

The influence of celebrity endorsements on brand love: Exploring the mediating effect of self-brand connection

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to present and validate a comprehensive model of brand love, encompassing its causes and effects. The model is based on a causal approach and includes a well-established construct of the consumer-brand relationship, celebrities' credibility on brand love through the mediation role of self-brand connection. The research used a quantitative methodology, utilizing samples consisting of individuals who use body care products. Data was obtained from 271 respondents using a Google Form questionnaire. The data were analyzed using Smart PLS structural equation modeling. The research results show that the construction of celebrities' credibility, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, positively affects self-brand connection and brand love. Self-brand identification mediates the relationship between credibility and brand image in body care.

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1. Introduction

The personal care industry is a thriving sector of the economy, evident from the diverse range of brands and products available. To stay competitive, companies continually innovate and introduce new, improved products. (Parayitam et al., 2020). Conversely, to expand the market, personal care companies develop various marketing strategies, one of which involves using celebrity endorsers. Famous people who endorse a product through advertisements are known as celebrity ambassadors (Rifon et al., 2016). Supporting celebrities has their charm, which can create a self-image that consumers want (Moore & Homer, 2008). It is necessary to have an individual who possesses charm, trust, and expertise to establish a credible celebrity (Ohanian, 1990). Furthermore, the endorsement process will create an ideal celebrity image related to the brand they endorse so that consumers can experience increased self-esteem, often called self-brand connection. When the self-brand connection strengthens, consumers experience additional benefits such as increased self-esteem, social acceptance, and personal expression (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Studies (Dwivedi et al., 2011; Takaya, 2019) found that a celebrity's attractiveness positively affects the self-brand connection. On the other hand, celebrity credibility is also seen from the level of honesty, integrity and trustworthiness (Erdogan, 2010). In previous research, it was found that opinion messages were more effective than non-opinion messages in producing attitude change when endorsing celebrities who were considered highly trustworthy (Ohanian, 1990). Furthermore, appeal can create a consumer perception of a supporter. When consumers are attracted to supporters, they will follow what those supporters do. They also adopt

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supporting characters' beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, interests, or preferences. Expertise includes a consumer's perception of an endorser's knowledge, experience or ability with the endorsed product. This is also supported by research conducted by (Qurah et al., 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2011), which states that expertise can have a positive influence on self-brand connection.

In building long-term relationships with customers, a self-brand connection with the brand is also needed (Moore & Homer, 2008). In several studies, it was found that brand love is related to self-brand connection (Bagozzi et al., 2017; Batra et al., 2012). According to (Mazodier & Merunka, 2012), consumers tend to judge brands in terms of the fit between their self-concept and their symbolic values. Furthermore, brand love and self-connection are components of brand association quality (Aldaihani et al., 2023; Fournier, 1998). Based on the previous explanation, we will test the influence of celebrity endorsement and brand love through the mediating role of self-brand connection. This study combines the concepts of customer brand love and self-brand connection within the framework of endorser credibility. This allows strategic managers to understand better how celebrity endorsers might influence consumer behavior.

2. Literature review

2.1 Celebrity credibility

A celebrity endorser is typically described as an individual widely recognized by the public and utilizes this recognition to promote a consumer product by appearing alongside it in an advertisement. (Wang et al., 2017). The definition of endorsement is the trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness of the endorser or brand, all of which are critical to enhancing the persuasiveness of a message (Ohanian, 1990). Attractiveness is a combination of similarity, familiarity, and allure. According to (Alkhaldeh et al., 2023; Ohanian, 1990), Attractiveness can be likened to influencers who are considered attractive and can influence consumer purchase intent. As a spokesperson, attractiveness is very important, namely the charming physical appearance of the supporting celebrity, which becomes one part of the attraction. Consumers tend to form positive impressions and place greater trust in apps delivered by celebrities who look attractive. According to Erdogan (2010), trust is a trait that exists in people who can be trusted and are considered to have insight into certain issues, such as brand reliability. Trust can also influence the person who is most able to convince others to take action. Trust refers to the honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness of a supporter (Al-Adamat et al., 2023; Jamil & Hassan, 2014). Someone who has a high level of trust by the public will also directly increase that person's credibility. According to Aprilianingsih & Putra (2022), expertise is a reference process where supporting celebrities are qualified enough to provide valid and accurate information in discussing certain topics (experienced, qualified, knowledgeable, and skilled). Furthermore, expertise is the consumer's perception of the knowledge, experience or ability related to the endorser and the product being endorsed (Erdogan, 2010).. The endorser's expertise can increase consumers' confidence that the brand will perform well, perhaps increasing consumers' trust enough to incorporate the brand into their self-concept (Dwivedi et al., 2011).

2.2 Self-brand connection

Malär et al. (2011) argue that many companies seek ways to create strong emotional brand connections with consumers. According to Escalas (2007) and Zhao et al., (2024), A self-brand connection is a strong and meaningful connection between a brand and a consumer's self-identity. Although related to consumer self-identity, self-brand connections differ from consumer "self" in relevant structures. Self-brand connections are not based on the distinction between user image and brand image, but include the extent to which a particular brand is incorporated into self-concept. Some consumers can form a meaningful relationship between themselves and a particular brand so that the brand itself is closely linked to the individual's self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

2.3 Brand love

Brand love is an emotional bond that is studied with consumer behavior, which is the deepest emotion involving the consumer's relationship with a particular brand (Aprilianingsih & Putra, 2022). When using a brand, consumers tend to choose a brand that they feel suits them. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) defines brand love as the emotional attraction and desire consumers have after using a brand for a certain period. Meanwhile, Batra et al (2012) states that brand love is a relationship built by consumers with a brand, which includes related cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements rather than specific, single, and temporary emotions. This self-conformity allows consumers to express themselves by purchasing a brand that suits what they are looking for and need. According Liu et al (2012) Matching a brand's concept with one's own self-concept can provide self-congruity, which leads to favorable product and brand attitudes. If consumers use brands that match their own self-concept, this can foster brand love.

3. Hypothesis Development

Celebrities have their charm, which can create a self-image that consumers want. A credible celebrity must-have charm, believability, and expertise. Furthermore, the endorsement process will create an ideal celebrity image related to the brand they endorse

so that consumers can feel an increase in self-esteem, which is often called self-brand connection. Furthermore, endorsements will create brand love for a product. Someone who is exposed to endorsements is likely to develop brand love. Attractiveness refers to what a celebrity endorser finds attractive in relation to the concept of attractiveness. This includes friendliness, agreeableness, physicality, and occupation as some of the important dimensions of the concept of attractiveness. This attachment shows that celebrity endorsers can attract consumers' attention to a product (Ohanian, 1990). In addition, when consumers find what they find attractive in a supporting celebrity, consumers will identify, that is, consumers will perceive the supporting celebrity and tend to adopt certain attitudes, interests or preferences from the supporting celebrity. This is also supported by research conducted (Dwivedi et al., 2016; Takaya, 2019) which shows the results that attractiveness has a positive effect on self-brand connection. Brands endorsed by favorite celebrities become more credible and trustworthy (Ohanian, 1990). Celebrities reinforce the effectiveness of the celebrity endorsement technique as customers place their trust in their beloved celebrities and the recommendations they make (Ozer & Gultekin, 2015). Expertise is the level at which the communicator is seen as a source with valid and trustworthy statements and is able to provide an objective opinion on a topic (Dwivedi et al., 2016). Celebrities are also considered to have sufficient knowledge, experience and skills to promote products that will attract consumer interest.

In addition, Kruger (2018) states that self-connection influences consumer behavior (Giroux dan Grohmann, 2015; Randhawa et al., 2015) personal brand relational quality (Dwivedi, 2014) Self-brand connection is expected to create a positive attitude towards the brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Consumers use brands to establish themselves, present themselves to others or achieve their identity goals (Escalas & Bettman, 2017). Furthermore, brands have the ability to reflect important aspects of consumers' identities and express significant aspects of themselves (Fournier, 1998) Studies on brand identification identify two sources of congruence between consumers and brands: sources originating from the brand's image, values, or personality, which is called the brand (Albert & Merunka, 2013). However, previous studies did not link the relationship between celebrity credibility and brand love (Algharabat, 2017). This is because previous studies have built a nomological relationship between brand love and established constructs such as consumer loyalty (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Based on this explanation, the following hypothesis can be formulated: Based on this explanation, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

Hypothesis 1: *Celebrity credibility positively affects self- brand connection.*

Hypothesis 2: *Celebrity credibility positively affects brand love.*

Hypothesis 3: *Self-brand connection positively affects brand love.*

Hypothesis 4: *Self-brand connection mediates the relationship of celebrity credibility to brand love.*

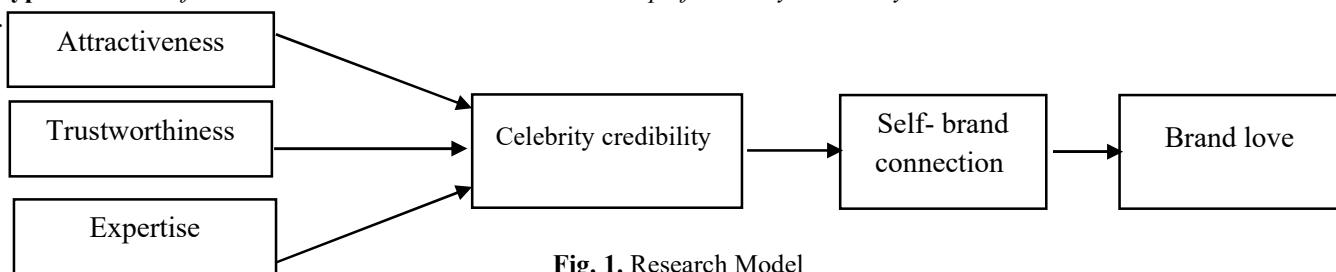


Fig. 1. Research Model

4. Method

This research uses quantitative methods. Meanwhile, the sample determination method in this study used a purposive sampling method, with several sample criteria, such as individuals as users of body care products. Furthermore, data collection used an online survey method using the Google Form which was distributed via social media and email. Data collection was carried out within 1 month. From the results of data collection, 271 respondent data was obtained which could be analyzed.

4.1 Measurement

In order to accommodate the research context, we translated and readjusted previous measurements. Certain indicators are derived from the work of numerous previous researchers, which include the celebrity credibility construct, attractiveness from (Ohanian, 1990), trust from (Erdogan, 2010), Expertise (Ohanian, 1990), self-brand connection from (Escalas, 2007), brand love from (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Furthermore, to measure perceptions on each measurement, we used a 5-point Likert scale, with answer choices ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). We also included some demographic questions. To analyze the data, we used SEM analysis using SmartPLS.

4.2 Result

Based on the analysis results based on the characteristics of respondents, 271 respondents were obtained. Judging from the distribution of respondents in this study (see Table 1), most respondents were 161 female and 110 male. Meanwhile, when viewed

based on age, most respondents are aged 21-25. Furthermore, based on the type of work, the majority of jobs are private employees with a total of 148 people. Furthermore, based on the income criteria of respondents, the majority of Average Monthly Income/IDR (Indonesian Rupiah) is 2,100,000-3,000,000, with a total of 123 people. Based on the Average Monthly Expenses/IDR criteria, most respondents earn each month in the range of 2,100,000-3,000,000 with 100 people. Furthermore, the frequency of used products is dominated by respondents who have bought once used, a total of 124 people.

Table 1
Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics of Respondents	Total	Characteristics of Respondents	Total
Gender		Frequency of Use Product	
Male	110	Once used	124
Female	161	Twice used	90
		More than twice used	66
Age		Profession	
16 – 20 Years	15	Student	80
21 – 25 Years	154	Private Employees	142
26 – 30 Years	41	Entrepreneur	20
More than 30 Years	60	Civil Servant	28
Average Monthly Income/IDR		Average Monthly Expenses/IDR	
500.000 – 1.000.000	18	500.000 – 1.000.000	20
1.100.000 – 2.000.000	44	1.100.000 – 2.000.000	74
2.100.000 – 3.000.000	123	2.100.000 – 3.000.000	100
More than 3,000,000	85	More than 3,000,000	76

Source: Primary data 2023

Furthermore, in this study, we used the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) equation and then processed it using the Smart PLS SEM tool to analyze the influence on each variable. The initial stage in this study is the analysis of confirmatory factors (CFAs) to know the measurement of each indicator used. From this test, it was obtained that the *loading factor* value of the indicator used was above 0.6. As for the average results of the variation that is fully described above 0.5. These results indicate that the indicators' measurements have good discriminant and convergent validity (Melhem et al., 2023; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Furthermore, we use composite reliability analysis and Cronbach Alpha in reliability tests. The analysis results show that the composite's reliability ranges from 0.7 to 0.78. Meanwhile, Cronbach Alpha's value is above 0.7. These results state that the measurements used have good reliability (Eldahamsheh et al., 2023; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The validity and reliability analysis results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Results Validity and Reliability

Indicators	Loading (λ)	Cronbach alpha	CR
Celebrity Credibility			
Attractiveness		0.831	
Attractiveness 1	0.913		0.834
Attractiveness 2	0.935		
Attractiveness 3	0.935		
Trustworthiness		0.844	
Trustworthiness 1	0.857		
Trustworthiness 2	0.891		0.845
Trustworthiness 3	0.882		
Trustworthiness 4	0.873		
Trustworthiness 5	0.842		
Expertises		0.919	
Expertises 1	0.729		
Expertises 2	0.841		
Expertises 3	0.843		
Expertises 4	0.789		
Expertises 5	0.713		
Self-brand Connection		0.918	
Self-brand Connection 1	0.868		
Self-brand Connection 2	0.881		
Self-brand Connection 3	0.878		0.939
Self-brand Connection 4	0.775		
Self-brand Connection 5	0.717		
Brand Love			
Brand Love 1	0.757	0.87	
Brand Love 2	0.782		
Brand Love 3	0.747		
Brand Love 4	0.792		0.901
Brand Love 5	0.771		
Brand Love 6	0.817		

Source: Primary data (2023)

The next stage is the Goodness of Fit test or conformity test on the model in this study. Of the nine components of Goodness of Fit, this study gave the results of eight components coming together well and one other getting quite good results. The Chi-square in the test results data obtained by 204.17 is good enough. The detailed results of the Goodness Of Fit test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Goodness of Fit Test

GOF	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.084	0.112
d_ULS	0.93	1.8 23
d_G	0.382	0.53
Chi-Square	540.072	667.906
NFI	0.817	0.780

Source: Primary data (2023)

The next stage after the Goodness of Fit test is a structural model analysis (see Table 4). The results of the structural model analysis show that the T value between credibility variables in brand love is 6.947 with a significance of 0.00, and hypothesis 1 is accepted. Meanwhile, the T value between credibility variables on the connection is 60.27 8 with a significance of 0.00, so hypothesis 2 is accepted. Furthermore, the T value between the connection variables on brand love is 2.526 with a significance of 0.012 hence hypothesis 3 is accepted. Whereas the T value between credibility, self-connection, and brand love is 2,454 with a significance of 0.015, hypothesis 4 is accepted. Self-brand connection, then, mediates partial web brand relationships and experiences on intention.

Table 4
Results of SEM Structural Analysis

Variable Relationships	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Hypothesis Result
Credibility → love the brand	0.877	6.947	0.00	Hypothesis 1 accepted
Credibility → Connections	0.919	60.278	0.00	Hypothesis 2 accepted
Connection →love the brand	-0.343	2.526	0.012	Hypothesis 3 accepted
Credibility → Connections → brand love	-0.309	2.454	0.015	Hypothesis 4 accepted

Source: Primary data (2023)

5. Discussion

This research produced several findings. First, celebrity credibility has been proven to positively affect brand love. Celebrity credibility has been proven to have a positive effect on self-connection. Self-connection has a positive effect on brand love. Self-connection is proven to mediate the relationship between celebrity credibility and brand love. Supporting celebrities have their own charm that can create a self-image that consumers want. A credible celebrity must have charm, believability and expertise. Furthermore, the endorsement process will create an ideal celebrity image related to the brand they endorse, so that consumers can feel an increase in self-esteem which is often called self-brand connection. Furthermore, endorsement will create brand love for a product. Someone who is exposed to endorsements is likely to develop brand love. Attractiveness refers to what a celebrity endorser finds attractive in relation to the concept of attractiveness. This includes friendliness, agreeableness, physicality, and occupation as some of the important dimensions of the concept of attractiveness. This attachment shows that celebrity endorsers can attract consumer attention to a product (Smadi et al., 2023; Ohanian, 1990). In addition, when consumers find what they find attractive in a supporting celebrity, consumers will identify, that is, consumers will perceive the supporting celebrity and tend to adopt certain attitudes, interests or preferences from the supporting celebrity. This is also supported by research conducted (Dwivedi et al., 2016; Alshuqairat et al., 2023; Takaya, 2019) which shows that attractiveness has a positive effect on self-brand connection.

Expertise is the level at which the communicator is seen as a source with valid and trustworthy statements and is able to provide an objective opinion on a topic (Dwivedi et al., 2016). Celebrities are also considered to have sufficient knowledge, experience and skills to promote products that will attract consumer interest. This is also supported by research conducted by (Dwivedi et al., 2016), Furthermore, Self-brand connection is expected to create positive attitudes towards the brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Consumers use brands to establish themselves, present themselves to others or achieve their identity goals (Escalas & Bettman, 2017). Furthermore, brands have the ability to reflect important aspects of consumers' identities and express significant aspects of themselves (Fournier, 1998) Studies on brand identification identify two sources of congruence between consumers and brands: sources originating from the brand's image, values, or personality, which is called the brand (Albert & Merunka, 2013) . When people's self-awareness is high, consumers form attachments to brands that allow them to express who they really are (Malär et

al., 2011). In contrast, ideally self-congruent brands will generate stronger emotional brand attachment only in consumers who have low levels of societal self-awareness. The academic implication of these findings is that in addition to congruence between brand and self, social context also plays a key role in the development of emotional attachment to a brand.

6. Conclusions

This research seeks to examine the structural relationship between celebrity credibility, self-connection, and brand love. The results of this research have several theoretical and managerial implications. First, from a theoretical point of view, the results of this study prove the potential of celebrity endorsements in influencing consumer purchasing behavior. Consumers will love a brand more when the celebrity they like is able to stimulate them. On the other hand, consumers will increasingly love a brand. When they already have a connection to the brand. Second, consumers will basically consider celebrities as a communication medium that guarantees product quality, value and brand. Thus, celebrities add value to the company to the extent that the celebrity finds a following and ensures long-term brand loyalty.

This research has several limitations. This research proposes a model that provides multidimensional aspects related to celebrity credibility influencing self-connection and brand love. Because credibility is a construct, it is interesting to reexamine the cause and effect between variables when brand love arises. We also check the reliability of the instrument, thereby ensuring internal reliability. Even though the respondents come from one country, we hope that the results of the instrument we use can be generalized to other contexts. Finally, the objective of this study is to ascertain the extent to which celebrities endorse body care. However, we predict that the findings will be applicable to a wide range of other brands, as the dynamics of celebrity influence are consistent across all categories. additional brands and products.

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