

**Beyond the fame: The influence of endorser type and credibility in social media posts on
Generation Z's purchase intentions**

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ABSTRACT

In the developing era of digital marketing, social media platforms have become the dominant means of brand communication, particularly when targeting Generation Z. This study aims to answer the following research question: "To what extent does endorser type in social media advertisements influence Generation's Z purchase intentions, and to what extent is this relationship mediated by the perceived credibility of the endorser?" The research also aimed to explore whether traditional celebrity endorsers were still effective in driving purchase intention among Generation Z, considering a shift in their consumer behaviour. This was achieved by comparing the impact of celebrity endorsers with influencers and non-famous endorsers on purchase intention, while testing how credibility might have affected this relationship.

To answer the research question, an experimental research design was employed, collecting data through an online questionnaire distributed via the Qualtrics platform. The research focused on Generation Z representatives, while randomly assigning them to one of the three experimental conditions, each depicting a fictional Instagram post featuring either a traditional celebrity, an influencer, or a non-famous endorser. The data was analysed using SPSS 29.0 software, where mediation analysis was performed with PROCESS Model 4 to test the impact of endorser type and indirect effect of perceived credibility on purchase intention. The final sample consisted of 104 Generation Z participants.

The analysis revealed that none of the initial hypotheses were supported. No significant difference was found between celebrity, influencer and non-famous conditions in terms of effect on purchase intention. Also, celebrity was not perceived as significantly more credible than influencer or non-famous endorser. However, the influencer was rated as significantly less credible than the non-famous endorser. These findings show that credibility and fame of the endorser are not sufficient to influence Generation Z's purchase intention, emphasising the importance for brands to re-think their marketing strategies and avoid relying solely on the use of endorsers in their advertisements.

KEYWORDS: *Generation Z, purchase intention, perceived credibility, endorsements, social media.*

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1. Introduction

In 2023, Calvin Klein released a social media campaign featuring Jennie Kim, a member of one of the most popular K-Pop bands “BLACKPINK” (Kundu, 2023). A single post endorsed by the singer generated 68 million dollars of profit, where Calvin Klein successfully monetised the celebrity’s social media presence (Kundu, 2023). This case shows the power of celebrity endorsements in leveraging influence to drive consumer engagement and influence purchase intention among young audiences. Being born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z representatives never knew a world without the Internet (Nadanyiova & Sujanska, 2023, p. 69). In particular, this generation uses gadgets from a young age, mostly relying on information found online. In addition, the most common activity of Generation Z is simply the use of social media where nearly every person browses on the Internet or uses a phone on a daily basis (Nadanyiova & Sujanska, 2023, p. 69). Moreover, this generation accounts for one-fourth of the UK population and is forecasted to represent 40% of all consumers in the United States by 2020 (Priporas et al., 2017, p. 375).

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has led businesses to seek new means of targeting younger audiences. To tackle this issue, companies began communication with young consumers through celebrities, to connect brands with customers. One of the most popular business techniques became celebrity endorsements where celebrities engage in campaigns online or advertise products on their social media platforms (Lim et al., 2023, p. 510). In 2023, 45% of Generation Z consumers, particularly people between 18-24, bought a product after seeing it endorsed by a celebrity (Statista, 2025). The inspiring persona of celebrities attracts consumers due to their accomplishments in a certain niche and ‘unattainable’ social status (Gräve & Bartsch, 2021, p. 596).

In contrast to celebrities, influencers are individuals who gained their popularity without support from entertainment or sports organizations (Gräve & Bartsch, 2021, p. 595). In particular, they gained their follower base through consistent engagement and relationship building, which shaped their authentic and credible image, making them seem like unbiased sources of advice. In addition, their credibility is strengthened by domain-specific expertise and a sense of intimacy, which enhances their effectiveness as endorsers for niche products or brands that align with their community’s interests (Gräve & Bartsch, 2021, pp. 592, 595, 596). The growing trust in peer-driven endorsements underscores the importance of examining how different types of social media endorsers influence youth consumers’

purchase intention. However, celebrities continue to hold aspirational appeal due to their career accomplishments and prestigious lifestyles (Gräve & Bartsch, 2021, p. 598).

Besides influencers, non-famous individuals are also relevant figures in social media endorsements. With consumers becoming resistant to polished and ideal advertisements, ordinary people appear in endorsements to provide a sense of sincerity to consumers (Fitrianto et al., 2018, p. 197). Also, non-famous endorsers bring consumers closer to the product, as they tend to identify more with ordinary endorsers than with celebrities (Fitrianto et al., 2018, p. 197). This effect can be understood through heuristic processing, where persuasion is more effective when the recipient of the message identifies similarities such as shared values, background, or demographics with the sender of the message (Yang & Kraut, 2017, pp. 7-8). Also, if non-famous endorsers are perceived as part of the same social group by consumers, message acceptance increases through self-identification (Yang & Kraut, 2017, p. 8)

Considering the significant influence of social media on consumer behaviour, particularly among Generation Z, it is crucial to understand the impact of different types of endorsers (celebrity, influencer and non-famous person) on purchase intention. Thus, this study aims to address the following research question: *“To what extent does endorser type in social media advertisements influence Generation’s Z purchase intentions, and to what extent is this relationship mediated by the perceived credibility of the endorser?”*

1.1 Societal relevance

The influence of social media endorsements on Generation Z’s purchase intentions is vital in an era where social media significantly determines consumer behaviour. The vast and quickly developing growth of technologies significantly affected Generation Z, which is considered to be the biggest group of consumers by 2030 and the most digitally savvy generation (Chiu & Ho, 2023, p. 1). For instance, 70% of Chinese Gen Z representatives engage in online purchases since endorsers mostly engage in product marketing on social media (Chiu & Ho, 2023, p. 1). As a result, their purchasing behaviour shapes market trends and influences business strategies. Generation Z also exhibits a strong preference for authenticity and transparency in brand communication. A recent survey shows that 82% of Gen Z consumers are more likely to trust a company that features real customers in its advertising, highlighting the importance of brands’ authenticity and credibility (CX Today, 2023).

Furthermore, 79% of Gen Z individuals consider brand trust more important than ever, surpassing any other generation in this regard (Edelman, 2023). Therefore, the widespread use of influencers and celebrity endorsers on social media raises ethical concerns such as the authenticity of promotional claims and transparency regarding the commercial intent of the endorsement. Importantly, the research raises concerns regarding brands' accountability and their communication transparency through social media endorsements.

1.2 Scientific relevance

The topic of the influence of social media endorsements on purchase intention has been well-researched in the scientific field. Research by Djafarova and Rushworth (2016, p. 4) and Thangavel et al. (2019, pp. 3-6) highlight the transformative influence of social media on purchase decisions of Generation Z. This study aligns with these findings but aims to explore different types of endorsements and their credibility, filling the gaps identified in Schouten et al. (2019, p. 209), who compared celebrities versus influencers while non-famous endorsers were not included. Schouten et al. (2019, p. 261) also conceptualized credibility solely in terms of trustworthiness and expertise, while this study addresses the gap by including the attractiveness dimension, which may also impact purchase intention.

The study is also relevant with regard to examining how marketing strategies evolve, considering the social media dominance over traditional media channels (Hudders et al., 2020, p. 31). There is abundant research on the effects of celebrities versus non-celebrity endorsers in traditional advertising channels. For example, Friedman et al. (1976, p. 22) mention that celebrities are the most popular and most frequently used type of endorsers in prime-time television advertisements. Ferguson and Mohan (2019, p. 594) also found that a print advertisement featuring a non-celebrity resulted in the highest brand recall. However, social media represents a fundamentally different communication environment which means that the effects observed in traditional media need to be re-tested within the context of social media. Thus, this study includes influencers as a distinct category of endorsers who are native to social media. The research can also contribute to the understanding of Generation Z's purchasing behaviour and social media endorsements as persuasion tools.

1.3 Structure of the study

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework for the study, where key terms such as celebrity endorser, influencer, perceived credibility, purchase

intention and non-famous endorser will be defined, and relevant theories and research will be discussed, with a conceptual model presented at the end. The methods chapter explains and justifies the choice of quantitative research design, including detailed operationalisation and procedures applied to conduct the experimental study. The reliability and validity of the research are also addressed in chapter three. Chapter four focuses on the results, including the SPSS data analysis, descriptions of randomization and manipulation checks, and the outcomes of hypotheses testing. Lastly, the discussion and conclusion chapter provides an answer to the research question through a summary of key findings, addresses the study's limitations, and proposes directions for future research.

2. Theoretical framework

In recent years, the widespread digital revolution significantly influenced the purchase decision of Generation Z (Thangavel et al., 2019, p. 1). One-third of Generation Z was born into the Internet era where technology determines a significant part of a human's life (Thangavel et al., 2019, p. 3). Moreover, online retailers target this demographic through social media endorsements sometimes not fully disclosing the quality of the product. Therefore, this chapter will define and explore the key theoretical concepts of celebrity, influencer, non-famous endorser, perceived credibility, and purchase intention. Source effect theory and the concept of persuasion knowledge will be also addressed, as these theories apply to the context of the study. This chapter will discuss existing research on how advertisements featuring celebrity endorsers compare to those featuring other types of endorsers in shaping Generation Z's purchase intention. Additionally, the six hypotheses will be introduced to further support the investigation of how the type of endorser in social media advertisements and the perceived credibility of the endorser impact Gen Z's purchase intention.

2.1 Endorsement as an advertising strategy

Endorsement can be defined as an advertising strategy in which businesses select spokespersons to attract consumer attention to the products available for sale (Irawan & Wahyuni, p. 43). Researchers suggest that human endorsements convey personal charisma and foster emotional resonance with consumers (Liu & Lei, 2025, p. 2). Human endorsements that utilise emotional appeal also stimulate brand associations and help consumers recognize the brand (Liu & Lei, 2025, p. 5). Friedman et al. (1976, p. 25) found that advertisements featuring any type of endorsers led to higher purchase intention than advertisements that did not include an endorser.

To better understand why endorsers are effective in advertising, it is essential to consider the Source Effect Theory, which explains that multiple factors of the communication source impact the effectiveness of the message (Farivar et al., 2020, p. 3). Source effects are particularly crucial for social media endorsements as endorsers' characteristics are the main determinants of the persuasiveness of their message (Farivar et al., 2020, p. 3). Among various sources, expertise is often considered the most influential and can be assessed through an individual's education and professional experience (Yudha, 2023, p. 242). Similarly, attractiveness influences consumer purchasing decisions and is typically divided

into physical and social attractiveness (Yudha, 2023, p. 242). For example, brands usually employ physically attractive endorsers to boost consumer engagement. The findings from Farivar et al. (2020) also illustrate the significant impact of parasocial relationships on consumers' purchase intentions. This relationship can be further understood through Source Effect Theory, which explains that the persuasiveness of the message is influenced by specific characteristics of the source, having the potential to change attitudes (Wilson & Sherrell, 1993, p. 101). Although the theory was developed prior to the rise of social media, it can be applied in the context of digital communication to investigate how influencers' personal traits shape the effectiveness of their endorsements.

One outcome of endorsement effectiveness is its influence on purchase intention. Purchase intention can be explained as an initial step that predicts action related to acquiring consumer goods or a motivation to buy (Azhar et al., 2023, p. 4). Purchase intention also refers to the process in which an individual decides to buy a product under certain circumstances. Azhar et al. (2023, p. 4) mention that purchase intention is a critical predictor of actual purchase. Importantly, purchase intention is based on the consumer's experience or recommendation from others (Lim et al., 2023, p. 511). It also includes the evaluation of alternatives process, where consumers compare different products from the same category before making a final purchase (Lim et al., 2023, p. 511). Marketing professionals usually analyse customer purchase intentions to determine which factors generate successful sales (Lim et al., 2023, p. 511). For example, celebrity endorsements play a powerful role in customer buying intentions, as the fame and attractiveness of the endorser are often transferred to the product itself (Gupta & Nair, 2021, pp. 2-3). In particular, brands aim to collaborate with a particular celebrity to create an appeal to consumers through the personality and personal qualities of the endorser, ultimately driving purchase intentions (Lim et al., 2023, p. 514).

Another crucial concept in understanding how consumers respond to endorsements is Persuasion Knowledge. Persuasion knowledge refers to consumers' understanding of the intent behind marketing messages which includes potential benefits that the creator seeks to gain and the message's overall value (Tabassum et al., 2020, p. 4). Individuals with high persuasion knowledge can be described as those who easily recognize when a message is attempting to shape their decision and identify techniques used by marketers (Tabassum et al., 2020, p. 4). Endorsers are considered effective channels for delivering persuasive media content, as they add a human touch to a brand's communication (Willemsen et al., 2024, p. 111). Also, when branded messages are communicated by human representatives, they are

perceived as more credible than those delivered by brands. On top of that, endorsers are seen as more genuine and trustworthy than brands themselves, which makes their message more convincing (Willemsen et al., 2024, p. 111). Importantly, persuasion knowledge can vary by endorser type. For example, Gen Z consumers often struggle to cognitively identify the commercial essence of celebrity endorsements, as celebrities are assumed to promote products not because of financial gain but simply because they genuinely like the product (Kaabachi et al., 2021, p. 59). In particular, celebrities are often seen as successful individuals with sufficient financial resources who endorse only what holds real value and quality obscuring the fact that such endorsements are typically part of paid cooperation.

2.2 Evolution of celebrity endorsements in advertising

Since the 1940s, celebrity advertisements have been rated as the most enjoyable among consumers (Kapitan & Silvera, 2015, p. 565). Hsu and McDonald (2002, p. 19) mention that almost 70 percent of TV commercials in Japan feature celebrities, emphasizing celebrity appeal as a method of mass-mediated persuasive communication. Hariningsih et al. (2024, pp. 4, 16) also state that TV shows remain a significantly relevant channel for celebrity endorsements. Apart from television, celebrities appear on radio, billboards, and in magazines, strengthening their visibility across different channels (Hollensen & Schimmelpfennig, 2013, p. 88). The primary reason for the success of celebrity endorsements in traditional media lies in their ability to create secondary brand associations (Hollensen & Schimmelpfennig, 2013, pp. 88, 89). Particularly, marketers link brands with well-known figures, transferring the positive traits attached to celebrities such as luxury or success onto the endorsed goods. As a result, consumers project their perceptions of judgments toward the celebrity to the endorsed brand, reinforcing their likelihood of purchase (Hollensen & Schimmelpfennig, 2013, p. 89). Finally, frequent encounters with celebrities in advertising contribute to the development of strong psychological connections between consumers and endorsers (Knoll & Matthes, 2016, p. 58). In particular, consumers often develop relationships with celebrities they encounter repeatedly through television, radio, or the Internet, leading them to perceive these endorsers as familiar, friend-like figures and become susceptible to celebrity influence (Knoll & Matthes, 2016, p. 58).

With the rise of digital platforms, celebrity endorsements have transitioned from traditional media to social media, reshaping brands' engagement with consumers (Fan, 2021, p. 171). Established celebrities, known for their achievements in external fields, add value to

endorsements by transferring positive associations to the brand, increasing its appeal (Al-Emadi & Yahia, 2020, p. 197). Therefore, celebrities acquire established influential fame, which companies leverage to promote their products and enhance brand visibility through social media. As traditional celebrities began appearing on social media platforms, Fan (2021, p. 172) describes them as ‘online migrants’ since their fame originated in traditional media and now must be adapted to fit new social media trends. Some celebrities also share aspects of their daily routines, which develops the interest of the audience and can lead to the formation of parasocial relationships while expanding their social media visibility further (Al-Emadi & Yahia, 2020, p. 198). Unlike traditional advertising channels, social media allows consumers to participate in a marketing process by exchanging and interacting with the content (Ji et al., 2021, p. 137). For example, Sokolova and Kefi (2019, p. 3) highlight that influencers can reply to user comments and messages, enabling two-way interaction between the endorser and the follower.

2.3 Types of endorsers

2.3.1 Celebrity endorsers

A celebrity endorser can be described as a well-known individual who uses popularity to promote a product by participating in the advertisement (Hariningsih et al., 2024, p. 3). Gräve and Bartsch (2021, p. 592) also describe celebrities as any person who enjoys being recognized publicly and who gained popularity in a particular niche such as modelling or acting. Celebrity endorsement is also an established marketing strategy in which well-known public figures are used to enhance brand image and influence the attitudes of consumers (Gräve & Bartsch, 2021, p. 597). In the advertising industry, it is common for a product to be linked to a single celebrity endorser for an extended period (Hsu & McDonald, 2002, p. 19). For example, Nespresso has been partnering with George Clooney since 2005, to position itself as a unique, aspirational brand, with the endorser representing success and luxury lifestyle (Brem et al., 2015, pp. 136, 141). However, celebrities are also often hired for the duration of a single campaign, such as David Beckham, who was featured in Burger King’s 2012 campaign to endorse low-calorie smoothie (Yang, 2017, p. 390).

Consumers often see celebrities as unbiased individuals who gain their reputation through talent in a specific field, such as acting or sports, which makes their opinions appear more authentic. In addition, the success of singers or models often comes with a luxury lifestyle that is uncommon for a regular person, making them an inspiring figure that

influences the audience (Gräve & Bartsch, 2021, p. 596). The prestigious social status that celebrities acquire through recognition in industries such as film and music is usually what the audience desires and aspires to, making celebrities effective figures in endorsements that leverage their influence (Gräve & Bartsch, 2021, p. 596).

The presence of celebrity endorsers was also found to leverage positive attitudes among consumers therefore stimulating higher purchase intention (Lim et al., 2023, p. 511). Advertisements featuring celebrities successfully work as consumers aim to align with famous personalities by acquiring the promoted goods (Zipporah & Mberia, 2014, p. 164). Marketers believe that celebrity endorsers succeed in making the message memorable for the audience (Zipporah & Mberia, 2014, p. 166). The chances of success and re-positioning of the brand are usually high when the company collaborates or engages with a famous person (Zipporah & Mberia, 2014, p. 166). Particularly, celebrity endorsements re-establish brands' market position and ensure wider popularity among consumers.

2.3.2 Non-famous endorsers

Non-famous endorsers are often defined as individuals without publicity, but who participate in the advertisement of a certain product (Menon, 2001, p. 3). Brands usually engage with unknown people to fully put a spotlight on a product rather than on the famous persona of the endorser.

Companies engage with non-famous people as there is often a request from the audience for unpolished and genuine commercials (Fitrianto et al., 2018, p. 198). Ordinary people featured in endorsements create a sense of genuineness while conveying realistic messages (Fitrianto et al., 2018, p. 198). Consumers relate more to regular people in comparison to celebrities, making the audience feel closer to the product (Fitrianto et al., 2018, p. 198). For instance, ordinary endorsers positively affect the audience's perception of the endorsement, as consumers focus more on the brand's characteristics rather than on the persona of the endorser (Erdogan, 1999, p. 293-294). Non-famous endorsers, when perceived as 'one of us', can be effective in making a brand feel more approachable, as their presence stimulates a sense of personal identification and makes the audience feel closer to these relatable peers (Fleck et al., 2013, pp. 84, 87). The trend of integrating non-celebrity endorsers is explained by companies' desire to avoid the negative impact of celebrity endorsements that could damage brand image (Saeed et al., 2014, p. 156). However, Gaided

and Rached (2010, p. 4) mention that promotional messages transmitted by celebrities still generate a higher degree of attention than by non-famous endorsers.

2.3.3 Influencers

The development of social media has transformed the advertising landscape by enabling the emergence of a new category of endorsers - influencers, who are active social media content creators with an established community of followers who consider them online opinion leaders who often use this status for their business-related interests (Leung et al. 2022, p. 228; Sun et al., 2021, p. 605). Hariningsih et al. (2024, p. 2) mention that traditional celebrities may no longer be the only drivers of consumer decisions. Particularly, the audience is now exposed to a diverse array of non-traditional celebrities such as influencers who have gained fame through their digital presence and not by succeeding in their professional careers. Thus, even though some influencers have a significant network of followers, they still can't be considered celebrities in a traditional way. In particular, influencers are not recognized by any formal institution and their following is purely generated by their social media agency (Leung et al., 2022, p. 228). Influencers position themselves between celebrities, who are less accessible, and friends, who appear more relatable to the audience (Sun et al., 2021, p. 608). They establish close bonds with the audience through consistent interaction and shared interests, resulting in the formation of parasocial relationships, which are one-sided relationships formed by media audiences toward a media figure (Hwang & Zhang, 2018, p. 157). The concept can also be understood as an illusionary interaction experience, where consumers engage with media characters as if they are in a mutual relationship (Hwang & Zhang, 2018, p. 158). When followers are constantly exposed to digital celebrities' social media content, they may begin to perceive them as credible sources of information. Influencers also often foster parasocial relationships with their audiences by having regular interactions and disclosing private information which makes their recommendations appear more relevant and trustworthy (Waltenrath, 2024, p. 1). In addition, consumers often view their product endorsements as reliable purchase recommendations. Conde and Casais (2023, p. 3) found that parasocial relationships have a direct effect on consumers' intention to accept product recommendations. As a result, within parasocial relationships, consumers often view digital celebrities as friends, making them more likely to trust and rely on their advertising content during purchase decision-making (Hwang & Zhang, 2018, p. 158). Engaging with followers plays a significant role in the

purchase intention as it enables consumers to communicate directly with content creators. (Sun et al., 2021, p. 608). Influencers often integrate personal content with advertisements, making it complex for consumers to recognize the commercial intent behind their messages (Waltenrath, 2024, p. 2). In some cases, they purposely present advertisements as authentic recommendations, thus fostering uncertainty among consumers regarding the true nature of their posts (Waltenrath, 2024, p. 8).

2.4 Comparison of endorser types

While celebrities, influencers and non-famous endorsers play an important role in marketing, their ways of attaining an audience and influencing consumer behaviour differ.

Prior research suggests that marketing a product through celebrity endorsement is more likely to attract attention rather than non-celebrities, further supporting the idea that celebrities hold a superior position in shaping purchase intentions (Lim et al., 2023, p. 510). The effectiveness of celebrity endorsers, compared to non-famous ones, derives from their ability to add distinct personality traits and symbolic meanings to the endorsements, which are established due to their long-term public exposure and repeated performances that shape a recognizable image in the minds of consumers (McCracken, 1989, p. 315). For example, Audrey Hepburn will be perceived as more elegant than a non-famous endorser because she embodied this elegance through years of performance on screen and stage (McCracken, 1989, p. 315). Thus, unlike non-famous endorsers, celebrities accumulate symbolic meaning through their diverse professional roles such as in movie or sports careers, allowing these meanings to be transferred to the endorsed product (McCracken, 1989, p. 315).

In contrast to celebrities, influencers are regular internet users who became popular and gained a significant number of followers without support from managers and agents (Gräve & Bartsch, 2021, p. 596). Celebrities differentiate themselves from influencers by having successful offline careers that established their public recognition before entering social media (Al-Emadi & Yahia, 2020, p. 197). In contrast to influencers, celebrities are native to both online and offline advertising channels and serve as aspirational figures across diverse demographics, allowing endorsements to reach a broader audience (Gräve & Bartsch, 2021, p. 598). In addition, some celebrity endorsers may possess universal appeal, generating broad public interest among the mass audience (Zipporah & Mberia, 2014, p. 168). Celebrities can be also chosen by brands over influencers due to their distinctive social status, talent and achievements beyond social media which resulted in their well-established

reputation (Hess et al., 2022, p. 1238). Another important limitation of using non-famous endorsers is that they typically require significant advertising investment to build public recognition (Van Der Waladt et al., 2011, p. 103). Moreover, such endorsers are more suitable for campaigns that aim to develop a long-term association between the brand and the endorser (Van Der Waladt et al., 2011, p. 103). In contrast, figures with existing recognition such as influencers are effective in creating an immediate and memorable effect. In addition, parasocial relationships lead consumers to perceive influencers as friends, positively influencing purchase intention (Hwang & Zhang, 2018, p. 158). Based on the above findings, celebrity endorsers are expected to be more effective than influencers and non-famous endorsers due to their established fame and broad appeal, while influencers are assumed to generate higher purchase intention than non-famous endorsers because of their strong social media presence. Therefore, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1a: Exposure to a social media post featuring a celebrity endorser will result in higher purchase intention for members of the Gen Z than the post featuring an influencer a non-famous person.

H1b: Exposure to a social media post featuring an influencer will result in a higher purchase intention for members of the Gen Z than the post featuring a non-famous person.

2.5 Perceived credibility

The credibility of the endorser is one of the crucial factors that determine the attitude toward the brand (Wang et al., 2016, p. 10). Ohanian (1990, p. 41) defines source credibility as the perceived positive qualities of a communicator that enhance the likelihood of message acceptance by the receiver. Importantly, credibility is a multi-dimensional construct, with different researchers proposing various sets of dimensions to measure it (Ohanian, 1999, p. 40). For example, McCroskey and Young (1981, p. 27) identified five dimensions: competence, character, sociability, extroversion and composure. O'Keefe (2002, p. 182) proposes two main dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness while Lou and Yuan (2019, p. 61) defined credibility as a four-dimensional construct which includes trustworthiness, expertise, similarity and attractiveness. Ohanian (1990, pp. 41-42), conceptualized credibility as a three-dimensional construct through three key dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. For the purposes of this study, Ohanian's conceptualization was chosen, with each of the three dimensions discussed in detail below.

2.6 Dimensions of credibility

The attractiveness dimension plays a psychological role which includes not only the beauty of the endorser but also athletic abilities and personality traits (Erdogan, 1999, p. 299). Attractiveness is also a key factor of personal judgement regarding another individual. Moreover, attitudes towards the endorsement were found to be significantly impacted by the attractiveness dimension of source credibility (Bhatt et al., 2013, p. 85). The physical dimensions of attractiveness include familiarity, similarity, and likeability (Bhatt et al., 2013, p. 79). This supports the decision to adopt Ohanian's (1990, p. 41) model, as it already incorporates similarity within the attractiveness dimension. Therefore, there is no need to treat similarity as a separate dimension, as done by other researchers such as Lou and Yuan (2019, p. 61). Similarity determines the resemblance between the informant and the receiver of the information while familiarity explains the acquaintance with the source. Lastly, likeability refers to the fondness of the source that resulted because of physical features or behavioural traits (Bhatt et al., 2013, p. 79). The match-up hypothesis further explains that the physical attractiveness of the celebrity is normally associated with the success of endorsed products (Hemantha, 2019, p. 4). Particularly, the physical features and perceived beauty of the celebrity will affect how the audience evaluates a product. Thus, a natural synergy between brand and celebrity will most likely shape a positive brand image in the mind of the young audience and leverage the appealing brand reputation (Hemantha, 2019, p. 4). According to Kelman (1961, p. 63), individuals are more likely to adopt behaviour from another person when the source is perceived as attractive and occupies a role that the individual aspires to. It is also assumed that regardless of the product niche that is being endorsed, the consumer's perception of the attractiveness will determine the attitude toward the endorsed brand.

Another dimension of source credibility, expertise, can be explained as a level of expertness or competence that the informant has (Sertoglu et al., 2014, p. 69). It is also a degree to which the endorser is perceived as adequately qualified and has sufficient skills to advertise the product. Expertise is also described as the most important factor for a successful campaign (Sertoglu et al., 2014, p. 69). When the audience perceives that a celebrity has a high expertise level, they are more likely to be persuaded which can generate purchase intention (Erdogan, 1999, p. 298). The endorser who possesses sufficient expertise and is perceived as an expert can be more persuasive and enhance customer engagement (AlFarraj et al., 2021, p. 361). Therefore, the celebrity endorser who lacks competence in a promoted

field will be treated as a deceitful and questionable message source (Sertoglu et al., 2014, p. 69).

The last credibility dimension that has to be discussed is trustworthiness. AlFarraj et al. (2021, p. 361) describe it as believability that the endorser holds. Ohanian (1990, p. 41) also described this dimension as the level of confidence that listeners have in the speaker's intent to communicate statements, they believe to be valid. Trustworthiness is also defined as the perception of an endorser's honesty and integrity (Erdogan 1999, p. 261). Seiler & Kucza (2017, p. 3) mention that if the source is assessed as trustworthy, the endorser can easily facilitate the opinion change of the consumer. It was also found that 40% of Generation Z representatives trust the endorser over the brand (AlFarraj et al., 2021, p. 361). In addition, trustworthiness is significantly relevant for Gen Z consumers as they are highly sceptical of traditional advertising and value transparent marketing. Considering that Gen Z is a digitally native cohort, they tend to reject conventional advertising approaches and instead prioritize authenticity and transparency, which significantly shapes how brands must engage with them (Baghel, 2023, p. 1259). Therefore, based on the literature discussed it can be assumed that when the celebrity endorser is perceived as credible, consumers may develop stronger purchase intentions.

2.7 The influence of source credibility on purchase intention

Credibility can be considered one of the main pillars of persuasion on social media (Lim et al., 2023, p. 511). The source credibility theory suggests that the message is more effective and persuasive when the credibility of the endorser is stronger (Bhatt et al., 2013, p. 78). Expertise and trustworthiness of the communicator were initially proposed as the core elements of credibility (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). However, due to the growing use of celebrities in advertisements, the dimension of attractiveness was later added leading to the development of a three-dimensional model, which is applied in the context of the current study (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). This three-dimensional model has also been supported by multiple empirical studies, showing that each dimension of credibility significantly influences purchase intention. Particularly, if the celebrity is perceived as credible by the audience, the purchase intention will also be high (Lim et al., 2023, p. 511). This can be due to the celebrity's professional knowledge in a particular field or simply attractiveness (Lim et al., 2023, p. 512). According to Martiningsih and Setyawan (2022, p. 198), the dimensions of credibility such as expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness significantly influence purchase

intention. For instance, an attractive endorser can easily capture consumers' attention and improve the effectiveness of the advertisement. Moreover, endorsers perceived as attractive are more likely to generate higher purchase intention (Muda & Hamzah, 2021, p. 445). Weismueller et al. (2020, p. 162) also refer to attractiveness as the crucial determinant of consumers' buying behaviour.

Trustworthiness is also directly correlated with persuasion and message effectiveness, supporting its importance in shaping purchase intention (Muda & Hamzah, 2021, p. 444). For instance, endorsements featuring trusted celebrities were rated as more favourable than those with unknown endorsers, who may appear unreliable to the audience (Onu et al., 2019, p. 1968). Moreover, celebrities who promote a brand without financial compensation are perceived as more trustworthy than those who are paid to endorse a product (Onu et al., 2019, p. 1968). In contrast to celebrities, even though influencers are typically perceived as credible informational sources that positively shape consumer attitudes and behaviours, these effects tend to decrease if consumers become aware of the influencer's persuasive intent (Willemsen et al., 2024, p. 112).

In addition to attractiveness and trustworthiness, an endorser's expertise also has an impact on purchase intention where the communicator is perceived as competent and accurate (Chakraborty, 2019, p. 144). Endorsers with demonstrated expertise in a specific field can significantly leverage purchase intention (Weismueller et al., 2020, p. 163). Andita et al. (2021, p. 54) mention that endorser's expertise is a more significant determinant of purchase intention than trustworthiness or attractiveness. For example, influencers often build their careers by dedicating themselves to a specific niche and becoming an expert in that distinct domain (Kaabachi et al., 2021, p. 62). The self-proclaimed expertise contributes to their credibility, as consumers are more likely to perceive them as knowledgeable about the products they promote (Kaabachi et al., 2021, p. 62). Bhutada and Rollins (2015, p. 891) found that expert endorsers had higher perceived credibility than non-famous endorsers. Martiningsih and Setyawan (2022, p. 203) also reported that the attractiveness and expertise of influencers positively affected purchase intention while Lou and Yuan (2019, p. 58) mentioned that influencers' trustworthiness positively affects purchase intention.

Perceived credibility is important as it primarily determines the persuasiveness of the message that is being conveyed (La Ferle & Choi, 2005, p. 70). As celebrities have wide recognition and popularity, consumers usually view them as more credible than regular

people, which in turn enables them to have a greater effect on the outcome of the campaign through their well-established credible image (La Ferle & Choi, 2005, p. 69). Therefore, based on the literature discussed, it can be assumed that when endorsers are perceived as credible, they are also seen as more persuasive, leading to higher purchase intention. The following hypotheses are proposed for the study:

H2: a) Exposure to a social media post featuring the celebrity endorser results in a higher perceived credibility of the endorser than exposure to the post featuring a non-famous person or an influencer, b) which in turn increases purchase intention for members of the Gen Z.

H3: a) Exposure to a social media post featuring the influencer endorser results in a higher perceived credibility of the endorser than exposure to the post featuring a non-famous person, b) which in turn increases purchase intention for members of the Gen Z.

The hypothesized conceptual model of this study is illustrated graphically in Figure 1.

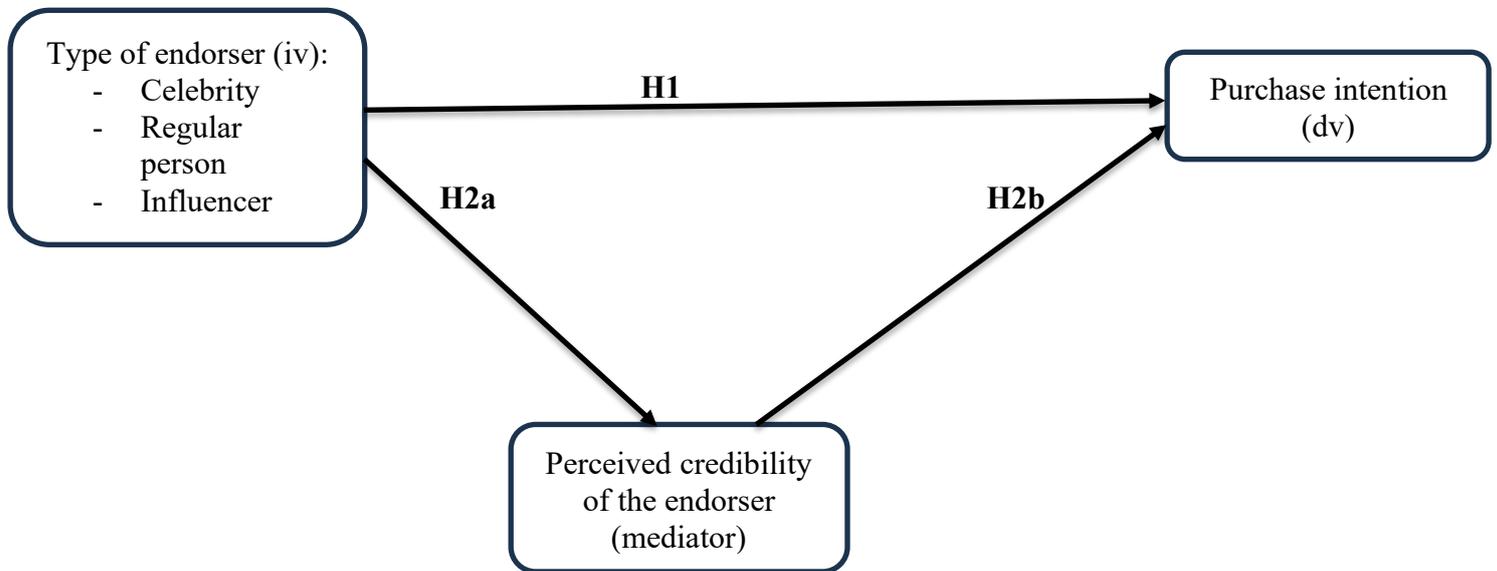


Figure 1: Conceptual model

3. Method

This chapter focuses on examining the methodology employed for the study. In the first section, the main components of the research design are described, which includes the sampling method and the construction of the stimulus material used for the experiment. Afterwards, the operationalisation of variables is described, ending with a description of a research procedure.

3.1 Research design

To test the hypotheses an online experiment was designed. An experimental design that was applied included three experimental groups (traditional celebrity, influencer, regular person) and a mediator (perceived credibility). In particular, the online questionnaire was used to expose participants to one of the three conditions of the independent variable: endorsement featuring a celebrity, an influencer, or a regular person. The goal of the experiment is to measure how exposure to a visual stimulus affects the dependent variable while counting for a mediator. Babbie (2008, p. 247) mentions that the primary goal of the experiment is to establish the impact of the independent variable on a dependent one. One of the advantages of online experiments is that they can be carried out in various settings, not constraining participants' access to the questionnaire, and ensuring their comfort in familiar settings (Dandurand et al., 2008, p. 428). Scheduling difficulties are also avoided as multiple participants can participate at the same time (Reips, 2002, p. 245). It is also important to address the drawbacks of the experiment, conducted in the form of an online questionnaire. One of the issues in online experiments is dropouts, which is the participants' decision to terminate participation (Reips, 2002, p. 248). In particular, long and time-consuming questionnaires may stimulate anger from participants, making them drop out or fill in questions randomly (Reips, 2002, p. 248).

To conduct an experiment, an online questionnaire was distributed. The quantification of the collected data was done through SPSS software, where numerical analysis of the data collected from the Qualtrics questionnaire occurred. A between-subject design was applied in the study, with each participant exposed to only one of the three conditions of the independent variable, allowing for a comparison of purchase intention across groups. Particularly, each participant was exposed to only one version of the stimulus, which further allowed to compare three groups that were exposed either to a celebrity endorser, an influencer, or a regular person. Participants were also notified about complete anonymity and

confidentiality with the possibility to withdraw from participation without penalties at any moment, ensuring that ethical considerations are kept. In addition, participants were given the contact information of the researcher in case they had any questions regarding the experiment or the study itself.

3.1.1 Sampling method

By employing convenience sampling, the data was collected via the Qualtrics platform between the 7th of April and the 16th of May 2025. Convenience sampling was used for the study which is a type of nonprobability sampling. It is an efficient technique to use while conducting an online questionnaire since any respondent can be reached by the researcher, recruiting a sample which is already available (Jawad et al., 2022, p. 73). In addition to this, convenience sampling is effective as it provides direct access to the targeted population, approaching any respondent who falls into the selection criteria (Jawad et al., 2022, p. 74). Convenience sampling also does not impose financial constraints on the researcher and is the least time-consuming (Taherdoost, 2016, p. 23). However, convenience sampling has the disadvantage of sampling units being selected based on their availability, meaning that the researcher chooses participants who are easy to access, which limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the studied sample (Jawad et al., 2022, p. 75).

Although a total of 192 responses were initially recorded, only 104 were considered valid after data cleaning and therefore retained for the final analysis. A total of 88 cases were removed due to incomplete answers or failure to meet the demographic criteria, such as not belonging to the targeted cohort of Generation Z. In terms of the sample, no restrictions were applied regarding participants' ethnicity and gender. Participants were recruited through various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram and personal networks. Participants were also encouraged to re-share the survey with their network to gather more responses. Platforms such as SurveySwap and SurveyCircle were also used to recruit participants and generate a larger sample. The final sample consisted of 104 participants who were all members of Generation Z. The majority identified as female with 77 participants (75.5%), followed by 17 male participants (16.7%), 6 non-binary participants (5.9%) and 2 participants who preferred not to say their gender (2%) (Appendix B).

3.1.2 Stimuli construction

As a part of the experiment, each participant was randomly exposed to one of the three conditions of the independent variable, presented in the form of an Instagram post, featuring either a celebrity, an influencer, or a regular person as an endorser. The three versions of the stimulus can be found in Appendix A. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of three conditions to further ensure a clear comparison between the groups exposed to different endorser types. The Qualtrics randomizer function was applied to ensure the random distribution of conditions, with the option selected to evenly present items, so the number of participants in each group would be approximately equal.

For the celebrity endorsement stimulus, the picture of a football celebrity Lionel Messi from a Louis Vuitton campaign ‘Horizons Never End’ was chosen. The athlete was selected as a celebrity who can be easily and globally recognized by Generation Z, regardless of gender. An existing brand and its real campaign were selected to enhance the ecological validity of the experiment. In particular, using a fictional brand or campaign may lead consumers to perceive the stimulus as abstract and less applicable to real-life contexts, potentially reducing the relevance of the findings for the studied phenomenon (Schmuckler, 2001, p. 422). In addition, a luxury brand was selected because celebrities are typically employed to endorse high-end products to emphasize prestige and status while using the same brand across all three conditions enables a controlled comparison (Tor-Kadioglu & Bozyigit, 2025, p. 122). Moreover, Gen Z often facilitates self-worth through luxury consumption, making them a target for the luxury industry as its fastest-growing segment, as they are assumed to have more disposable income than older consumers (Shin et al., 2021, p. 397). To create the influencer and regular person conditions, two altered versions of the same Louis Vuitton campaign image were made. The visual depicting an influencer featured Noah Beck, a highly recognizable social media persona with almost 34 million followers on TikTok, whose face was edited into the image using the Canva Pro tool. The regular person condition was fabricated with Sora AI-based editing tool, which gave the opportunity to edit the original picture, ensuring that the endorser is an unknown and non-famous individual. All three images were edited with the aim of closely resembling authentic branded Instagram posts, using Canva Pro to replicate Instagram’s classic design. Additionally, attitude toward

the brand was measured, to control for pre-existing participants' perception of Louis Vuitton, prior to exposure to the stimulus.

To ensure consistency across conditions and maintain the integrity of the experimental manipulation, potential visual differences in the Instagram posts that could influence participants' responses were carefully controlled for. In particular, all three visual stimuli were designed to appear highly similar in order to avoid potential bias that could impact responses. Each post represented an endorser in front of the same background, wearing a black suit and depicted in a seated position next to the same Louis Vuitton suitcase. The similar posing and identical clothing minimised the influence of extraneous variables ensuring that answers are only influenced by the type of endorser rather than the appearance of the models. Therefore, biases related to background or posture were avoided by selecting visually consistent stimuli.

A pre-test was also conducted to ensure that the visual stimuli were appropriate for the experimental manipulation prior to measuring purchase intention as part of the stimulus construction phase. Babbie (2008, p. 283) emphasises the importance of pretesting a questionnaire with at least 10 individuals who do not necessarily need to be a part of the target sample but can help the researcher identify potential errors. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback upon completing the questionnaire to identify whether any stimuli required adjustment.

3.2 Operationalisation

The research aimed to examine the extent to which the presence of a celebrity endorser in a social media advertisement influences the purchase intention of Generation Z and the possible mediating role of perceived credibility.

Validity refers to the degree to which an empirical measure accurately captures the true meaning of the concept being studied (Babbie, 2008, p. 160). The main goal of the study is to establish a relationship between the type of endorser and purchase intention thus the measurement instrument must be accurate and align with what it initially intends to measure. For example, content validity which concerns the extent to which a measurement reflects all aspects of the concept was addressed by applying Ohanian's source credibility scale to measure mediating variable (Babbie, 2008, p. 161). Particularly, the scale includes multiple items that assess key dimensions such as trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, ensuring the accurate measurement of a construct. The internal validity was ensured by

applying a randomiser in Qualtrics, to eliminate the potential selection bias. In addition, all participants were given the same instructions.

Reliability refers to the consistency of a method in producing the same result each time it is repeated (Babbie, 2008, p. 157). The overall reliability of the study was ensured by the use of established scales previously validated in scientific research. Specifically, the internal reliability of the adopted scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, which all showed acceptable scores of above .70. Pallant (2016, p. 71) mentions that Cronbach's alpha score should be preferably higher than .70 which would ensure good internal consistency. The reliability analysis and factor analysis results of the scales used in the study are reported below.

Firstly, the reliability analysis was conducted on 4 items from the purchase intention scale. The reliability analysis has shown that a scale has high internal consistency, Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$ (Appendix B). A factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation indicated that the scale was unidimensional (only one component with an eigenvalue above 1.00 was extracted, $E.V. = 2.92$), explaining 72.94% of the variance in the four items (all factor loadings $> .30$). The Keiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .80 verified sampling adequacy for the analysis, as it exceeded the minimum acceptable value of .60. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also significant, $\chi^2(6) = 208.16, p < .001$, indicating that correlations were sufficiently large to conduct PCA. Thus, all items were computed to one variable, named purchase intention. The variable was measured through the Dodds et al. (1991) scale, often used in advertising research (e.g., Busljeta Banks and De Pelsmacker, 2014, p. 203), consisting of 4 items and being measured on a 7-point Likert scale. The items of the scale can be found in Table C1 in Appendix C. The scale was further adjusted into a 5-point Likert scale and applied within the context of the study, ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). The 5-point Likert scale was used within the study, as it is widely preferred by respondents for its ease of use and fewer response options (Russo et al., 2021, p. 4). The items included: "If money was not an issue, the probability that I would buy from Louis Vuitton is very high"; "If money was not an issue, I would gladly purchase a Louis Vuitton product"; "I would recommend Louis Vuitton to my friends"; and "If money was not an issue and if I were going to buy a luxury item, Louis Vuitton would be one of my choices." Therefore, the final variable was computed using all 4 items ($M = 2.96, SD = 1.02$), with the higher values of the variable indicating higher levels of purchase intention.

The independent variable in this study is the type of endorser, which includes three categories: celebrity, influencer and regular person, and was operationalized through the

stimuli described above. The experimental conditions were represented by two dummy-coded independent variables. Particularly, the first dummy variable represented the celebrity condition (1 = celebrity vs. 0 = influencer or regular person), and the second dummy variable represented the influencer condition where (1 = influencer vs. 0 = celebrity or regular person).

Afterwards, the mediating variable in this study, perceived credibility, was assessed with a 5-point Likert scale by integrating 14 items from Ohanian, which includes key dimensions of credibility: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990, p. 47). The reliability analysis showed great internal consistency, proving a scale to be reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$). Then, a Principal Component Analysis with direct oblimin rotation was conducted. The Keiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .90 confirmed the sampling adequacy. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also significant, $\chi^2(91) = 870.66, p < .001$. The resulting model consisted of two components with eigenvalues of 7.26 and 1.77, which together explained 64.50% of the variance. Component 1 reflected attractiveness and some trustworthiness-related items, while Component 2 combined trustworthiness and expertise items. The Pattern Matrix revealed that attractiveness items such as CredCom1 (.89), CredCom2 (.80), CredCom3 (.93), CredCom4 (.76), and CredCom5 (.69) loaded strongly on Component 1. In addition, trustworthiness-related items such as CredCom6 (.74), CredCom7 (.61) and CredCom8 (.48) also loaded on Component 1. Meanwhile, other trustworthiness items: CredCom9 (.62), and CredCom10 (.60) together with expertise items: CredCom11 (.90), CredCom12 (.79), CredCom13 (.88), and CredCom14 (.76) loaded on Component 2 (for full list of items, see Table C2 in Appendix C). Given the strong reliability of the scale, the decision to compute a single aggregated variable was made, ($M = 2.80, SD = 0.76$). This approach is also supported by prior literature showing that credibility is often treated as an aggregate construct rather than divided into distinct dimensions (Pornpitakpan, 2004, p. 244).

Lastly, the reliability analysis of the covariate brand attitude scale was conducted. The scale was proven to be reliable, demonstrating great internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha of .95 (Appendix B). The brand attitude was operationalised as the average score on all items of the attitude toward the brand scale developed by Spears and Singh (2004, p. 60), assessed using a 5-point Likert scale. A factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation indicated that the scale was unidimensional. The Keiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was .90, indicating excellent sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(10) = 488.40, p < .001$. The analysis revealed a single-factor solution with an eigenvalue of 4.14, explaining 82.77% of the total variance (all factor loadings $>.30$) Therefore, all items were

computed to one variable named brand attitude (for the full list of items, see table C3 in Appendix C). Overall, participants expressed neutral to slightly positive attitudes toward Louis Vuitton ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.14$).

3.3 Procedure

After the pre-test, the questionnaire was distributed through personal networks, social media platforms and within the university's online community, applying a convenience sampling approach. The questionnaire was developed in Qualtrics and began with informed consent and a brief introduction, explaining that participation was voluntary, outlining the questionnaire's estimated length and assuring anonymity and confidentiality. Age was used as a filter question, where only participants falling into the age category "between 1997-2012" could proceed. Participants who did not meet the age criteria were redirected to the end of the questionnaire, where they were thanked for their time and participation.

The first block of questions measured attitude toward Louis Vuitton, as this brand was featured in the visual stimuli. In the next part of the survey participants were randomly shown one stimulus material, representing an Instagram post. After the exposure to the manipulation, participants' perceived credibility of the endorser they had just been exposed to was measured. The final block measured the dependent variable of purchase intention, adopted to specifically assess how participants' intention to purchase from Louis Vuitton was affected after being exposed to a campaign featuring one of the three endorsers. The manipulation check was added at the end to check if the stimuli were correctly recognized by participants. The questionnaire concluded with a thank you message and a debriefing statement, which included the researcher's contact details in case participants had any questions.

4. Results

This chapter outlines the data analysis approach, including an overview of the statistical tests conducted using SPSS. Section 4.1 describes the data analysis and section 4.2 reports the results of manipulation and randomization checks. The chapter concludes with the results of the mediation analyses, followed by a table summarizing the outcomes of the tested hypotheses.

4.1 Data analysis

After the data collection in Qualtrics was completed, data cleaning was performed, and responses were converted into numerical format using SPSS statistical software. Since the survey included an age requirement (participants born between 1997 and 2012), additional screening was mandatory to remove the responses from individuals outside this range.

Mediation analysis through PROCESS Model 4 was performed to answer H1a: Exposure to a social media advertisement featuring a celebrity endorser will result in higher purchase intention for members of the Gen Z than advertisement featuring an influencer or a non-famous person; H1b: Exposure to a social media post featuring an influencer will result in a higher purchase intention for members of the Gen Z than the post featuring a non-famous person; H2: a) Exposure to a social media post featuring the celebrity endorser results in a higher perceived credibility of the endorser than the post featuring a non-famous person or an influencer, b) which in turn increases purchase intention for members of the Gen Z; H3: a) Exposure to a social media post featuring the influencer endorser results in a higher perceived credibility of the endorser than exposure to the post featuring a non-famous person, b) which in turn increases purchase intention for members of the Gen Z.

Mediation analysis is a causal chain where the relationship between independent and dependent variables is explained by the mediating variable's role (Pardo & Román, 2013, p. 614). Therefore, the main goal is to understand the relationship between celebrity endorsers in the advertisement and purchase intention, while counting for the mediator of perceived credibility. Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1177) mention that the effect of the independent variable on the dependent one can only be mediated when it is significant and present. However, Hayes (2017, p. 117) mentions that an independent variable can still influence a

dependent variable indirectly through a mediator, even in the absence of a significant total effect. Therefore, a significant direct effect is not a compulsory condition for mediation to occur. As a result, the PROCESS Model 4 was chosen to perform mediation analysis.

4.2 Manipulation and randomization checks

A manipulation check question was included to ask participants whether they recall who was featured in the Louis Vuitton post they were exposed to. A total of 39 participants (37.5%) were assigned to a celebrity condition, 34 (32.7%) participants were exposed to an influencer condition and 31 (29.8%) to a regular person condition (Appendix B).

In the celebrity condition, 28 out of 39 participants (71.8%) correctly reported seeing a celebrity, with 3 participants (7.7%) wrongly reporting seeing an influencer, 5 (12.8%) wrongly reported seeing a regular person and 3 participants (7.7%) reported not remembering.

In the influencer condition, 19 out of 34 participants (55.9%) correctly recognized an influencer, while other 4 participants wrongly reported seeing a celebrity (11.8%), 4 also wrongly chose regular person (11.8%) and 7 participants did not remember (20.6%).

In the regular person condition, 18 out of 31 participants (58.1%) correctly identified the endorser as a regular person. The rest 7 participants wrongly reported seeing a celebrity (22.6%), 2 reported seeing an influencer (6.5%) and 4 did not remember (12.9%). Since most of participants in each condition correctly identified each endorser type, the manipulation was considered successful.

Randomization checks were also performed for brand attitude, age and gender. Brand attitude, as a continuous variable, was tested using a one-way ANOVA. The results did not reveal significant differences between the three conditions, $F(2, 101) = 0.31, p = .731$, confirming successful randomization. Therefore, brand attitude was not included as a covariate. Age was also not included as a covariate as a Chi-square test revealed no variation between conditions since all participants in the cleaned dataset were born between 1997 and 2012. A chi-square test revealed significant differences in gender distribution across the endorser conditions, $\chi^2(6) = 16.95, p = .009$, meaning that randomization was not successful for gender. Therefore, gender was included as a covariate in the mediation analysis (Appendix B).

4.3 Main results

A bootstrapping procedure was conducted to test for a possible mediation effect with a 95% confidence interval and 5,000 bootstrap samples. Endorser type was represented with two dummy-coded variables, one for the celebrity condition (1 = celebrity vs. 0 = influencer or regular person), and one for the influencer condition (1 = influencer vs. 0 = celebrity or regular person). Perceived credibility was entered as a mediator and purchase intention as the dependent variable. Gender was also included as a covariate as the randomization check revealed significance. Two separate analyses were conducted: one including the influencer condition as a covariate (Noah Beck dummy) and one including the celebrity condition as a covariate (Lionel Messi dummy). The analysis was performed in SPSS using PROCESS Model 4.

The direct effect of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention was not significant, $b = 0.17, p = .515, CI95\% = [-0.35, 0.69]$, resulting in a rejection of H1a. Participants in the celebrity condition ($M = 2.97, SD = 1.12$) reported similar levels of purchase intention as those in the influencer ($M = 3.15, SD = 0.99$) or regular person ($M = 2.75, SD = 0.92$) conditions. Hypothesis H1b was also not supported, as the direct effect of influencer endorsement on purchase intention, compared to a regular person, was not statistically significant, $b = 0.51, p = .057, CI95\% = [-0.02, 1.04]$.

The manipulation of endorser type did not significantly influence perceived credibility, $b = -0.05, p = .798, CI95\% = [-0.43, 0.33]$, where participants rated the perceived credibility of the endorser only marginally higher in the celebrity condition ($M = 2.97, SD = 0.80$) than in the influencer ($M = 2.54, SD = 0.65$) and regular person ($M = 2.87, SD = 0.78$) conditions (Appendix B). As a result, hypothesis H2a was rejected. Although perceived credibility was a significant predictor of purchase intention, $b = 0.30, p = .034$, the indirect effect of celebrity endorsement on purchase intention through credibility was not significant, $b = -0.01, CI95\% = [-0.15, 0.13]$, as the confidence interval included zero. Therefore, mediation hypothesis H2b was rejected.

The influencer condition had a significant negative effect on perceived credibility compared to the regular person condition, $b = -0.38, p = .046, CI95\% = [-0.76, -0.01]$, showing that participants perceived influencer as less credible than a non-famous person, rejecting H3a. The indirect effect via credibility was also not significant, $b = -0.11, CI95\% = [-0.27, 0.00]$, as the confidence interval included zero, H3b was rejected.

In addition, gender, which was included as a covariate, did not significantly predict purchase intention, $b = -.00$, $p = .996$, $CI95\% = [-0.40, 0.40]$.

Table 1

Hypotheses Results Summarized

Hypothesis	Result
H1a: Exposure to a social media post featuring a celebrity endorser will result in higher purchase intention for members of the Gen Z than the post featuring an influencer a non-famous person.	Rejected
H1b: Exposure to a social media post featuring an influencer will result in a higher purchase intention for members of the Gen Z than the post featuring a non-famous person.	Rejected
H2a: Exposure to a social media post featuring the celebrity endorser results in a higher perceived credibility of the endorser than the post featuring a non-famous person or an influencer.	Rejected
H2b: Exposure to a social media post featuring the celebrity endorser results in a higher perceived credibility of the endorser than the post featuring a non-famous person or an influencer, which in turn increases purchase intention for members of the Gen Z.	Rejected
H3a: Exposure to a social media post featuring the influencer endorser results in a higher perceived credibility of the endorser than exposure to the post featuring a non-famous person.	Rejected

H3b: Exposure to a social media post featuring the influencer endorser results in a higher perceived credibility of the endorser than exposure to the post featuring a non-famous person, which in turn increases purchase intention for members of the Gen Z. Rejected

5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Discussion of main findings

5.1.1 The impact of endorser type on purchase intention

Hypothesis H1a predicted that exposure to a social media post featuring a celebrity endorser would lead to higher purchase intention among Generation Z participants compared to advertisements featuring influencers or regular people. However, the mediation analysis did not reveal a significant direct effect of endorser type on purchase intention. This suggests that an Instagram post by Louis Vuitton featuring a celebrity did not significantly increase participants' intention to purchase when compared to the purchase intention resulting from posts featuring either an influencer or a regular person. This outcome contradicts the findings by Friedman et al. (1976, p. 25), who reported that advertisements featuring endorsers regardless of their type lead to higher purchase intention compared to ads without any endorser. In contrast, in the present study, no significant differences in purchase intention were observed between the three types of endorsers, suggesting that including an endorser in the advertisement may not be persuasive enough to drive purchase intention among Generation Z.

Hypothesis H1b proposed that a social media post featuring an influencer would generate higher purchase intention among Generation Z participants than one featuring a non-famous person. However, the results were not supported by mediation analysis that did not reveal statistical significance between the two endorser types. As Audrezet et al. (2018, pp. 2-3) explain, influencer marketing blurs the line between commercial and non-commercial intent, posing challenges for social media influencers to maintain authenticity. Therefore, it is possible that participants perceived the influencer's appearance in the Louis Vuitton post as part of a commercial agreement, reducing the perceived sincerity of the endorsement. It is also possible that some participants were unfamiliar with the influencer Noah Beck which could potentially weaken the persuasive impact due to a lack of recognition. On the other hand, participants who recognized Noah Beck may have viewed the post as a conventional pairing of a popular influencer with a luxury brand, reducing the uniqueness of the endorsed suitcase. De Veirman et al. (2017, p. 808) highlight that endorsements featuring popular influencers can lead audiences to perceive a product as common rather than exclusive, thereby decreasing their intention to purchase the advertised product.

5.1.2 Perceived credibility as a mediator

Hypothesis H2a was not supported, indicating that celebrity endorser was not perceived as more credible than influencer or non-famous endorsers. However, previous research suggested that celebrities' professional expertise and attractiveness positively influence purchase intention, where their popularity leads the audience to perceive them as more credible than non-famous endorsers or influencers (Lim et al., 2023, p. 512; La Ferle & Choi, 2005, p. 70). Furthermore, Fan (2021, p. 178) found that influencers were rated less credible than celebrities, where influencers were not trusted enough to recommend products due to a lack of professionalism and reputation. Despite the theoretical expectations, the present study did not reflect previously established patterns. A possible explanation is that Generation Z may be sceptical towards all endorser types, especially if they recognize the promotional motive, which diminishes the credibility of the endorser, explaining no significant differences in perceived credibility.

Hypothesis H2b was also not supported, indicating that higher credibility of the endorser does not lead to higher purchase intention. This aligns with Ohanian's (1990, p. 42) argument that highly credible sources are not always more persuasive than less credible ones. In addition, purchase intention is also dependent on the consumers' interest in a brand and their attitude toward the endorsed product (Sesar et al., 2023, p. 161). In terms of Generation Z, credibility alone may be insufficient without a strongly favourable attitude toward the brand. This finding shows the complex nature of consumer behaviour, where an interplay of multiple psychological factors shapes purchasing decisions.

Hypothesis H3a predicted that exposure to a social media post featuring the influencer endorser results in a higher perceived credibility of the endorser than exposure to a post featuring a non-famous person. This prediction was based on prior research suggesting that influencers often develop niche expertise in a specific area, which enhances their credibility and makes them appear as more qualified to endorse specific products, as expert endorsers are generally perceived as more credible than non-famous individuals (Kaabachi et al., 2021, p. 62; Bhutada & Rollins, 2015, p. 891). However, hypothesis H3a was rejected, revealing that the influencer was rated as significantly less credible than the non-famous endorser. A possible explanation for this result is that participants may have recognised the influencer's persuasive motive, which significantly reduced credibility (Willemsen et al., 2024, p. 112). It is also possible that individual negative attitudes toward the persona of Noah Beck contributed to lower credibility ratings.

Hypothesis H3b was also not supported. The hypothesis proposed that influencer endorsement would lead to a higher perceived credibility of the endorser than a non-famous person, increasing purchase intention. Prior literature suggested that influencer traits such as trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness positively affect purchase intention (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022, p. 198; Lou & Yuan, 2018, p. 58). However, in this study, negative perceptions of the influencer's credibility may have weakened the mediator's effect, which in turn disrupted the expected indirect relationship between endorser type and purchase intention, leading to a non-significant result.

5.2 Implications

The results of the present study add to the academic debate on social media endorsements' effectiveness by challenging the assumption that credible endorsers increase purchase intention. Existing literature argues that dimensions of credibility such as expertise and trustworthiness positively influence purchase intention (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022, p. 198). Previous empirical studies supported this framework, suggesting that consumer intention will be higher if the endorser is perceived as credible, whether due to being an expert or because of perceived attractiveness (Lim et al., 2023, p. 512; Muda & Hamzah, 2021, p. 445). The findings of this study indicate that the credibility of the endorser alone may not be sufficient to drive the purchase intention of Generation Z, suggesting the need to explore other potential factors such as attitude toward the celebrity.

The findings suggest that none of the three endorser types were effective in increasing purchase intention among Generation Z. Thus, marketers should focus on other aspects of the campaign to achieve better results, rather than relying solely on the presence of an endorser and shift their focus toward the content format. For example, the portrayal of the endorsers in a formal setting may not have been perceived as relatable by participants. Influencers were also as ineffective as non-famous endorsers in stimulating purchase intention. Therefore, influencer endorsements could be reassessed by marketers, encouraging bloggers to create content that displays genuine product use such as travel vlogs, 'get ready with me' formats, or 'day in the life' videos. The polished endorsements can be re-integrated into a lifestyle format, where the product is embedded in the daily routines, allowing audiences to envision themselves using the product in a realistic context. Furthermore, the findings did not align with prior literature suggesting that Gen Z typically links self-worth to luxury consumption while trying to associate with famous endorsers by acquiring luxury goods (Zipporah &

Mberia, 2014, p. 164; Tor-Kadioglu & Bozyigit, 2025, p. 122). Since the celebrity featured in this study was a sports star, marketers can consider testing endorsements by celebrities from other fields such as music, fashion, or film. Lionel Messi's appeal may be particularly strong among football fans or participants who are interested in sports therefore other types of celebrities could better align with the interests of the broader Gen Z audience.

5.3 Limitations and future research recommendations

5.3.1 Limitations

Firstly, the stimulus material used in a celebrity condition featuring Lionel Messi may have influenced the results. While Messi is a sportsman well-known globally, not all members of Generation Z may relate to or like him. Moreover, 13.5% of participants indicated that they did not remember which post they were shown, suggesting that an experiment may not have been effective for some of the participants. In addition, although the study focused on social media endorsements, all stimuli were presented in the format of Instagram posts. Therefore, the findings can't be generalized to other platforms such as YouTube or TikTok, which focus on video content and where Generation Z users may respond differently to endorsement formats. Another important limitation of this study concerns the purchasing power of the sample. Particularly, as the sample solely consisted of Generation Z, many of whom may still be students without stable jobs, they may simply be unable to afford the Louis Vuitton trunk featured in the endorsement. This may have limited the effect of the stimuli on purchase intention, regardless of endorser type.

Experimental mortality is also a limitation, as a substantial number of participants did not complete a questionnaire (Jurs & Glass, 1971, p. 62). Out of 192 recorded responses, only 104 were retained for the analysis, with 88 cases being excluded because of being incomplete, therefore it is not known whether the outcomes would have differed if these participants completed the questionnaire.

5.3.2 Future research

With regard to future research, the study can be extended to younger age groups such as Generation Alpha, those born between 2010 and 2024 and raised with constant exposure to technology. This age cohort could allow researchers to examine how exposure to social media endorsements featuring this group's most followed influencers and celebrities impacts their purchase intention. Since children are usually unable to critically evaluate advertising,

they may be highly persuaded by their admired opinion leaders. In addition, the perceived credibility of these endorsers may have a strong influence on underage consumers shaping their preferences and brand perceptions from an early age. Focus can be also shifted toward older age cohorts such as Millennials as they are the first generation to be raised with gadgets and social networking. As technologies are embedded into the daily lives of millennials, it could be beneficial to research how they respond to digital marketing and celebrity endorsements. Considering the aforementioned limitations, Millennials represent a more financially stable cohort with steady employment. Therefore, they may be able to afford luxury products, which can potentially increase their intention to purchase.

Future research can also explore the impact of endorser-product fit, particularly for non-famous individuals as endorsers. In this study, the non-famous endorser promoted a luxury item, which may have reduced the persuasiveness of the post. Further studies can examine how non-famous endorsers perform when promoting products that require less financial commitment, such as personal care items, food, or tech accessories. These categories may align more with non-famous endorsers, potentially making them more active in driving purchase intention.

Although the role of parasocial relationships was acknowledged in this study, future research could investigate this phenomenon more deeply. For example, researchers could examine whether parasocial relationships mediate the relationship between endorser type and purchase intention. Measuring emotional attachment to specific celebrities or influencers may explain differences in endorsement effectiveness, offering in-depth insights into how consumer decision-making is influenced by social media advertising.

Finally, other covariates such as familiarity with the advertised brand may influence the relationship between perceived credibility and purchase intention. This variable can also be tested separately as a mediator or moderator, to establish whether the direct significant effect on purchase intention exists independently of credibility. In addition, cross-cultural comparisons can investigate how endorsement effectiveness varies based on prescribed norms, religious beliefs, and values of different ethnicities.

5.4 Conclusion

The study's goal was to answer the following research question: "To what extent does endorser type in social media advertisements influence Generation Z's purchase intentions, and to what extent is this relationship mediated by the perceived credibility of the endorser?"

while exposing participants to three different endorsers. The results showed that there were no significant differences in the level of purchase intention between the groups exposed to different types of endorsers. However, in contrast to initial expectations, the influencer endorser was found significantly less credible than the non-famous endorser. These findings highlight the complexity of Generation Z's consumer behaviour, suggesting that fame may not be enough to persuade a youth cohort. The study offers valuable insights for scholars and marketing professionals by revealing that the use of celebrities, influencers, or non-famous people in social media advertising does not necessarily guarantee increased purchase intention for Generation Z, highlighting a need for emotionally resonating and authentic marketing campaigns. Social media endorsements should move beyond conventional portrayals of idealised lifestyles and instead prioritise relatable imagery that reflects the values of Generation Z.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Survey

CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study about how people respond to different types of promotional content on social media. The purpose of this study is to better understand how certain elements of online advertisements influence consumer perceptions and preferences. Your participation in this study means that you agree to take part in a short online survey. Your answers will be completely anonymous and confidential. No identifying information such as your name or contact details will be collected or stored. The data will be used exclusively for academic purposes. There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. The survey will take approximately 5–10 minutes to complete. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

By clicking "Next," you indicate that:

- You are at least 18 years old.
- You understand the general purpose of this study.
- You voluntarily agree to participate.

If you have any questions about the study, you can contact:

Alice Zolotarova
607158az@eur.nl

When were you born?

Before 1997

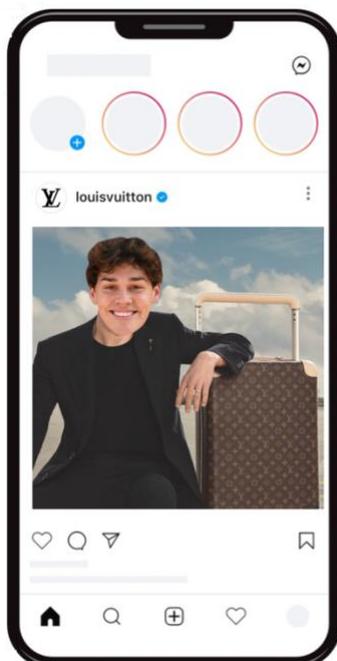
Between 1997 and 2012

After 2012

Please describe your overall feelings about Louis Vuitton.

	1	2	3	4	5
Unappealing – Appealing	<input type="radio"/>				
Bad – Good	<input type="radio"/>				
Unpleasant – Pleasant	<input type="radio"/>				
Unfavorable – Favorable	<input type="radio"/>				
Unlikable – Likable	<input type="radio"/>				

Below, you can see a social media ad for Louis Vuitton, featuring social media influencer Noah Beck. Please take a look at the ad and answer the questions below it.



Please rate Noah Beck on the following characteristics.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Attractive	<input type="radio"/>				
Classy	<input type="radio"/>				
Handsome	<input type="radio"/>				
Elegant	<input type="radio"/>				
Sexy	<input type="radio"/>				
Dependable	<input type="radio"/>				
Honest	<input type="radio"/>				
Reliable	<input type="radio"/>				
Sincere	<input type="radio"/>				
Trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>				
Expert	<input type="radio"/>				
Experienced	<input type="radio"/>				
Knowledgeable	<input type="radio"/>				
Skilled	<input type="radio"/>				

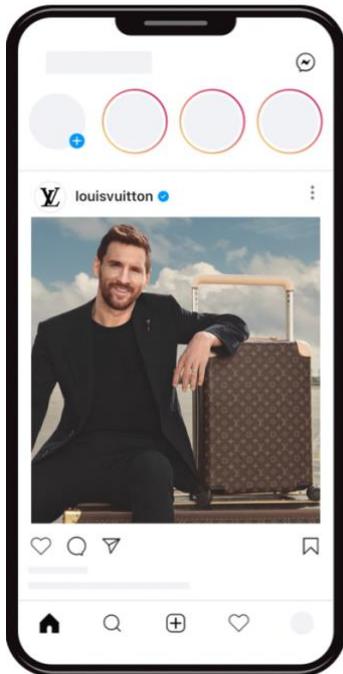
Below, you can see a social media ad for Louis Vuitton. Please take a look at the ad and answer the questions below it.



Please rate the person you saw in the picture on the following characteristics.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Attractive	<input type="radio"/>				
Classy	<input type="radio"/>				
Handsome	<input type="radio"/>				
Elegant	<input type="radio"/>				
Sexy	<input type="radio"/>				
Dependable	<input type="radio"/>				
Honest	<input type="radio"/>				
Reliable	<input type="radio"/>				
Sincere	<input type="radio"/>				
Trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>				
Expert	<input type="radio"/>				
Experienced	<input type="radio"/>				
Knowledgeable	<input type="radio"/>				
Skilled	<input type="radio"/>				

Below, you can see a social media ad for Louis Vuitton, featuring Lionel Messi. Please take a look at the ad and answer the questions below it.



Please rate Lionel Messi on the following characteristics.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Attractive	<input type="radio"/>				
Classy	<input type="radio"/>				
Handsome	<input type="radio"/>				
Elegant	<input type="radio"/>				
Sexy	<input type="radio"/>				
Dependable	<input type="radio"/>				
Honest	<input type="radio"/>				
Reliable	<input type="radio"/>				
Sincere	<input type="radio"/>				
Trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>				
Expert	<input type="radio"/>				
Experienced	<input type="radio"/>				
Knowledgeable	<input type="radio"/>				
Skilled	<input type="radio"/>				

To what extent do you agree with the statement: If money was not an issue and if I were going to buy a luxury item, Louis Vuitton would be one of my choices.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

To what extent do you agree with the statement: If money was not an issue, the probability that I would buy from Louis Vuitton is very high.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

To what extent do you agree with the statement: If money was not an issue, I would gladly purchase a Louis Vuitton product.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

To what extent do you agree with the statement: I would recommend Louis Vuitton to my friends.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

The Louis Vuitton post I saw featured:

- A celebrity
- An influencer (or non-traditional celebrity)
- A regular person
- I don't remember

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

Debrief statement

Please note that the social media posts you viewed during this survey were created and manipulated specifically for the purpose of this academic research project. While one of the images was based on a real Louis Vuitton campaign featuring Lionel Messi, the format in which it was shown, as well as the other posts were manipulated. These posts are not actual advertisements, and they are not affiliated with or endorsed by Louis Vuitton or any other brand or individual.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact:

Alice Zolotarova
607158az@eur.nl

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

Appendix B

B1. Descriptive statistics

B1.1 Gender

What is your gender?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	17	16.3	16.7	16.7
	Female	77	74.0	75.5	92.2
	Non-binary	6	5.8	5.9	98.0
	Prefer not to say	2	1.9	2.0	100.0
	Total	102	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.9		
Total		104	100.0		

B1.2 Manipulation check

Endorsertype * Manipcheck Crosstabulation							
			Manipcheck				
			A celebrity	An influencer (or non-traditional celebrity)	A regular person	I don't remember	Total
Endorsertype	celebrity	Count	28	3	5	3	39
		% within Endorsertype	71.8%	7.7%	12.8%	7.7%	100.0%
	influencer	Count	4	19	4	7	34
		% within Endorsertype	11.8%	55.9%	11.8%	20.6%	100.0%
	regular person	Count	7	2	18	4	31
		% within Endorsertype	22.6%	6.5%	58.1%	12.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	39	24	27	14	104
		% within Endorsertype	37.5%	23.1%	26.0%	13.5%	100.0%

B1.3 Distribution of conditions

Endorsertype					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	celebrity	39	37.5	37.5	37.5
	influencer	34	32.7	32.7	70.2
	regular person	31	29.8	29.8	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

B1.4 Credibility by endorser type

Report			
credmain			
Endorsertype	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
celebrity	2.9693	39	.79780
influencer	2.5402	34	.64818
regular person	2.8659	31	.78363
Total	2.7982	104	.76336

B1.5 Purchase intention by endorser type

Report

purchint			
Endorsertype	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
celebrity	2.9679	39	1.12124
influencer	3.1495	34	.98661
regular person	2.7500	31	.92195
Total	2.9623	104	1.02391

B1.6 Descriptives of the main scales

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
purchint	104	1.00	5.00	2.9623	1.02391
Valid N (listwise)	104				

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
credmain	104	2.7982	.76336
Valid N (listwise)	104		

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
brandat	104	3.1019	1.14128
Valid N (listwise)	104		

B2. Reliability analysis

B2.1 Credibility

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.923	.924	14

B2.2 Purchase intention

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.875	.876	4

B2.3 Brand attitude

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.946	.948	5

B3. Factor analysis

B3.1 Purchase intention items

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.804
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	208.159
	df	6
	Sig.	<.001

Component Matrix^a

	Component 1
To what extent do you agree with the statement: If money was not an issue, the probability that I would buy from Louis Vuitton is very high.	.876
To what extent do you agree with the statement: If money was not an issue, I would gladly purchase a Louis Vuitton product.	.870
To what extent do you agree with the statement: I would recommend Louis Vuitton to my friends.	.839
To what extent do you agree with the statement: If money was not an issue and if I were going to buy a luxury item, Louis Vuitton would be one of my choices.	.829

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Total	Initial Eigenvalues		Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.918	72.942	72.942	2.918	72.942	72.942
2	.491	12.278	85.221			
3	.321	8.018	93.239			
4	.270	6.761	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

B3.2 Brand attitude items

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.898
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	488.402
	df	10
	Sig.	<.001

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.138	82.767	82.767	4.138	82.767	82.767
2	.296	5.926	88.693			
3	.235	4.703	93.396			
4	.184	3.687	97.083			
5	.146	2.917	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

1

Please describe your overall feelings about Louis Vuitton. – Bad – Good	.924
Please describe your overall feelings about Louis Vuitton. – Unpleasant – Pleasant	.923
Please describe your overall feelings about Louis Vuitton. – Unlikable – Likable	.909
Please describe your overall feelings about Louis Vuitton. – Unappealing – Appealing	.897
Please describe your overall feelings about Louis Vuitton. – Unfavorable – Favorable	.894

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

B3.3 Credibility items

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.898
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	870.660
	df	91
	Sig.	<.001

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings ^a
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	7.255	51.824	51.824	7.255	51.824	51.824	6.234
2	1.774	12.675	64.499	1.774	12.675	64.499	5.639
3	.824	5.882	70.381				
4	.779	5.563	75.944				
5	.553	3.953	79.897				
6	.523	3.734	83.631				
7	.443	3.166	86.797				
8	.395	2.824	89.621				
9	.340	2.429	92.050				
10	.310	2.217	94.267				
11	.255	1.822	96.089				
12	.218	1.559	97.647				
13	.176	1.260	98.907				
14	.153	1.093	100.000				

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Pattern Matrix^a

	Component	
	1	2
CredCom3	.934	
Combined Credibility attractive	.889	
CredCom2	.799	
CredCom4	.760	
CredCom6	.739	
CredCom5	.692	
CredCom7	.611	
CredCom8	.483	.469
CredCom11		.901
CredCom13		.876
CredCom12		.791
CredCom14		.755
CredCom9		.623
CredCom10	.309	.604

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.^a

B4. Randomization checks

B4.1 Brand attitude

ANOVA

brandat

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.829	2	.415	.314	.731
Within Groups	133.330	101	1.320		
Total	134.160	103			

B4.2 Gender

What is your gender? * Endorsertype Crosstabulation

			Endorsertype			Total
			celebrity	influencer	regular person	
What is your gender?	Male	Count	3	3	11	17
		% within Endorsertype	7.9%	9.1%	35.5%	16.7%
	Female	Count	29	28	20	77
		% within Endorsertype	76.3%	84.8%	64.5%	75.5%
	Non-binary	Count	4	2	0	6
		% within Endorsertype	10.5%	6.1%	0.0%	5.9%
	Prefer not to say	Count	2	0	0	2
		% within Endorsertype	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%
Total		Count	38	33	31	102
		% within Endorsertype	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.945 ^a	6	.009
Likelihood Ratio	18.121	6	.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	13.118	1	<.001
N of Valid Cases	102		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .61.

B4.3 Age

Chi-Square Tests

	Value
Pearson Chi-Square	. ^a
N of Valid Cases	104

a. No statistics are computed because When were you born? is a constant.

B5. PROCESS output

Run MATRIX procedure:

***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 *****

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com
Documentation available in Hayes (2022). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

Model : 4
Y : purchint
X : LM
M : credmain

Covariates:
NB Gender

Sample
Size: 102

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
credmain

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.2882	.0831	.5382	2.9593	3.0000	98.0000	.0361

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.4057	.2693	8.9330	.0000	1.8712	2.9401
LM	-.0489	.1907	-.2564	.7982	-.4272	.3295
NB	-.3828	.1893	-2.0227	.0458	-.7584	-.0072
Gender	.2798	.1428	1.9598	.0529	-.0035	.5631

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
purchint

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.2700	.0729	1.0223	1.9074	4.0000	97.0000	.1153

Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.8932	.4999	3.7870	.0003	.9010	2.8855
LM	.1717	.2628	.6533	.5151	-.3500	.6934
credmain	.2995	.1392	2.1512	.0339	.0232	.5758
NB	.5120	.2662	1.9232	.0574	-.0164	1.0404
Gender	-.0010	.2006	-.0048	.9962	-.3990	.3971

***** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL *****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

purchint

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.1694	.0287	1.0602	.9649	3.0000	98.0000	.4125

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.6137	.3780	6.9153	.0000	1.8637	3.3638
LM	.1571	.2676	.5870	.5585	-.3739	.6881
NB	.3974	.2656	1.4960	.1379	-.1298	.9245
Gender	.0828	.2004	.4134	.6802	-.3148	.4804

***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.1571	.2676	.5870	.5585	-.3739	.6881

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.1717	.2628	.6533	.5151	-.3500	.6934

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
credmain	-.0146	.0657	-.1480	.1269

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:

5000

----- END MATRIX -----

***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 *****

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com
Documentation available in Hayes (2022). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

Model : 4
Y : purchint
X : NB
M : credmain

Covariates:
Gender LM

Sample
Size: 102

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
credmain

Model Summary

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	.2882	.0831	.5382	2.9593	3.0000	98.0000	.0361

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.4057	.2693	8.9330	.0000	1.8712	2.9401
NB	-.3828	.1893	-2.0227	.0458	-.7584	-.0072
Gender	.2798	.1428	1.9598	.0529	-.0035	.5631
LM	-.0489	.1907	-.2564	.7982	-.4272	.3295

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
purchint

Model Summary

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	.2700	.0729	1.0223	1.9074	4.0000	97.0000	.1153

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.8932	.4999	3.7870	.0003	.9010	2.8855
NB	.5120	.2662	1.9232	.0574	-.0164	1.0404
credmain	.2995	.1392	2.1512	.0339	.0232	.5758
Gender	-.0010	.2006	-.0048	.9962	-.3990	.3971
LM	.1717	.2628	.6533	.5151	-.3500	.6934

***** DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.5120	.2662	1.9232	.0574	-.0164	1.0404

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
credmain	-.1147	.0726	-.2716	.0046

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:
95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:
5000

----- END MATRIX -----

Appendix C. Scale items

C1. Four-item purchase intention scale

Variable	Item	Measurement
Purchase intention	PI1	If money was not an issue and if I were going to buy a luxury item, Louis Vuitton would be one of my choices.
	PI2	If money was not an issue, the probability that I would buy from Louis Vuitton is very high.
	PI3	If money was not an issue, I would gladly purchase a Louis Vuitton product.
	PI4	I would recommend Louis Vuitton to my friends.

C2. Fourteen-item credibility scale

Variable	Item	Measurement
Credibility	CredCom1	Attractive
	CredCom2	Classy
	CredCom3	Handsome
	CredCom4	Elegant
	CredCom5	Sexy
	CredCom6	Dependable

CredCom7	Honest
CredCom8	Reliable
CredCom9	Sincere
CredCom10	Trustworthy
CredCom11	Expert
CredCom12	Experienced
CredCom13	Knowledgeable
CredCom14	Skilled

C3. Five-item brand attitude scale

Variable	Item	Measurement
Brand attitude	BA1	Unappealing – Appealing
	BA2	Bad – Good
	BA3	Unpleasant – Pleasant
	BA4	Unfavorable – Favorable
	BA5	Unlikable – Likable

Appendix D. Declaration

Declaration Page: Use of Generative AI Tools in Thesis

Student Information

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Course Name: Master Thesis CM5000

Supervisor Name: Ivana Bušljeta Banks

Date: 25.06.2025

Declaration:

Acknowledgment of Generative AI Tools

I acknowledge that I am aware of the existence and functionality of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, which are capable of producing content such as text, images, and other creative works autonomously.

GenAI use would include, but not limited to:

- Generated content (e.g., ChatGPT, Quillbot) limited strictly to content that is not assessed (e.g., thesis title).
- ~~Writing improvements, including~~ grammar and spelling corrections (e.g., Grammarly)
- Language translation (e.g., DeepL), without generative AI alterations/improvements.
- Research task assistance (e.g., finding survey scales, qualitative coding verification, debugging code)
- Using GenAI as a search engine tool to find academic articles or books (e.g.,

Prompts used:

1. Use of Grammarly to check spelling of particular words and punctuation of separate sentences.
2. Use of Sora (image generation tool) to create an artificial stimulus for non-famous endorser condition.
3. Use of ChatGPT to brainstorm ideas for an engaging title.

I declare that I have used generative AI tools, specifically Grammarly, ChatGPT and Sora (stimuli construction) in the process of creating parts or components of my thesis. The purpose of using these tools was to aid in generating content or assisting with specific aspects of thesis work.

I declare that I have NOT used any generative AI tools and that the assignment concerned is my original work.

Signature: [digital signature]

Date of Signature: [Date of Submission]

Extent of AI Usage

I confirm that while I utilized generative AI tools to aid in content creation, the majority of the intellectual effort, creative input, and decision-making involved in completing the thesis were undertaken by me. I have enclosed the prompts/logging of the GenAI tool use in an appendix.

Ethical and Academic Integrity

I understand the ethical implications and academic integrity concerns related to the use of AI tools in coursework. I assure that the AI-generated content was used responsibly, and any content derived from these tools has been appropriately cited and attributed according to the guidelines provided by the instructor and the course. I have taken necessary steps to distinguish between my original work and the AI-generated contributions. Any direct quotations, paraphrased content, or other forms of AI-generated material have been properly referenced in accordance with academic conventions.

By signing this declaration, I affirm that this declaration is accurate and truthful. I take full responsibility for the integrity of my assignment and am prepared to discuss and explain the role of generative AI tools in my creative process if required by the instructor or the Examination Board. I further affirm that I have used generative AI tools in accordance with ethical standards and academic integrity expectations.

Signature: 

Date of Signature: 25.06.2025