

## THE IMPACT OF ENDORSER'S CREDIBILITY ON CONSUMER RESPONSES: AN EMPIRICAL ENDEAVOR

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**Abstract.** *The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of endorser's credibility*

*on consumer responses. It also explores the mediating role of attitude towards advertisement (ATA) and moderating role brand awareness (BA). Data was collected from two hundred and sixty-three educated consumers to test the proposed hypotheses. The results suggested that the endorser's credibility (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) positively impacts ATA and purchase intention (PI). Moreover, ATA mediates between endorser's credibility and PI. It was also found that brand awareness moderates the relationship between ATA and PI. The findings of this study imply that advertisers should carefully consider the endorser's credibility before the selection. In contrast, ignoring these factors could lead to adverse effects on consumer responses. Theoretical implications are also discussed, which are presented in the proceeding sections.*

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### Introduction

As we are approaching the verge of the modern era, businesses face difficulties both in survival and growth. To gain benefit over one another, the seller utilizes celebrity endorsement as an essential component of marketing communications strategy (Clutchfield, 2010). Every day we are bombarded with many advertisements on the media, including any endorsement by a celebrity (Plank, 2012). Early research on the subject has widely established the payback of celebrity endorsement (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Previously, celebrity endorsement research primarily concentrated on the uniqueness of celebrities rather than their ultimate impact on buying decisions (Reed, 2002). Recently, this topic started getting attention from researchers from different perspectives

(Tzoumaka, Tsiotsou, & Siomkos, 2016). For example, Till, Stanley, and Priluck (2008) found the association of celebrity endorsement with positive word of mouth, and positive attitude (Bush, Martin, & Bush, 2004) increased sales (Clutchfield, 2010), superior stock market worth (Fizel, McNeil, & Smaby, 2008), and brand equity (Spry, Pappu, & Cornwell, 2011).

Celebrities who are popular within the social realm have much more convincing power than ordinary people (Erdogan, 1999). Due to numerous achievements and successful performances within their respective fields such as showbiz, sports, politics, etc., celebrities develop many fans. From the western perspective, Brad Pitt, David Beckham, Jim Carry, Lady Gaga, Michael Jordan, and Vin Diesel, etc., can be regarded as celebrities. These superstars nowadays are preferable choices of local and international brand sponsors. Desirable results and outputs are achieved when organizations form relationships with stars like these for the target consumers (Kumar, 2010).

Celebrities being inspirational to society aids the brand sponsors to generate beneficial impacts on the consumers buying conduct (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Such tactics are worthwhile for grabbing consumer attention (McCracken, 1989). These notable characters have an exceptionally unique spot in the core of their devotees. Indeed, this is because of a superstar's physical appeal, individual or expert mastery, or recognition with the overall population (Erdogan, 1999).

Expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness are three distinct characteristics of a celebrity's credibility, which act as "persuading impetus" in making a promotion even more engaging and eye-catching. Besides, these factors have the most alluring effects on a customer's shopping decisions (Nasir, Khan, Sabri, & Nasir, 2016). Expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness are predictors of attitude toward advertisements (Tanjung & Hudrasyah, 2019). It has also been determined that attitude towards advertising predicts consumer intentions to purchase (Prajogo & Purwanto, 2020).

Building upon the previous research, this study endeavors to fill gaps in the existing research on celebrity endorsement and its outcomes. First, it investigates the influence of endorser's credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) on ATA and ultimately purchase intention. Second, building upon the literature and suggestions from recent studies such as Prajogo and Purwanto (2020) and Tanjung and Hudrasyah (2019) establishes a link between endorser's credibility factors and purchase intention by investigating a mediating role of attitude towards the advertisement. The same has been found missing in the existing literature.

Based on the call of Liao, Wu, and Pham (2020) and Prajogo and Purwanto (2020), it also proposes and tests that the relationship between ATA and ultimately purchase intention is moderated by brand awareness. According to the best of researchers' knowledge, brand awareness with endorsers' credibility and consumer responses has not yet been investigated. Moreover, contrary to general belief, this study treats both attitudes towards advertisement and purchase intention as consumer responses. This treatment is in line with the recommendation of Bagozzi (1986), who argued that responses contain not the intentions/behaviors but also the attitudes. Therefore, taking a note from Bagozzi's work, ATA has also been treated as a consumer response, thus to this study' research novelty and giving a new perspective to the research paradigm of consumer behavior.

Finally, the influence of social and cultural aspects should not be ignored. The majority of research on endorser's credibility has been in the context of developed economies. Pakistan, being an emerging economy (Lagarde, 2016) and still improving despite the COVID-19 pandemic makes the findings of this study more exciting and fruitful.

### **Literature Review**

The 21st century is an era of incredible opportunities as well as cutthroat competition among brands. These days each brand manager, regardless of the geographical boundaries, is prepared to devote a massive quantity of financial fortune on brand promotions (Priyankara, Weerasiri, Dissanayaka, & Jinadasa, 2017). The primary objective of advertising and promotions is to promote the brand to attract potential customers and develop purchase intentions (Sertoglu, Catl, & Korkmaz, 2014).

The literature section reviews the endorser's credibility (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) relationship with the ATA. Then attitude towards advertising is related to PI. Next, the moderating role of the relationship between ATA and PI is presented. Finally, the mediating part of ATA is discussed.

### **Attractiveness and Attitude towards Advertisement**

In the research literature, it is widely accepted that a celebrity's physical appearance qualifies by a mechanism known as an "ID," which occurs when the information transmitted by the attractive figure is recognized by the user (Cohen & Golden, 1972). According to Kahle and Homer (1985) research on physical attractiveness and amiability, visually attractive endorsers had higher buying targets than unattractive endorsers. Erdogan (1999), however, contradicted that only the physically engaging quality does not need to be the

appeal; an appeal may involve scholarly abilities, method of living, athletic exhibitions, or the aptitudes of endorsers themselves. For example, Sports stars with an incredible sports image can attract customers regardless of their looks because their followers are fascinated.

Numerous examinations have recognized attraction as a significant marker of promoting viability (Chao, Wührer, & Werani, 2005) and significantly affect consumer ATA and brand (Sallam & Wahid, 2012). Hudha and Hidayat (2009) found that the attractiveness quality of celebrities on TV promotions will positively impact shoppers, and superstar-based TV promotions will have an optimistic impact on customers' purchase decisions in Indonesia. Wei and Wu (2013) inspected the effect of big-name on shoppers' social aims in Malaysia. The findings have shown that the appeal of the source and credibility is crucial to the viability of superstars.

It has been previously mentioned that buyers like to upgrade their physical attraction or magnificence. They generally respond decidedly to the brand endorser who appears as though him/her or is having progressively physical appeal (Erdogan, 1999). Research has shown that celebrity support influences customers' sentiments and could also influence buyers' disposition towards the promotion and brands. It could bring about expectations to buy and improve the chances of sealing the deal.

H1: Attractiveness has a positive influence on attitude towards advertisement.

### **Expertise and Attitude towards Advertisement**

Erdogan (1999) characterizes that expertise as "the degree to which an endorser is seen to be a source of authentic statements." According to Ohanian (1990), having a beautiful celebrity is insufficient; shoppers must believe that the endorser has the requisite skills. Celebrity endorsers with skill in their respective fields are more influential with customer buying intentions and decisions (Aaker, 2009). According to Ohanian (1990), this results in an increased buying expectation. Customers are more likely to recognize a brand when the endorser is an expert in the area, i.e., the more mastery an endorser has, the higher the adequacy (Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008).

Expertise can be characterized as the apparent capacity of an endorser to make or give authentic affirmations. It considers the endorser's knowledge, experience, and skills gained while working in a related area. According to Ohanian (1990), celebrity endorsers' apparent ability is more important than their physical appeal. Kahle and Homer (1985) pointed out that expertise acts as an essential influencer under certain conditions.

According to Till and Busler (2000), purchase intention and brand attitude are optimistically influenced by the expertise of an endorser. Meanwhile, Speck,

Schumann, and Thompson (1988) found that celebrities who are experts in their fields can influence purchase decisions higher than those of celebrities that are not well acknowledged. The skill has additionally been related to capability, master capacity, dominance, and legitimacy (Han & Ki, 2010). Since shoppers frequently need explicit item information, they might be happy to depend on suggestions by a believed power figure (for example, a big name). The more prominent the celebrity endorser's apparent degree of skill in a promotion, the more influential or successful the ad will be (Wang, Kim, & Agrusa, 2018).

H2: Expertise has a positive influence on attitude towards advertisement.

### **Trustworthiness and Attitude towards Advertisement**

The term "trustworthiness" refers to "an endorser's genuineness, sincerity, and acceptability" (Erdogan, 1999). Organizations seek trustworthy, acceptable, and trustworthy endorsers, according to Shimp (2010). Reliability and affability are among the most significant parts of trust (Friedman, Santeramo, & Traina, 1978). According to them, when a consumer gets the message from a superstar, the dependability of the brand is expanded. However, Ohanian (1990) contended that the connection between the buyer's purchase expectations of a related brand is not influenced solely by the reliability of an endorser.

The reliability of an endorser is a total perceptual periphery that relies on the intended target audience. Advertisers exploit these collections of qualities by utilizing renowned people who are generally reliable, legitimate, reasonable, and trustworthy among their fans and individuals (Shimp, 2010). According to previous research, source mastery and dependability can make autonomous commitments to source viability (Mowen & Minor, 2006).

Advertisers attempt to benefit from endorsers' dependability by choosing legitimate, trustworthy, and reliable endorsers. Reliable endorsers have been found to improve the validity of a brand, ease questions, and advance financial benefits for the sellers (Erdogan, 1999). Similarly, McGuire (1985) contended that a source's trustworthiness impacted the adequacy of a corresponding message. An appealing endorser influenced the customers when they acknowledged the data given by a trustworthy source. It has also been found that reliable endorsers generate economic profits, eliminate doubts, and advance the reliability of the celebrity (Kim, Haley, & Koo, 2009). Furthermore, an appealing endorser positively influences followers' frame of mind, developing positive attitudes among consumers (Erdogan, 1999). Therefore, it has been proposed that:

H3: Trustworthiness has a positive influence on attitude towards advertisement.

### **Attitude towards Advertisement & Purchase Intention**

Every advertisement tries to elicit some sort of positive behavior from the consumer. That positive behavior most of the time is purchase intention (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). Ajzen (2002) supported that advertisement effectiveness resides in its ability to ignite a purchase intention among the target consumers. Past studies have indicated that purchasers' attitude towards advertisements impacts their reactions toward marketing communications, mainly their buying intentions (Mitchell & Olson, 1981).

Other studies have also found that ATA is a significant predictor of customers' intention to purchase. For example, in their investigation on celebrity and corporate credibility, Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell (2000) found that ATA significantly predicted purchase intentions among target consumers. Similarly, Kim et al. (2009) also found that consumers' attitude towards advertising was influenced by consumers' involvement with products and corporations, while attitude towards advertisement leads to purchase intentions.

More recently, Lee, Byon, Ammon, and Park (2016) investigated the impact of consumer attitude toward advertising on PI in the context of golf products. They also found that purchase intention was influenced consumers' attitudes towards golf product advertisements. Later, Tanjung and Hudrasyah (2019) investigated the impact of endorser credibility on attitudes and purchase intentions. They also found that attitudes influenced purchase intentions. Prajogo and Purwanto (2020) argued that consumer attitudes lead to purchase choices and other consumer-related outcomes in another recent investigation.

The above discussion supports enough evidence that ATA influences positive outcomes like purchase intentions. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H4: Attitude towards advertisement has a positive influence on purchase intention.

### **Brand Awareness as a Moderator**

According to Aaker (2009), brand awareness is the ability of potential customers to recognize or remember a brand. According to Shimp (2010), BA is the ability of a brand to emerge in consumers' minds when they are thinking about a scrupulous product category. Most importantly, brand awareness is an essential dimension in brand equity. In other words, brand recognition is a company's ability to appear in a buyer's mind while considering a particular product category.

The relationship between BA and PI was found in extant studies (Irshad, 2012). Most of the studies tested the relationship between customers' purchase intention and BA and exhibited positive relation between the variables considered (Arslan & Altuna, 2010; Tariq, Nawaz, Nawaz, & Butt, 2013). Therefore, it is more probable that brand awareness leads to increased consumers' intention to purchase the brand (Tih & Lee, 2013). Results of Fernández and Boluda (2012) also recommended that purchase intention significantly impacted BA. Kawa, Rahmadiani, and Kumar (2013) exhibited that consumers' purchase intention is influenced by brand awareness.

There is an essential role of brand awareness in shopper's buying interest since buyers will make purchases of the well-known items (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). Brand awareness can assist buyers in knowing the brand and settle on buying decisions (Percy & Rossiter, 1992). BA has an enormous impact on decisions and can be considered before picking an item (Hoyer & Brown, 1990). Items with a higher price in the overall industry and sound quality will have recognition amongst its potential customers due to the high acknowledgment and high level of brand awareness (R. P. Lee, Johnson, & Grewal, 2008).

Although the impact of BA on PI is evident from the above literature, some recent studies have suggested testing the moderating factors that could influence purchase intention as an outcome. Prajogo and Purwanto (2020) tested the hedonic personality as a moderating influence on purchase intention and suggested trying other variables. Similarly, Liao et al. (2020) investigated the impact of ATAs on purchase intentions in the green marketing context. They also tested the moderating role of marketing and psychological factors influence the two variables and recommended testing other moderators which could affect the ATA and purchase intention relationship. Based on the call and suggestions of the studies mentioned above, it has been proposed that:

H5: Brand Awareness moderates the relationship between attitude towards advertisement and purchase intention such that the higher the brand awareness, the stronger the relationship.

### **Attitude towards Advertisement as a Mediator**

There is a well-established literature review on the relationship between endorser characteristics and ATA. For example, Erdogan (1999), Shimp (2010), and Wang et al. (2018) have all supported the influence of endorser characteristics on ATA. In comparison, the impact of attitude towards advertising has repeatedly been supported by the studies like Y.-g. Lee et al. (2016), Tanjung and Hudrasyah (2019), and (Prajogo & Purwanto, 2020). It

indicates an indirect influence of endorser characteristics on purchase intentions through attitude towards the advertisement.

A recent investigation by Tanjung and Hudrasyah (2019) also established that three endorser characteristics influence customer intentions to purchase. O'Mahony and Meenaghan (1998) also supported these findings, who argued that the most influenced outcome of endorser characteristics is purchase intention. The above arguments conclude that endorser credibility directly affects purchase intention and indirectly affects the advertisement. Therefore, in the line of presented ideas, we propose that:

H6: Attitude towards advertisement mediates between attractiveness and purchase intention.

H7: Attitude towards advertisement mediates between expertise and purchase intention.

H8: Attitude towards advertisement mediates between trustworthiness and purchase intention.

Based on the literature discussed above, the authors have proposed the following conceptual framework as presented in figure 1.

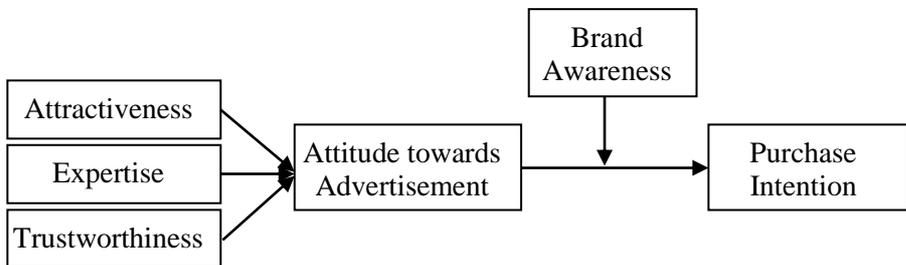


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

### Methodology: Study Setting and Sampling

The study setting consisted of the consumers of Haripur and Abbottabad, who were mainly the students at The University of Haripur and COMSATS University Islamabad, Abbottabad campus. The total student population at The University of Haripur was 3500 at the time of data collection, while the entire student population at COMSATS University Islamabad, Abbottabad campus was 15000. Thus, the accumulated population was 18500. By using the online sample size calculator, the recommended sample size was generated to be 267. For attaining this sample size, 350 questionnaires were disseminated, and 263 were returned in a usable form.

Since the aim of this study was to discover the public's perceptions of celebrity reputation only. Method of convenience sampling was adopted due to multiple constraints such as limited time, not enough financial resources.

### **Measures**

Instruments for the collection of data were adapted from extant studies on a five-point Likert scale. Attractiveness was estimated utilizing four items adapted from McCracken (1989). In comparison, expertise was estimated utilizing four items received from McCracken (1989). Trustworthiness was estimated utilizing four items scale from McCracken (1989). Attitude Towards endorsement was assessed using three items adapted from Bergkvist and Zhou (2016). Brand awareness was estimated utilizing four items from Dwivedi, Johnson, and McDonald (2015). Purchase Intention was projected using four items adapted from (Duffett, 2015).

### **Data Analysis**

The descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, correlations analysis, and regression analysis were performed on the data using IBM SPSS 21. For testing the mediation hypothesis, we used PROCESS version 3.4 written by Andrew F Hayes.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

We obtained the demographics data from the survey respondents. It was found that 64.6% of the respondents were males, and 35.4% were female. In terms of age, 31.9 percent of respondents were under the age of 20, 62.4 percent were between the ages of 20 and 30, and 5.7 percent were between 30 and 40. In terms of education, 70.3 percent of the respondents were enrolled in undergraduate programs, while 24% were enrolled in master's degree programs, and 5.7 percent were enrolled in Ph.D. programs. Regarding household income, 23.2% respondents had less than 20,000 income, 51.3% had income in the bracket of 20,000-40,000, while 25.5% had income ranging 40,000-60,000.

### **Reliability and Validities**

According to Nunnally (1994), acceptable values of reliability ranges from 0.6 to 0.90. In this study, the alpha value for attractiveness is 0.795, expertise 0.810, trustworthiness 0.837, ATA 0.868, brand awareness 0.769, and purchase intention is 0.844. Since all the values in acceptable ranges, data were considered reliable for further analysis. See table 1 for reliability scores.

Table 1 *Reliability, AVE, and CR*

	A	CR	AVE	ATA	BA	ATT	EXP	TWT	PI
ATA	0.87	0.87	0.57	0.76					
BA	0.77	0.78	0.54	0.66	0.73				
ATT	0.80	0.82	0.53	0.71	0.70	0.73			
EXP	0.81	0.81	0.52	0.71	0.63	0.70	0.72		
TWT	0.84	0.84	0.56	0.68	0.71	0.70	0.72	0.75	
PI	0.84	0.85	0.58	0.69	0.60	0.70	0.66	0.69	0.76

Note. ATA = attitude towards advertisement; BA = brand awareness; ATT = attractiveness; EXP = expertise; TWT = trustworthiness; PI = purchase intention; AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability.

In addition to data reliability, data validity should be calculated. The validity review results are shown in Table 1. First, the values of average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliabilities (CR) were computed to determine convergent validity. For valid data, the importance of AVE should be above .5 while the values of CR should be above 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Since the computed values for AVE (ranges from 0.52 to 0.58) and CR (ranges from 0.776 to 0.870), data were considered to have no convergent validity issue. The square root of a variable's AVE should be greater than the association between it and all other variables to achieve discriminant validity. Since the AVE values observed for attractiveness (0.73), expertise (0.72), trustworthiness (0.75), ATA (0.76), brand awareness (0.73), and purchase intentions (0.76) were also above the correlations with themselves and other variables, we assumed that data were safe from discriminant validity issue.

### Regression Analysis

To test the consequence of independent variables on dependent variables, we utilized regression analysis. The values of R and R<sup>2</sup> were observed from the model summary. The R describes the multiple correlations, and its value of 0.564 represents the great extent of multiple correlations. At the same time, the value of R<sup>2</sup> shows the size of the overall variation in the dependent variable by independent variables combined (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness). The value of 31.9% explains that about 32 percent of the variation in attitude towards advertising is collectively accounted for by these three independent variables.

Table 2 presents the result of the regression analysis. It can be observed that attractiveness showed a significant (0.00) positive (B = 0.357) impact on attitude toward advertisement. Hence H1 was supported. Next, expertise showed a significant (0.00) positive (B = 0.296) impact on attitude toward advertising. Hence H2 was supported. Similarly, trustworthiness showed a

significant (0.00) positive (B =0.23) impact on attitude toward advertisement. Hence H3 was supported. Finally, H4 was also supported as the impact of attitude toward advertising was a significant and positive predictor of purchase intention (B = 0.567, sig. = 0.00).

Table 2 *Coefficients*

IDV	DV	B	SE.	T	Sig.
Attractiveness	ATA	0.36	0.20	7.83	0.00
Expertise	ATA	0.30	0.05	5.70	0.00
Trustworthiness	ATA	0.23	0.07	3.53	0.00
Attitude toward advertisement (ATA)	Purchase intention	0.57	0.06	9.94	0.00

Note. ATA = attitude towards advertisement.

### Moderation Analysis

It was proposed that brand awareness moderates the relationship between ATA and purchase intention. Before performing the moderation analysis, the values of the independent and moderators were mean-centered. An interaction of brand awareness (BA) and ATA (BA x ATA) was also created before analysis. See table 3 for results of moderation analysis.

Table 3 *Moderation*

Model	B	SE.	T	Sig.
(Constant)	2.31	0.12	19.37	0.00
BA x ATA	0.54	0.01	10.48	0.00

Note. ATA = attitude towards advertisement; BA = brand awareness. Criterion is purchase intention.

It can be observed from that table 3 that brand awareness moderates the relationship between ATA and purchase intention, which indicates the acceptance of H5 (B=.544, sig=0.000). The interaction was also plotted, as shown in figure 2. It can be observed that when brand awareness is high, it will result in a more substantial influence of attitude toward advertisement on purchase intention.

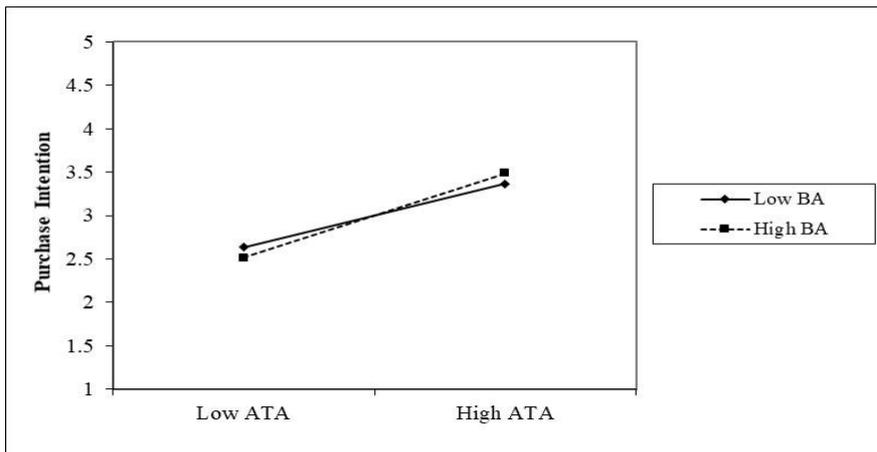


Figure 2 Interaction Plot

### Mediation Analysis

Three hypotheses were projected for this part of the study. The first hypothesis proposed that ATA mediates the relationship between attractiveness and purchase intention. PROCESS macro by Hayes was used to perform the data analysis.

Since the LLCI (.1160) and ULCI (.2573) have non-zero values, the results show that ATA mediates the relationship between attractiveness and purchase intention. H6 is accepted because there were non-zero values that designate that the indirect path is meaningful. The results of the mediation study using the PROCESS macro are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 *Statistics about ATA as Mediator Attractiveness & PI*

	Coefficient	SE	T	P
Constant	2.05	2.41	0.18	0.00
Attractiveness	0.25	0.36	0.05	0.00
	Coefficient	SE	T	P
Constant	0.72	1.18	0.23	0.00
Attractiveness	0.03	0.14	0.06	0.00
ATA	0.39	0.51	0.06	0.00
Direct effect of X on Y				
	Effect	SE	T	P
	0.14	0.06	2.50	0.00
Indirect effect of X on Y				
	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
	0.18	0.04	0.12	0.26

Note. ATA = attitude towards advertisement; PI = purchase intention.

H7 proposed that attitude towards advertisement mediates between expertise and purchase intention. A similar procedure was followed, gathering all the necessities (See table 5), and LLCI (.1302) and ULCI (.2961) had no zero-value indicating the occurrence of mediation.

*Table 5 ATA Mediates between Expertise and Purchase Intention*

	Coefficient	SE	T	P
Constant	1.62	1.96	.174	0.00
Expertise	0.38	0.48	0.05	0.00
	Coefficient	SE	T	P
Constant	0.67	1.11	0.22	0.00
Expertise	0.12	0.23	0.06	0.00
ATA	0.31	0.45	0.07	0.00
Direct effect of X on Y				
	Effect	SE	T	P
	0.23	0.06	3.89	0.00
Indirect effect of X on Y				
	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
	0.21	0.04	0.13	0.30

Note. ATA = attitude towards advertisement; PI = purchase intention.

H8 posited that attitude towards advertisement mediates between trustworthiness and purchase intention. After meeting all requirements, a similar procedure was followed (see table 6). LLCI (.1344) and ULCI (.3073) had no zero value between them. Thus, the mediation hypothesis was supported.

*Table 6 ATA Mediates between Trustworthiness and Purchase Intention*

	Coefficient	SE	T	P
Constant	1.74	2.08	0.17	0.00
Purchase Intension	0.36	0.46	0.05	0.00
	Coefficient	SE	T	P
Constant	0.74	1.18	0.22	0.00
Purchase Intension	0.12	0.23	0.06	0.00
ATA	0.34	0.47	0.06	0.00
Direct effect of X on Y				
	Effect	SE	T	P
	0.19	0.06	3.09	0.00
Indirect effect of X on Y				
	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
	0.22	0.05	0.13	0.31

Note. ATA = attitude towards advertisement; PI = purchase intention.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The impact of endorser reputation (expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) on ATA and ultimately purchased purpose was investigated in this report. Then, it established a link between endorser's credibility factors and purchase intention by establishing a mediating role of attitude towards the ad. It was also discovered that brand recognition moderates the relationship between ATA and eventually purchasing intention. To test the proposed hypotheses, a sample of two hundred and sixty-three educated consumers was analyzed.

H1 supported that attractiveness has a positive effect on attitude towards the advertisement. These findings are in line with extant literature. For example, a study by Kahle and Homer (1985) on agreeableness and attractiveness indicated that the endorsers who have more appealing features trigger purchasing goals among the potential consumers more than that of the physically unattractive. Other studies such as Tanjung and Hudrasyah (2019) also supported that attractiveness leads to ATAs. According to the result of this hypothesis, a positive effect has been considered of attractiveness on ATA. H2 proposed that expertise has a positive impact on attitude towards the advertisement. These results were also supported by data analysis. A study by Till and Busler (2000) suggested that a positive effect on purchase intention and attitude towards a brand has been found due to expertise. Shimp (2010) and Tanjung and Hudrasyah (2019) also found similar results in their investigation. This hypothesis proves that; indeed, a positive relationship has been found on ATA due to the endorser's expertise.

Results also supported H3, which proposed that trustworthiness has a positive effect on ATA. An alluring endorser has the credibility to influence the customers when they acknowledge the data given by a trustworthy source. Further, an appealing big-name positively affects attitudes and purchase decisions (Erdogan, 1999). H4 proposed that a positive effect on purchase intentions happens due to attitude towards the advertisement. In this regard, research has shown that consumer attitudes lead to purchase choices and other consumer-related outcomes (Prajogo & Purwanto, 2020). In the sense of golf goods, Y.-g. Lee et al. (2016) investigated the effect of customer attitudes toward ads on purchasing intention. They also found that purchase intention was influenced consumers' attitudes towards golf product advertisements.

For H5, we proposed that brand awareness acts as a moderator between ATA and PI. The presence of brand recognition increased the impact of ATA on purchasing intentions, according to the findings. The importance of brand awareness is significant as it tends to influence the buying intention of the consumers because consumers are more satisfied when they purchase a brand that is well acknowledged amongst the public (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000).

Brand awareness can help consumers know the brand and facilitate purchase decisions (Percy & Rossiter, 1992).

Finally, three hypotheses, H6, H7, and H8, proposed that ATA mediates between endorser credibility factors (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) and purchase intention. All the hypotheses were supported. According to research, advertisement-associated cognitive responses were found due to exposure to celebrity endorsements (Mehta, 1994). Similar results were found in a study conducted on sponsorship (Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006). Furthermore, these findings were also supported by past studies such as Erdogan (1999), Shimp (2010), Tanjung and Hudrasyah (2019), and Wang et al. (2018).

### **Implications**

From the findings of this study, we can extract beneficial theoretical and practical implications. As far as researchers are concerned, this study serves as an essential contribution in understanding the influence of endorser credibility on purchase intention. The mediating role of ATA and the moderating role of brand awareness also add to the existing body of knowledge in the subject area. Researchers can use this study as a steppingstone for their future endeavors.

As far as practitioners are concerned, they can elicit useful findings as well. Marketing managers and advertisers should take precautions while selecting a celebrity for the promotion of their products. They should ensure that the star chosen to promote the product should be attractive, expert, and trustworthy. Together these three factors will help the probability of purchase intentions among target audiences. Moreover, to further boost the chances of inducing a purchase intention among consumers, advertisers should tweak brand awareness and endorser credibility.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

This study had some limitations, which may be covered in the follow-up investigations. First, this study relied upon the three most used endorser credibility factors: attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness. Other factors may be incorporated in future investigations. Future studies may also focus on the negative aspects of endorser's credibility and how it affects consumers' intentions and responses. Second, data were collected from a representable yet smaller sample size. A replication of this investigation across larger sample sizes will help increase its generalizability. Finally, due to time and cost limitations, the study was built on a cross-sectional design. A more robust research design with a time-lagged or longitudinal investigation should be attempted to improve the causality.

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