarding the validity and reliability of the scales used in the study. First, according to the results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) performed using AMOS, the model fit values are at an acceptable level (Hu & Bentler, 1999: 4; Muise et al., 2010; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). The loadings (λ) of the factor items are above .50, which is the expected level (Hair et al., 2009). The fact that AVE values are above .50 and CR values are above .70 supports convergent validity. In addition, CR values greater than AVE values indicate satisfactory construct reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Yaşlıoğlu, 2017).

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis and reliability results

Constructs and items	λ
Attractiveness (AVE=.783; $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}=.884$; MSV=.660; ASV=.389; CR=.915; $\alpha=.914$)	
I prefer to watch advertisements with physically attractive (beautiful, elegant, classy) endorsers.	.898
I think that attractiveness is an important attribute in a celebrity's product promotion.	.899
I feel that a physically attractive endorser influences my purchase intention toward a celebrity-endorsed brand.	.858
Expertise (AVE=.840; $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}=.916$; MSV=.660; ASV=.391; CR=.954; $\alpha=.953$)	
I think that having a celebrity with expertise (skilled, qualified, knowledgeable, experienced) in advertisements adds prestige to the brand.	.848
I pay more attention to advertisements using a celebrity with expertise.	.930
I will buy a product if the celebrity endorsing it is an expert.	.958
I think a brand promoted in advertisements by an expert celebrity is more trustworthy.	.927
Trustworthiness (AVE=.783; $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}=.884$; MSV=.481; ASV=.319; CR=.915; $\alpha=.915$)	

I feel that advertisements with a trustworthy endorser push me to remember the advertisement and the product that is being endorsed.	.876
I perceive the celebrity endorser as trustworthy.	.865
I think a brand being endorsed by a trustworthy celebrity is more respectable and desirable.	.914
Attitude (AVE=.871; $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}=.933$; MSV=.401; ASV=.291; CR=.953; $\alpha=.953$)	
I have bought products under the influence of a celebrity.	.918
I keep using a brand only because of the endorsing celebrity.	.933
Celebrities help me to remember a brand.	.950
Purchase Intention (AVE=.882; $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}=.939$; MSV=.057; ASV=.027; CR=.937; $\alpha=.938$)	
I will buy the product if the celebrity I like starts endorsing it.	.938
I am likely to purchase the product endorsed by the celebrity.	.941
Model fit summary: $\chi^2=184.761$; $p<.001$; $\chi^2/\text{df}=2.310$; GFI=.912; AGFI=.868; NFI=.957; RFI=.943; IFI=.975; TLI=.967; CFI=.975; RMSEA=.071; SRMR=.0324.	
Note: The item "I remember a brand more when an attractive celebrity advertises it" from the attractiveness scale was excluded because it reduced the validity and reliability of the scale.	

Furthermore, the fact that the square roots of the AVEs of the factors are greater than the correlation coefficients (r) between the relevant factors (see Table 4), and that the AVEs of the factors are greater than their MSVs and their MSVs are greater than their ASVs, supports the discriminant validity of the factors (Yaşlıoğlu, 2017: 83). Finally, the Cronbach's alpha (α) value of the scales (or factors) being above 0.80 indicates the high reliability of these five scales (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Durmuş et al., 2016).

Normality Test

The normality test results in Table 3 show that the skewness of the factors is between ± 3 and the kurtosis is between ± 10 . According to these results, it should be accepted that the obtained data set has a normal distribution (Kline, 2011).

Table 3. Normality test results

Variable	Mean	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Median	Var.	SD	Skew.	Kurt.
Attractiveness	4.382	4.277	4.487	4.667	.744	.863	-2.040	4.824
Expertise	4.138	4.018	4.257	4.250	.952	.976	-1.371	1.838
Trustworthiness	3.877	3.758	3.996	4.000	.955	.977	-.681	.155
Attitude	4.431	4.331	4.530	5.000	.665	.815	-1.898	4.452
Purchase Intention	3.308	3.157	3.458	3.000	1.519	1.232	-.186	-.929
Note: Minimum=1; Maximum=5.								

Correlation Analysis Results

Examining the Pearson Correlation Analysis results presented in Table 4, it is observed that there are generally positive relationships among all variables included in the study. Particularly noteworthy are the high-level relationships among perceived characteristics of celebrities; strong and significant correlations between attractiveness and expertise ($r=.813$, $p<.001$) and trustworthiness ($r=.691$, $p<.001$) demonstrate that these dimensions are complementary structures in the consumer's mind. Similarly, the moderate and significant relationships between attractiveness ($r=.630$), expertise

($r=.634$), and trustworthiness ($r=.558$) and brand attitude support the idea that these variables act as stimuli influencing brand attitude (organism) within the framework of the S-O-R model.

Table 4. Correlation analysis results

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Attractiveness	1				
2. Expertise	.813**	1			
3. Trustworthiness	.691**	.694**	1		
4. Brand attitude	.630**	.634**	.558**	1	
5. Purchase intention	.157*	.143*	.086	.240**	1
Note: **p < .001; *p < .05.					

Conversely, the relationships between purchase intention and other variables are relatively weaker (e.g., attractiveness $r=.157$, expertise $r=.143$), but the relationship with brand attitude is stronger and more significant ($r=.240$, $p<.001$). This finding demonstrates that purchase intention is largely shaped by brand attitude rather than directly by celebrity attributes, supporting the mediating structure predicted in the model. Furthermore, the fact that all correlation coefficients are below 0.90 indicates that there is no common methodological bias issue (Bagozzi et al., 1991).

Testing Hypotheses

The proposed research model was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) in AMOS. The standardized path coefficients, significance levels, explained variances, and model fit indices are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results for SEM

Path		R ²	β	St. β	S.E.	C.R.	p	Results
Attractiveness	→ Attitude	.478	.301	.349	.102	2.960	.003	Supported
Expertise	→ Attitude	.478	.196	.225	.094	2.079	.038	Supported
Trustworthiness	→ Attitude	.478	.137	.169	.068	2.012	.044	Supported
Brand attitude	→ Purchase Intention	.064	.407	.253	.104	3.911	***	Supported
Model fit summary	χ ² =186.594 P=.000 χ ² /df=2.248 GFI=.911 AGFI=.871 NFI=.956 RFI=.945 IFI=.975 TLI=.968 CFI=.975 RMSEA=.069 SRMR=.0343							
Note: ***p < .001								

The model fit values indicate an acceptable fit with the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.248$; CFI = .975; RMSEA = .069; SRMR = .034) (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Muise et al., 2010; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). The results show that the perceived attractiveness ($\beta = .349$), expertise ($\beta = .225$), and trustworthiness ($\beta = .169$) of celebrities have positive and significant effects on brand attitude. These three variables together explain 47.8% of the variance in brand attitude. Furthermore, brand attitude has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention ($\beta = .253$), explaining 6.4% of the variance in purchase intention. Among the endorser credibility dimensions, attractiveness appears to be the strongest determinant of brand attitude, followed by expertise and trustworthiness. Overall, these

findings support the S-O-R model, in which celebrity-related stimuli shape purchase intention through brand attitude.

6. Discussion

This research empirically demonstrates the important role of the core qualities of celebrities on consumers' internal evaluation processes and ultimate behavioral intentions within the framework of S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) theory.

The structural equation modeling (SEM) results provided empirical support for the proposed model by showing that the perceived attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of celebrities positively and significantly influence brand attitude, which in turn positively affects purchase intention. These findings reaffirm the basic assumptions of the Source Credibility Model developed by Ohanian (1990) within the modern marketing ecosystem.

A notable finding of this study is that celebrity attractiveness emerges as a significant predictor of attitude toward the brand (Avcı & Yıldız, 2019; Kahle & Homer, 1985). This result aligns with scholarly evidence suggesting that the identification process established between consumers and sources perceived as physically or socially attractive is effectively transferred to brand evaluations (Basil, 1996; Byrne et al., 2003; Schouten et al., 2020). Attractiveness is a powerful environmental stimulus that mediates the development of an emotional and empathetic bond between the consumer and the brand, as highlighted in similar studies conducted by Wang et al. (2017) in the airline industry. This situation can be explained by the halo effect, which argues that the physical beauty and lifestyle elements of the source make the brand more desirable (Baycur & Karaca, 2022; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

The findings regarding the expertise dimension indicate that consumers attach importance to the knowledge, skills, and experience of celebrity endorsers in relation to the endorsed product category. Messages delivered by an expert source are more likely to be accepted by consumers through the process of internalization, thereby reinforcing the credibility of the functional benefits promised by the brand. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that perceived source expertise plays an important role in shaping consumer purchase intention (Ohanian, 1990; Sertoglu et al., 2014). The literature frequently emphasizes that perceived expertise plays a central role in persuasion, sometimes even more dominant than physical appeal, particularly in service categories requiring technical knowledge or involving high risk (Biswas et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2017). As Jeng (2016) states, perceived expertise minimizes the uncertainty and risk perception experienced by consumers before purchasing, thus facilitating the decision-making process. The positive impact of the trustworthiness dimension on brand attitude shows that the honesty and sincerity of the source are critical factors determining the extent to which consumers accept the advertising message (Bhatt et al., 2013; Muda et al., 2014). The perception of a celebrity as sincere

and believable reduces the defense mechanisms consumers may develop regarding advertising messages and contributes to a lasting positive attitude toward the brand (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999). These results are consistent with studies in the literature that emphasize the central role of credibility in shaping attitudinal responses (Amos et al., 2008; Karahan, 2022). Although trustworthiness has a lower coefficient compared to the other dimensions in this study, it remains an important element in the process of building brand credibility, as also suggested by Wang et al. (2017).

Finally, the significant influence of brand attitude on purchase intention supports the organism–response link within the S-O-R mechanism (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). These results are consistent with studies in the literature emphasizing that attitudinal responses developed toward a brand are important and reliable predictors of purchase intention (Ajzen, 1991; Aksoy et al., 2021; Al-Mu’ani et al., 2023). Positive overall evaluations developed toward a brand differentiate it from its competitors in the consumer’s mind, making it a preferred choice in the purchasing decision process (Spears & Singh, 2004; Regina & Anindita, 2022). Our finding that brand attitude strengthens purchase intention is consistent with recent empirical research findings from various platforms (Sarioğlu, 2023; Trissetianto & Wibowo, 2024; Yavuz & Özüpek, 2025).

7. Theoretical Implications

This research provides significant theoretical contributions to the marketing literature by diversifying the conceptual framework of celebrity endorsement. First, the study integrates the three-dimensional Source Credibility Model (Ohanian, 1990) with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), providing a cognitive-emotional bridge (Ohanian, 1990; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Theoretically, this integration indicates that celebrity attributes— attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness—function as environmental stimuli that do not merely trigger automatic behavior but undergo a complex internal processing within the organism (Jacoby, 2002; Eroglu et al., 2003). By incorporating the foundational insights of Hovland et al. (1953) on expertise and trustworthiness, this research reaffirms that the persuasion process is fundamentally rooted in the recipient's perception of the source's willingness and ability to provide valid information (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1991).

Second, the study enhances the literature by positioning brand attitude as an internal evaluative mechanism and provides empirical support for the attitude–intention link emphasized in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Contrary to studies suggesting direct behavioral triggers, our model demonstrates that the path from source perception to purchase intention (Response) is filtered through attitudinal evaluations (Ajzen, 1991; Mitchell & Olson, 1981). The dominant role of visual attractiveness in shaping these attitudes confirms the Attractiveness Halo Effect (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), where physical grace leads consumers to assign positive cognitive traits to the brand (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Ohanian,

1990). Furthermore, this identification mechanism aligns with the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989), illustrating how the cultural and symbolic meanings inherent in a celebrity are systematically transferred to the consumer's self-concept through the endorsed product (McCracken, 1989; McGuire, 1985).

Finally, the study contributes to the source credibility literature by highlighting the enduring relevance of expertise and trustworthiness in the digital age, beyond mere social media popularity. Consistent with Kelman's (1961) social influence theory, the results indicate that consumers accept information from an expert source through a process of internalization, which fosters a long-term, stable commitment to the brand (Kelman, 1961; Shimp, 1997). By using established measurement scales (Spears & Singh, 2004), the research suggests that while attractiveness gains attention, the rational dimensions of credibility are essential for reducing consumer defense mechanisms and establishing brand trust (Spears & Singh, 2004; Byrne et al., 2003). Consequently, this study offers a hierarchical understanding of endorser attributes, suggesting that the stimulus of professional knowledge is just as critical as visual appeal in the organism stage of consumer decision-making.

8. Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the research findings offer a strategic roadmap for marketing managers and advertising agencies. Firstly, the fact that attractiveness has the strongest influence on brand attitude when choosing celebrities shows that brands should prioritize physical image and lifestyle elements, especially on platforms where visual aesthetics are paramount. In this context, collaborating with celebrities who align with the target audience's ideal self-image and can establish an emotional connection through visual appeal will strengthen brand attitude. Furthermore, the significant impact of the expertise dimension reveals that instead of focusing solely on highly popular names, brands should work with celebrities who are compatible with the product category – a match (Till & Busler, 2000) – and knowledgeable in their field, as this is critical for rational trust building. The impact of the trustworthiness dimension shows that celebrities should be supported by communication strategies that offer a sincere, honest, and genuine user experience; this reduces consumer resistance and contributes to easier internalization of the brand message. In addition, considering the key role of brand attitude in shaping purchase intention in the research findings, it is understood that managers should focus primarily on integrated communication strategies aimed at building a positive brand attitude, rather than directly sales-oriented campaigns. Indeed, correlation and structural model results show that the effect of celebrity attributes on purchase intention is indirect and largely occurs through brand attitude. In this context, brands need to invest in long-term brand building, deliver consistent messages, and position celebrity use not just as an attention-grabbing element, but as a value-creating tool integrated with brand identity. In conclusion, strategies that balance appeal, expertise, and trustworthiness and center on brand attitude will produce more sustainable and effective results in guiding consumer behavior.

9. Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study presents significant findings, its limitations present opportunities for future research. First, although the sample size of 260 participants is adequate for the statistical analyses conducted in this study, larger samples are needed to generalize the findings to broader and more diverse socioeconomic groups. Future studies could conduct comparative analyses across different age groups or geographic regions. Second, this research did not focus on a specific product category (luxury, fast-moving consumer goods, etc.). The literature argues that expertise and trustworthiness may become more dominant with higher levels of product involvement, while attractiveness may be more dominant with lower involvement (Petty, 1983; Homer & Kahle, 1990). Future research should test product type as a moderator variable in the model. Finally, incorporating other mediating variables such as brand loyalty, brand credibility, or social media engagement could more deeply explain the complex nature of celebrity endorsement in advertising.

10. Conclusion

Overall, this study reveals that the perceived attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness dimensions of celebrities have significant and positive effects on brand attitude; and that brand attitude is a significant determinant of purchase intention. The findings confirm that the relationship between stimulus (celebrity characteristics) and response (purchase intention) occurs not directly, but largely through the organismic evaluation process, represented by brand attitude, within the framework of the S-O-R model. This demonstrates consistency with theoretical approaches in the literature, showing that consumer behavior is shaped not only by external stimuli but also through the individual's internal evaluation processes. Another important contribution of the research is that it reveals that attractiveness has a relatively stronger effect among the characteristics of a celebrity. This finding emphasizes the significant role of visual and perceptual elements on consumer attitudes, especially in today's digital communication environment. However, the significant effects of expertise and trustworthiness dimensions show that consumers value not only superficial characteristics but also cognitive and trust-based evaluations. Therefore, it is understood that celebrity use should be considered as a multidimensional structure, and that evaluating these dimensions together will yield more holistic results. Furthermore, the relatively low explained variance regarding purchase intention in the model reveals the multifaceted nature of consumer behavior and offers a significant area of research for future studies. In this context, the inclusion of variables such as perceived value, brand trust, consumer-celebrity match-up, or social influence in the model could increase its explanatory power. In conclusion, this study offers both theoretical and practical contributions; particularly for brand managers, it demonstrates that using a celebrity in advertising strategies is not only a tool for attracting attention but also a critical element in shaping brand attitude and indirectly influencing purchasing behavior.

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