Does Star Power Sell? Celebrity Endorsements and Consumer Purchase Intentions in Rupandehi, Nepal

Arju Marasini*[1]
Tara Prasad Upadhyaya[2]

Corresponding Author

Abstract

This study investigated how celebrity endorsements drive purchase intention in Nepal's Rupandehi district, analysing attributes like trustworthiness and congruence. Based on data from 384 respondents, regression analysis revealed that congruence, familiarity, and liking are the key drivers of consumer purchase intention. Notably, attributes such as trustworthiness and expertise were found to have an insignificant effect. The findings indicate that congruence is the strongest predictor, underscoring the critical need for marketers to select celebrities whose public image and values are in strong alignment with the brand's identity to effectively influence consumer behaviour.

Keywords: attractiveness, celebrity endorsement, congruence, purchase intention

INTRODUCTION AND STUDY OBJECTIVES

Celebrities are recognised by the public such as an actor, sports figure, entertainer and so on for his or her achievements in relevant fields aside from the product they endorse (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). In this evolving business landscape, the competition between different products and brands is increasing. With this Consumers are also becoming sophisticated and more demanding towards the firm's products and services (Seno & Lukas, 2007). This has made it very difficult for marketers to capture and retain customer's attention. So different companies are adopting creative strategies to survive and conquer the market (Keller, 2016). According to McCracken (1989), a celebrity endorser is an individual who enjoys public popularity and utilises their fame to promote a consumer's product by appearing along with it in an advertisement. International businesses rely on celebrity endorsements in their marketing campaigns to positively impact consumer's purchasing patterns and intentions (McCutcheon et al., 2002). According to Kotler (2006) celebrity

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[1]Miss Marasini, the corresponding author*, is the MBA-BF student at Lumbini Banijya Campus, and she can be contacted via marasiniarju010@gmail.com

[2]Dr. Upadhyaya is professor at Lumbini Banijya Campus. He can be reached at tpug1969@gmail.com

endorsement is a particular strategy used by marketers to advertise a product from such a platform through which consumers can associate themselves with the brand value from the perspective of the celebrity personnel. People view celebrities as a source of inspiration and their role models. So, maximum number of businesses believe that celebrities can create strong emotions and deeper connections as compared to non-celebrity endorsers (Hossain et al., 2025).

According to Ohanian (1991), celebrities should be able to sell a product, raise consumer awareness, and influence the purchasing intention of the target market. With enhancement and improvement, the marketing and advertising sectors are also flourishing in the country. Every other day consumers are introduced to new products with unique advertisement and positioning strategy. Celebrity endorsement has been a popular marketing strategy in both developed and developing countries (Roy et al., 2020). While celebrity endorsement in business can lead to increased brand awareness and sales, it can also relate to different dangers such as controversies, high costs, and maintaining the brand's originality (Hussain et al., 2020; Patil, 2019; Soleimani et al., 2020). With celebrities' rising popularity and the expanding reach of global media, it is critical to understand how celebrity endorsement influences Nepalese consumers' purchase decisions (Ojha, 2022). Marketers spend extensively in associating their products with celebrities, expecting this will increase visibility and favourable consumer impression (Biswas et al., 2009). However, such endorsements can significantly differ regarding social, cultural, and economic situations. In the current circumstances, different brands and companies across the world are using celebrities to promote their product and services such as Nike, Mc Donalds, Gucci, and many more to promote the product and increase the product reach among consumers (Ahuja, 2024). Similarly, in the context of Nepal, different industry is using this strategy for the promotion of products and services such as footwear industry, banking industry, soft drink industry, fashion wear industry, automobile industry and so on. Rajesh Hamal, Madan Krishna Shrestha, Hari Bansha Acharya, Parash Khadka, and Ashmi Shrestha are some of the Nepali celebrities who are associated in promoting various goods and services (Shrestha, 2016).

Despite the existing empirical studies conducted in Nepal on celebrity endorsement, significant gaps remain. First, most studies in Nepal do not incorporate all seven major endorsement dimensions together, instead focus on a few attributes such as attractiveness, credibility, which indicates that complexity is rarely tackled in prior research (Baniya, 2017). Second, empirical studies in Nepal are heavily skewed towards urban or capital areas, while districts like Rupandehi remain underrepresented (Upadhyay & Niroula, 2022). Therefore, the main objective of this research was to address this gap by conducting a research study to examine the effect of celebrity endorsement on customer purchase intention in a distinctly under-examined regional area of Rupandehi District of Nepal, utilising a larger sample size and incorporating a diverse set of variables. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between consumer purchase intention in Rupandehi's district of Nepal, utilising the following important celebrity endorsement attributes such as Likability, Familiarity, Congruence, Expertise, Trustworthiness and Attractiveness. It also seeks to determine

which of these characteristics within their particular social and cultural context has the highest influence on consumers' purchase decisions. This research also examines the structural associations between factors connected with celebrity endorsement and purchase intention u SmartPLS-based Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). It also helps marketers, advertisers or brands to choose celebrities whose personal value and image is best fit for their brand identity. Overall, the study helps to address the gap between the theory and existing practice. However, the study was limited with the resident who reside at the six-lane road segment from Belahiya to Butwal based on the proximity on both side of the road i.e. East and West.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Source Credibility Model is one of the foundations which states, the impact of communication is dependent on the apparent level of expertise and trustworthiness of the endorser (Hovland &Weiss, 1951). It was further studied by Ohanian and implies three factors add to the credibility of the source i.e. trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise (Ohanian, 1990). Similarly, the Source Attractiveness Model is also taken as a base for this study. This model demonstrates how an endorser's similarity, familiarity and likeability impact the effectiveness of a message (McGuire, 1985). Meaning Transfer Model (MTM) has been considered to understand how celebrity endorsement influences consumer buying behaviour by transferring the message associated with celebrity. The (MTM) model is further segmented into three stages. The first stage is all about the creation of celebrity image and an observation of the cultural significance of the society along with the determination if the

subject, people and context are appropriate to the celebrity. Similarly, the second stage is concerned with the celebrity's transfer of meaning from brand endorsement to product. And the last stage is about the transmission of brand image to consumers (McCracken, 1989). Product Match-up Hypothesis Model suggests that for the advertisement to be effective, the celebrity image and product message should be similar and matched up in order (Kamins, 1990).

Gupta et al. (2015) concluded that attractiveness and trustworthiness have a significant impact on purchase intention, while expertise did not have a significant impact on purchase intention. Ha and Lam (2017) declared attitude towards the brand is positively affected by celebrity matchup congruence with the brand or product, celebrity trustworthiness, and celebrity expertise. Moreover, the attitude towards a brand also has a positive impact on a customer's purchase intention. Adnan et al. (2018) studied the relationship between celebrity and consumer purchase intention and found that there is a positive relationship between celebrity endorsement and buying intention of the buyers. Shrestha (2019) declared similarity, matching and familiarity as key variables in increasing purchase intention. However, there was no support for expertise and trustworthiness to increase the purchasing intention for endorsed products and services.

Khan et al. (2019) exaggerated celebrity attractiveness, credibility, and product match-up as key factors to promote purchasing intention. Moreover, brand loyalty and perceived quality also affect the buying intention of consumers. Qureshi amd Malik (2016) determined that gender, attractiveness, credibility, endorser type and multiple celebrity endorsement are

effective with respect to buying intention while multiple product endorsement had a negative relationship with buying intention of consumers. Saeed et al. (2019) ascertained that only the fit between celebrity and endorsed product was associated with the purchase among students, while other independent variables may not lead to purchase intention among students. Abbas et al. (2018) revealed that likeability, beauty, experience, and personality as the most successful components of the celebrity construct. The study discussed how to effectively leverage celebrity endorsement to increase the purchase intention of male and female buyers for mobile phones.

Pokharel and Pradhan (2017) concluded that celebrity endorsement has a favourable effect on purchase behaviour for the majority of consumers, and respondents prioritised brand as the most influential factor in their purchasing decisions, with celebrity endorsement placing fourth. Behaviour (Upadhyay & Niroula, 2022) revealed

that celebrity endorsement influences purchasing decisions. Therefore, to ensure a positive perception among target clients, the marketplace should carefully evaluate celebrities. Baniya (2017) ascertained that physical attractiveness, source credibility, and celebrity brand alignment positively influence brand attitudes. However, only physical beauty and celebrity brand matchup were linked to purchase intentions.

Operational Definition of Variables

Attractiveness: Physical attractiveness, conveyed through attributes like weight, height and facial beauty is one of the first impressions people notice (Bardia et al., 2011). However, this concept goes beyond mere physical looks; it also includes mental abilities, personality, lifestyle and artistic talents (Erdogan, 1999). The celebrity's attractiveness boosts the persuasive power of customers as they aspire to be like the celebrities they admire (Cohen & Golden, 1972).
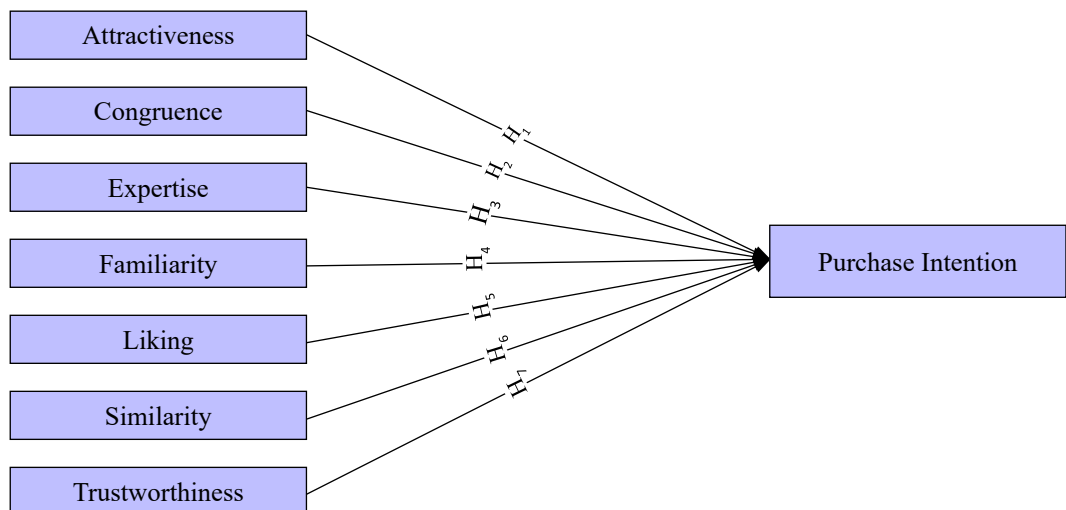
Note. *Adopted from Ha & Lam (2017)*
Figure 1. *Research Framework*

H$_1$: There is a significant effect of celebrity's attractiveness on consumer purchase intention.

Congruence: Celebrity match-up congruence with the brand or product refers to the alignment between a celebrity and a brand that helps to form a connection which will further allow the qualities of celebrity to be transferred to the brand (Seno & Lukas, 2007). This alignment should be able to showcase the unique traits of the celebrity and key features of the brand (Misra & Beatty, 1990). When a product is endorsed by a celebrity whose image aligns well with the product, people tend to have more confidence in both the advertisement and the celebrity (Kotler, 1997).

H$_2$: There is a significant effect of celebrity congruence on consumer purchase intention.

Expertise: Hovland and Weiss (1953) described expertise as the amount of knowledge and experience a person has in a particular area, which is recognised as legitimate. A celebrity with higher expertise can influence more on purchase decisions (Ohanian, 1991).

H$_3$: There is a significant effect of celebrity expertise on consumer purchase intention.

Familiarity: Familiarity refers to the sense of similarity and emotional connection felt towards a celebrity through exposure (Belch & Belch, 2004; Erdogan, 1999). When customers perceive themselves as similar to a celebrity, this familiarity has a more positive impact, known as the mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968).

H$_4$: There is a significant effect of celebrity's familiarity on consumer purchase intention.

Liking: Likeability refers to the affection for someone due to their physical appearance and behaviour. When customers like a celebrity, they are more likely to favor brands associated with that celebrity (McGuire, 1985).

H$_5$: There is a significant effect of celebrity liking on consumer purchase intention.

Similarity: McGuire (1985) defined similarity as a perceived likeness between the person delivering a message and the person receiving it. When celebrities and customers share common factors like interests or lifestyles, it creates a stronger connection (Erdogan, 1999).

H$_6$: There is a significant effect of celebrity's similarity on consumer purchase intention.

Trustworthiness: According to Erdogan et al. (1999), trustworthiness encompasses the honesty, integrity and believability of an endorser. Celebrities are often deemed trustworthy (Goldsmith et al., 2000) and trustworthiness is a climax of qualities that foster positive perceptions and enhance message acceptance (Erdogan,1999). Ohaninan (1990) highlighted trustworthiness as a crucial and powerful means to increase confidence and reliability in brand among customers.

H$_7$: There is a significant effect of celebrity's trustworthiness on consumer purchase intention.

Consumer Purchase Intention: A consumer purchase intention refers to their likelihood of

buying a particular brand or product (Belch & Belch, 2004). It indicates the probability of making a purchase (Phelps & Hoy, 1996).

RESEARCH METHODS

Descriptive and causal research design has been considered under the study. The descriptive and causal design helped in identifying and testing the relationships among the celebrity endorsements attributes and consumer purchase intention at a time. Since the population of consumers were unknown, the sample of 384 respondents was determined using the Cochran (1977) formula. In this study, a purposive sampling design was used to approach the sample respondents for data collection. Research

Table 1
Assessment of Measurement Tittle

Variables	Items	Outer loadings	VIF	Mean	S.D.
Attractiveness	A1	0.870	2.128	3.109	1.245
	A2	0.873	2.108	3.185	1.246
	A3	0.826	1.555	3.365	1.276
Congruence	C1	0.903	2.570	3.352	1.170
	C2	0.900	2.595	3.526	1.115
	C3	0.855	1.862	3.518	1.125
Expertise	E1	0.800	1.549	3.404	1.011
	E2	0.846	1.732	3.435	1.006
	E3	0.79	1.352	2.979	1.246
Familiarity	F1	0.878	2.073	3.258	1.099
	F2	0.863	1.965	3.258	1.136
	F3	0.865	1.863	3.362	1.126
Liking	L1	0.874	2.276	3.216	1.198
	L2	0.915	2.686	3.323	1.127
	L3	0.792	1.565	3.031	1.301
Similarity	S1	0.853	1.800	3.391	1.082
	S2	0.863	1.822	3.312	1.09
	S3	0.813	1.552	3.479	1.043
Trustworthiness	T1	0.860	1.923	3.208	1.094
	T2	0.870	1.981	3.271	1.063
	T3	0.830	1.605	3.372	1.097
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.810	1.882	3.271	1.237
	PI2	0.812	2.211	3.383	1.162
	PI3	0.808	2.194	3.615	1.081
	PI4	0.788	1.904	3.151	1.112
	PI5	0.817	2.004	3.424	1.279

Note. Data from authors' survey 2025; and Calculations through Smart-PLS

Table 2
Construct, Reliability and Validity

Variables	Alpha	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE
Attractiveness	0.818	0.818	0.892	0.734
Congruence	0.863	0.863	0.916	0.785
Expertise	0.742	0.742	0.853	0.660
Familiarity	0.837	0.838	0.902	0.754
Liking	0.825	0.833	0.896	0.743
Purchase Intention	0.866	0.869	0.903	0.652
Similarity	0.797	0.799	0.881	0.711
Trustworthiness	0.813	0.813	0.889	0.729

Note. *Calculations through Smart PLS*

has been conducted through a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree to measure customer attitudes, opinions or perceptions. A total of 473 questionnaires were distributed to the sample respondents, out of which 23 questionnaires were incomplete, 29 were returned without any response and 37 were not received. In total, 273 questionnaires were collected physically, and 111 questionnaires were administered through an online survey via Google Forms, making a sum of 384. Furthermore, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The following model was used in the study.

$$PI = \beta0 + T\beta1 + S\beta2 + E\beta3 + A\beta4 + L\beta5 + F\beta6 + C\beta7 + €$$

Where, T = Trustworthiness, S= Similarity, E= Expertise, A= Attractiveness, L=Liking, F=Familiarity, C=Congruence and PI= Purchase Intention.

DATA ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

As per the survey conducted in Rupandehi district, the sample comprised 181 male (47.1%) and 203 female (52.9%) respondents, indicating the dominance of female respondents. The largest group of respondents were in the 20-30 age range, which represents that maximum respondents were from the younger generation. Some 53.9% of the respondents hold a Bachelor's degree and 21.9% of the respondents hold a Master's degree concluding majority of the respondents were well qualified to contribute their valuable insights.

The measurement model of this study from Table 1 indicates strong reliability and validity with outer loadings exceeding 0.79 across the all items, indicating the robust alignment between indicators and the respective constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2017). Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) ranging between 1.352 to 2.686 confirming the absence of multicollinearity, supporting each construct (O'Brien, 2007; Franke & Sarstedt, 2019). Purchase intention mean (3.3688) indicates the positive significance towards the endorsed products, congruence mean (3.4653) being the dominating factor whereas trustworthiness mean (3.2836) needs some strategic intent. As of the above-mentioned table, each factor has a mean

Table 3
Latent Variable Correlation Matrix

	PI	T	S	E	A	L	F	C
PI	1	0.695**	0.691**	0.675**	0.734**	0.777**	0.763**	0.790**
T		1	0.726**	0.685**	0.696**	0.717**	0.673**	0.701**
S			1	0.711**	0.648**	0.699**	0.640**	0.671**
E				1	0.714**	0.688**	0.649**	0.704**
A					1	0.762**	0.718**	0.721**
L						1	0.767**	0.735**
F							1	0.751**
C								1

Note. Calculations through SmartPSL
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level*

value above 3 which indicates inclination towards agreement on purchase intention influenced by celebrity endorsement. And the less standard deviation indicates less deviation with each other concluding the relevant data.

Construct, Reliability and Validity

Table 2 indicates Cronbach's alpha as alpha, Composite Reliability as CR and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) helps to measure the validity of the variables. Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.705$) and CR (value of both rho_a and rho_c) ≥ 0.70, ensuring the internal consistency (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair & Alamer, 2022). Similarly, AVE ≥ 0.50 indicating the convergent validity indicating each variable shows more than 50% of the explained variance. For the internal validity the methodology adapted accurately examines the research questions. As well as the external validity of the research has been established through the consistency of the findings of the research with other findings. The construct and content validity has been proven through pilot testing after incorporating expert review.

Latent Variable Correlation Matrix

Model Fit Assessment : The SRMR value shows the model good alignment fit that is 0.056 is well below threshold 0.08, between the observed as well as predicted correlations (Bollen & Stine, 1992; Henseler et al., 2016). Here, R=0.861 indicates there is a strong positive relationship between celebrity attributes and purchase intention. R2=0.74, demonstrates 74.1% of total variation is explained by the independent variables and the remaining 25.9% of total variation is explained by other factors. Adjusted R2= 0.736 shows 73.6% of the variation is explained by the model effectively after the adjustment for the number of variables.

Hypotheses Testing using Bootstrapping

The above-mentioned figure 1 and table 4 is constructed by using bootstrapping analysis calculated using 10000 sub samples which shows the decision regarding the hypotheses. Hypotheses are indicated as H_1, H_2, H_3, H_4, H_5, H_6 and H_7 have gained the significance as p – value is less than 0.05, however, H_3 and H_7 shows statistically insignificant indicating p value greater than 0.05 (Henseler & Chin, 2010; Nitzl et al., 2016). The PLS-SEM finds
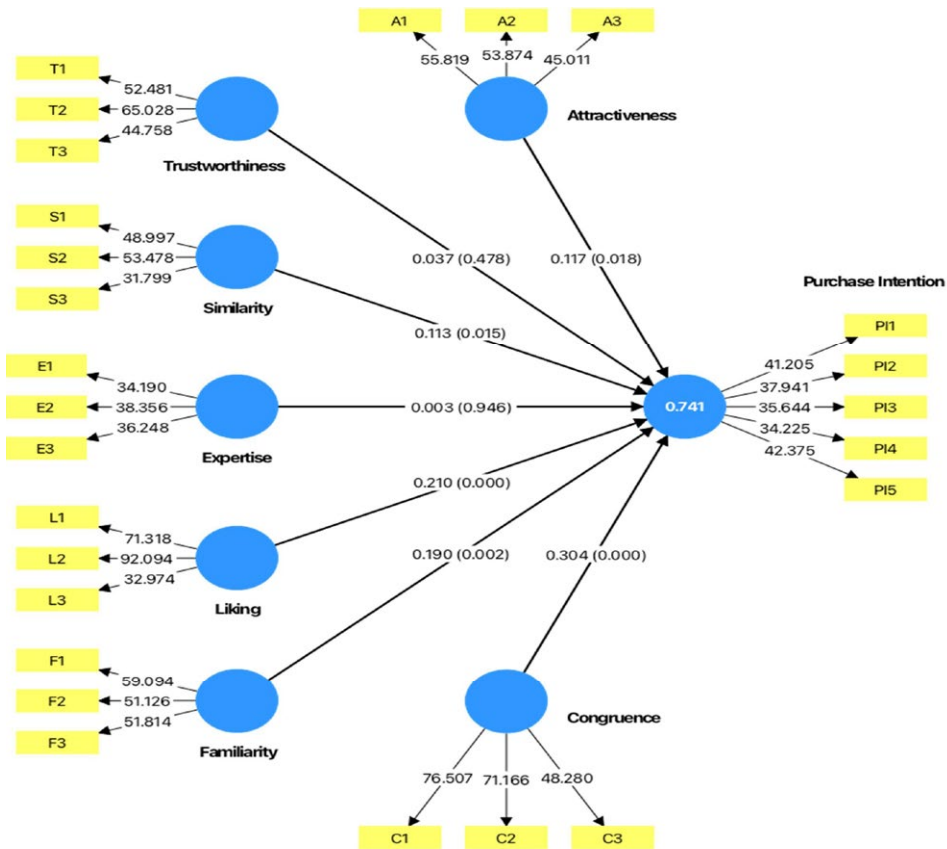
Figure 1. *Path-relationship diagram*
Note. Smart-PLS

that five out of the seven celebrity attributes-beauty, congruence, familiarity, liking, and similarity are significant and positively contributing to consumer purchase intent in Rupandehi. Amongst these, congruence ($\beta = 0.304$, $p < 0.001$) has been the most consistent, which means a celebrity whose image can be congruent with the image of the product highly contributes towards consumer persuasion. Analogously, liking ($\beta = 0.21$) and familiarity ($\beta = 0.19$) indicate that repeated exposure and affection shape positive attitudes toward brands. The similarity ($\beta = 0.113$) and attractiveness ($\beta = 0.117$) effects indicate that perceived similarity and beauty enhance purchase

motivation through aspirational influence and identification.

Conversely, credibility ($\beta = 0.037$, $p = 0.478$) and professionalism ($\beta = 0.003$, $p = 0.946$) were statistically insignificant, i.e., consumers in Nepal's socio-cultural setup are more likely to be influenced by affective and social signals rather than credibility or professionalism. This corresponds to the symbolic consumer culture of developing economies, where celebrities will be looked after for lifestyle idols rather than technical specialists. The findings serve faith to the social, emotional, and cultural foundations of consumer psychology in the Nepalese

Table 4
Hypotheses Testing Using Bootstrapping

Variables	β	Mean	S.D.	T statistics	P values	Decision
H_1: Attractiveness -> Purchase Intention	0.117	0.117	0.050	2.358	0.018	Accepted
H_2: Congruence -> Purchase Intention	0.304	0.302	0.066	4.602	0.000	Accepted
H_3: Expertise -> Purchase Intention	0.003	0.004	0.049	0.068	0.946	Not accepted
H_4: Familiarity -> Purchase Intention	0.190	0.190	0.060	3.140	0.002	Accepted
H_5: Liking -> Purchase Intention	0.210	0.210	0.059	3.559	0.000	Accepted
H_6: Similarity -> Purchase Intention	0.113	0.113	0.047	2.423	0.015	Accepted
H_7: Trustworthiness -> Purchase Intention	0.037	0.039	0.052	0.710	0.478	Not accepted

Note. Calculations through SmartPSL

Table 5
Importance Performance MAP Analysis

Variables	LV Performance	Importance
Attractiveness	55.557	0.103
Congruence	61.635	0.287
Expertise	57.1	0.004
Familiarity	57.343	0.185
Liking	55.104	0.192
Similarity	59.83	0.119
Trustworthiness	57.114	0.038
Total	57.669	0.132

Note. Calculations through SmartPSL

market, where endorsement effectiveness is based on fit and familiarity rather than rational judgment.

The Importance Performance Map Analysis of Table 4 indicates strategic roles into celebrity endorsement factors leading towards the purchase intention in Rupandehi, Nepal. It indicates the overall effect of attractiveness, congruence, expertise, familiarity, liking and similarity on purchase intention. The findings above demonstrate marketers in Nepal prioritise reinforcing congruence and familiarity in the meantime relocating all the resources from underperforming variables like expertise.

Importance -Performance Map

Figure 2 states the importance performance map highlights as congruence as being the major influential factor with strong performance highlighting the critical role in building purchasing intention. Similarly, familiarity along with Liking shows the moderate significance however, mid-range performance, emphasising the open spaces for improvement through various campaigns. However, expertise and trustworthiness,
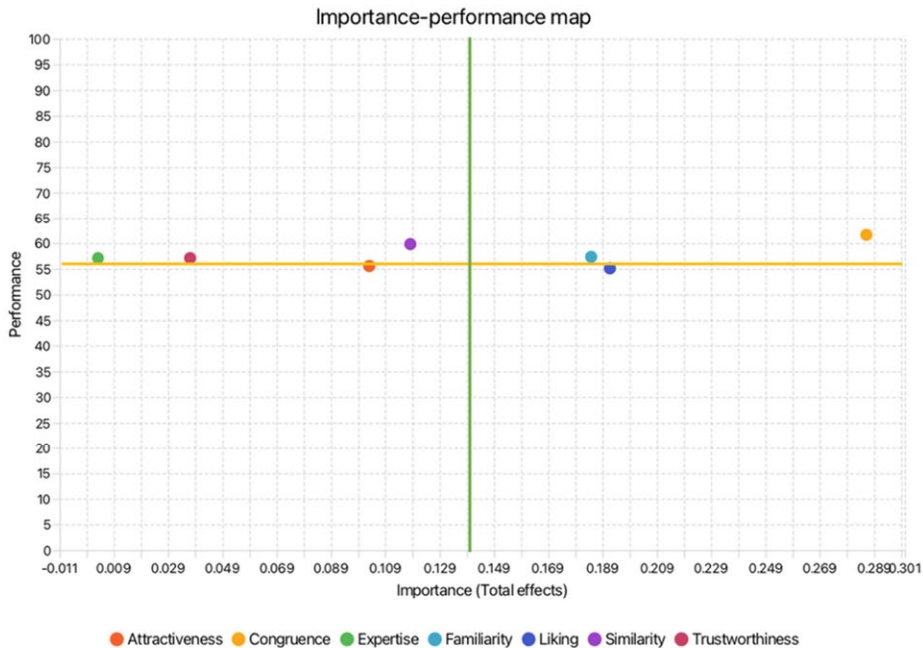
Figure 2. *Importance -Performance Map*
Note. Calculations through Smart PLS

although acquiring good performance showing negligible importance. Likewise, attractiveness and similarity show moderate influence requiring strategic intervention.

Discussion

A nuanced landscape where the core tenets of celebrity endorsement theory are both supported and challenged by the present findings. There is strong, consistent alignment with several studies, particularly regarding the fundamental power of congruence as the strongest predictor of purchase intention, reinforcing the Meaning Transfer and Product Match-up hypotheses (Lee et al., 2021;Min et al., 2019). Similarly, the positive influence of attractiveness and familiarity finds broad empirical support, confirming their roles as reliable drivers in emerging and digital markets (Macheka et al., 2023; Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019;). However, the analysis highlights a key area of divergence: the context-dependent

salience of source credibility. While studies in specialised product categories (e.g., green skincare) or with specific demographics (e.g., millennials in digital beauty) emphasise the significant impact of trustworthiness and expertise (Macheka et al., 2023; Mamun et al., 2023), these factors were non-significant in our context. This discrepancy, also noted by Alharbi et al. (2022) in their emphasis on consumer-brand over celebrity congruence, suggests that the weight consumers place on cognitive, credibility-based cues versus affective, attractiveness-based cues is not static. It is moderated by perceived purchase risk, product category complexity, and the nature of the consumer domain. Ultimately, the matrix underscores that while congruence and attractiveness form a robust core for endorsement effectiveness, the perceived importance of a celebrity's trustworthiness is contingent, varying significantly with the market environment and the specific product-consumer relationship.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study presents a robust empirical contribution to the existing body of knowledge about celebrity endorsement's influence on consumer's purchase intention within the framework of a developing economy. While performing PLS-SEM analysis, it confirms that congruence, liking and familiarity are the most effective predictors of purchase decisions in Rupandehi, while trustworthiness and expertise show low explanatory power. These results emphasise the reality that Nepali consumers are more favourably responsive to endorsers possessing their ambitions, ways of life, and reginal relevance than to endorsers who possess only credibility or professional competence. Theoretically, the findings validate Source Attractiveness and Meaning Transfer Models, suggesting endorsement effectiveness is dependent on emotional identification and symbolic congruence.

In practice, it encourages marketers and brand strategists to emphasise celebrities with similar and widely recognised public images who represent the brand's identity. Endorsements that emphasise comparable ideals, consistent public behaviour, and emotional identification can increase consumer loyalty and brand confidence. For marketers and policymakers, the study demands the creation of ethical guidelines for celebrity endorsement to preserve authenticity and credibility among consumers. Further studies can include psychographic and behavioural moderators such as social media activity or brand engagement to further project the model. Overall, the study benefits theory and practice by placing celebrity endorsement dynamics against the evolving consumer marketplace in Nepal and rendering a universal marketing plan as a culturally sensitive, data-driven strategy towards brand success.

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