Consumer Perception of Celebrity-Endorsed Sports Goods and Its Impact on Purchase Decision

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Abstract

Celebrity endorsement has become a widely used marketing strategy in the sports goods industry to influence consumer attitudes and buying behaviour. This study examines consumer perception of celebrity-endorsed sports goods and its impact on purchase decision. The research focuses on key perceptual dimensions such as celebrity credibility, attractiveness, expertise, and brand–celebrity fit, and evaluates how these factors shape consumer trust, brand image, and purchase intention. Data were collected from consumers using a structured questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive statistics and inferential techniques. The findings reveal that positive consumer perception of celebrity endorsers significantly enhances purchase decision by improving brand recall, emotional connection, and perceived product quality. The study concludes that effective alignment between the celebrity and the sports brand plays a crucial role in influencing consumer buying behaviour and offers practical insights for marketers in designing impactful endorsement strategies.

Keywords: Celebrity Endorsement, Consumer Perception, Sports Goods, Purchase Decision, Brand–Celebrity Fit

Introduction

In today's highly competitive marketing environment, organizations increasingly rely on innovative promotional strategies to differentiate their brands and influence consumer behaviour. Among these strategies, celebrity endorsement has emerged as a powerful tool, particularly in industries where brand image, trust, and emotional appeal play a decisive role in purchase decisions. Sports goods brands frequently associate themselves with well-known athletes and public figures to enhance brand visibility, create aspirational value, and establish credibility among consumers. The presence of celebrities in advertisements not only attracts attention but also transfers their image, expertise, and popularity to the endorsed products, thereby shaping consumer perceptions and attitudes. Consumer perception plays a central role in determining the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. Factors such as the credibility, attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of the celebrity, along with the perceived fit between the celebrity and the brand, significantly influence how consumers evaluate sports goods. When consumers perceive a strong alignment between the endorser and the product, it enhances brand recall, emotional attachment, and perceived product quality, ultimately leading to favorable purchase decisions. Conversely, a mismatch or lack of authenticity may reduce trust and weaken the impact of endorsements, highlighting the need for strategic selection of celebrities by marketers. The sports goods industry provides a particularly relevant context for examining celebrity endorsement, as consumers often associate sports products with performance, health, and lifestyle aspirations. Athletes and sports celebrities, in particular, are viewed as credible experts,

making their endorsements more persuasive than those of non-sports personalities. Understanding how consumers perceive such endorsements and how these perceptions translate into purchase decisions is essential for brands seeking to maximize marketing effectiveness. In this context, the present study aims to analyze consumer perception of celebrity-endorsed sports goods and assess its impact on purchase decisions, offering insights that can guide marketers in designing effective endorsement strategies.

Review of Literature

The effectiveness of celebrity endorsement has long attracted scholarly attention, with early theoretical work attempting to explain why celebrities influence consumer decision-making. Mittelstaedt, Riesz, and Burns (2000) critically examined competing theories and concluded that endorsements work through a combination of product-related cues and endorser-related attributes such as credibility, attractiveness, and symbolic meaning. This foundational understanding set the stage for later empirical studies that examined how celebrity characteristics transfer value to brands and shape consumer attitudes. As advertising clutter increased and audience attention declined, celebrity endorsement emerged as a strategic response to cut through promotional noise and enhance message recall (Rotfeld, 2006; Rai & Sharma, 2013). Subsequent studies expanded the discussion by focusing on consumer perception and buying behaviour across different contexts. Research conducted in developing economies revealed that celebrity endorsement significantly influences young consumers and students by enhancing brand familiarity and aspirational value (Munyoro & Nhevere, 2019). Mathur (2017) and Sabunwala (2013) found that celebrities positively affect brand image and purchase intention, particularly in fast-moving consumer goods, while Muthukumar and Jeyakumaran (2013) demonstrated the strong impact of television-based celebrity endorsements at the regional level. These findings were reinforced by Randhawa and Khan (2014) and Ravindra and Yadav (2018), who observed that celebrities shape consumer perceptions by increasing trust and reducing perceived purchase risk. The role of credibility and congruence has been emphasized in later studies, highlighting that not all endorsements are equally effective. Nyamakanga, Viljoen, and Ford (2019) showed that both local and international celebrities influence purchase intention, but credibility and cultural relevance play a decisive role. Pradhan, Duraipandian, and Sethi (2016) further demonstrated that congruence among celebrity personality, brand image, and user self-concept significantly improves brand attitude and purchase intention. Similarly, Prananda and Ningrum (2019) confirmed that celebrity endorsement, along with brand image and trust, strongly affects consumer decisions in the sports footwear segment, reinforcing the importance of strategic brand–celebrity fit. With the growth of digital media, the endorsement landscape has expanded beyond traditional celebrities to include social media influencers. Mrisha and Xixiang (2024) and Mohammed and Sundararajan (2024) highlighted how influencer marketing shapes consumer trust and purchase decisions across platforms by creating perceived authenticity and relatability. These findings align with broader branding literature emphasizing the evolving meaning of brands and the need for clarity and consistency in brand identity (Stern, 2006; Srivastava, 2011). At the same time, Oladepo and Abimbola (2015) noted that celebrity endorsement works most effectively when integrated with other promotional mix elements to strengthen brand image and buying intention. Ethical considerations and consumer sensitivity have also gained prominence in endorsement research. Sagar et al. (2011) proposed the Ethical Positioning Index to differentiate brands based on ethical communication, while Saeed et al. (2014) compared celebrity and non-celebrity advertisements, concluding that celebrities enhance attention but do not always guarantee superior perception if credibility is questioned. Sliburyte (2009) emphasized that overuse or poor alignment of celebrities can dilute brand meaning, underscoring the need for careful selection. Recent interdisciplinary studies further suggest that advancements in AI and data analytics are transforming strategic

decision-making in marketing, including endorsement effectiveness and targeting precision (Mohammed & Madhumithaa, 2024). Overall, the literature consistently indicates that celebrity endorsement significantly influences consumer perception and purchase decision, particularly when credibility, congruence, and brand trust are well managed. While traditional media studies highlight awareness and recall benefits, contemporary research underscores the growing role of digital influencers, ethical positioning, and strategic alignment. These insights provide a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for examining consumer perception of celebrity-endorsed sports goods and its impact on purchase decisions in the present study.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to examine the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer purchase decision with reference to selected sports goods brands. Specifically, the study aims to analyze consumers' perceptions toward celebrity-endorsed sports goods, evaluate the influence of celebrity attributes such as credibility, attractiveness, expertise, and brand–celebrity fit on purchase decision, and assess the role of brand image and trust in shaping consumer buying behaviour. The study also seeks to identify the extent to which celebrity endorsement enhances consumer preference and intention to purchase sports goods.

Methodology of the Study

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to understand consumer perception and purchase behaviour related to celebrity-endorsed sports goods. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to consumers who use or are familiar with sports goods brands. A sample size of **274 respondents** was selected using a convenient sampling technique to ensure adequate representation of different age groups, income levels, and usage patterns. The collected data were analyzed using statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean score analysis, and inferential techniques including correlation and regression analysis to examine relationships between celebrity endorsement factors and purchase decision. Secondary data were sourced from journals, books, reports, and online publications to support the conceptual framework and interpretation of results.

Figure 1: Structural Equation Model (SEM) of Celebrity Endorsement and Purchase Decision
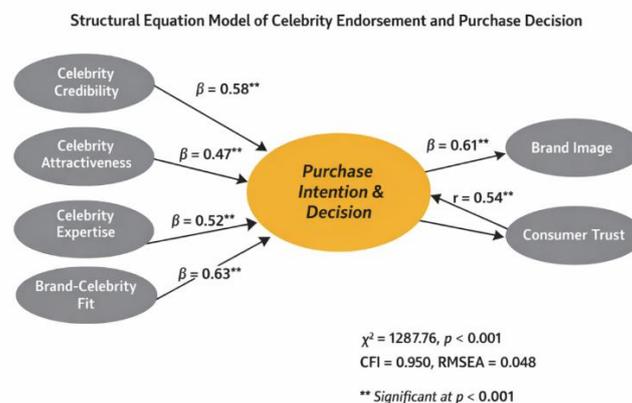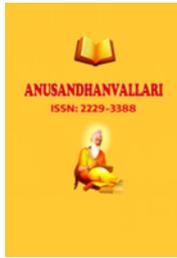
Introduction to the SEM Figure

Figure presents the Structural Equation Model (SEM) of Celebrity Endorsement and Purchase Decision developed to examine the interrelationships between celebrity-related attributes and consumer buying behaviour in the sports goods market. The model conceptualizes celebrity credibility, attractiveness, expertise, and brand–celebrity fit as exogenous constructs influencing consumers' purchase intention and decision, while brand image and consumer trust are treated as key outcome variables. SEM is employed to simultaneously test multiple relationships and to validate the overall theoretical framework, offering a comprehensive understanding of how celebrity endorsement mechanisms operate in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions.

Model Fit Summary and Interpretation

The overall model fit indices indicate that the proposed SEM demonstrates a satisfactory and statistically acceptable fit with the observed data. The Chi-square (χ^2) value is significant, which is common in large-sample SEM studies, but incremental and absolute fit indices provide stronger evidence of model adequacy. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) value of 0.950 exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.90, indicating a good fit between the hypothesized model and the empirical data. Similarly, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value of 0.048 falls well below the acceptable limit of 0.08, suggesting minimal approximation error and strong model parsimony. Collectively, these indices confirm that the structural model is robust, well-specified, and suitable for interpreting the causal relationships among the constructs.

Path Analysis and Structural Relationships

The path analysis reveals that all celebrity endorsement dimensions exert a significant positive influence on purchase intention and decision. Celebrity credibility shows a strong effect, indicating that consumers are more inclined to purchase sports goods when endorsers are perceived as trustworthy and reliable. Celebrity attractiveness and expertise also demonstrate meaningful positive impacts, suggesting that physical appeal and perceived knowledge or performance competence enhance persuasive effectiveness. Among all predictors, brand–celebrity fit exhibits the strongest path coefficient, highlighting that alignment between the celebrity's image and the sports brand is a critical determinant of consumer purchase decisions. Further, purchase intention and decision significantly influence brand image, implying that favorable buying decisions reinforce positive brand perceptions. The strong association between purchase decision and consumer trust indicates that endorsement-driven purchases enhance confidence in the brand, strengthening long-term consumer relationships. Overall, the path analysis confirms that celebrity endorsement operates through both rational (credibility and expertise) and emotional (attractiveness and fit) mechanisms, ultimately shaping purchase decisions, brand image, and trust in the sports goods sector.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is suggested that sports goods brands should adopt a strategic and carefully planned approach to celebrity endorsement rather than relying solely on celebrity popularity. Greater emphasis should be placed on selecting celebrities who possess high credibility, relevant expertise, and a strong fit with the

brand image, as these factors significantly influence consumer purchase decisions. Marketers are also encouraged to integrate celebrity endorsement with digital platforms and social media to enhance brand engagement and reach younger, tech-savvy consumers more effectively. Continuous monitoring of consumer perception is essential to ensure that endorsements remain authentic and aligned with evolving consumer expectations.

From a managerial perspective, organizations should focus on building long-term partnerships with celebrities instead of short-term promotional contracts, as sustained associations help strengthen brand trust and recall. Transparent communication and ethical endorsement practices should be maintained to avoid credibility loss arising from over-endorsement or celebrity controversies. Additionally, firms may leverage consumer feedback and data analytics to evaluate endorsement effectiveness and refine marketing strategies. Training marketing teams to assess endorsement fit and manage brand–celebrity relationships can further improve return on investment in celebrity-based promotions.

In conclusion, the study establishes that celebrity endorsement plays a significant role in shaping consumer perception and purchase decisions in the sports goods market. The results confirm that attributes such as credibility, attractiveness, expertise, and brand–celebrity fit positively influence purchase intention, which in turn enhances brand image and consumer trust. By adopting customer-centric, ethically grounded, and strategically aligned endorsement practices, sports goods brands can strengthen competitive advantage and foster long-term consumer loyalty. The study thus contributes valuable insights for marketers and researchers, reinforcing the importance of effective celebrity endorsement in contemporary marketing strategy.

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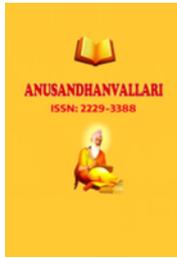
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