

Expert vs. Celebrity Endorsement: Analyzing the Impact of Influencer Marketing on Brand Image, Consumer Loyalty, and Repurchase Behavior

Chih Ming Tsai^{1*}, Tzu Ching Chao², and Trinity Madison Chen³

Dept. of Industrial Engineering and Management, National Chin-Yi University of Technology, Taiwan¹

Kang Chiao International School, Taiwan²

Sage Hill School, Newport Coast, California, USA³

*Corresponding Author: cmtsai@ncut.edu.tw

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Abstract

With the rise of social media platforms in today's age of digitalization, influencer marketing quickly gained popularity, adopted by businesses across different industries. The study aims to investigate the relationship between the two types of endorsement in influencer marketing and how they impact brand image, consumer loyalty, and repurchase behavior, specifically within the status quo of Taiwan, an area other studies have not yet explored. An online questionnaire was developed to test the hypotheses, and a total of 807 responses were collected. After filtering out invalid responses, the final sample size was reduced to 762. The data was then analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM). After analysis, the results indicate the following: Positive expert endorsement leads to celebrity endorsement ($\beta=0.697$); Expert endorsement positively affects brand image ($\beta=0.224$) and consumer loyalty ($\beta=0.209$); Celebrity endorsement positively impact brand image ($\beta=0.503$) yet impacts consumer loyalty negatively ($\beta=-0.311$); Positive brand image impacts consumer loyalty ($\beta=0.984$) and repurchase behavior ($\beta=0.230$) positively; and enhanced consumer loyalty leads to sustained positive repurchase behavior ($\beta=0.675$). The findings highlight the complex interplay of the five constructs in a new geographic market and provide a two-stage managerial implication to assist business managers in adopting an integration of expert and celebrity endorsements in order to secure a large and diverse customer base in the Taiwanese market.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, brand image, consumer loyalty, repurchase behavior

1. Introduction

In April 2024, social media users reached a new high of 5.07 billion, amounting to 62.6% of the global population (Statista, 2024). The surge of social media platforms in the past decades, including Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, has catalyzed a paradigm shift in marketing strategies. Consequently, businesses adapt to the changing landscape to remain competitive. Social media marketing (SMM), with its interactive and dynamic nature, allows corporations to appeal their product to a wider range of consumers, no longer limited by the geographical barriers faced in traditional marketing (Desai, 2019). Namely, under SMM, influencer marketing has emerged as a pivotal approach.

Influencer marketing leverages the prestige and credibility of individuals with a substantial following (Vrontis et al., 2021). Within this domain, expert and celebrity endorsements remain the most popular techniques selected by firms nowadays across multiple industries (Vrontis et al., 2021). Expert endorsements utilize influencers reputable for their knowledge and authority in a specific field, hoping to boost brand image through associations with credibility and expertise (Ren et al., 2023). On the other hand, celebrity endorsements prioritize

fame and following base over expertise, capitalizing on the visibility of the public figures, allowing the brands to reach a wider audience while leveraging the established loyalty of the celebrity's fan base (Vrontis et al., 2021). As both forms of influencer marketing offer distinct advantages, firms face trade-offs while making decisions, as brand ambassadors play a pivotal role in altering consumer behavior (Desai, 2019). Particularly given a limited budget for marketing, firms are frequently concerned about selecting the ideal type of influencer to serve as their ambassador. Drawing on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model as the theoretical foundation of the study, influencers participating in the endorsement would act as stimuli triggering a response—changed consumer perception and responses to the brand and advertised product. Hence, the examination of consumer behavior and repurchasing intentions is essential to assist brands to select endorsements that resonate best with target audience to increase brand appeal.

Most studies considered influencer marketing as a new marketing approach resulting from the rise of digital marketing, and the consequent impacts it has had on firms that adopted it (Leung et al., 2022; Ye et al., 2021). Those studies treated

expert and celebrity endorsements as a single category, rather than distinguishing the unique characteristics and challenges associated with each type of endorsement. In order to recognize the impacts of endorsement on the various facets of consumer behavior, this study aims to explore the relationship between different endorsements' impacts on brand image, consumer loyalty, and repurchase behavior. Finally, we also provide some practical implications for influencer marketing to enhance the contributions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Influencer Marketing

Influencers are individuals with popularity and a stable following base. They can create an influence on others through their knowledge and expertise within a particular niche (Vrontis et al., 2021). Typically, brands engage in influencer marketing to increase brand awareness and credibility (Belanche et al., 2021). While there are multiple types of influencer marketing, we will focus on two of the most widely adopted ones: expert and celebrity endorsements.

Expert endorsement is when a product or service is promoted through authoritative figures specialized in a particular field (Bogliacino et al., 2021). Given their expertise, consumers perceive them as a reliable source for advice and recommendations. Thereby, expert endorsement is regarded as a valuable source of information that enhances a product's credibility to increase consumers' willingness to purchase, though it primarily appeals to a niche audience (Ren et al., 2023). Celebrities refer to individuals with a high degree of public awareness. In influencer marketing, brands work with celebrities to leverage their large public presence to increase their product's exposure, thereby expanding their customer base. Given celebrities' distinct fan base, the celebrity chosen for cooperation decides the target audience of the marketing campaign (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). As a result, celebrity endorsements are also effective in securing a loyal consumer base linked to the celebrity's influence, with fans purchasing the products to support their favorite celebrity (Hung et al., 2011).

2.2 Brand Image

Brand image refers to the public's overall impression of a particular brand (Nandan, 2005). This encompasses the emotions, experiences, and perceptions that consumers associate with the brand whenever it comes to mind (Plumeyer et al., 2017). There are multiple factors that influence brand image, such as product presentation, marketing campaigns, partnerships, and reviews (Plumeyer et al., 2017). A company's brand image is significant as it reflects the credibility and quality of the products and services it provides, as well as its standing in the industry among competitors. Brand image

allows consumers to identify and create associations with a brand as their values align. This encourages differentiation and helps secure a loyal customer base.

2.3 Consumer Loyalty

Consumer loyalty refers to how committed a consumer is to a particular brand (Chahal & Kumari, 2011). This can be gauged by their willingness to make repeat purchases and consistently choose one brand's product over competing alternatives (Cachero-Martínez & Vázquez-Casielles, 2021). Consumer loyalty is also an indicator of the emotional connection and relationship established between a brand and its consumers (Chahal & Kumari, 2011). It can be achieved through loyalty programs, active communication, and improving experiences. Through these methods, brands increase consumer loyalty to ensure a stable revenue stream in the long run.

2.4 Repurchase Behavior

Repurchase behavior refers to a consumer's intention to purchase a brand's product after their initial purchase (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001). This can be measured through various metrics such as purchase frequency, retention rate, and Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001). Measuring customers' repurchase behavior is crucial as it reflects positive user experiences, consumer loyalty, perceived value, and brand perception (Liu et al., 2023). Consistent repurchase behavior from consumers can also ensure sustained revenue, reduce marketing costs, and allow businesses to predict future market trends depending on their behavior.

2.5 Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

The Conceptual framework is shown in figure 1. Following the S-O-R model, expert and celebrity endorsement are classified as stimuli (S)—external factors eliciting specific psychological reactions, whether cognitive, emotional, or affectional. These reactions observed in consumers reflect internal processing and evaluation of the organism (O), leading to changes in brand image and consumer loyalty. Ultimately, these internal responses trigger the response (R) stage, where repurchase behavior occurs as a result of the positive perceptions and loyalty formed during the organism phase.

The essence of expert endorsement is to provide factual credibility and authority to establish the endorsed product as trustworthy and effective (Bogliacino et al., 2021). Yet unlike experts, celebrity endorsement lends popularity to a product, allowing businesses to reach a wider audience. Through a combination of expert validation and celebrity popularity, the company could expand its product sales by bridging the gap between specialized and mainstream customers. Hence, the

proposed hypothesis *H1 is: Positive expert endorsement leads to celebrity endorsement.*

The type of influencer individual firms cooperate with directly impacts their brand image. Consumers who comment on the products or the expert endorser as “reliable” and “authentic” will immediately associate such terms with the brand. In other words, the credibility, authenticity, and trust consumers hold towards the expert endorser are directly interpreted as the brand’s image (Eyob, 2018). Hence, expert endorsement has a positive impact on the brand image due to increased confidence and positive attitudes towards the product. The proposed hypothesis *H2 is: Expert endorsement positively affects brand image.*

Celebrity endorsement, on the other hand, affects brand image in a similar way. Since consumers associate the celebrity endorser’s image with the brand’s, the image of a celebrity endorser directly determines the brand’s image (Chan et al., 2013). Mukherjee (2009) states that the image of a celebrity is determined by the celebrity’s popularity, credibility, personal values, physical attractiveness, recognition, and controversy. Hence, a celebrity with a positive image will contribute to a positive brand image simultaneously. The proposed hypothesis *H3 is: Celebrity endorsement positively affects brand image.*

In regards of consumer loyalty, as expert endorsers often serve to validate product quality to reduce perceived risk, the trust consumers place in the expert endorser is transferred to the product and the brand (Bogliacino et al., 2021; Chahal & Kumari, 2011). The enhanced trust and emotional connection consumers hold towards a brand will strengthen their commitment, thus increasing loyalty in the long run (Chiou & Droge, 2006). The proposed hypothesis is *H4: Expert endorsement positively impacts consumer loyalty*

Similarly, celebrity endorsement also increases consumer loyalty. Brand’s partnership with a public figure signals that the product is validated and used by a popular figure consumers admire and respect, thus reinforcing their purchase decisions (Hung et al., 2011). Moreover, since the celebrity endorser has already established a large and loyal fan base, this loyalty is likely to be transferred directly to the brand (Nisar et al., 2017). Fans of the celebrity often purchase from a brand to show their support for the endorsed figure, creating a ripple effect that enhances trust and strengthens consumer loyalty. Given, the hypothesis developed is *H5: Celebrity endorsement positively impacts consumer loyalty.*

According to Rahman et al. (2023), increasing brand satisfaction and awareness dramatically boosts consumer loyalty. Ariyani and Kurniawan (2023) also pointed towards the same conclusion: there is a strong, positive correlation between brand image and consumer loyalty among businesses in various industries. Given, the proposed hypothesis is *H6: Positive brand image has a positive effect on consumer loyalty;*

A positive brand image can be shaped through strong marketing campaigns, superior product quality, consistent customer service, and ethical, and moral business practices (Plumeyer et al., 2017). Hence, identifying and cultivating these positive attributes that consumers value will foster long-term purchasing behavior, leading to enhanced consumer loyalty. Consequently, consumers who develop emotional connections and align their values with one brand will purchase from it consistently, resulting in a sustained, positive repurchase behavior over time (Blut et al., 2015). Given, the proposed hypotheses are *H7: Positive brand image positively affects repurchase behavior;* and *H8: Enhanced consumer loyalty leads to sustained positive repurchase behavior.*

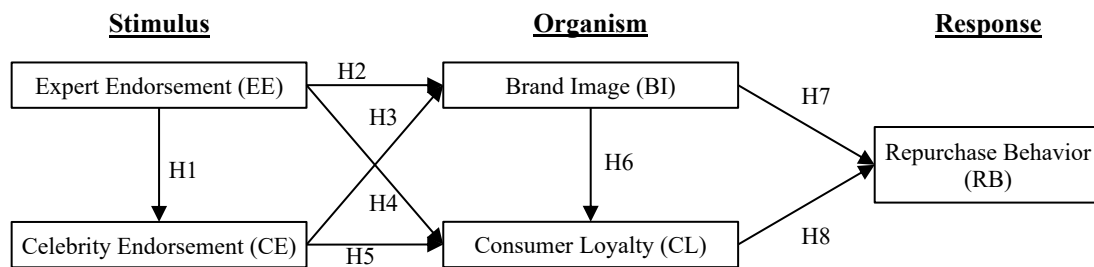


Figure 1: Research Framework and Hypothesis

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Sample and Participants

The data for this study was collected through an online questionnaire in July 2024. While convenience sampling was employed, the study’s target audience aimed towards individuals between the ages of 12 and 75 residing in Taiwan. The respondents must be regular social media users

having retail experience with either or both kinds of influencer marketing. Given, participants under 12 were excluded as they rarely make independent purchasing decisions without parental guidance, despite being exposed to influencer marketing. Similarly, individuals over the age of 75 were also excluded due to potential challenges related to technological access and engagement in regular purchasing behaviors. Underaged participants are

fully informed of the study's purpose, and their participation is obtained with parental consent and a signed consent form. A total of 807 responses were obtained. However, after removing invalid responses, such as those who provided incomplete information for demographics or displayed inconsistent answering patterns, the final sample size was reduced to 762 responses. These invalid responses were removed from the sample group to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the final data analysis.

3.2 Measures

The questionnaire is divided into six sections. The first section gathers demographic information, including gender, age, education level, and monthly income. The second section explores the influence of expert endorsement on consumer behavior, using five items (EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, and EE5) referred from Biswas et al. (2006). The third section focuses on the effect of celebrity endorsement on consumer behavior, with three items (CE1, CE2, and CE3) referred from Ahmed et al. (2015). The fourth section assesses the impact of brand image on consumer behavior, measured by three items (BI1, BI2, and BI3) referred from Sonnier et al. (2011). The fifth section examines respondents' views on customer loyalty, with three items (CL1, CL2, and CL3) referred from Huddleston et al. (2003). Finally, the sixth section investigates consumer repurchase behavior, using three items (RB1, RB2, and RB3) referred from Blut et al. (2015). Participants are instructed to respond to all items via a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 signifies "strongly disagree" and 5 signifies "strongly agree."

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Information of Respondents

The questionnaire received a total of 762 valid responses. Among the responses, 61.8% of respondents were male, accounting for the majority, while females only comprised 35.1%. In terms of

age distribution, the largest group of respondents fell within the age group of 30-45 (42.6%), followed by the 45-60 age group (37%), the 18-30 group (14.9%), the 60-75 group (4.7%), and finally the age group of 18 or below with 0.7%—the lowest participants amongst all the age groups. Regarding the respondents' education level, the majority of respondents held a bachelor's degree (57.9%), followed by a high school diploma (22.9%), a master's degree (14.9%), and a doctorate degree (1.5%). Lastly, for monthly income, the largest proportion of respondents reported earnings of TWD 40,001-70,000 (46.5%), followed by those earning TWD 20,001-40,000 (22.2%) as the second largest. The demographic profile of the respondents reflected a diverse range of age groups, educational backgrounds, and income levels of Taiwanese residents, offering a basis for evaluating the public's consumer behavior towards influencer marketing holistically in the context of this study.

4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis: The Assessment of Reliability and Validity

After reviewing the responses, EE4 and CE1 were removed from the final analysis because the Cronbach's alpha of the constructs EE and CE, with both items included, did not meet the required threshold that would render the data collection reliable. After removing EE4 and CE1, the Cronbach's alpha for the five constructs is mostly above 0.7. Additionally, the construct reliability (CR) for all five constructs after conducting the confirmatory factor analysis all exceeds 0.7, indicating the items in the questionnaire are internally consistent and reliable. On the other hand, the convergent validity model is satisfied, with both the factor loading and average variance extracted (AVE) exceeding 0.5 for all items. Finally, the discriminant validity is also satisfied since the square root of the AVE of each construct was greater than the correlation among any pair of constructs. An overview of the analysis above is shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Construct	Items	Factor Loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Expert Endorsement (EE)	EE1	0.770	0.879	0.645	0.876
	EE2	0.831			
	EE3	0.834			
	EE5	0.775			
Celebrity Endorsement (CE)	CE2	0.774	0.714	0.556	0.693
	CE3	0.716			
Brand Image (BI)	BI1	0.754	0.774	0.536	0.770
	BI2	0.804			
	BI3	0.626			
Customer Loyalty (CL)	CL1	0.812	0.812	0.592	0.803
	CL2	0.669			
	CL3	0.818			
Repurchase Behavior (RB)	RB1	0.823	0.804	0.579	0.810
	RB2	0.761			
	RB3	0.692			

Table 3. The Correlation and the Discriminant Validity Evaluation

	EE	CE	BI	CL	RB
EE	(0.803)				
CE	0.696	(0.746)			
BI	0.574	0.65	(0.732)		
CL	0.566	0.472	0.704	(0.769)	
RB	0.493	0.521	0.718	0.698	(0.761)

Note: The square root of the AVE of each construct is shown inside the diagonal cell.

4.3 Structural Equation Model

The assessment of multivariate normality has to be conducted first. Since the absolute value of skew and the absolute value of kurtosis were less than 2 for each variable (item) and the Mardia value for the model was 123.108 less than the threshold 255 (15×17), the multivariate normality is accepted for the usage of the structural equation model.

The structural equation model exhibits a good fit with the data collected. The goodness-of-fit model indices indicate satisfactory values:

GFI=0.913, AGFI= 0.873, and CFI= 0.929. Moreover, RMR (0.034) and RMSEA (0.083) are near zero, further supporting the model's fit. Figure 2 and Table 4 demonstrate the path results between each construct. EE has a positive impact on CE, BI, and CL. CE has a positive impact on BI, and a negative impact on CL. Additionally, BI has a strong positive impact on CL and RB, while CL has a positive impact on RB. Therefore, H1, H2, H3, H4, H6, H7, and H8 are well supported, while the results of H5 differ due to the negative estimate of -0.311, which will be further explored in the next section.

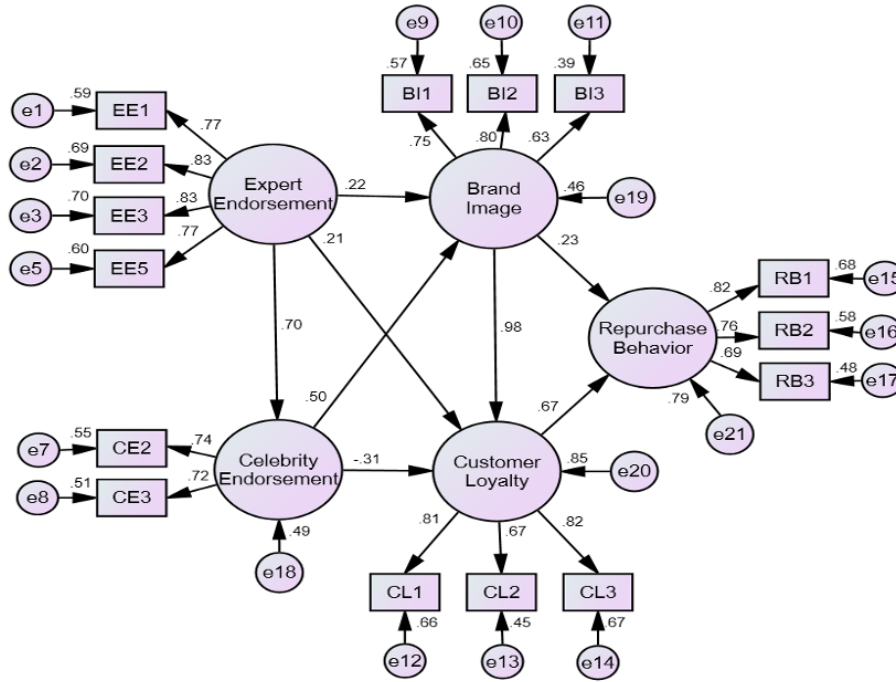


Figure 2: The Structural Equation Model

Table 4: Path Results of SEM

Path	Estimate (95% B.C. confidence interval)	S.E.	C.R.	P
H1: EE → CE	0.697 (0.625 - 0.761)	0.049	13.749	***
H2: EE → BI	0.224 (0.060 - 0.356)	0.065	3.381	***
H3: CE → BI	0.503 (0.338 - 0.682)	0.082	6.225	***
H4: EE → CL	0.209 (0.093 - 0.340)	0.056	3.805	***
H5: CE → CL	-0.311 (-0.523 - -0.127)	0.085	-3.811	***
H6: BI → CL	0.984 (0.872 - 1.142)	0.075	13.572	***
H7: BI → RB	0.230 (0.019 - 0.532)	0.119	2.125	.034*
H8: CL → RB	0.675 (0.335 - 0.991)	0.122	5.93	***

* p<0.05; ***p<0.001

5. Conclusion: Discussion and Managerial Implications

This study addresses the interplay between expert and celebrity endorsement, examining how one influences the other. Additionally, it reveals that expert and celebrity endorsements exert differing degrees of impact on brand image, consumer loyalty, and repurchase intentions, highlighting the interconnected nature of these constructs. The S-O-R model incorporated in the research framework highlights the pathway through which marketing stimuli can drive long-term consumer engagement and repeat purchasing. In many facets of daily life, especially in today's society where influencer marketing has become commonplace, consumers are increasingly exposed to a multitude of endorsements across various platforms. Consequently, it is crucial to conduct a thoughtful approach to maintain brand relevance. Such the approach of building trust through expert validation and increasing brand exposure through celebrity endorsement allows brands to establish strong relationships with consumers, ensuring long-term success in a competitive landscape.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

This study contributes new insights to the literature by exploring the relationships between two popular endorsement methods in influencer marketing. Rather than only conducting a comparative analysis, the study reveals a hidden relationship between the two types of endorsements: an increase in celebrity endorsements following the adoption of EE by brands. This is evident in Table 4, shown in path H1 “EE to CE,” with a high estimate of 0.697. The strong correlation indicates adopting EE as an initial step has a positive impact on businesses' adaptation of CE as a follow up approach. This is further proven as celebrities often want to be associated with a reputable brand selling quality products, increasing their willingness to partner. Such the marketing campaign allows EE to secure brand credibility while expanding the market through CE. Thus, H1 is validated. Second, CE has a stronger impact on BI than EE. The result aligns with Ren et al. (2023) since EE only appeals to a niche audience while celebrities have a broader reach and appeal due to their large following base. Specifically, endorsements of well-known celebrities could even expand the brands' reach into international markets. In contrast, expert endorsements instead focus on specific product attributes that resonate with specialized or more informed consumers. Hence, expert endorsement only has a mild impact on brand image. Thus, while both H2 and H3 are supported, under comparison, the path H2—correlation between EE and BI—is weaker. This thereby leaves a strong impression on a broader group of audience, shaping how the general public perceives one brand. One notable finding is that

paths H2 and H3 reflect the growing trends of pop culture in Taiwan, particularly driven by recent advancements in technology (Chen & Chiu, 2021; Fan et al., 2023). Diverting from what is previously assumed to be a more conservative society, the rise of social media platforms in Taiwan transformed the marketing landscape (Chen & Chiu, 2021). Social media now acts as a medium where influencers and celebrities can directly engage with consumers. Such a cultural shift contributes to the result where celebrity endorsement has a wider appeal while creating a stronger brand image because consumers increasingly turn to social media for recommendations and validation from familiar faces, amplifying celebrities' impact on consumer behavior.

Third, the study explores the impact of positive brand image on long-term impacts, such as consumer loyalty and repurchase behavior. Path H6 “BI to CL” has a high estimate value of 0.984, indicating a strong impact of positive brand image on consumer loyalty. Since brand image directly reflects the public's impression towards the brand, when a brand is viewed favorably, whether through effective marketing, high-quality products, or positive experiences, customers are more inclined to choose it over its competitors. Over time, this fosters trust, credibility, and emotional attachment, making consumers more likely to remain loyal. Hence, a positive brand image not only attracts customers but also cultivates long-term loyalty. Thus, aligning with Abbas et al. (2021), Andreani et al. (2012), Ariyani and Kurniawan (2023), and Cretu and Brodie (2007), H6 is supported. Next, regarding path H7 “BI to RB,” there is a weak estimate of 0.23. The impact of brand image on repurchase behavior is weak because it is not a direct relationship, as proven by the estimates of paths H6 and H8. Both path “BI → CL” and “CL → RB” has high estimates of 0.984 and 0.675. This suggests that brand image influences repurchase behavior indirectly. This results in a weak relationship because it is a two-step pathway: brand image shapes consumer loyalty, which in turn drives repurchase behavior. Hence, while brand image certainly does impact repurchase behavior, the impact is minute and indirect.

One interesting aspect that sets the study apart from previous studies is that CE has a negative impact on CL. For H4, it is evident that EE has a weak impact on CL since it often focuses on factual information and technical expertise rather than building emotional connection. Its appeal to a smaller audience further limits their overall impact on CL. Yet on the other hand, although most literature rather assumes CE to have a stronger impact on CL, however, the H5 results challenges this assumption. In Taiwan, recent scandals involving celebrities had led to a decline in CL. Fans who initially purchased products endorsed by these influencers had gradually lose interest and ultimately disengage

due to the negative publicity, tipping consumer's view of celebrities and influencers. This explains the observed negative correlation between CE and CL, due to the current social trends of which the survey was conducted. Yet, despite these scandals, CE can still positively influence BI, as proven in H3, since these controversies often bring brands into the public spotlight, increasing awareness and visibility. As a result, more consumers may learn about the brand and consider making purchases, even after the initial loyalty from fans wanes. Such dynamic illustrates the complex interplay between BI, CL and the impact of CE specifically within the status quo of Taiwan, in which other studies have not yet explored.

5.2 Managerial Implication

Businesses seeking to expand their customer base while securing their product quality should consider such an approach when planning their marketing campaign involving influencers. The first stage is to conduct expert endorsement to establish the credibility of the product. While this study shows that expert endorsements have a limited impact on brand image and consumer loyalty due to their appeal to a smaller audience, this initial phase is crucial for building trust and credibility. Even among a small group, establishing trust for the product is a vital first step because it lays the foundation for broader consumer acceptance and future marketing efforts. Only when a product is established as credible via expert endorsement, the brand should then consider celebrity endorsement to expand its customer range. After completing the first stage, brands should repurpose their influencer marketing approach to celebrity endorsement, cooperating with celebrities whose images are closely aligned with the endorsed product. This alignment strengthens the emotional connection with consumers and further enhances brand attachment. Through leveraging the fame of well-matched celebrities, businesses can further promote their product with a stellar reputation, one that is established previously through expert endorsement, to a broader audience. This creates an effective marketing campaign that elevates brand image and customer loyalty, which encourages repurchase behavior. Additionally, even if the celebrity encounters a scandal, it is unlikely to affect the brand's image negatively to a large degree due to the pre-established credibility gained through expert endorsements. Hence, a successful integration of expert and celebrity endorsements enables businesses to secure a large and diverse customer base in the long term.

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About Authors

Chih Ming Tsai is an associate professor in the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management at National Chin-Yi University of Technology, Taiwan. He specializes in industrial engineering, knowledge management and e-commerce. His publications include articles in *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, *Grey Systems: Theory and Application*, *Sustainability*, *Expert Systems with Applications*, *Applied Sciences*, *Electronics* and other journals.

Tzu Ching Chao is a graduate from Kang Chiao International School and an incoming freshman at the University of Chicago planning to major in Economics. She developed a strong interest in the intersection of marketing and consumer purchase behavior during high school, especially regarding the role of social media and how marketing strategies transforms in today's digital age.

Trinity Madison Chen is a rising senior at Sage Hill School. She has a strong interest in the intersection of Marketing and Sociology and hopes to major in either or both of them. She currently serves as a marketing intern at the Tossware Company and a Teacher's Assistant for UCI Ethics Center Summer Program.

