Hallyu Stars in the Philippines: Effects of Brand and Endorser's Credibility on Filipino Purchase Intention

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Abstract
Introduction: There has been a notable rise in the popularity of K-pop endorsers within the landscape of Philippine advertising, influencing Filipino consumers' purchase intentions. Therefore, this study aims to examine the mediating effect of attitude toward a brand on the relationship between brand credibility, endorser credibility, and consumers' purchase intentions.
Methods: The participants of the study were Filipino internet service subscribers, and they were selected using purposive sampling technique. The approach used in this study was quantitative research and causal-predictive approach while the partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to estimate the relationships of the proposed model.
Findings: The results showed that an endorser's credibility significantly influences consumers' purchase intention and attitude towards a brand. On the other hand, the relationship between brand credibility and purchase intention is not supported. However, there is a significant relationship between brand credibility and attitude towards a brand. The relationship between attitudes towards a brand and purchase intention is also supported. The mediation analysis revealed the importance of attitude towards a brand which tremendously mediates the relationship between brand credibility and endorser's credibility leading to purchase intention.
Originality: This study highlights the novel role of consumers' attitude as a mediator between endorser and brand credibility, shaping purchase intentions in the Philippine telecom industry through K-pop idol endorsements.
Keywords: Endorser's Credibility, Brand Credibility, Purchase Intention, Attitude, Hallyu.

Introduction

Consumer behavior has been an important tool used by researchers to understand how consumers think, behave, and decide before purchasing a product (Apasrawirote & Yawised, 2022). Knowing the consumers' behavior, companies use well-known celebrities to endorse and differentiate their products to build a substantial competitive advantage (Kalam et al., 2024). Advertisers choose a famous and recognized celebrity who is aligned with their brand personality (McCormick, 2016; Adam & Hussain, 2017).

Studies have shown that celebrity endorser's credibility and attractiveness increase consumer purchase intention (Yang et al. 2024). Moreover, celebrity endorsers affect not only the consumers' purchasing intention but also their brand credibility whenever they express their opinions (Hussain et al., 2020). Therefore, advertisers believe that celebrity endorsement is a winning strategy to attract the attention of potential customers (Chin et al., 2020).

The explosion of the popularity of Korean celebrities and idols is boosting the brand image of big companies internationally (Sabalionis, 2020; Tamondong, 2021). The public's admiration of Korean celebrities started in 1997, and the Chinese term Hallyu (Korean Wave) was coined (Jin & Yoon, 2016). Hallyu or Korean Wave refers to the prevalence of Korean popular culture in the global arena. It includes Korean pop music (K-pop), dramas (K-drama), movies, fashion, food, and beauty that fascinate people's interest (Bok-rae, 2015). Hallyu has been seen as a new field of interest among academicians (Ganghariya & Kanozia, 2020) and recent studies have shown the effectiveness of Korean celebrities as endorsers and how it affects consumers' purchase intention (Halim & Kiatkawsin, 2021; Wibowo, 2020; Yu & Yu, 2020).

The tremendous impact of Korean celebrities in the Philippines has triggered the two telecommunication giants, Globe Telecom Inc. (Globe) and Philippine Long-Distance Telephone Company (PLDT) through its subsidiary Smart, to hire K-pop idols to leverage their product/services among competitors (Cupin, 2020; Cupin, 2021; Hicap, 2021). In addition, K-pop idols have captivated Filipinos' hearts through their attractiveness and appealing personalities (Arayata, 2018). This is supported by the recent report of Twitter data which reveals that Filipinos ranked 5th in the world in 2020 as K-pop avid fans (Madarang, 2020). Also, Lacap et al. (2024) uncovered that Korean celebrity endorsers affect the attitude of Filipino consumers towards a brand and how they give a positive perception to a brands' credibility on beauty products. Hence, the undeniable approval of Filipinos to Korean popular culture extends to how they view themselves and how it affects their attitude towards a brand (Centeno & Wang, 2020).

Several studies prove the mediating effect of attitude towards a brand (Kaushal & Kumar, 2016; Sheeraz et al., 2016). The construct attitude towards a brand has been utilized as an intervening variable in the following: between endorser's credibility and purchase intention (Chin et al., 2019), brand credibility, and purchase intention (Sheeraz et al., 2016). From these studies, it can be observed that there is a scarcity of studies on the mediating role of attitude towards a brand between the relationship of endorser's credibility and brand credibility that leads to purchase intention. Moreover, there is no published research yet on the area in the Philippine context of how effective Korean celebrity endorsers are, especially in the telecom industry. Hence, the present study is conducted to address this gap in the literature. Korean pop (K-pop) idols are the subject of this study due to their growing popularity on both mainstream and social media platforms.

The present study is founded on the source credibility model and the meaning transfer model that both determine the factors influencing consumers' attitude towards a brand and purchase intention. The source credibility model argues that the credibility of a celebrity endorser depends on three dimensions, namely: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990) that positively impact consumers' attitude and purchase intention (Yoon & Kim, 2015). Expertise (experienced, expert, qualified, knowledgeable, and skilled) and trustworthiness (degree of confidence and level of acceptance) are the degrees of an endorser's ability in gaining a favorable outlook of the brand to the

consumer (Ananda & Wandebori, 2016). Furthermore, the endorser's attractiveness such as personality, intellectual skills, or athletic prowess (Kumar & Ramana, 2019) more likely leads to a higher brand attitude and purchase intentions (Nguyen, 2021).

Meanwhile, the meaning transfer model (MTM) conveys that cultural meaning resides in culture and moves to consumer products, then transfers to the consumers (McCracken, 1986) through marketing ideas and instruments (Kaur & Sohal, 2020). With this, meaning is illustrated as the total evaluation or importance of a product based on the representation of an endorser (Lee & Jeong, 2023). It has been observed that endorsement can be in the form of a celebrity that plays an important role in meaning transfer (McCracken, 1989). Along with their popularity, the endorsers' image and their characteristics generate a meaning in the society that will also introduce the product or brand they endorse (Yang et al., 2024). Certainly, consumers purchase the product or brand in the desire that the meaning they perceive will also take part in their life (Halder et al., 2024). In connection to this, the transfer meaning model has been applied in this study since Korean celebrities were employed as endorsers. Hence, analyzing how these endorsers impact on the consumers' purchase intention is conducted.

In marketing, one tactic by major companies is to use endorsers to represent them or their brand image (Halder et al., 2024). By appointing an endorser, advertisers help the company obtain the consumers' attention (Sudradjat & Wahid, 2020). Either a celebrity or a non-celebrity (Tanjung & Hudrasyah, 2019), an endorser is someone who represents and suggests a product (Darmawan et al., 2019). A celebrity is a well-known person to the public and uses their popularity to promote a product (Gupta et al., 2015). In comparison, a non-celebrity is an obscure person yet can be seen in an advertisement (Tanjung & Hudrasyah, 2019).

According to the source credibility model, individuals have the tendency to be enticed if they recognize the credibility of an endorser (Lee & Koo, 2015). The endorser's credibility can be affected by three factors: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Schouten et al., 2021). An endorser with expertise is more effective and credible in promoting products by giving appropriate information (Halder et al., 2021) especially to the products that are advanced, upgraded, hazardous, and valuable (Wen et al., 2009). Moreover, consumers will feel that the product is dependable if the endorser is trustworthy (Gilal et al., 2020). Furthermore, attractive endorsers undeniably influence and persuade consumers easily towards a brand (Nguyen, 2021). Therefore, the more credible the endorser is, the more favorable outlook for the brand image will be (Natarajan et al., 2023).

According to Molinillo et al. (2022), consumers construct a brand image that is crucial to consumers' decision-making and potentially provides biased brand evaluation. Brand plays an important role in managing consumer satisfaction and commitment related to the brand credibility of the service industry (Rather et al., 2022). Brand credibility is defined as the believability of the product information entrenched in a brand, depending on consumers' perceptions of whether the brand has the ability (i.e., expertise) and willingness (i.e., trustworthiness) to continuously deliver what has been promised (Lee & Kim, 2020).

Brand credibility provides an amicable relationship between consumers and a brand (Hussain et al., 2020). Additionally, through the use of marketing mix activities and practices such as advertising, sponsorship, or sales promotion, brand credibility is consistently achieved over time (Jeng, 2016) wherein expertise and trustworthiness are observed (Kao et al., 2020). Moreover, a brand serves as a basis when consumers are

uncertain about a brand and lack knowledge about the product than firms do. Thus, credibility is the most important characteristic of a brand as a signal of product positioning (Sekhar et al., 2022).

The degree to which consumers evaluate the brand that directs consumers' purchase behavior is called attitude towards a brand (Liu et al., 2020). A key driver of consumers' evaluation of a product/service in gaining a positive attitude towards a brand and its attributes is called brand image. A great brand image attracts consumers to differentiate and buy the product or service amongst its competitors (Lien et al., 2015). The brand image represents the wholeness of the brand to the people (Foroudi et al., 2021).

In addition, brand awareness and consumers' perceived quality immensely impact consumers' attitude towards a brand (Jung & Seock, 2016). Brand awareness, consumers' knowledge about the product/services, affects the decision making of the consumers in buying the products/ availing services; consumers tend to buy the brand they know well (Shahid et al., 2017). Also, consumers evaluate the quality of the brand, along with its price and styles, before finally purchasing the product. Perceived quality is regarded as the overall consumers' evaluation leading to purchase intention and satisfaction (Saleem et al., 2015). Finally, achieving a favorable attitude towards a brand leads to a higher level of brand satisfaction and a positive brand experience (Lacap & Tungcab, 2020).

Whenever customers decide to buy a product, they are affected by several factors such as their knowledge about the product, price, design, packaging, quality, celebrity endorsement, fashion, and sometimes family relations as well. These factors lead to purchase intention (Li & Peng, 2021). Purchase intention is the preference of the consumer to buy the product or service after evaluation (Younus et al., 2015). Prior studies have supported the impact and relation of the endorser's credibility, brand credibility, and attitude towards a brand on purchase intention (Jeng, 2016; Ong & Ong, 2015; Sheeraz et al., 2016; Vidyanata et al., 2018).

Throughout the years, marketing values are changing from using products' key qualities and features to using celebrities to endorse or sell products (Okoli, 2016). Endorser's trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise may have a positive and negative effect on consumers' purchase intention and attitude towards a brand. Many studies have revealed that an endorser's credibility has significantly and directly influenced purchase intention and attitude towards a brand. In recent studies, Ling (2021) investigated the relationship between endorser's credibility and purchase intention on Chinese smartphone buyers. The result revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between the credibility of the endorser and consumers' intention to purchase. Also, Kwajaffa et al. (2021) found out that the endorser's credibility has a positive effect on the consumers' purchase intention in India. Another study by Osei-Frimpong et al. (2019) reveals a significant effect of celebrity endorsement on consumers' purchase behavior. In addition, based on past studies, Wang et al. (2017) and Weismueller et al. (2020) also revealed that an endorser's credibility has a significant and direct influence on consumers' purchase intention.

The study of Ribeiro et al. (2021) revealed that a higher endorser's credibility plays a positive and important role in building consumers' loyalty to the brand that will significantly and directly influence the attitude towards a brand of Portuguese students. Febrian and Fadly (2021) also explored how an endorser's credibility influences the attitude towards a brand. The result revealed that the endorser's credibility significantly and directly influences the consumers' attitude towards a brand in Indonesia. The same is true with the studies of Chin et al. (2019) and Pradhan et al. (2016) whose results showed

that an endorser's credibility significantly and directly affects consumers' attitude towards a brand. Therefore, we proposed that

H1a: Endorser's credibility has a positive influence on purchase intention.

H1b: Endorser's credibility has a positive influence on attitude towards a brand.

Several studies revealed that brand credibility significantly and directly influences purchase intention and attitude towards a brand. For instance, Shams et al. (2017) investigate the relationship between brand credibility and consumers' purchase intention on several designer bags. The result revealed that creative and original brands have high brand credibility, resulting in an increased purchase intention. Lee and Kim (2020) also explored how brand credibility influences consumers' purchase intention. The findings revealed that credible brands have a positive and direct influence on the consumers' purchase intention. Moreover, the study of Paul and Bhakar (2018) showed that brand credibility increases the possibility that the consumer may choose to buy the product. On the contrary, poor brand credibility was found to reduce consumers' purchase intention (Atta et al., 2024).

When brand credibility is low, attitude towards a brand tends to decrease and vice versa (Dwivedi et al., 2019; Shams et al., 2020). Reitsamer and Brunner-Sperdin (2021) investigated the relationship between brand credibility and attitude towards a brand in leading winter sports destinations in Austria. The results revealed that brand credibility has a strong positive and direct impact on consumers' attitude towards a brand. Moreover, Isotalo and Watanen's (2015) research also revealed that providing an engaging and consistent brand experience increases the brand credibility that positively affects consumers' attitude towards a brand. The same is true with Atta et al. (2024) who noted that maintaining strong credibility has a positive influence on consumers' attitude towards a brand. Thus, we postulate that

H2a: Brand credibility significantly and directly influences purchase intention.

H2b: Brand credibility significantly and directly influences attitude towards a brand.

Studies revealed that attitude towards a brand has a significant and direct influence on purchase intention. Chin et al. (2019) investigated the correlation between attitude towards a brand and purchase intention for local apparel brands in Malaysia. The result revealed that consumers' attitude towards a brand has a significant and positive influence on purchase intention. Singh and Banerjee (2018) also revealed that attitude towards a brand has a significant influence on intention to purchase a two-wheeled motorcycle in India. According to AlFarraj et al. (2021), a highly credible brand will likely influence consumers' attitude towards a brand that will positively affect consumers' purchase intention. Another study reveals that consumers' brand perception influences attitudes towards a brand that will determine consumers' purchase intention (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Therefore,

H3: Attitude towards a brand significantly and directly influences purchase intention.

Several studies have identified that attitude towards a brand mediates the relationship between different constructs and purchase intentions. For instance, Sheeraz et al. (2016) found that attitude towards a brand partially mediates the relationship between brand credibility and purchase intention in the service sector in Pakistan. In the study of Sallam and Wahid (2012), the writers examined the mediating effects of attitude towards a brand of overhead products in Yemen between the relationship of attitude towards advertisement and purchase intention. The findings showed that attitude towards a brand partially mediates the relationship between attitude towards advertisement and purchase intention. Moreover, Lim et al. (2017) examined the mediating role of

consumers' attitude towards a brand between the relationship of social media influencer as an endorser and purchase intention. The authors found that consumers' attitude towards a brand or a product significantly mediates the relationship of social media influencers as endorsers--through its attractiveness, product match-up, and meaning transfer--and purchase intention. Furthermore, Chin et al. (2019) explored the mediating effects of attitude towards brand credibility and attitude towards a brand between endorser's credibility and brand credibility in fluctuating consumers' purchase intention. The study found that attitude towards brand credibility and attitude towards a brand hold a significant impact as mediators between endorser's credibility and brand credibility in fluctuating consumers' purchase intention. Hence, the present study examined whether the attitude towards a brand acts as a mediator of the endorser's credibility and brand credibility leading to purchase intention. Hence, we hypothesize that

H4a: Attitude towards a brand mediates the significant relationship between endorser's credibility and purchase intention.

H4b: Attitude towards a brand mediates the significant relationship between brand credibility and purchase intention.
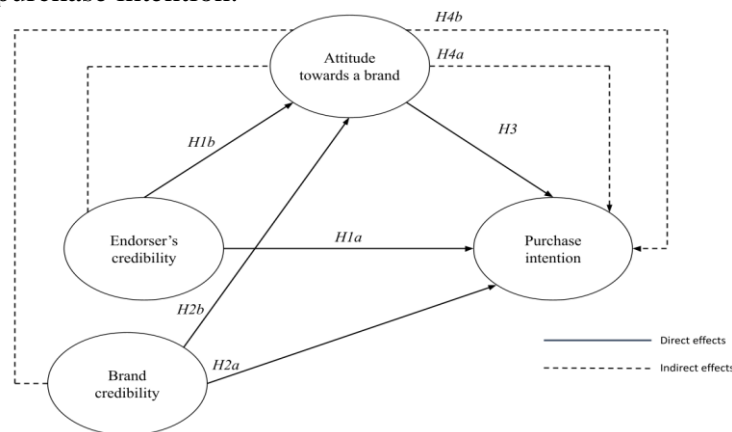

Figure 1. Proposed Research Framework (source: authors own work)

From the identified research hypotheses, Figure 1 presents the proposed research framework on the relationship of endorser's credibility and brand credibility to purchase intention and attitude towards a brand. Moreover, the present study also explored the mediating effects of attitude towards a brand on the relationship between endorser's credibility and brand credibility to purchase intention.

Methods

Participants of the Study

The respondents of the present study were selected by applying the purposive sampling technique. The gathering of data was done through online surveys that started in April 2021 and ended in June 2021. There were assessments made in the survey to verify the target respondents. *First*, participants were identified whether they are Globe or Smart/PLDT internet subscribers. *Then*, they were asked if they have seen the recent advertisement of Blackpink for Globe subscribers and the advertisement of BTS for Smart users. *After that*, participants were questioned about their age to identify those 18 years old and above. *Lastly*, their location was sought to find out those located within NCR. After these evaluations, only participants who met the criteria answered the main questions. Out of 460 distributed surveys, 234 qualified and answered completely, giving a response rate of 50.87%. To gauge the sufficiency of the sample size, PLS-SEM was

used. The sample size used is 234.

The instrument used in the study was a self-administered online survey questionnaire generated through a Google form. It consisted of two parts--demographic factors and the constructs of the study. The demographic characteristics include the respondent's age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, occupation, location, internet activities, and monthly internet spending. On the other hand, the constructs consist of the endorser's credibility, brand credibility, attitude towards a brand, and purchase intention. Endorser's credibility was measured using the twelve items adopted from the study of Wang et al. (2017). On the assessment of brand credibility, seven items used in this construct were taken from the studies of Erdem and Swait (2004) and Wang et al. (2017). With regards to the attitude towards a brand, items were taken from the studies of Wang et al. (2017), Wei and Lu (2013), and Tee et al. (2013). For purchase intention, five items were from the studies of Wang et al. (2017) and Kumar et al. (2009). All items in the four constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree. The validity and reliability of the said constructs were measured as shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Results

A predictive-causal research design was used in the present study to assess the interrelationships of the four constructs—endorser's credibility, brand credibility, attitude towards a brand, and purchase intention. To estimate the relationships of the proposed model with latent variables, the partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using WarpPLS 7.0 software was applied. A PLS-SEM is a statistical test that follows multi-stages: (1) inner and outer model specification, (2) assessment of the outer model, and (3) evaluation of the inner model. Furthermore, the present study applied the mediation analysis to measure how mediator/s absorb/s the effects of an exogenous variable on an endogenous construct in PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2014).

The assessment of the measurement instrument includes the validity and reliability of the constructs. In the present study, the validity of the research instrument was measured using convergent and discriminant validity tests. Convergent validity is a measure of the totality of features and characteristics of a measurement instrument. If the questions associated with each latent construct are understood by the respondents in the same way as they are intended by the designer/s of the question statements, then convergent validity is evident in the measurement instrument. On the other hand, discriminant validity is apparent when the items or measures of each latent construct have a clear meaning and respondents take it as understandable (Kock, 2017).

Before a measurement instrument is deemed to be acceptable, both convergent and discriminant validity must be presented. Convergent validity was assessed by evaluating the loadings of each item for every latent construct. A value of 0.5 and above must be seen in each loading and the p-values for each loading must be equal to or less than 0.05 (Hair et al., 2009; Kock, 2017). Based on the results in Table 1, the latent constructs - endorser's credibility, brand credibility, attitude towards a brand, and purchase intention - are within the acceptable thresholds for convergent validity.

Additionally, the assessment of the average variance extracted (AVE) values were included to determine the discriminant validity of the measurement model. According to Kock and Lynn (2012), the values of the AVEs must be equal to or greater than 0.5. As seen in Table 1, the coefficient of AVE for endorser's credibility is the only latent construct that is below the recommended level; other latent constructs reached the desired

level. However, Lam (2012) argued Fornell and Larcker's (1981) statement where an AVE is a conservative estimate to prove the validity of a measurement model; therefore, an AVE coefficient below the recommended level can still be acceptable as long as the reliability measurements (composite reliability) are accepted.

To determine the reliability of the research instrument, both Cronbach's alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CR) are reported. Through these reliability tests, the quality of the research instrument can be seen. A reliable research instrument has measures or items for each latent construct that are accepted by different participants equally (Kock, 2017). The present study used the acceptable coefficient of 0.60 and above for CA values (Hair et al., 2012; Ringle et al., 2014) while the CR value must be equal to or greater than 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Nunnally, 1978; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Based on the coefficients of CA and CR, as shown in Table 1, the latent construct endorser's credibility, brand credibility, attitude towards a brand, and purchase intention are highly reliable.

Table 1. Convergent validity and reliability measures

Constructs/Items	Factor loading
Endorser's credibility: AVE = 0.461; CR = 0.911; CA = 0.893	
EC1. I prefer to watch advertisements with physically attractive celebrity endorsers.	0.692
EC2. I think that attractiveness is an important characteristic for a celebrity endorser.	0.622
EC3. I feel that a physically attractive endorser influences my purchase intention towards a celebrity-endorsed brand.	0.731
EC4. I remember a brand more that is endorsed by attractive celebrities.	0.615
EC5. I think advertisements with a celebrity endorser who has expertise are more respectable.	0.622
EC6. I pay more attention to the advertisements endorsed by an expert celebrity.	0.724
EC7. I will buy a product if it is endorsed by an expert celebrity.	0.708
EC8. I think of a brand that is endorsed by a trust expert celebrity.	0.731
EC9. I think a product endorsed by trustworthy celebrity endorsers receives less negative recall.	0.615
EC10. I feel that an advertisement with a trustworthy endorser pushes me to remember the advertisement itself the product being endorsed.	0.619
EC11. I think that a celebrity endorser is a trustworthy person.	0.688
EC12. I think a brand endorsed by a trustworthy celebrity is more respectable and desirable.	0.754
Brand credibility: AVE = 0.696; CR = 0.941; CA = 0.925	
BC1. This brand reminds me of someone who is competent and knows what he/she is doing.	0.646
BC2. This brand has the ability to deliver what it promises.	0.838
BC3. This brand delivers what it promises.	0.890
BC4. This brand's claims are believable.	0.851
BC5. This brand has a name that you can trust.	0.854
BC6. This brand is not pretentious.	0.811
BC7. This brand delivers what it has promised.	0.923
Attitudes towards a brand: AVE = 0.584; CR = 0.847; CA = 0.758	
AT1. I bought a product because of its brand.	0.781

AT2. I remember the brand because of the celebrity endorser.	0.615
AT3. I think this brand is worth purchasing.	0.841
AT4. I think I am willing to buy a branded product.	0.800
Purchase intention: AVE = 0.549; CR = 0.855; CA = 0.787	
PI1. I will buy the product if the celebrity I like started endorsing it.	0.870
PI2. I would continue buying a product endorsed by a celebrity.	0.844
PI3. I consider myself to be loyal to a brand because of its endorser.	0.793
PI4. I intent to buy a product from a trusted brand.	0.564
PI5. I plan to buy a product from a trusted brand more often.	0.572

Note: All item loadings are significant at 0.001 (p<.001). AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability; CA = Cronbach's alpha

Moreover, the discriminant validity was evaluated through Fornell and Larcker's criterion. This criterion shows that the diagonal values represent the square root of AVE for each latent construct. These values must be greater than their corresponding off-diagonal values in the same row on their left side to say that discriminant validity is present (Ab Hamid et al., 2017; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Kock, 2017). Regarding this, the results in Table 2 indicate that the measures used in the study have discriminant validity.

Table 2. Discriminant validity using Fornell and Larcker criterion

	EC	BC	AT	PI
EC	0.679			
BC	0.576	0.835		
AT	0.588	0.608	0.764	
PI	0.632	0.527	0.661	0.741

Note: EC- endorser's credibility; BC- brand credibility; AT- attitude towards a brand; PI- purchase intention. Diagonal elements are the square root of the AVE of constructs while the off-diagonal elements are the correlation between constructs.

Furthermore, Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criterion was also applied to verify the discriminant validity of the constructs. According to Ab Hamid et al. (2017), the HTMT criterion can adequately determine the discriminant validity of the constructs compared to the Fornell -Larcker criterion. An HTMT ratio is sufficient when it is less than 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015) or lower than 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001; Teo et al., 2008). Thus, the results in Table 3 for the HTMT criterion exhibited a discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant validity using heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criterion

	EC	BC	AT	PI
EC				
BC	0.642			
AT	0.734	0.727		
PI	0.722	0.611	0.879	

Note: EC- endorser's credibility; BC- brand credibility; AT- attitude towards a brand; PI- purchase intention.

Structural model evaluation involves the assessment of path coefficients of the structural model, collinearity, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect sizes, and predictive relevance (Q^2). Figure 3 shows the PLS path model. The beta coefficients (β) are the path coefficients of the mediation model. The beta coefficient between the endorser's credibility and purchase intention (β=0.35, p<0.01) and the path between the endorser's credibility and attitude towards a brand (β=0.33 p<0.01) are both significant and positive. The same is true with the relationship between brand credibility and attitude

towards a brand (*β*=0.43 *p*<0.01) and attitude towards a brand and purchase intention (*β*=0.43 *p*<0.01). On the other hand, the relationship between brand credibility and purchase intention (*β*=0.05 *p*<0.23) is insignificant. Moreover, attitude towards a brand significantly and positively mediates the relationship between endorser's credibility and purchase intention (*β*=0.14 *p*<0.01). In addition, attitude towards a brand also has a significant and positive mediation effect on the relationship between brand credibility and purchase intention (*β*=0.18 *p*<0.01).
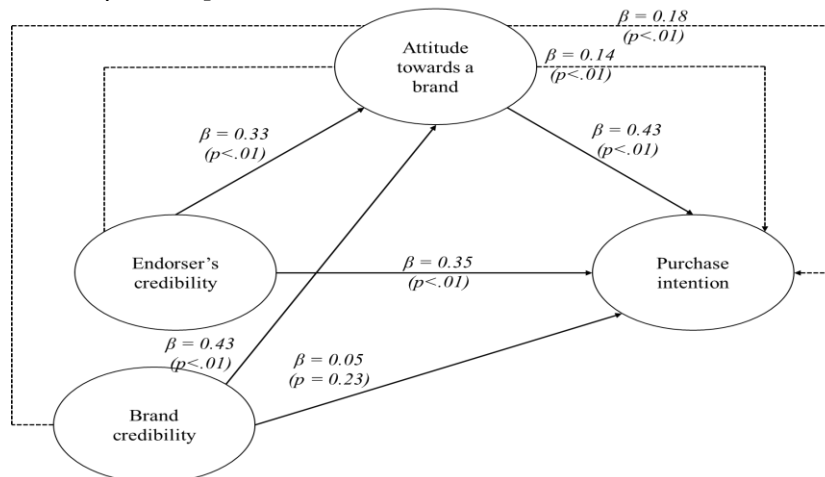

Figure 2. The mediation model with parameter estimates (source: authors own work)

Table 4 presents the direct and indirect effects of the PLS-SEM model. Assessment of data shows that the endorser's credibility significantly and positively affects the purchase intention of the consumers ($\beta = 0.353$, $p<0.001$). The beta coefficient strengthens that the endorser's credibility influences the purchase intention of consumers. The effect size of the endorser's credibility to purchase intention (Cohen's $f^2 = 0.228$) is medium; hence, H1 is supported. Furthermore, an endorser's credibility significantly and positively affects the attitude towards a brand *(β = 0.331, p<0.001)*. As supported by the path coefficient with a medium effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = 0.197$), the endorser's credibility impacts the consumers' attitude towards a brand. The result suggests that H1b is supported. With regards to brand credibility to purchase intention, there is a positive yet insignificant relationship between the two variables ($\beta = 0.049$, p 0.227). Brand credibility does not significantly influence the purchase intention of the consumers. Hence, H2a is not supported. However, the relationship of brand credibility to attitude towards a brand has a positive and significant effect ($\beta = 0.427$, $p<0.001$). This suggests that brand credibility governs the consumers' attitude towards a brand. The effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = 0.270$) is medium; thus, H2b is supported. Additionally, attitude towards a brand showed a positive and significant connection to purchase intention ($\beta = 0.430$, $p<0.001$). Also, having a medium effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = 0.291$), H3 is supported.

Concerning the endorser's credibility and purchase intention, the indirect relationship towards a brand is scientifically significant ($\beta = 0.142$, $p<0.001$). This magnifies that attitude towards a brand partly mediates in the association of endorser's credibility and purchase intention with a small effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = 0.092$). As a result, H4a is supported. In addition to this, attitude towards a brand has also a significant *(β = 0.184, p<0.001)* effect on brand credibility and purchase intention. It also mediates relatively to brand credibility and purchase intention. The positive path also shows a small effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = 0.102$); hence, H4b is also supported.

Table 4. Direct and indirect effects

Hypothesis	β	p	SE	f^2	Decision
Direct effects					
H1a. EC → PI	0.353	<0.001	0.061	0.228	Supported
H1b. EC → AT	0.331	<0.001	0.062	0.197	Supported
H2a. BC → PI	0.049	0.227	0.065	0.027	Not supported
H2b. BC → AT	0.427	<0.001	0.061	0.270	Supported
H3. AT → PI	0.430	<0.001	0.062	0.291	Supported
Indirect effect					
H4a. EC → AT → PI	0.142	<0.001	0.045	0.092	Supported
H4b. BC → AT → PI	0.184	<0.001	0.045	0.102	Supported

Note: EC- endorser's credibility; BC- brand credibility; AT- attitude towards a brand; PI- purchase intention; β- standardized path coefficient; p-p-value; SE-standard error; f2-effect size (Cohen, 1988): 0.02=small, 0.15=medium, 0.35=large.

Full collinearity VIFs were also assessed to detect and correct common method variance. According to Kock (2015) and Kock and Lynn (2012), full collinearity VIF value must be equal to or less than 3.3. As seen in Table 6, the coefficients of full collinearity VIF of brand credibility, endorser's credibility attitude towards a brand, and purchase intention are within the acceptable values; hence, the constructs used passed the common method bias test.

As part of the study of the structural model, the coefficient of determination (*R2*) and predictive validity (*Q2*) were also assessed. According to Cohen (1988) and Kock (2014), 0.02 *R2* coefficients mean that the effects are very weak and irrelevant from a practical perspective. On the other hand, to consider that the construct possesses predictive relevance the Stone-Geisser *Q2* coefficients must be greater than zero (Geisser, 1974; Kock, 2020; Stone, 1977). As shown in Table 5, all constructs passed the *R2* and *Q2* requirements.

Table 5. Collinearity assessment, coefficient of determination, and predictive relevance

Construct	Full collinearity VIF	Q^2	R^2
EC	1.983		
BC	1.806		
AT	2.191	0.468	0.467
PI	2.130	0.549	0.547

Note: EC- endorser's credibility; BC- brand credibility; AT- attitude towards a brand; PI- purchase intention; R2- coefficient of determination; Q^2- predictive validity.

Discussion

Analysis of the result revealed that an endorser's credibility has a positive influence on purchase intention and consumers' attitude towards a brand. The results signify that the endorser's credibility plays a great role in influencing the consumers' purchase intention and attitude towards a brand. It illustrates that an endorser's credibility greatly impacts attracting the customers, trusting the brand, and purchasing the product. Also, it improves the brand image and brand recall making the customers more likely to purchase the product. Hence, when an endorser's credibility is recognized, it may increase purchase intention and a positive attitude towards a brand. Prior studies have also identified that an endorser's credibility directs to boost purchase intention and favorable attitude towards a brand (Gilal et al., 2020; Lee & Koo, 2015; Nguyen, 2021).

The result revealed that the relationship between brand credibility and purchase

intention is not supported. The findings suggest that brand credibility does not lead consumers into having an intention to purchase products. According to Hussain et al. (2020), poor brand credibility was found to reduce consumers' purchase intention. Monoarfa and Tausyanah's (2020) study also revealed that poor service quality affects brand credibility and customer satisfaction. Thus, the lack of connection between brand credibility and purchase intention can imply that consumers are unsatisfied, and some are not willing to purchase or subscribe to the two telecom's services due to disappointment in the credibility of the brand.

However, the result showed that the relationship between brand credibility and attitude towards a brand is supported. This suggests that brand credibility is significant and has a direct influence on attitude towards a brand. This connection between the two constructs also suggests that the credibility of the two telecoms can positively affect how consumers view and interpret their brands. Prior studies regarding brand credibility and attitude towards a brand support that there is a connection between the two constructs which signifies that the presence of the former has a direct influence on consumers' opinion towards the product of the brand (Dwivedi et al., 2019; Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin 2021; Shams et al., 2020).

In terms of attitude towards a brand and purchase intention, the result showed that consumers' attitude towards a brand significantly and directly influences purchase intention. This signifies that purchase intention is a result of a positive attitude of consumers towards a brand. Moreover, the positive correlation between the two constructs means that the view and opinions of consumers extremely affect their behavior to make a concrete decision before subscribing to the telecom's services. This is also the case of previous studies regarding the significance of attitude towards a brand and how it directly influences consumers' purchase intention (Chin et al., 2019; Singh & Banerjee, 2018).

Remarkably, findings revealed that attitude towards a brand holds a significant impact as a mediator between endorser's credibility and brand credibility leading to purchase intention. As mentioned, the relationship between brand credibility and purchase intention is not supported; however, the mediating effect of attitude towards a brand undeniably intensified the connection between the two latent constructs. In line with this astonishing result, telecom companies should take note that their brand credibility alone is not sufficient to trigger consumers' purchase intention; nevertheless, through the aid of attitude towards a brand, the connection becomes apparent.

Regarding the results between the endorser's credibility and purchase intention, it is also surprisingly revealed that attitude towards a brand positively mediates between the two constructs. This result suggests to telecom companies that attitude towards a brand amplifies the effectiveness of K-pop idols, making persuaded consumers unconsciously increase their purchase intention. Additionally, consumers' purchase depends on how a product influences them (Shahid et al., 2017). Expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, which are factors of an endorser's credibility (Atta et al., 2024) aid the consumers' favorable views of the product (Weismueller et al., 2020). Furthermore, brand credibility provides the way for product positioning (AlFarraj et al., 2021), and consumers' evaluation affects their purchase intention (Saleem et al., 2015). Thus, the result implies that attitude towards a brand creates a stronger link between the association of the endorser's credibility and brand credibility to make a momentous impact on purchase intention.

The present study highlights the credibility of a brand and the endorser, its effect

on the consumers' purchase intention, and the role of attitude towards a brand as a mediator. Internet service providers or the telecom industry must continue to emphasize the role and the attributes of the K-pop idols or Korean celebrities, as endorsers, to their companies. The present study found that in terms of the credibility of the brand, attitude towards the brand plays a significant role in influencing consumers to purchase the products/services. It implies that consumers evaluate the brand carefully by assessing the quality of the product/service, its price and styles, the image of the brand, and through their awareness of the brand. Additionally, K-pop idols or Korean celebrities gain a positive and higher impact on the purchase intention of the consumers. It entails that telecom companies must take advantage of the popularity of K-pop idols or Korean celebrities.

It is also worthy to highlight that this study will serve as a good source of insights for marketers, managers, and Korean celebrity endorsers in aspects of marketing and brand management within the telecom industry. Also, this will help them understand the consumers' behavior in choosing a telecom company in the Philippines. In this study, it reveals that Korean celebrity endorsers have a significant and positive impact on consumers' attitude towards a brand and purchase intention. This can be attributed to the fact that K-pop culture is penetrating even in the landscape of marketing and advertising. On the other hand, according to this study, the brand credibility of a telecom company does not significantly affect the consumers' purchase intention. Thus, marketers and management of a telecom company should invest more and take advantage of utilizing the popularity of K-pop idols nowadays. In addition, the mediating role of attitude towards a brand in an endorser's credibility and brand credibility can impact significantly the consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, marketers and managers in the telecom industry must positively increase the attitude towards a brand by improving brand image, brand awareness, and quality of the brand together with its price and styles.

A key theoretical contribution of this study establishes the importance of consumers' attitude towards a brand as a mediator between the endorser's credibility and brand credibility to purchase intention. The findings support the source credibility model wherein the attractiveness of Korean celebrity endorsers contributes to how consumers are influenced before deciding to buy products (Lee & Jeong, 2023). This study also supports the meaning transfer model (MTM) through the indirect effect of consumers' attitudes towards a brand between the endorser's credibility and purchase intention. This mediation of attitude towards a brand between the endorser's credibility and purchase intention can imply that consumers want to purchase these products endorsed by Korean celebrities because they want to feel that they have the same interest and personality that will give meaning to their purchase.

There are limitations in the present study. First, it only focuses on the National Capital Region of the Philippines. Hence, future researchers may conduct in-depth studies around the Philippines since both telecom companies operate nationwide. They might also add the new telecom company in the Philippines that will also operate nationwide. Second, the study targets the telecom industry. Thus, future researchers may conduct related studies in other sectors or industries, e.g., restaurants/food industry, clothing and fashion industry, and mobile phones companies. Additionally, it concentrates on one mediator only which is the attitude towards a brand in assessing consumers' intention to purchase a product or avail services. Therefore, future researchers may commit to finding other mediating variables, e.g., attitude towards advertisement, perceived value, etc., on the relationship of endorser's credibility and brand credibility leading to purchase

intention.

Conflict of Interest

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organization related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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