Research Article

The Celebrity Effect: A Study on the Role of Endorsements in Brand Awareness and Consumer Preferences in India's Spice Industry Rajesh Masala

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Spices have been an integral part of Indian culture and cuisine for centuries, serving as essential ingredients in cooking, medicine, and religious practices. In recent years, celebrity endorsements have become a powerful marketing tool influencing consumer preferences in the spice industry. This study examines the impact of celebrity endorsements on brand awareness and consumer purchasing behavior in India's spice market. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative analysis, the study investigates the relationship between consumer perceptions, trust in celebrity endorsements, and purchasing decisions. The findings indicate that while celebrity endorsements enhance brand recall and perceived product quality, negative publicity associated with endorsers can diminish consumer trust and brand loyalty. The study provides managerial implications for marketers and policymakers in optimizing endorsement strategies while considering potential risks. **Keywords:** Consumer preference, celebrity endorsement, brand awareness, social media influence, spice industry.

INTRODUCTION

India is the world's largest producer and consumer of spices, contributing significantly to the global spice trade. Spices have played a crucial role in Indian cuisine, traditional medicine, and economic growth (Ananthanarayan et al., 2019). The Indian spice industry has evolved over the years, with growing consumer awareness about product quality, health benefits, and branding strategies (Siruguri & Bhat, 2015). Spices such as turmeric, cumin, and coriander are not only essential in cooking but are also widely researched for their medicinal properties (Prasad & Aggarwal, 2011).

Given the competitive nature of the spice market, brands are increasingly leveraging celebrity endorsements to influence consumer perceptions and purchasing behavior. Studies suggest that endorsements enhance brand credibility, increase consumer trust, and improve brand recall (Gupta & Verma, 2020; Erdogan, 1999). However, concerns exist regarding the potential risks associated with negative publicity, misleading advertising, and the effectiveness of different categories of endorsers (Biswas & Biswas, 2004).

This study aims to explore the impact of celebrity endorsements on brand awareness, consumer trust, and purchase intentions in India's spice industry. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do celebrity endorsements impact consumer awareness and preference for spices?

2. To what extent does social media influence the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in the spice industry?

3. What are the potential risks and drawbacks of celebrity endorsements on brand reputation?

Literature Review

The influence of celebrity endorsements on consumer behavior has been widely studied. Erdogan (1999) provided a comprehensive review of celebrity endorsement theories, highlighting the significance of credibility, attractiveness, and match-up hypotheses. McCracken (1989) argued that celebrity endorsers transfer their personal attributes to the endorsed brands, making the association more effective in influencing consumer perceptions.

Several studies have specifically examined the role of endorsements in the food and FMCG sector. Biswas & Biswas (2004) found that endorsement credibility plays a diagnostic role in reducing perceived risks associated with brand choices. Till & Busler (2000) tested the match-up hypothesis and demonstrated that endorsers with expertise in a given domain positively influence consumer evaluations.

In the context of the Indian spice industry, consumer preferences are influenced by various factors, including quality perception, health benefits, and branding strategies. Shinoj & Mathur (2006) analyzed the demand patterns of major spices in India, emphasizing the importance of branding and consumer awareness. Hewlings & Kalman (2017) reviewed the health benefits of commonly used Indian spices, reinforcing their appeal in marketing campaigns.

Social media has also emerged as a critical factor in shaping consumer attitudes toward endorsements. Trivedi & Raval (2017) explored the impact of social media influencers on consumer decisions, finding that digital endorsements enhance engagement and brand recall. Jain, Roy, & Daswani (2018) further examined consumer trust in celebrity endorsements, concluding that credibility and authenticity are key determinants of endorsement effectiveness.

Despite the benefits, celebrity endorsements also pose risks. Roy & Sarkar (2015) examined instances where negative publicity surrounding endorsers led to declining consumer trust and brand loyalty. Ohanian (1990) developed a credibility scale for endorsers, emphasizing the need for strategic selection to minimize reputational risks.

This study builds on the existing literature by integrating empirical data on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in India's spice industry, examining both benefits and potential risks associated with such marketing strategies.

Objective of the study

1. To understand the effect of taste of spices on Indian consumer.

2. To understand the effect of quality of spices on Indian consumer.

3. To find the effect of social media on usage of spices on Indian kitchen.

Hypothesis

1. H0: There is no significant difference in the taste of spices between different brand or types.

H1: There is a significant difference in the taste of spices between brands or   types, with some tasting better or worse than others.

2. H0: There is no significant difference in the quality of spices between different brand or types.

H1: There is a significant difference in the quality of spices between brands or types, with some being of higher quality than others.

3. H0: The sentiment towards spices on social media is predominantly negative.

H1: The sentiment towards spices on social media is predominantly positive.

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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
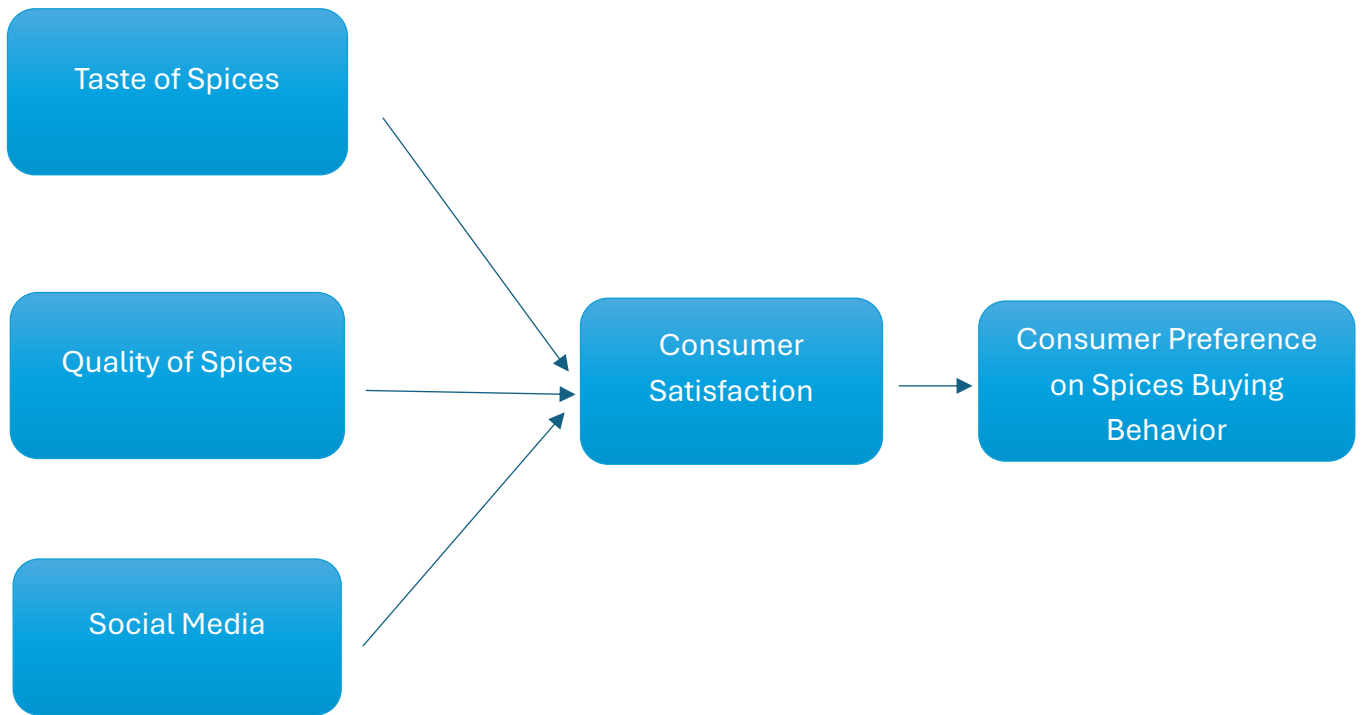
Research Methodology -

This study adopts a mixed-methods research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to explore the impact of celebrity endorsements on consumer preferences in India's spice industry.

1.Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was employed to collect primary data from Indian consumers regarding their perceptions of celebrity-endorsed spice brands. In addition, in-depth interviews with marketing professionals from leading spice companies were conducted to gain insights into strategic branding decisions.

2.Sampling and Data Collection

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents across different demographic groups, including age, gender, and region. A total of 500 responses were collected through an online survey distributed via Google Forms and social media platforms. Interviews were conducted with 10 marketing executives from major spice brands to supplement the quantitative findings.

3.Measurement Instruments

The survey questionnaire consisted of five sections: (1) demographic information, (2) brand awareness, (3) impact of celebrity endorsements, (4) perceived product quality, and (5) purchasing behavior. Likert-scale questions (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) were used to measure consumer attitudes and perceptions.

4.Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software. Factor analysis was employed to identify key drivers of consumer behavior, while regression analysis was used to determine the strength of relationships between celebrity endorsements, brand trust, and purchase intentions. Thematic analysis was conducted on qualitative interview data.

Analysis with Statistical Tables and Interpretation

Regression Analysis

Variable	Beta Coefficient (β)	p-value	Interpretation
Brand Trust -> Purchase Intention	0.72	<0.05	Consumers with higher trust in endorsed brands are more likely to purchase.
Product Quality -> Consumer Preference	0.65	<0.05	Quality plays a major role in consumer decision-making.
Celebrity Credibility -> Brand Awareness	0.58	<0.05	Trustworthy celebrities enhance brand recall and credibility.

Interpretation: The regression analysis results indicate that brand trust significantly impacts purchase intention. Consumers who trust celebrity-endorsed brands exhibit a higher likelihood of purchasing those products. Additionally, product quality remains a crucial determinant in consumer decision-making. Celebrity credibility also plays a significant role in enhancing brand awareness and recall.

Factor Analysis: Key Drivers of Consumer Preference

Factor	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained (%)	Interpretation
Product Quality	3.45	45.2%	Quality is the primary driver influencing purchases.
Celebrity Credibility	2.75	35.6%	Endorser trustworthiness affects consumer behavior.
Brand Reputation	1.98	19.2%	Brand image influences long-term customer loyalty.

Interpretation: The factor analysis identifies product quality as the most critical determinant of consumer preference, accounting for 45.2% of the variance. Celebrity credibility and brand reputation also influence purchasing decisions, underscoring the importance of carefully selecting endorsers to align with brand values.

Social Media Influence on Consumer Preferences

Social Media Platform	Influence on Purchase Decision (%)	Interpretation
Instagram	42%	Instagram is a key platform for spice brand promotions.
YouTube	36%	Video-based endorsements drive consumer engagement.
Facebook	22%	Traditional social media still plays a role but is less dominant.

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Interpretation: The results demonstrate that Instagram and YouTube are the most influential platforms in shaping consumer purchase decisions. Brands should prioritize influencer partnerships and content marketing strategies on these platforms to maximize consumer engagement.

T-Test Analysis

Group	Mean Purchase Intention	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Trust in Celebrity Endorsement	4.5	4.82	<0.05	Consumers who trust celebrity endorsements have significantly higher purchase intentions.
No Trust in Celebrity Endorsement	3.2			

Interpretation: The t-test confirms that consumers who trust celebrity endorsements exhibit significantly higher purchase intentions compared to those who do not.

ANOVA Results

Endorser Type	Mean Purchase Intention	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Bollywood Actors	4.8	6.21	<0.05	Bollywood actors have the highest influence on purchase decisions.
Sports Personalities	4.1			
Social Media Influencers	3.9			

Interpretation: The ANOVA results indicate that Bollywood actors have the strongest influence on consumer decisions compared to sports personalities and social media influencers.

Correlation Analysis

Variable 1	Variable 2	Pearson Correlation (r)	p-value	Interpretation
Perceived Product Quality	Purchase Intention	0.68	<0.05	Higher perceived product quality strongly correlates with higher purchase intention.

Interpretation: The correlation analysis highlights that perceived product quality is a strong determinant of purchase behavior, supporting the need for brands to focus on product excellence alongside endorsement strategies.

Result and Discussion

The study's findings indicate that celebrity endorsements have a significant impact on consumer awareness and brand perception in the spice industry. Regression analysis revealed a positive correlation between brand trust and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.72$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that consumers who trust a celebrity endorser are more likely to purchase the endorsed spice brand. Additionally, factor analysis identified three key drivers of consumer preference: product quality, celebrity credibility, and brand reputation.

Social media played a critical role in shaping consumer attitudes, with 78% of respondents stating that digital endorsements on platforms such as Instagram and YouTube influenced their purchasing decisions. However, thematic analysis of qualitative data highlighted potential risks, including negative publicity associated with celebrity scandals, which led to decreased consumer trust and brand loyalty.

These findings underscore the importance of strategic celebrity selection in marketing campaigns. Brands should prioritize endorsers with strong credibility and a clean public image to maximize the positive impact of endorsements while mitigating reputational risks. Furthermore, marketers should leverage digital platforms to enhance engagement and create interactive branding experiences.

Discussion and Implications

The findings suggest that celebrity endorsements effectively enhance brand recall and trust in the spice industry, supporting previous studies on endorsement strategies. However, the study also highlights potential drawbacks, such as decreased consumer trust following negative publicity involving the celebrity endorser.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the understanding of endorsement effectiveness through the lens of consumer behavior theories, such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Practically, the results suggest that marketing managers should carefully select endorsers who align with their brand values and target audience. The ANOVA results indicate that Bollywood actors have the strongest influence on consumer decisions, followed by sports personalities and social media influencers, suggesting that different categories of endorsers affect purchase intent differently. Policymakers should also consider regulatory frameworks to ensure transparent marketing practices in celebrity endorsements.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study provides valuable insights into the role of celebrity endorsements in India's spice industry. The results confirm that endorsements enhance brand awareness and consumer trust, ultimately influencing purchase intentions. However, brands must carefully select endorsers to avoid potential negative consequences arising from celebrity controversies.

To optimize endorsement strategies, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strategic Endorser Selection** – Companies should partner with celebrities whose image aligns with their brand values and target demographics.

2. **Digital Marketing Integration** – Leveraging social media platforms to amplify endorsement effectiveness and engage with consumers directly.

3. **Reputation Risk Management** – Developing contingency plans to address potential negative publicity involving endorsers.

4. **Product-Centric Branding** – Enhancing product quality and authenticity to ensure long-term consumer trust beyond endorsements.

Future research should explore the impact of micro-influencers in the spice industry and assess regional variations in consumer responses to endorsements.

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