

THE IMPACT OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT ON CUSTOMER PURCHASE INTENTION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE YOUNG CONSUMERS OF INSTANT NOODLES PRODUCTS IN KANDY DISTRICT IN SRI LANKA.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing and dynamic business environment, customer bargaining power has become a prominent factor, with consumers seeking alternative solutions to fulfill their basic needs amidst their busy lifestyles. Instant fast food has gained immense popularity worldwide as it meets the demands of convenience, time-saving, and appetite satisfaction (Inbalakshmi, 2014). The fast-food industry, offering prepared foods served quickly and affordably, has seen increasing consumption across various age groups, especially among teenagers and young adults (Majabadi et al., 2016).

Sri Lanka, with a significant youth population aged between 15 and 29 years, has experienced a growing trend in the consumption of instant noodles, reflecting the busy lifestyles of its inhabitants (Samaranayake, 2022). The country's instant noodles market, although non-matured and limited to a few players, has attracted multinational rivals and newly launched local companies, leading to intense competition for market share (Sri Lanka Instant Noodles Market | 2022 - 27 | Industry Share, Size, Growth - Mordor Intelligence, n.d.). As a result, local companies need help achieving significant market share and must focus on influencing customer purchase intentions to succeed.

Celebrity endorsement is one of the strategies companies employ to increase purchase intention and brand awareness. Celebrities who enjoy public recognition and influence are widely used in advertising to persuade and inform consumers about products (McCracken, 1989). The impact of celebrity endorsement on customer purchasing decisions has been studied internationally (Kofi-Osei et al., 2019; Kaldeen, 2019; Abbas et al., 2018; Fleck et al., 2012). Nevertheless, limited research exists in the Sri Lankan context (Mudiyanse & De Silva, 2021; Bandaranayake et al., 2020; Munasinghe et al., 2020).

This study aims to fill this research gap by investigating the impact of celebrity endorsement on customer purchase intention, specifically among young consumers in the Sri Lankan instant noodles industry. The research questions will focus on understanding the influence of celebrity attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness on customer purchase intention. By examining these factors, the study will provide insights into the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement as a marketing communication strategy for instant noodle brands.

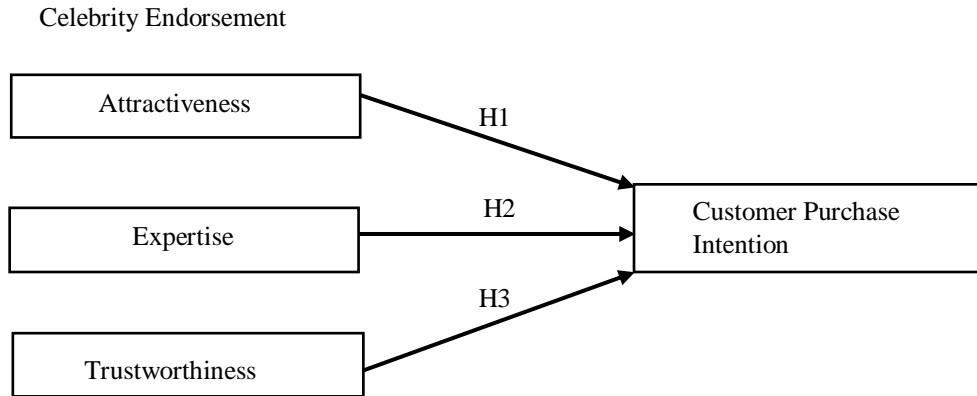
The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable knowledge to marketers and companies in the instant noodles industry, helping them devise effective strategies to increase purchase intention and gain a competitive edge in the market. As the consumption of instant noodles continues to grow in Sri Lanka, understanding the role of celebrity endorsement in influencing consumer behavior becomes crucial for sustained success in the industry.

METHODOLOGY

The conceptual framework employed for the study is as follows.

Figure 1

Conceptual framework



Source:(Zhang, 2020)

The research adopts a positivist approach, which emphasizes using scientific methods and empirical data to gain objective knowledge about the phenomenon under study. This approach aims to uncover general laws and patterns that govern the subject matter by focusing on observable and measurable variables. The research will rely on quantitative data collection techniques, such as surveys and experiments, to ensure a systematic and unbiased analysis. Embracing positivism will enable me to maintain a neutral standpoint and produce reliable and verifiable findings, contributing to advancing empirical knowledge in the field. This research also refers to past research studies as well as quantitative research. Hence, this research comes under the deductive approach. This research study observed the questionnaires under the survey strategy. In the data collection, the study used a survey research method to collect data from a population sample. As a primary data collection method, the researcher chooses questionnaires. It should be very simple, easy to understand, and very short. Then, it takes work to get feedback. As secondary data, the researcher expects to collect from books, journals, and other reports. In 2014, the Department of Census and Statistics estimated the young population in Kandy as 305,282. Based on this data, the sample size should be 382 young customers in the Kandy district. However, given the passage of time and potential changes in the population, the exact young population in Kandy is still being determined. As a result, the sample size for this study was assumed to be 384 young customers. Morgan's table was used to determine this sample size.

The researcher used SPSS software to analyze the data that will be collected from the questionnaire. Researchers use descriptive statistics like frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviations to analyze demographic data. Regression analysis will be used to test the hypotheses.

Table 1
Operationalization of Variables

Variable	Dimension	Question Code	Indicators	Source
Celebrity Endorsement	Attractiveness	CEA	Appearance Desire Attention Interest	(Zhang, 2020)

Trustworthiness	CET	Confidence Honest Sincerity Strength	(Zhang, 2020)
Expertise	CEE	Knowledge Experience Authority Training	(Zhang, 2020)
Consumer purchase intention	CPI	Selecting Purchasing Using Evaluating Deposing	(Zhang, 2020)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research study aimed to investigate the impact of celebrity endorsement on customer purchase intention among young consumers of instant noodles in the Kandy district, Sri Lanka. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis.

Table 2

Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
0.882 ^a	0.777	0.776	0.488

a. Predictors: (Constant), Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, Expertise

According to the table 2, it is represented the Model Summary of regression test. R Square of the test is 0.777. It means, there is a 77.7% Impact of celebrity endorsement on customer purchase intention” with special reference to young instant noodles consumers.

The R Square is a modified version of the R Squared. It can be used to describe how the dependent variable changed in relation to the chosen independent factors. Within the range of 0 to 1, it varies, and values near to 1 are considered to be the best match for the model. The revised R Square value is 0.777. It implies that the sample regression line can be used to observe 77.7% of fitness. Additionally, it captures 77.7% of the overall variation in celebrity endorsement on customer purchase intention. The remaining 22.3% of the variation in customer purchase intention.

The ANOVA table test the good fit of regression model in overall. The significant value which is less than 0.005 is concerned the good fit data model of the study. According to the table 3 it is represented good fit regression model for the particular study. The table shows that $F = 442.580$, $P < .0005$.

Table 3

Regression Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error			
(Constant)	0.302	0.105		2.864	0.004
Attractiveness	0.363	0.050	0.356	7.329	0.000
Expertise	0.292	0.051	0.290	5.769	0.000
Trustworthiness	0.263	0.041	0.292	6.373	0.000

R^2 : 0.77; F:442.580(0.000)

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intension

The study revealed that the celebrity's attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness significantly positively impacted customer purchase intention. Among these factors, attractiveness was found to have the highest influence (35.6%), followed by expertise (29%) and trustworthiness (29.2%). The overall regression model indicated that these three factors collectively accounted for 77.7% of the variance in customer purchase intention for instant noodles.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of celebrity endorsement in influencing consumer behavior in the instant noodles market. The significant positive impacts of attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness suggest that celebrity endorsements can be influential marketing strategies to enhance customer purchase intention among young consumers.

The high-reliability coefficients for all variables indicate that the data collected through the survey was consistent and dependable, ensuring the robustness of the research findings. Moreover, the normality analysis demonstrated that the data followed a normal distribution, further validating the statistical analyses.

The study's regression analysis confirmed that the chosen independent variables (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) substantially influenced the dependent (customer purchase intention) variable. The beta coefficients revealed the strength and direction of these relationships, reinforcing the significance of celebrity endorsements in driving customer purchase decisions.

This finding is consistent with research in other countries, which has also found a positive correlation between celebrity attractiveness and purchase intention. In a study conducted by Widiyanto (2019), on the impact of celebrity endorsement on the purchase intention of young consumers in Indonesia, it was found that celebrity attractiveness has a significant positive effect on purchase intention. The study found that young consumers perceive celebrities as attractive when they have physical attractiveness, charisma, and social status. A study by Saeed and Iqbal (2020) on the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer buying behavior in Pakistan found that celebrity attractiveness has a significant positive impact on consumer purchase intention. The study found that young consumers perceive celebrities as attractive when they possess physical attractiveness, likeability, and trustworthiness.

The research also addressed the specific demographic characteristics of the sample, providing insights into the gender, education level, occupation, and salary distribution of the young instant noodle consumers in Kandy. Understanding these demographics can aid marketers in tailoring their strategies to target specific consumer segments more effectively.

Overall, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on consumer behavior and marketing in the context of the instant noodles industry in Sri Lanka. The findings underscore the importance of carefully selecting celebrities based on their attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness to maximize the impact of endorsement campaigns on customer purchase intention.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this research. The study focused on a specific geographic area and a particular age group, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or consumer segments. Additionally, convenience sampling could introduce potential biases in the sample, and future studies may benefit from employing more diverse and representative sampling methods.

In conclusion, the research provides valuable insights for marketers and instant noodles companies in Sri Lanka seeking to leverage celebrity endorsements to enhance customer purchase intention. By understanding the significant influence of attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness, marketers can make informed decisions in designing effective celebrity endorsement campaigns that resonate with their target audience and drive business success.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data and understand the main features of the variables. The findings indicated that celebrity attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness were positively associated with purchase intention. The regression analysis revealed that these three factors collectively explained 77.7% of the variance in purchase intention, indicating a strong impact of celebrity endorsement on young consumers' purchase decisions.

The hypotheses testing confirmed the significance of the three independent variables (celebrity attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) on purchase intention, providing further support for the positive impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer behavior.

The discussion delved into the implications of the findings in the context of existing literature. The results align with previous research from other countries, highlighting the consistent influence of celebrity attributes on purchase intention. Furthermore, suggestions for future research were provided, encouraging investigations into more prominent and representative sample sizes, cross-cultural comparisons, and long-term impacts of celebrity endorsement. Experimental design and exploring mediating variables were recommended better to understand the dynamics between celebrity endorsements and purchase intention.

In conclusion, the research study concludes that celebrity endorsement significantly influences the purchase intention of instant noodles among young consumers in the Kandy district, Sri Lanka. The findings contribute valuable insights for marketers and advertisers who leverage celebrity endorsements as an effective marketing strategy in the instant noodles industry. However, further research is warranted to explore the intricacies of this influence and its long-term effects in a broader context.

Keywords: Celebrity endorsement, fast food, instant noodles, purchase intention, young consumers

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