

# Chapter 2

## Addictive Product Endorsement by Celebrity Sports Players: Effect on Celebrity Personality and Consumers' Purchasing Intention

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the impact of addictive products endorsement by celebrity sports players on their credibility, image, and trustworthiness, as well as on consumers' behavioural intentions to purchase these products. A purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from 362 university students. Confirmatory factor analysis and covariance-based structural equation modelling techniques were applied to the data. The findings revealed that celebrities' credibility, image, and trustworthiness were tarnished after they endorsed addictive products, which ultimately led to negative purchase behaviours among consumers. This implies that sports celebrities should consider whether a product is suitable before endorsing it and that corporate managers should select appropriate celebrity personalities for endorsement.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, using celebrities to promote brands has been a common practice in the West (Abeza *et al.*, 2020). The percentage of engaging celebrities in advertisements soared to more than 50% of total ads compared to 17% in the late 1970s (Forbes, 2024). This trend shows that celebrities currently play a bigger role in advertising (Rai *et al.*, 2021). Recent studies have found that the percentage of celebrity advertisements in Western countries is around 25–30% (Forbes, 2024) and 28% in India (Campaign India, 2024).

Currently, tying up brands with celebrities is an elite practice to boost the former image in the eyes of customers. Connecting a brand with a celebrity is considered a favourable marketing strategy for companies to promote their products and promote a positive view among customers (Ambroise *et al.*, 2014; Amos *et al.*, 2008; Saluja *et al.*, 2021). This strategy revolves around the source credibility model, developed by Ohanian (1990), which states that assessing the effectiveness of celebrity promotion can be done by measuring purchasing intention through attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise of the celebrities as perceived by the customers (Rai and Singh, 2020). Furthermore, this strategy is supported by the image transfer theory which states that the image of the celebrity player is transferred to the product and further influences consumers' behavioural intentions. The customers' perception of the product is positively influenced when the celebrity is seen as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and attractive. This positive perception or attitude influences their trust in the celebrity and willingness to purchase the product (Fleck *et al.*, 2012).

The current study used source credibility theory and image transfer theory as a foundation upon which to develop its conceptual model. It attempted to understand how endorsement of legalised products with a high potential for dependence (also known as addictive products) such as alcohol, tobacco, and hard drugs by celebrity sports players affects their credibility, trustworthiness, and image (Baker III *et al.*, 2017; Jain and Roy, 2016). It also tries to explain how the celebrity endorsement of an addictive product is perceived by consumers and further influences their purchasing intentions. Therefore, this study has two objectives: 1) exploring the discrete impact of celebrity endorsement of addictive products on sports celebrity's credibility, image and trustworthiness, and 2) investigating the effect of each of these celebrity personality traits (i.e. credibility, image, and trust) on consumers' purchase intentions.

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