

The Impact of Celebrity Endorsements on Purchase Intentions in Sri Lanka's Fashion Retail Industry: The Mediating Role of Customer Trust

Celebrity
Endorsement

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Abstract

In the contemporary world, celebrities are often regarded as role models. This phenomenon significantly influences purchasing within the retail fashion sector. The current study aims to assess the influence of celebrity endorsements on customer purchasing intentions within Sri Lanka's fashion retail industry. The study employed an online, standardised questionnaire to gather data, which was then analysed using SPSS version 26. The analysis results reveal that celebrity endorsement has a positive influence on customer purchase intention, with customer trust acting as a significant mediating variable in this relationship, and Trustworthiness emerged as the most influential sub-dimension. Although existing literature has explored this relationship, findings have been contentious, and a noticeable gap remains regarding the mediating role of customer trust in the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention, especially in the Sri Lankan context. The current research can be extended to other industries and contexts by incorporating mediating and moderating factors such as word of mouth (WoM), customer perception, and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Keywords: Celebrity Endorsement, Purchase Intention, Customer Trust, Fashion Retail

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Introduction

As days go on, more people look on celebrities as role models, which influences how their followers behave (Ahmed, Seedani, Ahuja, & Paryani, 2015; Kennedy, Baxter, & Ilicic, 2019). Hence, many organisations use celebrities to help increase their brand recognition and involve more people in their marketing campaigns. By associating products with well-known personalities, marketers aim to generate heightened levels of brand awareness, interest, and curiosity, thereby influencing customer purchase intention. The growing prevalence of companies using celebrity endorsements underscores the importance of further investigating the concept. Celebrity endorsement refers to a contractual agreement wherein a public figure promotes a business or product, leveraging their fame and status to influence customer behaviour (Cocker, Mardon, & Daunt, 2021). The effectiveness of this marketing strategy is rooted in the psychological appeal celebrities hold over customers. Therefore, celebrity endorsement of a product could have a profound effect on the perception and buying behaviour of customers. According to prior research, celebrity endorsement is one of the most effective ways to garner customer interest and foster brand loyalty (Giraldi, Oliveira, & Rocha, 2019). The appeal of celebrity endorsers relies on the perceived credibility of expertise and attractiveness that increases the perceived value for the endorsed product (Freire, Quevedo-Silva, & Scrivano, 2018). Due to this, many companies spend enormous amounts of money on celebrity endorsements in ways they believe will ultimately foster customer trust and brand loyalty. The interaction between celebrity endorsement and customer purchase intention is multi-dimensional (Chen, Geng, & Wang, 2019). Customers, with increasing knowledge through online platforms, develop their purchasing intentions based on various external influences such as opinion leaders in social media. This complexity calls for a focused understanding of how celebrity endorsement influences customer buying behavior. Customer purchase intention is generally viewed as an indication of the likelihood of a customer buying a particular product or service (Madushika, Dissanayake, & Udovita, 2024). According to Pansari and Roy (2014), the celebrity is perceived as trustworthy and relatable, their endorsement will increase the customer's purchase intention for the product. However, in situations where their credibility is questionable, perhaps due to controversies in their personal lives or scandals surrounding them, the value of endorsement diminishes, which can lead to lower customer trust in a product or service and, consequently, reduced purchase intentions (Baker & Legendre, 2021; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Younus et al., 2015). Further, the link between celebrity endorsement and customer behaviour is not fixed. It can change with the endorser's behaviour and the public's reaction. For instance, a celebrity embroiled in scandal may negatively impact the brand's image, leading to decreased purchase intention among customers (Wei & Wu, 2013). Therefore, brands must carefully consider the implications of their celebrity partnerships, as the traits and behaviours of endorsers can significantly influence customer perceptions.

Problem Statement and Justification

In light of the considerations, the main research problem explored in this study is,

Understanding how celebrity endorsement impacts on customer purchase intention in the fashion retail industry in Sri Lanka, with customer trust acting as a mediator.

Despite the widespread use of celebrity endorsements in advertising, existing literature has not comprehensively examined their effect on purchase intention within the Sri Lankan fashion retail sector, particularly with the mediating role of customer trust. While past studies have explored the general influence of celebrity endorsements (Apejoye, 2013; Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001; Miciak & Shanklin, 1994), few have analyzed subcomponents such as credibility, attractiveness, or expertise in detail, nor have they assessed the dual nature positive and negative of celebrity influence. Research by Dissanayaka et al. (2018) and Udovita (2019) supports the relevance of endorser characteristics but stops short of evaluating how customer trust mediates the relationship between endorsement and purchase intent. Given the rapid expansion of the Sri Lankan fashion retail industry and its growing reliance on celebrity-driven marketing (Ranaweera & Halwathura, 2014), the lack of focused empirical evidence presents a critical gap. Moreover, while brands perceive endorsement as influential, customer responses often diverge (Weerasiri & Herath, 2017), highlighting a disparity in practice. Therefore, this study addresses a timely research gap by examining whether celebrity endorsements significantly impact customer purchase intention in Sri Lanka's fashion retail market, with customer trust as a mediating factor.

Context Justification on Fashion Retail Industry

The global fashion industry stands as one of the most dynamic and profitable sectors, contributing approximately USD 3 trillion and around 2% to the global GDP (Fashion United, 2022). In Sri Lanka, fashion retail is a relatively new yet rapidly expanding industry. Although it was virtually nonexistent a few years ago, local retailers now generate over USD 10 million annually, with projections estimating a potential rise to USD 500 million in the near future (Ranaweera & Halwathura, 2014). This upward trajectory is driven by post-war economic recovery, rising middle-class income, infrastructural improvements, and increased exposure to global fashion trends (Embuldeniya, 2015).

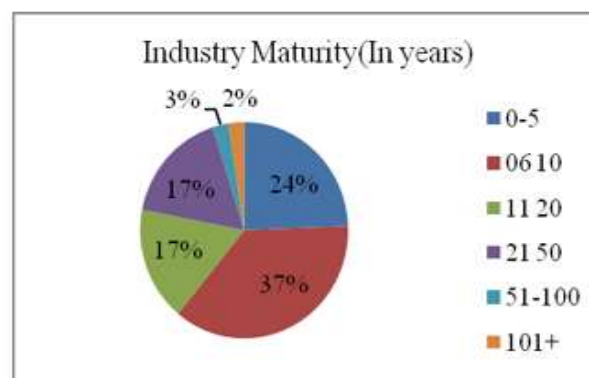


Figure 1: Industry Maturity

Source: Authors' presentation

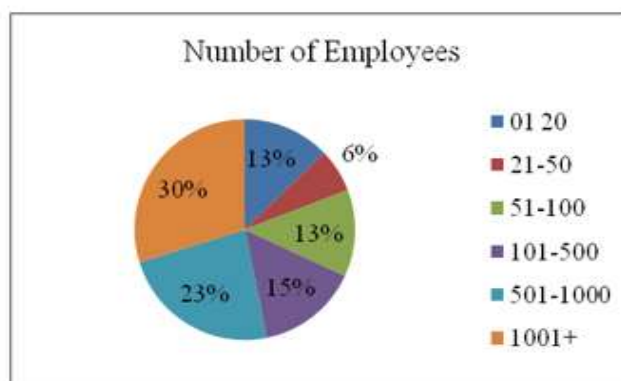


Figure 2: No of employees

Source: Authors' presentation

Despite its growth, the industry still exhibits characteristics of early-stage development. As indicated in Figure 01, the majority of fashion retail businesses (37%) have been operating for only 6 to 10 years, and 24% are within the 0–5-year bracket, confirming that the sector is still maturing (Ranaweera & Halwathura, 2014). In terms of workforce, Figure 02 shows that while a notable portion (30%) of companies employ over 1,000 people, a combined 44% employ fewer than 100, suggesting a dominance of small- to mid-sized operations (Ranaweera & Halwathura, 2014). Similarly, Figure 03 reveals that most retailers (26%) operate only 1–2 outlets, while 21% have up to five, further emphasizing the fragmented and emerging nature of the market.

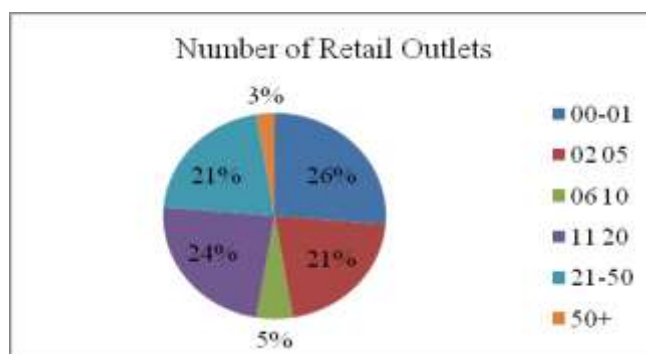


Figure 3: No of retail outlets

Source: Authors' presentation

Geographically, the industry is highly centralized, with 52% of retail outlets located in the Western Province (Figure 4), while other regions such as the Central and Southern provinces remain underserved (Dias, 2011; Ranaweera & Halwathura, 2014). Given the significant tourist influx to historical and coastal areas, expanding retail coverage beyond Western Sri Lanka could enhance both accessibility and customer satisfaction.

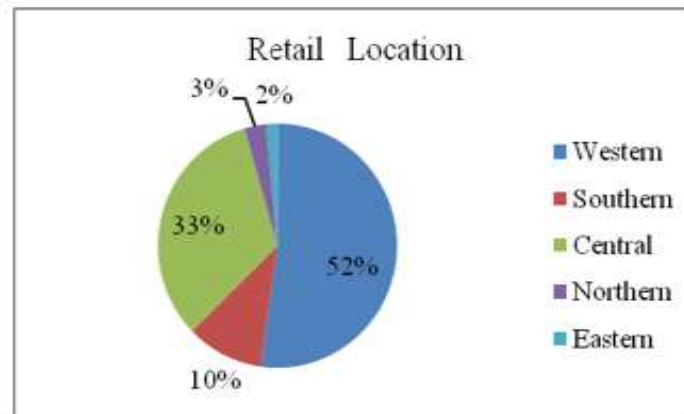


Figure 4: Retail outlet Locations

Source: Authors' presentation

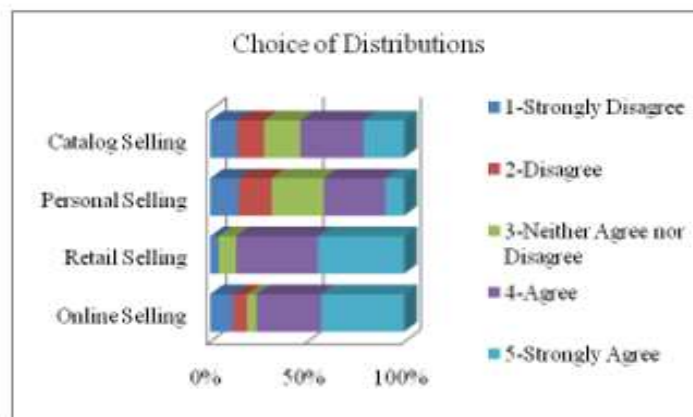


Figure 5: Choice of Distribution

Source: Authors' presentation

Moreover, the choice of distribution strategies among retailers shows a strong preference for modern retail and online selling methods, as highlighted in Figure 5, indicating a shift toward more flexible and customer-oriented distribution channels (Chen & Lai, 2009). Social media marketing has also played a pivotal role in boosting visibility, with brands such as Nolimit, Nils, and Glitz developing large digital followings (Fashion Retail Statistics, 2021).

Despite its promise, the industry continues to grapple with challenges including limited technological adoption, labor inefficiencies, and low levels of professionalization (Kottawatta. K. H., 2017). However, the cultural significance of fashion in Sri Lanka where self-presentation is highly valued even amidst economic hardships continues to drive customer demand (Resources. A, 2018). These contextual insights highlight a critical need to better understand customer behavior in this evolving market. Specifically, the influence of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention, mediated by customer trust, emerges as a vital area for empirical investigation. Such

research could provide strategic insights for retailers seeking to enhance competitive positioning and capitalize on emerging market opportunities.

Research Objectives

1. To study the impact of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention in the fashion retail industry in Sri Lanka.
2. To investigate the influence of expertise of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention in the fashion retail industry in Sri Lanka.
3. To study the impact of trustworthiness of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention in the fashion retail industry in Sri Lanka.
4. To explore the impact of attractiveness of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention in the fashion retail industry in Sri Lanka attractiveness
5. To investigate the mediating effect of customer trust on the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention in fashion retail industry in Sri Lanka.
6. To recommend effective celebrity endorsement strategies for Sri Lankan fashion retailers to increase the purchase intention by identifying customer trust.

Limitations of the study

The number of variables in this study is constrained. There are many distinct types of celebrity endorsements that affect purchase intention in Sri Lanka's fashion retail sector. However, the study examined the value of customers' purchases as a whole. There are specific types of celebrity endorsements that can have a significant impact on purchase intention, even though this study only looks at celebrity endorsement in general as a factor that can influence purchase intention. The questionnaire will only be dispersed on the internet. Because of this, the study's sample is limited to customers of online platforms.

Literature Review

Celebrity Endorsement

As per (McCracken G. , 1986), an individual who enjoys public awareness and utilizes it to promote customer good by appearing with it in an advertisement or other type of promotional action or effort on behalf of a fashion brand or product is referred to as a celebrity endorser. People who receive a lot of public notice and adoration are known as celebrities. The majority of celebrities fall into one of the following categories: athletes, actors, models, entertainers, musicians, politicians, and, less frequently, business moguls (Schlecht, 2003).

Celebrity Endorsement Elements

Attractiveness

Physical attractiveness is an informational signal, according to (McCracken G. , 1989) that involves effects that are subtle, widespread, and unavoidable; establishes a precise pattern of verifiable distinctions; and transcends culture in its effects. (Erdogan, 1999) adds that attractiveness is a stereotype of positive associations with a person that encompasses not just physical appearance but also personality and athletic prowess.

Expertise

Expertise is described as the extent to which the endorser is thought to have the necessary knowledge, experience, or abilities to promote the product. (Erdogan B. Z., 1999) asserts that an endorser's credibility is based on their knowledge, experience, and abilities in relation to the advertised brand.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the measure of how much customers believe the endorser's claims to be true (Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001; Ohanian, 1991). Women trust female celebrities more than male celebrities, according to (Patil, 2009) as described, while young people are more dependent on older people since they want to follow celebrity trends.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a customer's subjective decision regarding whether or not to purchase goods or services, based on an extensive evaluation (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001; Spears & Singh, 2004; Tanjung & Hudrasyah, 2016; Whitlark, Geurts, & Swenson, 1993).

Customer Trust

Customer trust is defined as the customer's confidence reliability, integrity, and competence of a company, which will contribute to willingness to rely on the goods, services, or brand to help them with their needs in the future (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Moorman, Deshpande, & Zaltman, 1993).

Hypothesis Development

It has been determined that celebrity endorsements are the most popular option among the various advertising styles and forms used by marketers to communicate the brand and product message to customers, with the aim of influencing brand choice (Alsmadi, 2006). This is due to the fact that, according to Kurzman, Anderson, Key, & Lee, (2007) celebrities are a ubiquitous presence among people in society, leaving a long-lasting impact. Celebrities have a significant impact on how customers behave (Alperstein, 1991). People want to copy and revere their favorite celebrities (McCutcheon, Ashe, & et, 2003). This develops into the highly desired celebrity brand endorsement amid all other advertising strategies. Therefore, it can be said that celebrities are the most potent reference points for influencing customer behavior. Therefore H1 as,

H1- There is a positive relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention

Expertise is a key component of the credibility model, and previous research has demonstrated that it has a considerable impact on customers' buying intentions (Eisend & Langner, 2010). Additionally, a celebrity's apparent competence may transform people's perceptions of a brand favorably, which would have a direct impact on customers' purchasing intentions (Erdogan B. Z., 1999). Therefore, H1a as,

H1a – There is a positive relationship between celebrity expertise and purchase intention

According to Miller & Baseheart, (1969), customers' opinions of a brand and their purchasing behavior may change if the target market perceives the message's source as reputable and trustworthy. Additionally, Gupta, Kishore, & Verma, (2015) demonstrated that trustworthiness significantly influences customers' purchasing. Therefore, H1b as,

H1b – There is a positive relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and purchase intention

More attractive people can persuade others to change their minds than less attractive people (Clow, James, & Kranenburg, 2006; Ohanian, 1990). A celebrity endorser's attractiveness has a significant and positive impact on customers' purchase intentions (Sallam, 2012). Hudha & Hidayat, (2009) also has revealed that customers' actions in Indonesia in terms of brand choice are positively influenced by celebrities' attractiveness. Therefore, H1c as,

H1c – There is a positive relationship between celebrity attractiveness and purchase intention

Marketers often employ the effective tactic of celebrity endorsement. It provides for customer demands in a psychological sense. As a result, it influences how the promoted product or brand behaves and makes decisions (Rollins & Bhutada, 2014). Celebrity appearances are desired to build customer trust in brands (Friedman & Figg, 2013; Gefen & Straub, 2004). Therefore H2 as,

H2 - There is a positive relationship between celebrity endorsement and customer trust

This definition of brand trust reflects two different components, brand reliability and purchasing intent. Customer perception of a brand's ability to deliver on its promise is the basis for determining its reliability. Additionally, purchasing intentions are determined by how much customers trust a brand to protect their interests when unanticipated difficulties with product purchases develop (Delgado-Ballester, 2004). Therefore H3 as,

H3 - There is a positive relationship between customer trust and purchase intention

There has a positive relationship between celebrity endorsement and customer trust (Ahmad, Chow, Idris, & Mason, 2019; Firman, Ilyas, Reza, & Lestari, 2021; Vidyanata, Sunaryo, & Hadiwidjojo, 2018; Wang, Cheng, & Chu, 2013). Furthermore, based on the findings of Delgado-Ballester, (2004) there is a strong relationship between customer trust and purchase intention. Therefore, the researcher identifies that customer trust mediates the relationship between celebrity endorsement and intention of purchase. Therefore, H4 as,

H4 – Customer trust mediates the Impact between the celebrity endorsement and purchase intention

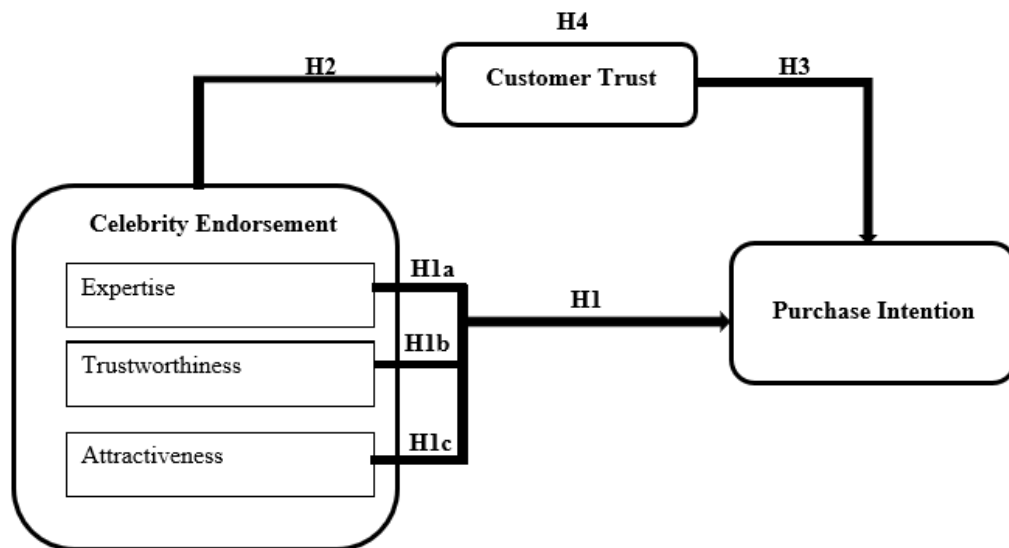


Figure 6: Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors' presentation

Methodology

This research adopts a positivist philosophical stance, which asserts that reality is objective and can be observed and measured without bias. Accordingly, the study employs a deductive reasoning approach, wherein existing theories or hypotheses are systematically evaluated through the collection and analysis of empirical data (Bougie & Sekaran, 2016). A quantitative research approach with convenience sampling was adopted to collect data from fashion retail customers in Sri Lanka. This was deemed appropriate, as Sri Lanka has a rapidly growing internet user base and an increasingly digital fashion retail environment, making online questionnaire distribution a practical and efficient way (DataReportal, 2024). According to the Department of Census and Statistics (2024), the country's digital literacy rate reached approximately 64%, indicating that the majority in the population can engage in online surveys. Convenience sampling is widely accepted in customer behavior and marketing research where probability sampling is not possible, especially in exploratory studies (Etikan et al., 2016). More importantly, the increase in the level of e-commerce platforms and engagement in online fashion within Sri Lanka provides access to the target population through online channels (Statista, 2024). Thus, the distribution of the questionnaire online falls in line with the nature of the study and the current trends in customer behavior in the Sri Lankan fashion retail sector. To ensure that the study included individuals who shop at fashion retail stores due to celebrity endorsements, the researcher included two screening questions at the beginning of the survey. This methodology is particularly well-suited to examining the relationship between celebrity endorsement and customer purchase intention, as it involves gathering numerical data and applying statistical techniques for analysis. To facilitate this, the survey method was used as the primary means of data collection.

Operationalization of Research and Indicators

Table 1. Operationalization Table

Variable	Indicator	Measurement Indicator	Source
Expertise	• Celebrities are an expert in the field • Celebrities have experience in the field • Celebrities have knowledge in the field • Celebrities are qualified in the field	• My favorite celebrity is an expert in fashion retail products. • My favorite celebrity has experience in using fashion retail products. • My favorite celebrity has knowledge about the product. • My favorite celebrity is qualified in endorsing fashion retail products.	(Adiwijaya, Halimin, Herjanto, Michael, & Wijaya, 2020; Nguyen N.-T. , 2020)
Trustworthiness	• Representing a reliable image • Presence in an ad makes the product more credible • Endorsing the product increases the trust level in the product • Celebrities are using the product	• My favorite celebrity always represents a reliable image • I believe the presence of My favorite celebrity in an ad makes the fashion retail products is more credible • The endorsement of My favorite celebrity on fashion retail products increases my level of trust in the product. • I believe My favorite celebrity is using that product	(Adiwijaya, Halimin, Herjanto, Michael, & Wijaya, 2020; Nguyen N.-T. , 2020)
Attractiveness	• Celebrities have an attractive appearance • Celebrities are handsome/beautiful • Celebrities have a classy style • Celebrities are sexy	• My favorite celebrity has an attractive appearance • My favorite celebrity is handsome/beautiful. • My favorite celebrity	(Adiwijaya, Halimin, Herjanto, Michael, & Wijaya, 2020; Nguyen N.-T. , 2020)

		has a classy style	
		• My favorite celebrity is sexy	
Purchase Intention	• When purchasing, brands endorsed by the celebrities easily come to mind • Buying a product after the celebrity endorse it • Consideration of buying after endorsed by the celebrity • Happiness of buying after being endorsed by the celebrity	• Whenever I have to make a purchase, brands endorsed by my favorite celebrity easily come to mind • If my favorite celebrity endorses a brand, I will buy it no matter what • I will consider buying a product endorsed by my favorite celebrity • I am happy to buy a brand endorsed by my favorite celebrity	(Brock & Liu, 2011)
Customer Trust	• Having complete trust when purchasing • Buying a product as it is the best for the situation • Treating honestly when purchasing • Having no doubts when purchasing	• Overall, I have complete trust on my favorite fashion retail outlet • When my favorite fashion retail outlet suggests that I buy a new product it is because it is best for my situation. • My favorite fashion retail outlet treats me in an honest way in every purchase. • I have no doubt about my favorite fashion retail outlet.	(Ball & et, 2006; Li, Kashyap, Zhou, & Yang, 2008; Leninkumar, 2017)

Source: Authors' estimation

Measures of the Study

Conducting this research across the entirety of Sri Lanka is strategically justified due to the nationwide growth and socio-economic importance of the fashion retail industry. As a developing nation undergoing rapid urbanization and modernization, Sri Lanka has witnessed a shift in customer behavior and lifestyle, particularly in relation to fashion and retail consumption

(Embuldeniya, 2015). In addition, the Sri Lanka Retail Association, (2020) reports a steady increase in the number of retail establishments across all nine provinces, reflecting the industry's broad geographic penetration. As such, limiting the research to a specific city or province would risk overlooking regional variations in customer attitudes, brand engagement, and the influence of celebrity endorsements. Moreover, the fashion industry in Sri Lanka contributes significantly to employment and GDP, making it a key area of interest for policy makers and investors (Department of Census and Statistics, 2021). Given this economic relevance, a nationally scoped study allows for the generation of comprehensive insights that are both contextually and economically impactful. Due to the unknown total population of fashion retail customers in Sri Lanka, attributable to the lack of centralised visitor tracking data, the study relied on established statistical sampling guidelines. A sample size of 384 respondents is sufficient to represent a large or undefined population (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). This ensures both statistical reliability and external validity, enhancing the applicability of the findings across diverse demographic and geographic segments.

Data Analysis Methods

The analysis of data employed multiple statistical methods to ensure validity and completeness in addressing the research objectives outlined in the introduction to the investigation. Correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between celebrity endorsement and intent to purchase, in order to identify associations among the variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to quantitatively model the influence of the independent variables, expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness on purchase intention. This method supported hypothesis testing and provided insight into the degree of the celebrity endorsement elements' effects on customer purchase behaviour. The mediation analysis was conducted using the Process macro (version 4.2) by Andrew F. Hayes, in conjunction with SPSS (IBM, version 26). The analysis facilitated a more detailed evaluation of customer trust as a mediator of the celebrity endorsement and customer purchase intent relationship, allowing for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms involved in influencing customer behavior.

Results and Discussion

The researcher independently collected primary data through an online survey by distributing the questionnaire to 428 respondents aged 18 and above residing in Sri Lanka, thereby exceeding the required sample size of 389 as determined by statistical sampling guidelines.

Table 2. Summary of Database Preparation

Survey Method	No of questionnaires distributed	No of received responses	Rejected responses	Usable responses
Online survey	428	412	23	389

Source: Authors' estimation

A detailed demographic analysis of the gathered data as follows,

Table 3. Sample demographics of the study

Sample Demographics		Frequency	Total	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Gender	Male	186	389	47.81%	100%
	Female	203		52.19%	
Age	Between 18 -30 years	257	389	66.07%	100%
	Between 31- 40 years	123		31.62%	
	Between 41-50 years	006		01.54%	
	Above 50	012		03.08%	
Occupation	Private sector employed	285	389	73.26%	100%
	Government sector	035		09.00%	
	employed	008		02.06%	
	Self-employed	060		15.42%	
	Unemployed				
Income	Below Rs 15,000	043	389	11.05%	100%
	Rs. 15,000- Rs. 35,000	185		47.56%	
	Rs. 35,000- Rs. 55,000	140		35.98%	
	Rs 55,000- Rs 100,000	016		04.11%	
	Above 100,000	005		1.28%	

Source: Authors' estimation

Results of Reliability, Validity and Normality

Reliability

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for both the independent and dependent variables ranged between 0.832 and 0.883, as presented in the preceding table. According to Gliem and Gliem (2013), a Cronbach's Alpha value exceeding 0.70 is generally considered acceptable for exploratory research. Therefore, the results confirm a high level of internal consistency and reliability for all constructions measured in this study.

Table 4. Summary of the reliability test

Variable	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Expertise	04	0.881
Attractiveness	04	0.832
Trustworthiness	04	0.878
Purchase Intention	04	0.883
Customer Trust	04	0.856

Source: Authors' estimation

Validity

Validity concerns the degree to which the researcher captures the intent of a concept via survey items. Content validity suggests that our survey fully represents the conceptual dimensions of the construct, primarily established through a thorough review of existing literature. Criterion validity refers to the degree of accuracy with which one variable predicts another variable established as a standard, often through some measure of correlation, the stronger the positive correlation, the greater the criterion validity (Nikolopoulou, 2022). Construct validity asks whether the instrument accurately measures the concept of interest and is typically measured through both convergent validity (strong correlations among items that are related) and discriminant validity (low correlations among measures that are unrelated).

Normality

Table 5. Normality test of the variables

Dimension	N	Skewness			Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Z value	Statistic	Std. Error	Z value
Expertise	389	-1.349	0.122	-1.0574	0.517	0.244	1.118852
Attractiveness	389	-1.303	0.122	-1.6803	0.462	0.244	1.893443
Trustworthiness	389	-1.321	0.122	-1.5420	0.4350	0.244	1.541021
Purchase Intention	389	-1.527	0.122	-1.5164	1.322	0.244	1.418033
Customer Trust	389	-1.245	0.122	-1.2049	0.092	0.244	0.377049

Source: Authors' estimation

George and Mallery (2019) suggest that skewness and kurtosis values between -2 and +2 are considered acceptable indicators of univariate normal distribution. Based on the values presented within the analysis, all key constructs in this study fall within an acceptable range indicating that data were normally distributed for univariate distribution.

Hypothesis Testing

Correlation and Multicollinearity

Table 6. Correlation and Multicollinearity analysis

	TPurchaseIntention	TExpertise	TAttractiveness
TExpertise	0.892**		
TAttractiveness	0.562**	0.49**	
TTrustworthiness	0.960**	0.32**	0.24**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors' estimation

Pearson correlation coefficients range from -1 to +1 and indicate the strength and direction of linear associations, with positive values indicating a direct relationship and negative values representing an inverse relationship. The analysis results revealed statistically significant, positive correlations between trustworthiness and purchase intention, as well as between expertise and purchase intention. Additionally, all correlations between the independent variables

were below the conventional threshold of 0.70 for multicollinearity, indicating that the correlations do not meet the guidelines for multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 7. VIF Table

	Tolerance	VIF
Expertise	0.999	1.001
Attractiveness	0.999	1.001
Trustworthiness	0.999	1.001

Source: Authors' estimation

To evaluate multicollinearity, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values and tolerance levels were evaluated in this study. According to Mansfield and Helms (1982), multicollinearity should not be present in the dataset when VIF values fall below 10, and the values of tolerance exceed 0.1 or 0.2. Based on the data presented in the coefficient table, the VIF values remained below the threshold of 10 and tolerance values stayed above 0.2. Therefore, we can confirm that multicollinearity is not a problem in this dataset, thus validating the regression estimates.

Model Summary

Table 8. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	.679 ^a	.461	.472

Source: Authors' estimation

In order to understand the extent to which the regression model had an overall fit to the data, the adjusted R square value, as a statistic, needs to be examined. The adjusted R square value will be closer to one if the independent variable is a good predictor of the dependent variable, or if it is explaining most of the effects that were made on the dependent variable. Thus, we can conclude that based on the adjusted R square value only 47.2% (0.472) in that variance of purchase intention was explained by the variance of these independent variables (that are expertise, attractiveness and trustworthiness) of this study.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the effect of multiple independent variables on a single dependent variable. The analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26, and the resulting statistical estimates summarizing the overall model fit, significance, and individual variable contributions are presented in the tables below.

Table 9. Coefficient Values of the Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	P Value
	B	Std. Error	Beta	

(Constant)	0.285	0.122		2.326	0.021
Expertise	0.443	0.056	0.051	7.904	0.000
Attractiveness	0.103	0.039	0.583	2.606	0.010
Trustworthiness	0.603	0.061	0.431	9.849	0.000

Source: Authors' estimation

The regression output indicated a p-value of 0.021 for the constant, which is well below the 0.05 significance threshold, indicating strong statistical significance. Hypothesis H1 is supported, indicating that celebrity endorsements significantly influence purchase intention. In addition, the p-value for expertise was found to be 0.000, indicating that expertise has a statistically significant effect on purchase intention, supporting Hypothesis H1a. Likewise, the p-value for the relationship between attractiveness and customer purchase intention was below 0.05, indicating a significant relationship, supporting Hypothesis H1b. Finally, the relationship between trustworthiness and customer purchase intention was also significant, with a very low p-value (below 0.05), which supported hypothesis H1c.

Based on multiple regression statistics, model summary can be built as follows,

$$PI = 0.285 + 0.443*CEE + 0.103*CEA + 0.603*CET$$

Results of Mediation

Table 10. Model Summary via Macro Process for Testing Hypothesis No 03

	Coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.0165	.0578	19.8587	.0000	4.4932	5.4806
TTrustworthiness	.8156	.0282	1.0490	.0000	.1596	.0486
TCustomerTrust	.1894	.0270	7.0180	.0000	.1363	.2425

Source: Authors' estimation

The model assessing the association between celebrity endorsement and customer trust returned a p-value of 0.000, which is below the accepted threshold of 0.05 for significance, so the current researcher concludes that the relationship is statistically significant both ways. The LLCI and ULCI values were also both positive, further supporting the conclusion that a positive relationship exists. Therefore, we accept Hypothesis H2, which predicted a positive relationship between celebrity endorsement and customer trust.

Table 11. Mediating Analysis via Process Macro

Direct effect of X on Y					
Effect	Se	T	p	LLCI	ULCI
.8156	.0282	28.9592	.0000	.7602	.8709
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y					
	Effect	BoostSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TCT	.1725	.0387	.0952	.2481	

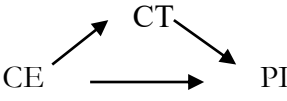
Source: Authors' estimation

As shown in the model summary, the p-value is below 0.05, which indicates statistical significance. The Lower Level Confidence Interval (LLCI) and Upper Level Confidence Interval (ULCI) are both positive values indicating a consistent positive effect. Therefore, the H3 Hypothesis proposing a positive relationship between customer trust and purchase intention is supported.

There is also a significant mediation effect in the direct and indirect model analysis, where the direct effect shows a p-value of 0.000, and both the LLCI and ULCI are positive values from bootstrap analysis. These results suggest that customer trust positively mediates celebrity endorsement on purchase intention. Thus, the H4 Hypothesis stating that customer trust mediates the celebrity endorsement effect on purchase intention is also supported.

Results Summary

Table 12. Table of Testing Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Relationship			Status	Justification
H1	CE	→	PI	Accepted	Beta value (0.285) p value (0.00)
H1a	CEE	→	PI	Accepted	Beta value (0.443) p value (0.00)
H1b	CEA	→	PI	Accepted	Beta value (0.103) p value (0.01)
H1c	CET	→	PI	Accepted	Beta value (0.603) p value (0.00)
H2	CE	→	CT	Accepted	p value (0.00) LLCI (0.1596,0.1363) ULCI (0.0486,0.2425)
H3	CT	→	PI	Accepted	p value (0.000) CE - LLCI (0.7602) ULCI (0.8709) CT- LLCI (0.1363) ULCI (0.2425) value
H4				Accepted	LLCI (0.0952) ULCI (0. 2481)

Source: Authors' estimation

The statistical data shown in the table above indicates that all hypotheses are accepted. These results suggest that purchase intention in Sri Lanka's fashion retail market is highly influenced by certain dimensions of celebrity endorsement: expertise, attractiveness and trust. The researcher also found that customer trust acts as a mediating variable, supporting the indirect relationship between celebrity endorsement and customer purchase intention.

Discussion and Managerial Implication

The findings of this research indicate that celebrity endorsement significantly impacts customers' purchase intentions in the Sri Lankan fashion retail industry. All three attributes of endorsement; expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness were positively related, with trustworthiness being the most significant (Erdogan B. Z., 1999; Ohanian, 1990). Based on this finding, it is clear that Sri Lankan customers prioritize reliability and ethical conduct in their assessment of celebrity endorses. The findings also establish that customer trust mediates the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention, adding further support to the idea that trust serves as a psychological link between external brand signals and consumer behavior (Delgado-Ballester, 2004). When consumers perceive a celebrity to be reliable, knowledgeable, and holds the same beliefs as the brand, then they will trust both the endorser and the brand, resulting in a greater purchase intention. Additionally, to trustworthiness, although attractiveness and expertise would be beneficial, trustworthiness is the most influential in this context, which shows the growing importance that consumers are putting on authenticity and honesty (Patil, 2009; Shimp, 2000).

From a managerial viewpoint, fashion retail brands should emphasize a credibility value, general authenticity, and matching to brand values when choosing endorsers, rather than simply favoring celebrities or good looks (Erdogan et al., 2001; McCracken, 1989). Endorsers that consumers perceive to be honest and sincere are more likely to help create an emotional connection with consumers, promoting brand loyalty. Marketers should also explicitly create endorsement campaigns that build trust and show honesty and transparency, as these aspects develop long-term relationships with customers to foster loyalty. Within the Sri Lankan context, with consumers increasingly more value-driven and having the ability to discern, endorsements that exude sincerity and expertise will most likely produce a stronger influence over buy-reach behavior (Friedman & Figg, 2013; Rollins & Bhutada, 2014). All in all, the study highlighted that trustworthiness and trust of the customer are important aspects in developing celebrity endorsement strategies that influence consumer loyalty and brand promotion in the fashion retail sector.

Future research could investigate the influence of varying celebrity types, for instance, social media influencers, local celebrities, or global celebrities, on purchase intention to uncover whether endorsement type affects consumer trust. In addition, longitudinal research might investigate the experiences of trust and endorsement effectiveness over time, revealing differences in long-term brand loyalty. Future research may also add demographic or cultural factors to examine how variables such as age, gender, or cultural orientation shape how consumers assess celebrity credibility and trust. To further validate the generalizability of these findings in the Sri Lankan context, research could also be extended to retail sectors outside fashion.

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