

ERASMUS UNIVERSITEIT ROTTERDAM

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**„How does celebrity endorsement across different product
categories affect the purchase intention of students in the
Netherlands?“**

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The views stated in this thesis are those of the author and not necessarily those of the supervisor, second assessor, Erasmus School of Economics or Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Executive summary

This thesis investigates one of the popular marketing strategies that brands employ today, which is celebrity endorsement: when a public figure promotes a product and/or is featured in a brand campaign. By hiring celebrity endorsers, brand are hoping for more exposure, easier recall and more influence on purchase intention of consumers. Nevertheless, celebrity deals can not only mean a hefty price tag for the company, but the partnership may also not be received by the public as intended. This paper will explore to what extent is celebrity endorsement efficient at influencing shopping behaviour of students in the Netherlands, across multiple product categories. Understanding this can help brand managers with deciding whether celebrity endorsement is a good strategy for their product advertising or whether it would result in an investment without returns. Therefore, the central research question is the following:

„How does celebrity endorsement across different product categories affect purchase intention of students in the Netherlands?“

In addition to this, a number of theoretical and empirical subquestions were introduced to further support the main question. The theoretical subquestions are the following:

„Which frameworks companies build upon in order to use celebrity endorsement in their marketing strategy?“

„What happens during the consumer purchase intention process?“

„What are important factors regarding the match between the celebrity and a product/service?“

And as for the empirical subquestions:

„How does celebrity endorsement look like on the Dutch market?“

„What are the latest trends of celebrity endorsement in the Netherlands?“

„What makes a successful celebrity endorsement?“

The subquestions were answered by conducting a literature review as well as an empirical research on the relevant themes of celebrity endorsement. Next, qualitative research was conducted in the form of in-depth interviews with 9 people studying in the Netherlands, in

order to gain insight into how and under which circumstances are the interviewees influenced by celebrities in advertisements (also referred to as ads), to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Subsequently, the findings from the interviews were used to design the survey. The survey responses were collected between the 19th and 29th of July 2023. In total, 150 responses were registered, however only 107 of them were usable for statistical analysis. The quantitative analysis was used to either accept or reject the formulated hypotheses, which yielded the following results:

Hypothesis	Verdict
H₁: <i>Celebrity endorsement positively influences purchase intention of consumers.</i>	ACCEPTED
H₂: <i>Celebrity endorsement effect on purchase intention will vary among product categories.</i>	ACCEPTED
H₃: <i>Celebrity endorsement has a larger effect on purchase intention when it comes to low involvement products.</i>	ACCEPTED

The statistical analysis gives evidence of a significant impact on purchase intention, which solidifies celebrity endorsement as a successful marketing strategy, and certain product categories have an even stronger effect of endorsement, as well as product categories that can be classified as low involvement products. It is thus advised for managers to consider celebrity endorsement especially under such circumstances.

However, even from these results, it is apparent that there are still some other factors of endorsement that influence purchase behaviour which were not considered in this thesis due to feasibility. It is recommended for managers to not only take into account whether celebrity endorsement fits their product, but also focus on the type and characteristics of celebrity. For future research, it would be pertinent to focus on the same target group, i.e. students in the Netherlands, but at a larger scale and focus on other possible factors as well.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Topic introduction

In today's competitive and fast-moving world, it is increasingly more difficult for businesses to stand out among other others due to the overwhelming amount of options that consumers nowadays have. Today's society is shaped consumerism, which is a theory which encourages spending on various goods as it is supposed to promote individual well-being and further economic prosperity (Britannica, n.d.). In turn, current marketplaces are increasingly more fast-paced, as businesses race to win over customers in the face of more and more vigorous competition. This means that companies invest way more into their marketing than ever before, but choosing the right marketing strategy can be challenging. This includes coming up with creative and efficient ways to attract consumers' attention, make them more memorable and drive them to purchase their products or services. Digitalization has helped these marketing efforts even further, by introducing new marketing strategies and spaces to advertise in: there has been a surge of digital marketing, targeted advertisements (from now on referred to also as ads), social media ad placements and so on in the recent years (Durmaz & Efendioglu, 2016). In fact, an average person is estimated to be exposed to 6,000 to 10,000 advertisements a day, compared to 500 to 1600 daily advertisements in the 1970s (Carr, 2023), which depicts well the oversaturation in marketing.

Hence, the main marketing decision problem that businesses face is to pick a suitable strategy for their business model and the target product, as investment into a campaign which ends up not yielding the desired results cannot only cost money, but can backfire on the brand reputation. Among such marketing strategies that are on the riskier and expensive side, there is one that uses society's fascination with popular culture in hopes that famous faces in advertisements will help with consumers' attitude towards the brand and also their purchase intention. This is called celebrity endorsement, and is present in many industries, from food to beauty to cars. Essentially, brands are paying hefty money to well-known public figures in exchange for the celebrities becoming an endorser for the brand or a certain product of the brand. As an endorser, the celebrity stars in various campaigns and helps the brand with exposure. A celebrity endorsing a certain brand can present multiple benefits: such feature can increase credibility of the brand, create buzz concerning a new product, or even create positive attitudes towards the brand. An endorser can also bring in a large amount of sales for

the company - this could be attributed to the aforementioned increase in exposure thanks to the endorser's reach. Of course, having a public figure tied to the brand can also become very risky in case the endorser becomes involved in scandals, as that can have a detrimental effect on the brand too. An infamous case of such failed endorsement was the Tiger Woods cheating scandal, who was prior to that one of the most sought after celebrities by brands. However, when the cheating allegations appeared, companies related to Tiger Woods' name jointly lost more than 2% of market value (Knittel & Stango, 2014). Seeing how expensive and risky such brand deal can get, one might wonder to what extent can celebrity endorsement be considered as an efficient marketing tool. After all, consumer behaviour is a delicate process that can only be roughly sketched out by present academic literature, but is too complex to be predicted in every detail. It can thus be difficult to determine for the company to what extent is such deal efficient, but especially what were the factors that made this specific deal so successful. This thesis is thus intended for companies that are interested in using celebrity endorsement to promote their products, but are unsure about the circumstances under which is celebrity endorsement a well-fitting marketing strategy. The research will focus on showing which factors make an endorsement attractive to the eyes of consumers to the point where they are willing to make a purchase, as this is crucial for managers to know as it will help with choosing the best celebrity endorsement deals for brand equity.

Based on this, the aim of this paper will be to explore and analyze the phenomena of celebrity endorsement and its effect on consumer purchase intention, specifically whether consumers are more inclined to purchase a product when the advertisement is endorsed by a celebrity compared to the advertisement having no endorser. Additionally, I will look at the difference of celebrity endorsement effect across different product categories, such as sports products, perfumes, beverages and so on, to determine where the effect of celebrity endorsers on the purchase intention is the largest and smallest. This leads to the central research question being: „**How does celebrity endorsement across different product categories affect the purchase intention of students in the Netherlands?**“

1.2. Managerial relevance

This study is relevant for managerial decisions by shedding a light on the importance of a public figure representing and promoting the brand. If there indeed is a significant effect of featuring a celebrity in an advertisement, managers can allocate suitable budget, knowing that such strategy will be fruitful in terms of sales. Furthermore, deep-diving into what

product categories are the most successful in terms of celebrity endorsement will also facilitate managerial decisions, as endorsement may not be as efficient in one category compared to another. Finally, if a celebrity endorser is not such a deciding factor or could be even polarizing in the eyes of consumers, managers would perhaps make the decision to refrain from celebrity involvement and focus on other marketing strategies to attract customers.

1.3. Scientific relevance

The topic of celebrity endorsement and its influence on consumer behavior has been talked about in the scientific literature on many occasions, most of the times measured by a quantitative survey. For example, Apejoye (2013) conducted a survey with a control and experimental group, meaning, one group was shown an ad with a celebrity endorser, the other one not. In contrast, many of the previous studies focused more on what makes celebrity endorsement so appealing to consumers. In their research, conceptual framework popularized by Ohanian (1990) is frequently used, which explains the different attributes that contribute to the enhanced appeal in case of celebrity endorser, such as likeability, trustworthiness, attractiveness, credibility. Researchers, such as Gupta et al. (2015) and Ha & Lam (2017) have adopted this framework and used it for their survey questions based on Likert scale, in hopes of establishing a significant relationship of these factors on consumer's attitude towards brand and/or consumer's purchase intention (depending on the study). However, most of surveys on this topic have been done in Asian/Middle Eastern countries, and with a wider target base – usually adults with no other age restraints. Furthermore, in most of the existing literature, the main or only focus has been on the aforementioned conceptual framework. Thus, this research aims to enrich research done by likes of Apejoye (2013), by targeting a different audience, specifically students residing in the Netherlands, as there could be differences in results due to varying cultures, data collection ten years apart, and so on compared to previous research.

1.4. Central research question

How does celebrity endorsement across different product categories affect the purchase intention of students in the Netherlands?

1.5. Theoretical subquestions

1. Which frameworks companies build upon in order to use celebrity endorsement in their marketing strategy?
2. What happens during the consumer purchase intention process?
3. What are important factors regarding the match between the celebrity and a product/service?

1.6. Empirical subquestions

1. How does celebrity endorsement look like on the Dutch market?
2. What are the latest trends of celebrity endorsement in the Netherlands?
3. What makes a successful celebrity endorsement?

1.7. Possible ethical limitations

This research paper may present some ethical limitations. With this type of research, respondents are asked to share some personal details regarding their preferences. In addition to this, interview respondents anonymity cannot be preserved completely, as the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Lastly, the findings of this study, which are based on the respondent's information, may be used by marketers in order to build a marketing strategy.

1.8. Possible research limitations

Due to this being a Bachelor's thesis, it is expected that there will be a number of research limitations due to the scope of such type of thesis. First limitation is that there are multiple ways to approach a study on the topic of celebrity endorsement, as it is a rather wide and popular topic in scientific literature, but also frequently used by marketers. However, due to the scope of this study, not all of the intricacies of this subject may be addressed, and the research will address what is relevant to the central question.

Next, this thesis heavily relies on consumer behaviour. While there has been plenty of literature studies that discussed this complicated topic, consumer behaviour remains a field

that is difficult to predict and measure. This thesis has done it in the best of its capabilities, but the results might not be the most accurate in regards to real life consumer behaviour.

Additionally, this research may present a study sample that is not large enough. The qualitative research sample (interview sample) consists of nine respondents, and the findings were used for the survey design. It is possible that some important factors were not mentioned by the interviewees and were not then accounted for in the following analysis. Furthermore, due to limited availability of respondents, the survey sample mainly consists of the author's social circle, that may present similar characteristics and not enough variety (for example, mostly students living in Rotterdam). This sample may also be relatively small because of lack of resources that stems from this being a Bachelor thesis.

1.9. Thesis structure outline

This thesis is divided into five chapters. In the first one, the topic of the research is introduced, as well as the problem statement and why is this study topic relevant from the managerial and scientific point of view. This is also where the central research question and its empirical and theoretical subquestions are stated. The second chapter, the literature review, consists of an empirical and literature study that answer the thesis subquestions. In the third chapter, which is the research methodology, the choice of research as well as the design for qualitative and quantitative part of the study will be discussed. The fourth chapter will describe the obtained results and provide key findings of the analysis. In the last chapter, key findings of the research will be discussed, as well as limitations and further recommendations.

2. Literature review

2.1. Which frameworks companies build upon in order to use celebrity endorsement in their marketing strategy?

To attract and win over customers, companies are using a collection of marketing tools to affirm their position on the market against other competitors (Goi, 2009). These tools are encapsulated by a marketing framework called 4Ps, which stands for product, place, price and promotion, and was first defined by McCarthy (1964). Occasionally, other „Ps“ are added, however, Kent & Brown (2006) argued that such Ps have yet to affirm their position in this conceptual framework regarding their validity.

In this thesis, the focus will be on the „P“ that stands for promotion. Novak (2011) defines promotion as „the process of communication between companies and customers in order to create positive attitudes about products and services that lead to their favor in the process of buying in the market“. For example, companies can choose to release memorable ads that „get stuck“ in the consumer’s mind. Another tactic would be endorsement, which is defined in general as „the act of saying that you approve of or support something or someone“, as per the Cambridge Dictionary (2023). Endorsement can be done in politics, for example, by publicly expressing support for a certain presidential candidate, but in this thesis, celebrity endorsement will be the topic of focus.

McCracken (1989) defined a celebrity endorser as „any individual who enjoys public perception and who uses this perception on behalf of a consumer good by showing up with it in an advertisement“. A celebrity is a public figure, that has already entered into the general public’s mind, thus helping with the ad recall (Khatri, 2006). When the audience might still be unsure about the product or service itself and has yet to make an opinion, a celebrity endorser is able to tilt this perception and convince the consumer to make a purchase. This is because while it is difficult to create an attitude towards an unfamiliar product or brand in general without testing it first, there probably already are pre-existing opinions or sentiments regarding the endorsing public figure (McCormick, 2016). So while positive attitude, such as what fans of a certain celebrity will have, might work out in favor of the brand by attracting this audience, celebrity endorsement is also a risky decision and might not yield the desired results. Erdogan (1999) sheds a light on the possible advantages and downfalls of celebrity

endorsement. Starting with „pros“ of endorsement, such marketing strategy can help with brand awareness, increased mentions (trending on Twitter, Google searches etc.), brand image but also brand repositioning (Erdogan, 1999). All in all, a successful endorsement can re-affirm the brand's image and position on the market. However, it comes with certain risks as Erdogan (1999) states, such as overexposure, brand being overshadowed by the celebrity, controversies and so on. Of course, such endorsements also cost the companies a lot of money. Endorsers must thus be chosen carefully and researchers have attempted to construct frameworks that make such decision-making more transparent and easier to follow.

Source Credibility Model.

One of them is the theoretical framework called the Source Credibility Model, of which the main contributor is Ohanian (1990) and was subsequently enriched by other authors, such as Ha & Lam (2017). This framework sums up the different factors of the consumer's perception regarding the celebrity endorser, and these factors impact the consumer's attitude towards the brand, ultimately influencing the purchase intention. Specifically Ohanian (1990) used in her research three dimensions of celebrity endorsement: expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. Ha & Lam (2017) used more of them, including similarity, familiarity and liking of the celebrity. Due to conciseness, the thesis will focus on attractiveness, expertise and similarity, as they cover the important aspects of endorsement, and they are defined in the study by Ha & Lam (2017) as following:

Attractiveness: physical attractiveness, but also requires „mental skills, personality, lifestyle and art talents“ (Ha & Lam, 2017).

Expertise: „the level of knowledge and experience that a person may obtain in a specific field that is acknowledged as valid“ (Ha & Lam, 2017).

Similarity: the extent to which the consumer identifies (similarizes) with the celebrity, in terms of background, origins, similar concerns, life experiences, etc. (Ha & Lam, 2017).

With these dimensions, a multi-factor scale was created to attempt measuring these dimensions, which proved to have a high validity and reliability as seen in the study by Ohanian (1990).

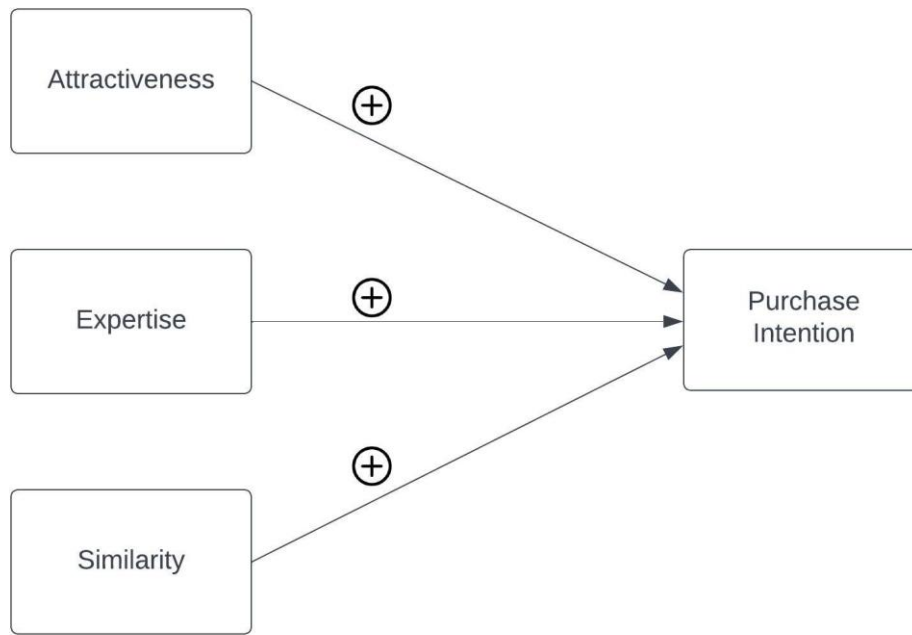


Figure 1. Source Credibility Model.

This framework has been later used in many other studies on celebrity endorsement, such as in the study by Gupta et al. (2015), where the authors found significant effect of, first of all, celebrity endorsement on consumer purchase intention, and second of all, attractiveness of the celebrity endorser on purchase intention. However, the relationship between the perceived expertise of the celebrity and purchase intention has not been significant.

Elaboration Likelihood Model.

An increasingly important framework in case of celebrity endorsement is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). As Lee & Koo (2016) suggested, this conceptual framework might play a larger role when trying to explain the effect of celebrity endorsement on consumer's purchase intention than thought before, and more marketers should consider using this theoretical model in their marketing strategy. ELM is a framework that shows how can consumer attitudes change in response to an advertising stimuli. The final outcome is determined based on the level of involvement the consumer has a priori, i.e., high or low involvement (Anghel, 2009). As per Clarke & Belk (1979), for high involvement products, the consumer is willing to put a considerable amount of time and work into researching more

information about the product prior to the purchase, in order to make the best decision. In contrast, low involvement products typically do not necessitate this extensive research in the eyes of the consumer. Because of this, the Elaboration Likelihood Model presents two different routes, depending on the level of involvement. In relation to celebrity endorsement, Petty et al. (1983), the originators of the ELM, showed in their research that celebrity endorsement is effective for low involvement decisions, but not as much for high involvement decision-making, as the consumers seek in those scenarios more arguments (information) and celebrities do not prove to be enough to persuade. Therefore, based on ELM, celebrity endorsement is recommended to use in low-involving product purchase decision scenarios (Anghel, 2009).

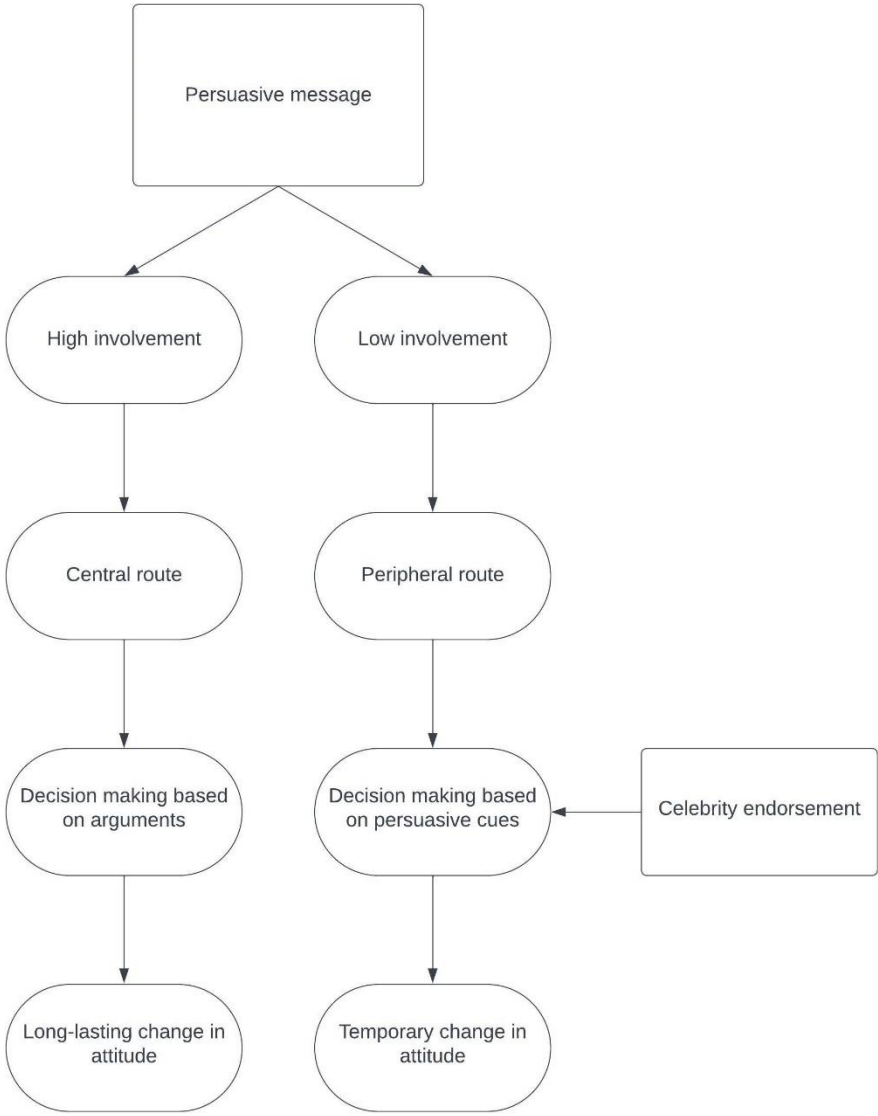


Figure 2. Elaboration Likelihood Model.

Summary

In this section, celebrity endorsement and the companies' motivations to proceed with such marketing strategy were explained. Celebrity endorsers can help with brand awareness thanks to their extensive reach among the public. Additionally, consumers can already create an attitude towards the advertised product which reflects their feelings about the celebrity endorser. However, this attitude does not always happen to be positive, and employment of celebrity endorsers as a marketing strategy can become very costly to the firm, for example, if the celebrity is involved in a scandal. Lastly, some of the frameworks that brands use to choose the right celebrity endorser were introduced. These models focus either on the context of the celebrity endorsement, i.e., the product category, or the attributes linked to the celebrity endorser. Thus, according to these frameworks, celebrity endorsement is more efficient when it concerns certain product categories and when the endorser presents certain characteristics.

2.2. What are important factors regarding the match between the celebrity and the product/service?

The so-called celebrity and product match-up deserves a section of its own, as it is often where the endorsement fails: according to Erdogan (1999), if consumers do not see a clear link between the celebrity and the product/service they endorse, they are more likely to assume that it is a „cash grab“, i.e., the celebrity became an endorser purely because of the monetary compensation. Other literature suggests that consumers view celebrities who endorse multiple brands less favorably than if they endorse a single brand (Tripp et al., 1994). Additionally, Louie & Obermiller (2002) found that celebrities that are blamed for specific events have potentially detrimental effect on the brands they endorse. This means that the match between the celebrity and the brand has to be carefully curated.

This match-up is often referred to differently in various research papers: Kahle & Homer (1985) refer to it as the match-up hypothesis, Bergkvist et al. (2016) as the celebrity-brand fit, or can also be called congruence as per Choi & Rifon (2012), but all these terms describe how „the message conveyed by the image of the celebrity and the message about the product ought to converge in effective advertisements“ (Kahle & Homer, 1985). This match-up hypothesis enriches the Source Credibility Model and serves as a sort of an extension to it, as in the study by Bergkvist et al. (2016).

In their research, Kahle & Homer (1985) focused more on the attractiveness match-up, i.e., for products that are supposed to enhance a person's attractiveness, an equally attractive celebrity endorser will be more effective than a less attractive endorser. On the other hand, Till & Busler (1998) were interested in the match-up of expertise as according to them, „the celebrity is not there for 'prettification', but should be at the core of the marketing strategy“. The authors also went on to give examples of a celebrity and product match-up that does not work well precisely because the celebrity endorser lacked perceived expertise of the advertised product: Cindy Crawford and her endorsement of the car brand Citroen. Till & Busler (1998) go on to explain that hiring a seasoned rally champion Carlos Sainz to endorse „a car he actually drives“ would be more effective in terms of believability and reflect positively in the eyes of the consumer.

Meaning transfer model.

The match-up hypothesis is directly tied to the Meaning Transfer Model by McCracken (1989). This model illustrates how consumers give a brand individual meaning through their perception of celebrity endorsement. This process is divided into three stages, in each of them, a certain meaning is transferred. The first one is all about the celebrity image, so the context, people and objects that individuals associate with the celebrity create a certain meaning given to the celebrity. The next stage involves the celebrity endorsement, and it is precisely here where we see the importance of a good celebrity and product/service match-up, as given the celebrity, their perceived characteristics will transfer to the endorsed product. In the third and final stage, it is the meaning of the product that is transferred onto the customers.

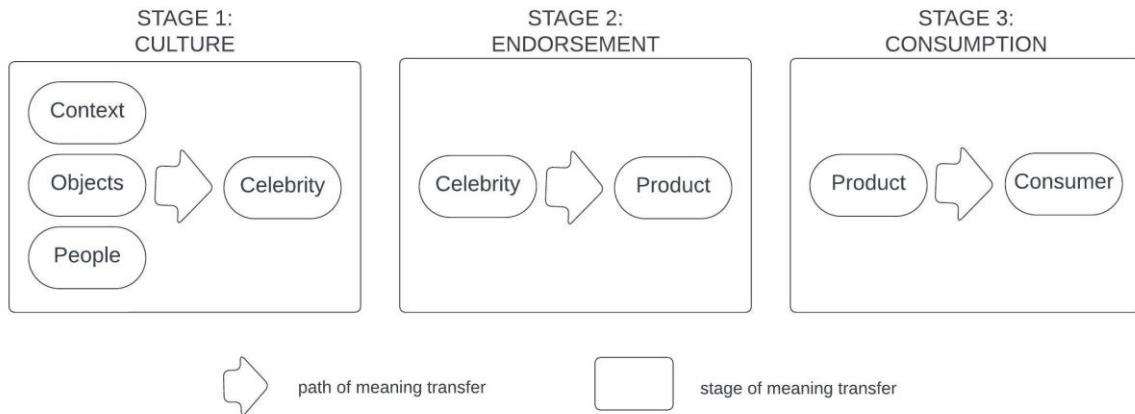


Figure 3. Meaning Transfer Model.

Adapted source: McCracken, 1989

Now, if the match between the celebrity and the product is not clear enough and seems confusing, the meaning transfer in the second stage can be a fail, with the consumer getting a false impression of the product and can thus lead to an undesirable attitude towards the brand. The Meaning Transfer Model thus highlights the importance of a good celebrity-brand fit, as did the aforementioned literature on this topic.

Summary

The findings in this subquestion suggest the importance of considering whether the match between the celebrity endorser and the product is adequate, as such agreement like endorsement is usually a long-term commitment. The match-up needs to make sense to consumers, as if there is not a successful meaning transfer in the eyes of the viewer, it is more likely to be considered as ingenuine, which lowers the chances of a purchase.

2.3. What happens during consumer purchase intention process?

The core of marketing lies in the company's efforts to understand what consumers need and choose a suitable strategy in order to attract those consumers and have a competitive advantage over other companies (Stankevich, 2017). Thus, it all comes down to getting to know how consumers think and how they process information before making a purchase, and how the environment influences their decisions. Several researchers have focused their work

on constructing frameworks that explain this consumer thought process. However, before diving into this concept, we have to first define what consumer behaviour is. Stankevich (2017) defines this term as „the process consumers experience when they make purchases, and it involves factors that influence their decision“. This process can be summarized by the Five Stage Decision Buying Process Model, first introduced by John Dewey in 1910. The stages are the following: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and finally postpurchase behaviour. I will describe each of the steps of the model.

Need recognition

The consumer decision process starts with the consumer identifying a problem or a need that needs to be resolved/fulfilled. Comegys et al. (2006) state that this need stems from the difference between the individual's actual state versus the desired state. The recognition of this difference can be triggered by an internal stimuli, such as physiological need (ex: hunger), but marketers purposefully create stimuli by creating this imbalance of state by introducing sales promotions, advertisements and so on. This is referred to as an external stimuli (Stankevich, 2017).

Information search

Once a need is recognized, consumer starts the process of gathering more information through different channels. Comegys et al. (2006) identify two different stages: the first one is heightened attention to the product options in consideration, for example, noticing smartphone ads more than prior new phone need recognition. Note that celebrity endorsement helps with the ad recall, thus the consumer is more likely to recall ads he has seen about the desired product category more if they featured a celebrity. The second level is the active engagement in looking for more information, through online reviews, word-of-mouth recommendations and so on.

Evaluation of alternatives

By gathering this information about the desired product, the consumer creates the so-called evoked set, i.e., a set of his preferred alternatives of the product (Stankevich, 2017). The individual determines the most important attributes (price, brand, quality, etc.), giving more weight to the more important ones and less weight to the less important ones, and use the cut-off method to get rid of less attractive product candidates.

Purchase

Once the consumer is left with only one alternative that has his preferred price, brand, quality, method of payment and so on, making him believe that this is the product he will be the most satisfied with, the purchase of this product alternative takes place. However, it is possible that the candidate that was initially picked from all the other alternatives ends up not being the purchased one. This is due to last minute changes that can occur because of social pressure or circumstances that are out of the consumer's control (Comegys et al., 2006). For example, a friend or family relative may strongly discourage the consumer from buying their chosen alternative and recommend a different one, thus changing the individual's initial ranking of alternatives. Furthermore, the chosen product can become out of stock, have their price increase substantially, the purchase is no longer a priority for the consumer and so on. Hence, the consumer might in the end opt for a different alternative (Comegys et al., 2006). In addition to this, there might be a delay between the purchase decision and the decision itself, especially when it comes to bigger investments, such as cars, and high involvement products in general. If this is the case, it is important for the marketers to „hook“ the consumer in for the delay period too, in order not to lose out on prospecting client (Stankevich, 2017).

Post-purchase evaluation

In the last stage, the consumer evaluates the extent to which he is satisfied with the product post-purchase. The individual determines whether the product met or even exceeded all of his expectations, if so, it is likely that a repurchase will be made in the future. The satisfied customer might also become a supporter of the product and recommend it to people in his social circle (Stankevich, 2017). While satisfaction does not guarantee brand loyalty, as discussed by Comegys et al. (2006), Auh & Johnson (2005) showed in their study that it is indeed the case and that satisfaction has a positive effect on loyalty. The authors also recommend to conduct follow-up activities by the brand to strengthen customer loyalty. If the individual becomes disappointed with the product, repurchase is not to be expected and it is possible that he will discourage his closed ones from the purchase (Stankevich, 2017).



Figure 4. Consumer purchase intention process.

Summary

To conclude, there are several stages that consumers go through when deciding on a purchase of a product/service. It is of utmost importance for the marketers to understand this complicated process to the best of their capabilities, as not all consumer behaviour can be predicted, in order to get a competitive advantage.

2.4. How does celebrity endorsement look like on the Dutch market?

The Dutch market is not an exception to celebrity endorsed ads: both Dutch and international companies are closing deals with well-known Dutch people (in Dutch, they are referred to as „bekende Nederlanders“ or just „BN’ers“) in hopes of making the entry to the new market easier or to reach new audiences (Spry et al., 2011). For example, the beloved F1 driver Max Verstappen is endorsing multiple brands at once, such as the supermarket chain Jumbo, the beverage companies Red Bull and Heineken and the clothing brand G-Star RAW. Many of these brands are (originally) from the Netherlands, and we can see a similar pattern for Doutzen Kroes, Dutch supermodel, and her endorsement portfolio, among which are companies such as Hunkemoller and MyJewellery (fashion oriented brands).

We can also look at Internet celebrities, namely famous people on social media. Statista (2019) provides information on the most followed people on Instagram at the end of 2018, who are also based in the Netherlands. Most of these Instagram accounts belong to BN’ers that are either involved in the music or fashion (or beauty) industry. At the point of the article publication, the most followed Instagrammer in the Netherlands was the Dutch-Persian beauty influencer Negin Mirsalehi, and as expected, companies are more than eager to collaborate with this BN’er. According to Women’s Wear Daily (2017), Negin gets paid 15,000 to 20,000 dollars per single sponsored post on Instagram. She also got once offered 800,000 dollars to become an endorser for an unnamed hair brand (Women’s Wear Daily,

2017). Companies are thus taking more and more interest in Internet celebrities, as is evident from Negin Mirsalehi's endorsement track, as well as most of the other top Dutch Instagrammers on the list (Tavi Castro and diet supplements, Lieke Martens and peanut butter,..).

However, celebrity endorsement in the Netherlands is starting to be restricted by the government in some specific fields due to ethical reasons. Earlier in 2022, the Dutch Cabinet announced a ban on celebrity endorsement of gambling, specifically forbidding public figures to appear in gambling advertisements. This ban was created to protect easily influenced people from becoming addicted, in response to the earlier legalization of online gambling. This is an example of government intervention into endorsement agreements, and it is possible that such practices will eventually take place in other advertising areas as the advertised products/services could pose a risk to consumers in a similar way as gambling.

Celebrity endorsement is thus frequently seen on the Dutch advertising and promotion market, but how susceptible are Dutch consumers to it? Winterich et al. (2018) conducted a study on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements across countries, by using the mediator of power distance beliefs (PDB), which is „a cultural orientation related to the extent to which people expect and accept differences in power“, as defined by Winterich et al. (2018). The authors go on to propose that populations with greater PDB are more sensitive to celebrity endorsement, i.e., are more likely to be positively influenced by celebrities featuring in advertisements. According to the authors, it is mostly Asian countries (China, India, Philippines) that have a high PDB, thus the effect of celebrity endorsement on consumers is expected to be larger, which would explain why celebrity endorsement is more prevalent in these countries than others. Europe as a whole scored relatively low in terms of PDB, but the Netherlands specifically scored low even compared to the other European countries, such as France, Poland or Belgium. This finding would thus point to Dutch consumers being relatively insensitive to celebrities in advertisements, and they are more likely to see the product „as it is“ (EURIB, n.d.).

A similar conclusion was also drawn by the research of Tran (2011), where the author focused on the differences in attitude and purchase intention regarding celebrity endorsed ad between participants of Dutch and Chinese descent. Tran (2011) concluded based on her sample results that Dutch participants were not influenced by the celebrity endorsement, in contrast, Chinese respondents were affected in terms of their attitude towards the

advertisement (but not in terms of purchase intention). This result is thus in line with the PDB hypothesis by Winterich et al. (2018).

So while the aforementioned research of celebrity endorsement in the Netherlands inferred that Dutch population could be less susceptible to this marketing strategy, there is still evidence of some influence of celebrities on the attitude of Dutch consumers. The study by Van Norel et al. (2014) revealed that using celebrity tweets to restore companies' reputation following a scandal proved to be efficient, as the attitude of Dutch respondents of the experiment towards the company became more positive. Additionally, a tweet from „an intelligent celebrity, who has the best fit with the topic“ proved to be the most influential, in comparison to „an attractive celebrity“ (Van Norel et al., 2014). On a similar note, when faced with green advertising, the Dutch sample population in the research done by Blasche & Ketelaar (2015) responded more positively to celebrity endorsers who were already associated with „green“ (eco) activism in the consumers' mind – in this case, it was a comparison between an ad for the same product, featuring either Gwyneth Paltrow (good fit with „green“ product) or Lindsey Lohan (bad fit with „green“ product). In conclusion, it seems that Dutch consumers do respond well to celebrity endorsed ads – and are then efficient - if they make sense. A good match between the celebrity and the brand (advertised product/service) is appreciated: if this is done poorly, Dutch people seem to be less persuaded by the celebrity strategy. Note that all of the mentioned studies on Dutch consumer behaviour regarding celebrity endorsement has not focused on a specific age group: it is thus unsure how does the target group of this thesis, students in the Netherlands, behave, and if there will be contrasting results to the discussed literature.

Summary

Using celebrities in ads is a widely used technique even on the Dutch market. Both traditional celebrities, such as models and sportsmen, and Internet-famous people are being used for celebrity endorsement. However, there is empirical evidence that Dutch people may be less susceptible to the celebrity effect in advertising compared to other populations. It is possible that this finding will affect the subsequent research and the significance of results.

2.5. What are the latest trends of celebrity endorsement in the Netherlands?

There are several directions that celebrity endorsement is currently taking in the Netherlands. So far, the focus has been mostly on the traditional concept of celebrities, such as well-known actors, singers or models, however, brands are in fact starting to realize the potential of social media influencers, such as bloggers and Instagram celebrities („instafamous people“) (Schouten et al., 2020). So while influencers might not be the first to be named when thinking of a celebrity, they still fall under this concept if we recall the definition of a celebrity endorser as stated by McCracken (1989). Indeed, social media is increasingly more integrated in people's everyday lives, and on the one hand, companies are utilizing these new platforms to advertise their products and services to reach more potential customers (Alalwan, 2018), and on the other hand, people are using social media to create and share content on various topics, such as fitness, beauty, food, travel. In fact, some of these social media users have created a large following on such platforms that they made content creation on social media their living. With such follower base in a specific field, it is no wonder that companies are turning to these online influencers to promote their brand (Schouten et al., 2020). There are multiple studies that focused on the perception and effectiveness of such celebrity endorsement in the Netherlands, often comparing it to endorsements by „traditional“ celebrities. Focusing on this new type of celebrity endorsement specifically on the Dutch market makes sense, as The Netherlands is among the top countries when it comes to Instagram usage in Europe as per Statista (2018). While this position might have changed in the recent years, it shows that the Dutch population became frequent Instagram users quicker than most of other European countries, and will thus have more experience and knowledge on social media advertising and influencer endorsement than others. On the Dutch market, Schouten et al. (2020) compared influencer vs. traditional celebrity endorsement, whereas Verspaget (2016) made a comparison between bloggers and traditional celebrities regarding endorsement. The results were similar: influencers (including bloggers) were perceived by the Dutch participants of the study as more trustworthy than regular celebrities. The Dutch consumers also feel more similar to influencers than to celebrities. These findings conclude that the use of influencers in endorsement leads to higher purchase intention as well as a more positive attitude towards brand (Schouten et al., 2018; Verspaget, 2016). The practical implications of these results are that influencer endorsement in the Netherlands is growing popularity for a reason and will continue on doing so at the same time as social media platforms keep on expanding.

Sometimes, scammers make use of the increased credibility that consumers perceive when it comes to celebrity endorsement. When cryptocurrency was just gaining more popularity in 2019, numerous fake celebrity endorsed ads appeared in the Netherlands promoting crypto-investment sites, that ultimately stole all the invested money with no returns (BeInCrypto, 2019). Not only did the investors lose money, the reputation of the featured Dutch celebrities – John de Mol, Waylon and Humberto Tan among others - was tarnished as well, as they were now negatively associated with the scam ad. So while this is not a „trend“ among consumers or brands, it shows that there is a surge in scams that use the potential of celebrity endorsements to such dishonest practices.

Summary

In summary, the traditional concept of celebrity endorsers is expanding to new territories: with the surge of social media, „regular“ platform users can now gain more exposure and connect with a wide range of people easily. Marketers are using this to their advantage, as influencers are possibly cheaper to hire as endorsers and are able to reach a more niche community. On the other hand, scammers are making use of celebrities and their influence on consumers increasingly more, by featuring famous and popular people in their fake ads to harness the credibility that the celebrity gives to the ad.

2.6. What makes a successful celebrity endorsement?

Celebrity endorsement is a frequently discussed topic even outside of scientific literature. Many news articles focus on explaining the perks of celebrity branding from the point of view of companies, as well as shedding lights on the possible obstacles and backfires of such promotion strategy. These recommendations match what the literature says, as many concepts of the various theoretical frameworks can be directly observable in real-life celebrity endorsements, and the success (and failure) of certain endorsements can be linked and explained by the theoretical literature.

Starting with gathering all the aspects that (non-academic) articles consider essential when it comes to a successful endorsement: Forbes (2022) created a few guidelines for it, starting with choosing the right celebrity that is in accordance with the target audience, but also with the advertised product. The author of the article recommends selecting celebrities that are already in the spotlight, but have yet to hit the peak of their career, as such

personalities will „secure maximum impact from their growing esteem and relevance“, at a lower cost (Forbes, 2022). The right timing for endorsement announcement is thus vital. In addition to this, Forbes also recommends to build the whole campaign around the endorser for maximal visibility and return on investment.

Futhermore, in news articles, themes directly borrowed from the scientific literature are encountered, such as the importance of attractiveness and credibility (expertise) of the celebrity (Martin Roll, 2018). This article also explains the vital role of meaning transfer, which the author explains as the „compatibility between the brand and the celebrity in terms of identity, personality, positioning in the market vis-à-vis competitors, and lifestyle“ (Martin Roll, 2018), rather than explaining the theoretical steps of this conceptual framework. In addition to this, the article stresses the essential role consistency and long-term commitment of the parties to the endorsement, as short-term deals or sudden changes reflect badly on the company. Next, the selected endorser should be „unique“, as in, oversaturation of one celebrity on the market makes the individual products stand out less. A real life example of such overexposed endorser would be the girl group Spice Girls, who in the 1990's became endorsers for a wide variety of brands. As Erdogan (1999) explains in his paper, if an endorser has links to too many different brands, not only does it make the endorsement less remarkable, but it is then also more likely to be seen as a simple „cash grab“ from a greedy celebrity. Lastly, the endorsement should be monitored closely by the company, to avoid any negative public image of the endorser's actions and other undesirable effects of such brand deal (Martin Roll, 2018).

Michael Jordan, the famous basketball player, is widely recognised as *the* celebrity endorser, with an impressive brand deal portfolio that ranges from colognes to beverages, but his most memorable endorsement is with Nike – in fact, he help Nike become the giant sports brand that it is today, as when he first signed the deal with them, the company was falling behind other major brands such as Adidas, Reebok and Converse. In 1984, when Michael Jordan was still an NBA rookie, Nike was searching for a suitable endorser to enter the basketball market (Sportskeeda, 2023). Together, they created the iconic Jordan Brand which remains popular not only among basketball enthusiasts, but also the general public. The case of Jordan underlines multiple themes that were previously discussed, such as companies using endorsers to break into new markets, but also often opting for stars on the rise to fame, as Nike probably would not be able to afford a bigger star at the start of the partnership, and it has paid off. Additionally, this memorable endorsement serves as an inspiration in a more

general sense: the public resonates well with „underdog“ and „rocky road“ stories, as both Nike and Jordan were newcomers to the competitive world of American basketball and managed to become stars. It only helps that Michael Jordan came from humble background and had to work hard to become the athlete icon he is today, making it easier for people to identify with him as his story is relatable.

Now that an example of a tremendously successful endorsement was discussed, some endorsements that failed or did not meet the expectations will be introduced. This failure is usually caused by a bad match between the celebrity and the brand, or because the campaign did not resonate with the public as it was meant to. A suitable example would be Helena Bonham Carter and her short-lived endorsement of Yardley Cosmetics. While selecting Carter, a leading actress in the UK in the 1990's, might have seemed initially like a good marketing choice for Yardley, the match did not make much sense, not even to the actress herself. Helena said in an interview that she did not understand why she was chosen as the face of Yardley Cosmetics, because she barely wears makeup and feels disconnected from the sophisticated image of Yardley, which is an established British brand that even produces cosmetics for the British Royal Family. The partnership ended soon after this statement (Independent, 2005). Another endorsement failure is Sarah Jessica Parker for GAP, the American clothing brand. The deal was made when the actress was known especially for her role in *Sex and the City*, where her character mostly wears high-end fashion and visits expensive New York boutiques. Thus, the endorsement of GAP, which is mostly known for being late to trends and somewhat boring, did not seem suitable for her (as she was, for consumers, connected to her TV role) and hence did not come across as genuine. Even this endorsement deal came to an end rather quickly. In conclusion, bad match-up in celebrity endorsement is usually regarded negatively by consumers and the campaigns are fairly short-lived.

Summary

This section focused on what makes a celebrity endorsement successful. Certain articles highlight the importance of an image congruence between the endorser and the product, as nonsensical endorsement may reflect negatively on how consumers view the advertised product. Moreover, the endorser needs to be paid attention to as well: for example, it was often stated that an up-and-coming celebrity is the best choice for an endorser. Looking at some past celebrity endorsements, there is a pattern when it comes to successful endorsement deals, relating to a good celebrity-product match-up and relatability.

2.7. Conceptual model

Following the literature review regarding celebrity endorsement, the following hypotheses have been formulated and will be either accepted or rejected in the subsequent research:

H₁: *Celebrity endorsement positively influences purchase intention of consumers.*

H₂: *Celebrity endorsement effect on purchase intention will vary among product categories.*

H₃: *Celebrity endorsement has a larger effect on purchase intention when it comes to low involvement products.*

Hence, the conceptual model looks as following:

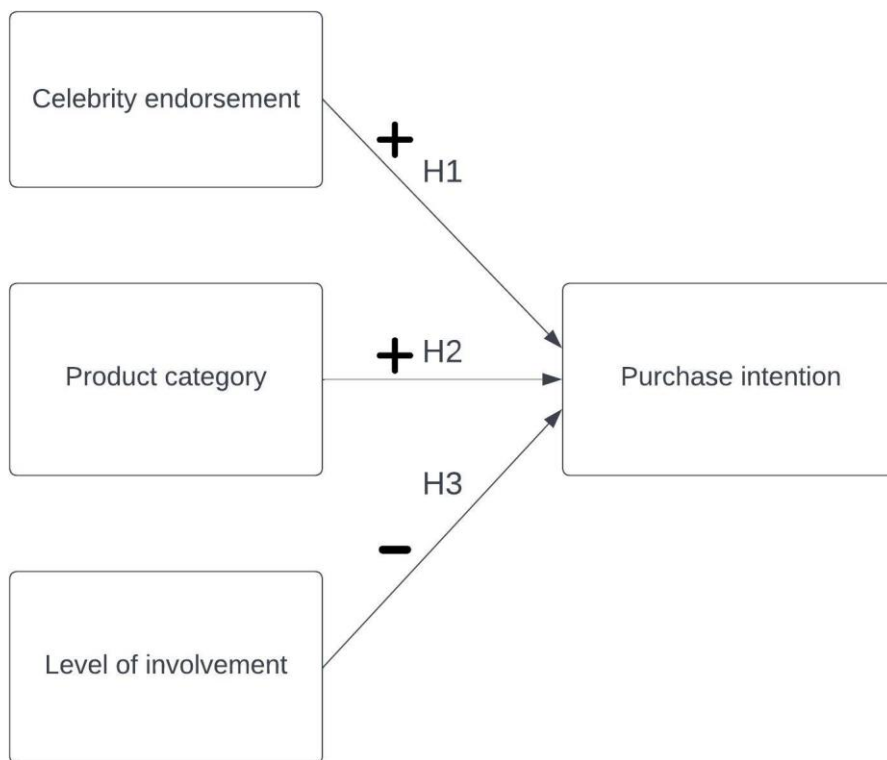


Figure 4. Conceptual model.

As seen from Figure 4, the paper will focus on three different variables affecting consumer purchase intention in regards to endorsement. The first hypothesis says that there is in fact a celebrity endorsement effect, meaning, ads with a celebrity endorser will score higher when it comes to purchase intention. According to the next hypothesis, the endorsement effect

will differ from one product category to another, so some product categories will present a stronger influence of the celebrity than other categories. Finally, the last hypothesis relates to the level of involvement the respondents present during purchase decision process when it comes to celebrity endorsed ads. Here, the relationship is marked as negative, as low involvement products are expected to experience stronger celebrity endorsement effect, i.e., consumers are supposed to be more influenced by celebrities when it concerns low involvement products, and less when it is high involvement products. Therefore, as the level of involvement increases, the effect should be weaker.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Qualitative and quantitative research – methodological choice

Before conducting a scientific research, determining a suitable research method is needed. Generally, there are two types of research: quantitative and qualitative research. According to Bryman (2003), quantitative analysis is based on „hard“ (factual), numerical data stemming from a large population sample, and is meant to test different hypotheses on a specific subject. This type of research is also designed to be replicable by future studies, by presenting clear, logical steps to follow during the research. Finally, it is also possible to conduct a statistical analysis on quantitative data, which can be done with the help of statistical tools such as SPSS, Stata or R. In contrast, qualitative analysis is looking for an in-depth understanding of certain phenomena. Such analysis does not contain precise steps, as most of the research is done through observation or semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2003), i.e., interviews that do not follow a precise step-by-step, but discuss matters as they come up during the interview and following a pre-determined pathway only loosely. It is thus likely that one interview will differ from one another in terms of structure. Instead of numerical data, it uses words, and more generally, quotes to conduct an analysis and draw conclusions and other insights based on that, and is open to multiple „realities“ and interpretations, contrary to quantitative data. This can be attributed to the nature of words, which can pass on emotions, experiences and other meanings.

In this thesis, both qualitative and quantitative method was used. For the qualitative part, experiences and opinions of a smaller sample were collected by means of in-depth interviews, and insights from the qualitative analysis were then used to construct the survey questions. The reason for this was to uncover some important attributes to the topic that could have been overlooked if I were to proceed with quantitative analysis only. Quantitative analysis is useful regarding testing the hypotheses formulated based on the literature review, as it is possible to test for significance based on the obtained numerical data.

3.2. In-depth interview design

First, semi-constructed, in-depth interviews were conducted among a sample of 9 students in the Netherlands. The interviewees came from the author’s personal circle, whether

it be from classes, work or other social activities. The interviews were all recorded with the permission of the respondents, and the purpose of the interviews was explained at the very beginning of the interview. Some interviews took place online through a Zoom evening (cameras on), while some of them were in person. Furthermore, all of the interviews were held in English, as most of the respondents were international students and/or feel very comfortable speaking in English, thus eliminating any potential communication obstacles.

3.3. Survey design

The survey was constructed and distributed once all the interviews were recorded, as insights from the qualitative research were needed for the ensuing quantitative study. The questionnaire starts off with explaining the purpose of the survey (bachelor thesis), then basic demographic questions are asked, namely about age and preferred gender, to get to know the sample better. Next comes the core of the survey, where the respondents are shown a sample of 14 ads, half of which are featuring a celebrity, whereas the other half does not. The shown ads are all real and are thus not fabricated for the purpose of the experiment, in order to increase authenticity of the experiment, as respondents being familiar with the ads would not pose a problem for the analysis. In total, there are seven pairs for each product category, which were inspired by the interviewee's responses. This entails that each product category has one ad without a celebrity endorser and one ad with a celebrity endorser. The product ads are for: mascara, perfume, gym supplement, chips, microwaveable snack, water, football boots. Additionally, the product categories were chosen in such way that the effect of involvement level would be measurable, thus, a fairly balanced sample of low and high involvement products was used: specifically, three out of seven categories are low involvement products, and the latter four are high involvement products. This slight imbalance is caused by the fact that high involvement products were mentioned more often in the interviews, thus, to cover most of the interview findings, the high involvement ad sample could only be reduced to four and no lower. To summarize, different product category ads were chosen in order to make answering the previous hypotheses possible.

The ad sample was curated not only in regards to the advertised product, but also to the celebrity endorser. While the type of the celebrity and its effect on purchase intention will not be measured in this survey due to time and extent constraints that come with bachelor thesis, the featured celebrities were still chosen utmost care. Celebrities that are generally recognizable among Generation Z were picked, but their name and occupation (what type of a

celebrity) were also included. In addition to this, celebrities who are not tied to any big/recent scandal were chosen, so that the external events would not impact the responses too much. For each shown ad, three different questions were asked that all relate to the respondent's purchase intention. More than one question was asked to ensure intra-item validity, i.e., seeing whether respondents are largely consistent with their answers. For the questions, 5 point Likert scale was used, where respondents were asked to what extent do they agree with the statements about purchase intention, with 1 being „strongly disagree“, 2 „somewhat disagree“, 3 „neither agree nor disagree“, 4 „somewhat agree“ and 5 „strongly agree“. The use of Likert scale makes the purchase intention variable ordinal. Furthermore, to avoid personal bias as much as possible, i.e., some respondents simply not needing/wanting the advertised product no matter the ad, the purchase intention questions were relating to the product purchase for the respondent themselves, but also for a close person of the respondent. Thus, if a specific individual is not interested in mascaras (makeup product) at all, they could still answer such question while thinking of buying it for a close person, rather than for themselves.

The survey was done in Qualtrics and distributed via WhatsApp, Instagram in direct chats or group chats, as that is the easiest way to reach the target group, which is people who currently pursue their education in the Netherlands. It is expected that most of the respondents will thus fall into the 18-25 years of age category, but options below 18 and above 25 were also added, as long as the individuals fulfill the student criteria. The various group chats were exclusively made up of students in the Netherlands, and people who were reached out to directly also fulfilled this requirement. Furthermore, snowball sampling was used, by asking respondents to share the survey with others who fit the needed prerequisites. The survey distribution started on the 19th of July 2023, and was supposed to run until sufficient number of usable responses has been recorded. Based on this, the response intake stopped on the 29th of July 2023.

4. Research results

4.1. In-depth interview results

The detailed demographics of the sample can be found in the appendix. Due to availability bias, most of the interviewed people are female and in their early twenties. However, the sample is diversified in terms of nationality, as the majority of interviewees are international students in the Netherlands, with two of the respondents living in the Netherlands for more than 8 years and one of them being born in the Netherlands. Similar goes to the school the individuals attend, as most of them are Erasmus students, but there is still some variety.

Questions regarding perception of celebrity endorsement and its influence were asked, to gain a deeper understanding of celebrity attributes that matter to the respondents, but also to grasp in what ways exactly does a celebrity endorser influence their purchase decision. The focus was thus on hearing their own experience and stance on celebrity endorsement.

One of the motivations to conduct in-depth interviews was to determine adequate ad sample of product categories that would be used in the survey experiment. Looking back at the literature study, low-involvement products are supposed to be the most effective product category to influence consumers in terms of celebrity endorsement, as in this case, consumers tend to put less thought into the purchase decision-making. However, the interviewees usually mention being influenced by beauty products, occasionally fashion, which are generally considered as high involvement products. This could just be that the respondents could recall examples of celebrity endorsement in the beauty industry easier as the interviewees may pay more attention to such ads, but might not actually be the product category where the celebrity influencing effect is the strongest. Hence, both low and high involvement products will be included in the survey experiment.

While the effect of different types of celebrity are not part of the research due to the scope of the thesis, this topic still came up during the interviews, as it was, first of all, a natural part of discussing celebrity endorsement, and second of all, still important to determine a suitable set of celebrities to be shown in the survey. As a result of this, it was found that influencers score higher concerning credibility and similarity, which also confirms what the relevant literature showed. Some of the interviewees admit that influencers „feel

closer“ to them and are easier to relate to. It is thus essential to include such sample ads in the experiment, as influencers still fall under the definition of celebrity as determined in previous chapters, and provide a different aspect perspective on celebrity endorsement.

Additional finding regarding celebrities was that during the interviews, respondents sometimes named specific celebrities within a certain context. Specifically Kim Kardashian and Kylie Jenner were mentioned in a mostly negative context by multiple respondents. Kim Kardashian was mentioned by Interviewee 1 when listing certain scandals, as well as generally being regarded as a not so trustworthy and genuine person and not having much in common with the general public, hence not scoring well in terms of similarity and purchase intention influence (Interviewee 4). Kylie Jenner was viewed quite similarly, as Interviewee 5 said that she would not necessarily trust her when it comes to her skincare line because it seems that „she would just put her name there and people will buy it“. These findings are very important when it comes to choosing the right sample celebrity endorsers. Initially, Kim Kardashian was featured in one of the ad samples, but seeing what strong perception the interviewees had of her, it was decided to not include her ad. This is because such celebrity could make the following analysis complicated due to negative bias, whereas the focus should still be on the endorsement and product category.

4.2. Survey descriptive results

In total, 150 respondents filled in the survey. The research was aiming for 200 responses, however, the response collection was already running for longer than intended and was thus stopped prematurely due to time constraint. Out of the total, 43 responses were missing certain answers, hence, after data cleaning, only 107 responses were kept for the analysis. As can be inferred from Table 1, women represent the largest group in the sample in terms of gender (60.7%), followed by men (37.4%), and lastly only 1.9% of respondents did not identified with the two aforementioned genders. For age, most of the respondents fall within the category of 18 to 25 years (80.4%), while 13.1% were younger than 18 years and 6.5% were older than 25 years.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

Variable	Count	Percentage
Total	107	
Gender		
Male	40	37.4%
Female	65	60.7%
Non-binary / other	2	1.9%
Age		
Less than 18	14	13.1%
18-25	86	80.4%
More than 25	7	6.5%

4.3. Hypotheses testing

Means and standard deviations of purchase intention variables

To prepare for the analysis, the three questions that were asked for each ad in the experiment sample were merged into one variable indicating purchase intention of the respondents, and named accordingly. For example, the variable *perfume_celeb* and then *perfume_none* indicate the overall purchase intention for the product when, respectively, the ad features and does not feature a celebrity endorser. Then, from these merged variables, a new variable was computed, again indicating purchase intention, but this time for all the endorsed product ads, and another one for the non-endorsed ads (*avg_celeb*, *avg_none*).

Next, the means for the resulting variables, which measure purchase intention for endorsed and non endorsed ads in all seven categories, are visualized, as seen in Table 2. From this table, it is already possible to infer whether and how much of an effect there was when the ad featured a celebrity endorser. The purchase intentions for each product category are shown, as well as the overall purchase intention variables.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of the purchase intention variables.

Product category	Endorsement	Mean	Standard deviation
Perfume	Celebrity	3.46	1.107
	None	3.22	1.019
Football shoes	Celebrity	2.23	0.974
	None	2.23	1.005
Gym supplements	Celebrity	2.32	1.168
	None	2.39	1.168
Chips	Celebrity	2.57	0.903
	None	2.54	0.922
Mascara	Celebrity	2.79	1.160
	None	2.82	1.146
Pizza snack	Celebrity	2.85	1.115
	None	2.28	1.078
Water	Celebrity	3.16	1.053
	None	2.58	1.009
Overall	Celebrity	2.77	0.657
	None	2.58	0.511

As indicated in the table above, overall purchase intention was on average higher for celebrity endorsed ads than for non-endorsed ads, across product categories. When diving deeper into the separate category effects, the perfume, pizza snack and water category each scored higher when the ad featured a celebrity as well. There does not seem to be much effect on purchase intention in the case of football shoes and chips, as the respective means are almost identical. However, for gym supplements and mascara, the means are noticeably in favor of non-endorsed ads, meaning that the respondents were on average more likely to consider purchase when it came to the respective non-endorsed products.

Celebrity endorsement and the product category

While comparing means can already give some idea about the celebrity endorsement effect, it is still necessary to determine the significance of this effect. Since it is a comparison between two observations within one population sample, paired samples t-test was used to determine whether the two observations are significantly different after introducing a new element (celebrity in the ad). Below is the table with the t-test results. Note that mean and

standard deviation report on the difference between the pair, respectively, the given purchase intention of the endorsed ad minus the given purchase intention of the non endorsed ad, concerning the same product category.

Table 4. Paired samples t-test for effect of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention.

Pair	Mean (difference)	Standard deviation (difference)	t-value	P > t
Perfume	0.25	0.823	3.09	0.003
Football shoes	0.00	0.753	-0.04	0.966
Gym supplements	-0.06	1.206	-0.53	0.594
Chips	0.03	1.139	0.23	0.821
Mascara	-0.04	0.921	-0.42	0.675
Pizza snack	0.56	1.102	5.29	0.000
Water	0.58	1.126	5.33	0.000
Overall	0.19	0.525	3.69	0.000

Table 4 shows that across product categories, there is a significantly positive effect of celebrity endorser featuring in the ad on the respondents' purchase intention, as the mean difference's p-value is smaller than the 5% significance level, thus being significantly different from one another. Additionally, perfume, pizza snack and water category have a strongly significant difference in means at 5% significance level. This means these product categories present a significant and positive celebrity endorsement effect on purchase intention of respondents. For the rest of the single product categories, the mean difference, be it positive or negative, is negligible and resulted thus in an insignificant effect of celebrity endorsers.

To tie these findings to the hypotheses, the first hypothesis: „*Celebrity endorsement positively influences purchase intention of consumers*“ is accepted, as the means for overall endorsed and non-endorsed ads proved to be significantly different within the same

population sample, which means that the celebrity endorser was a significant factor impacting purchase intention of the respondents.

For the second hypothesis: „*Celebrity endorsement effect on purchase intention will vary among product categories*“, we need to look at the separate product category results. The difference in means and its statistical significance reveal how efficient celebrity endorsement is among different product categories. The mean difference can also be described as the magnitude, i.e. the impact size, of the celebrity endorsement effect, and this differs for all the present categories. Namely, the water category seems to have the largest difference between celebrity and non-celebrity ad in stated purchase intention. This difference is also highly significant at $p\text{-value} = 0.000$. In contrast, celebrity endorsement even impacted purchase intention slightly negatively in certain product categories, such as gym supplements and mascara, although the difference is not statistically significant. In conclusion, the second hypothesis is accepted as well.

Celebrity endorsement and the level of involvement

What is left is to determine the impact of celebrity endorsement for low involvement products compared to high involvement ones. The product categories were chosen in such way that they all can be divided into one of these groups: thus, water, chips and pizza snacks count as low involvement products, and the rest (perfume, football shoes, gym supplements and mascara) are classified as high involvement products. As the third hypothesis is trying to see whether the (positive) celebrity endorsement effect is stronger for low involvement products, it is necessary to account for the mean differences, as it is the magnitude of the endorser effect. A negative mean difference would insinuate that non-endorsed ad was more successful in terms of perceived purchase intention, hence the sign of the magnitude value is equally as important. A magnitude variable was thus created for each of the product category per respondent, and those were then grouped according to the involvement level classification and the average score was noted. It is with these variables, respectively *magnitude_lowinv* and *magnitude_highinv*, that another statistical analysis could have been performed in order to answer the last hypothesis, as they represent the average difference in purchase intention score for the featured high/low involvement products.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of the magnitude variables.

Variable	Level of involvement	Mean	Standard deviation
Magnitude	Low	0.39	0.762
	High	0.04	0.554

Table 5. Paired samples t-test for the effect of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention, based on level of involvement.

Pair	Mean (difference)	Standard deviation (difference)	t-value	P > t
Magnitude – low and high involvement	0.35	0.779	4.70	0.000

First, taking a look at Table 4, low involvement product group has a positive and higher mean value than it is for high involvement category. Since the endorser effect could have been both negative and positive and that was reflected in the magnitude variable, it can be inferred that low involvement products altogether experience stronger, positive effect of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention. Furthermore, Table 5 displays a p-value that is lower than the 5% significance level, thus, the two involvement groups differ significantly in terms of the magnitude of the celebrity effect. This all being said, the third hypothesis: „“ is accepted.

4.3. Hypotheses summary

Hypothesis	Verdict
H₁: <i>Celebrity endorsement positively influences purchase intention of consumers.</i>	ACCEPTED
H₂: <i>Celebrity endorsement effect on purchase intention will vary among product categories.</i>	ACCEPTED
H₃: <i>Celebrity endorsement has a larger effect on purchase intention when it comes to low involvement products.</i>	ACCEPTED

5. Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

This paper aimed to answer the following research question: „How does celebrity endorsement across product categories affect purchase intention of students in the Netherlands?“. The findings from the previous chapter will enable a discussion and a final answer to this question.

Firstly, the interviewees in some cases indicated that they do not believe about being easily influenced by celebrity endorsers in advertising, but some did admit that it could happen subconsciously. The survey results show that there indeed exists a significant and positive effect of having a celebrity endorser in product ads. These two findings imply that indeed, such phenomenon is mostly subconscious and consumers are not aware of preferring celebrity endorsed ads.

Moreover, celebrity endorsement is especially powerful in certain product categories from the sample of ads. The largest positive average difference between an endorsed and non-endorsed ad concerns the bottled water advertisement (Smartwater, featuring actress Zendaya), followed closely by the pizza snack ad (Hot Pockets, featuring rapper Snoop Dogg). Both of the products are low involvement products, which also means that the endorsers do not have any special prerequisites or knowledge that would make them bigger experts in the field of the advertised product (as it is difficult to imagine being knowledgeable about a low involvement product such as a drink or food, especially among celebrities). The Source Credibility model and the match-up hypothesis are thus not applicable in this case.

We can only speculate why these two ads were rated significantly more attractive in terms of purchase intention when featuring the celebrity. The third hypothesis, which states that celebrity endorsement works better for low involvement products and this was accepted following the quantitative results, could explain this fact. However, the choice of celebrity most likely affected the purchase intention scores too, as the third low involvement product, which featured singer Katy Perry and chips, did not score nearly as well. It is difficult to answer this without additional analysis which focus more on the celebrity than the product category regarding endorsement, but Zendaya and Snoop Dogg may be more familiar and

overall more liked by Gen Z (as majority of the respondents fall in this age category) than Katy Perry.

On the other hand, a category where endorsement was not nearly as successful was the gym supplement and mascara category. The latter especially might be surprising considering that beauty products were often mentioned in the interviews as a category where a celebrity endorser is particularly influential on purchase conviction. After some reflection, there are two possible reasons that come to mind: first of all, the respondents might have not liked the „format“ of the ad, as it was not a typical billboard ad, but an Instagram post by an influencer-endorser in both cases. Second of all, the choice of celebrity endorser, i.e., an online influencer, might have not resonated with the respondents, despite the assumed good match-up (beauty influencer and mascara, gym influencer and gym supplements). Unfortunately, due to the scope of the thesis, the survey did not ask for further explanation of the choices, so there is no way to determine with certainty.

Summary

In conclusion, the analysis confirmed that celebrity endorsement positively influences purchase intention of students in the Netherlands. This same finding also concerns some of the singular product categories, such as water, pizza snack and perfume, however, no significant celebrity effect has been found for the football shoes, chips, gym supplements and mascara category. The celebrity endorsement effect thus differs among the product categories. Further statistical analysis also showed that this effect on purchase intention is stronger when it comes to low involvement products, rather than high involvement ones. Thus, to answer the main question, celebrity endorsement has a significant impact on purchase intention of students in the Netherlands, but the effect size varies from product category to another, and in some cases no significant difference in purchase intention was found.

Celebrity endorsement was thus proven to be an efficient tool in increasing purchase likelihood of consumers. It is thus advised to employ this marketing strategy to businesses that do have the financial means to proceed with an endorsement deals. Furthermore, this strategy is particularly fruitful in certain product categories, which according to this study were generally low involvement products. This means that endorsement is especially useful when companies are building a campaign for products which are bought frequently and do not require too much research and effort on the consumer side. Nevertheless, a product such as perfume, which is a high involvement product, scored significantly higher when a celebrity

endorser was present in the advertisement, so marketers are encouraged to use celebrity endorsement even for other products than low involvement products.

5.2. Managerial and marketing implications

This paper's aim was to shed a light on the effectiveness of using celebrity endorsement as a marketing strategy. Such strategy can be put in place to promote a product, help with visibility and attract customer attention, but also to directly influence purchase intention of consumers. The latter reason was the main focus of this research. The findings suggest that using celebrities in product advertisements is indeed a powerful marketing strategy, as the survey respondents on average stated a significant preference in terms of purchase intention for celebrity endorsed ads compared to those not featuring any celebrity.

Moreover, based on the findings, certain categories are especially suitable for celebrity endorsement, due to significantly different results after introducing a celebrity to the ad. In the findings, this generally concerned low involvement products as a whole rather than high involvement products. Thus, celebrity endorsement may be particularly fruitful to use by marketers for campaigns, where the product/service does not require a lot of thinking prior to purchase by the consumer, as consumers are easily influenced by factors that are technically irrelevant to the product itself. However, this theory is not completely foolproof, as there was still one low involvement product that did not have significant difference after celebrity endorser introduction, whereas one high involvement product did. It is thus advised to take into account the aforementioned findings when setting up an endorsement strategy for a brand, but to also consider other factors that may influence whether the campaign will be successful or not.

5.3. Limitations

As was already talked about in the first chapter, this research presents certain limitations. First of all, the research sample, both for interviews and survey, was mostly made up of people who belong to the author's (wider) social circle, as well as live in Rotterdam and mostly made up of international students. This could lead to a certain bias which makes the study sample not representative of the population sample of students in the Netherlands. In addition to this, the analysis sample of 107 people is not large enough for such type of analysis.

Furthemore, it might be difficult for respondents to determine how likely they are to buy a product only based on seeing an ad. That is also why „strongly disagree“ and „somewhat disagree“ options were chosen more often than their positive counterparts. While this did not hinder the statistical analysis and significant celebrity endorsement effect was still found, perhaps a less extreme mediator variable, such as attitude towards the brand, could be added.

Lastly, influencers and Instagram ads were added to the survey sample, as qualitative research and literature suggested that this type of ad will resonate with consumers, however, the respondents of this survey strongly disliked the ads from the two categories, as their means are significantly lower. This skewed the statistical results, where maybe a traditional ad would have had a positive significant effect of endorsement.

5.4. Recommendations for future research

This paper talked extensively about how celebrity endorsement influences purchase intention of students in the Netherlands across number of product categories, however, some of the findings suggest that there is still more to this phenomenon. Particularly the type of celebrity, such as influencer endorsements, would be pertinent for future academic research in relation to the target research group, i.e. students in the Netherlands.

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Appendix

Interview demographics

ID	Gender	Age	Nationality	School
Interviewee 1	Female	21	Polish	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Interviewee 2	Female	21	Vietnamese	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Interviewee 3	Female	21	Dutch	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Interviewee 4	Male	22	Belgian	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Interviewee 5	Female	23	Dutch-Persian	University of Utrecht
Interviewee 6	Female	23	Spanish-German	Leiden University
Interviewee 7	Female	22	Dutch-North Macedonian	University of Utrecht
Interviewee 8	Female	23	South African	University van Amsterdam
Interviewee 9	Male	21	Slovak	Erasmus University Rotterdam

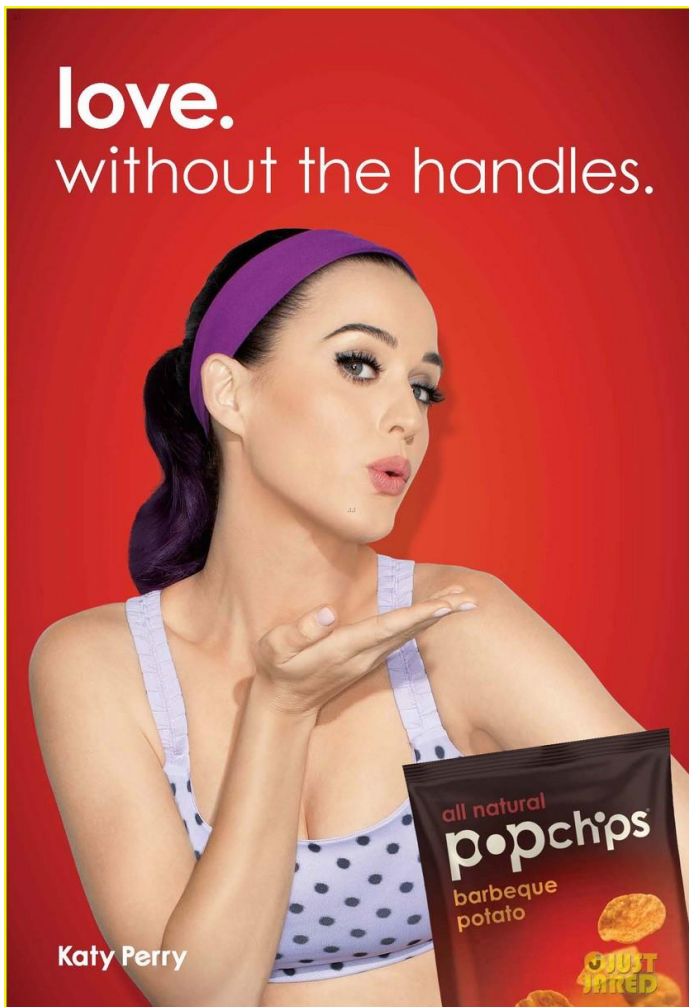
Ad sample

(no celebrity, celebrity)

Low involvement: Water, chips, pizza snack

High involvement: sportswear, perfume, makeup, gym supplement

Chips:



Hot pockets (pizza snack):



Smartwater:



Mascara (makeup):



mena_adubea • Sledování

Placené partnerství
Houston, Texas



mena_adubea Who else has TOO FACED BETTER THAN SEX mascara in their makeup kit? #TooFacedPartner Comment and lmk, because this stuff is good. It's volumizing, vegan, cruelty free, and now available in a rich, decadent chocolate shade! Linked in bio, so you can grab one!

#BetterThanSex #SephoraSquad
@toofaced @sephora

20 týd.



You like us.
YOU REALLY
like us!

Better Than Sex Mascara won **BEST MASCARA** in Allure's 2019 Best of Beauty Awards. Get yours now, gorgeous!

allure
THE BEAUTY EXPERT
2019
AWARD WINNER

Adidas football shoes:

MEZUT ÖZIL
#PREDATORINSTINCTS

adidas

ALL IN OR NOTHING

GET THE PREDATOR NOW ➔

This advertisement features a dynamic action shot of Mezzuto Özil in a black and red Adidas football kit, captured mid-kick. He is wearing white and orange Predator Instincts football boots. The background is dark with a white diagonal striped pattern on the left. The Adidas logo is in the top right corner. The text 'MEZUT ÖZIL' and '#PREDATORINSTINCTS' is positioned in the upper left. A white banner across the bottom contains the slogan 'ALL IN OR NOTHING' and a call to action 'GET THE PREDATOR NOW' with a right-pointing arrow.

adidas

instinct
takes over

predator *instinct*

2014

This advertisement shows a pair of Predator Instincts football boots in a white and orange colorway, positioned centrally. The boots are shown from a top-down perspective, highlighting their unique soleplate design. The background is dark with a subtle red glow. The Adidas logo is in the top right corner. The text 'instinct takes over' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, with 'predator instinct' in a smaller font below it. The year '2014' is visible in the bottom right corner.

Perfume:



BOSS

THE SCENT
THE NEW POWER OF SEDUCTION



BOSS

THE SCENT
THE NEW POWER
OF ATTRACTION

Gym supplement:



simeonpanda • Follow
Home-Los Angeles California

simeonpanda Max Strength HCL for the crazy pump 🍌🍌
@innosups if this doesn't get you PUMPED, I don't know what will 🍌

Max Strength HCL is formulated with the most concentrated form of creatine on the market! This product will help you [2] key ways - building muscle + amplifying recovery.

Packed with [2]g of pure creatine HCL to amplify blood flow to your muscles and provide your body with clean, natural energy! 🍌

What sets the formula apart from any on the market is HydroMax® - this natural ingredient helps replenish hydration within your body throughout your workout to start muscle restoration right away! 🍌

Say goodbye 🍌 to muscle soreness and enjoy the benefits of this powerful blend today! 🍌 The Watermelon Candy 🍌 flavor is awesome

Who's ready for this one? 🍌🍌

21,192 likes
JULY 13

Add a comment... Post



NATURAL SUPPLEMENTS YOU CAN TRUST

Product names visible: VOLCARN 2100, DRIVE, MAX STRENGTH, STORM MAKER, NITRO WOOD, CLA 1200, INNO SHRED, PROTEIN, ADVANCED ISO PROTEIN, INNO GUT PROTECT, INNO GUT RESTORE, INNO GUT CLEANSE, NATURAL BCAA, REDS + GREENS, FIBER + SKIN + HAIR, INNO GREENS, NIGHT SHRED, INNO SPRESSO.

Survey design

Introduction:

Hi,
thanks for taking interest in this survey! The topic of my thesis is celebrity endorsement and its influence on purchase intention. The survey will take circa 5 minutes of your time. The data you fill in will be used for academic purposes. Sharing this survey with others is greatly appreciated!



Demographical questions:

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Non-binary / other gender

What is your age?

18 or less

18-25

25 or more



Experiment:

You will be shown a sample of 12 ads featuring various celebrities and products. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements written below each ad.



Here is an example of an ad and the follow up questions (which were asked for every ad). To see all the ads, please refer to ad sample section.



Ad for Popchips (low-fat snack).

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I am interested in purchasing the advertised product for myself or a close person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am planning on purchasing the advertised product for myself or a close person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to purchase the advertised product for myself or a close person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Follow-up questions for each ad, measured with a 5 point Likert scale:

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

I am highly interested in purchasing the advertised product for myself or a close person.

I am planning on purchasing the advertised product for myself or a close person.

I want to purchase the advertised product for myself or a close person.

(strongly disagree – disagree – neutral – agree – strongly agree)

Links to shared drive

Recordings and transcriptions of interviews:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Q_upFP2xjVNmSBLkGeUfPVgMdspcJnV8?usp=sharing

Survey data and output:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1327vpB6nzqxxJRF_jDdxL07fTKgoS8eg?usp=sharing