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Influence of Korean Celebrity Endorsement on Chinese Consumers' Purchase Intention towards Fashion Goods

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Abstract

Korean celebrity endorsement is a common practice adopted by companies in China. This study assessed the impact of celebrity endorsement (trustworthiness, attractiveness, congruency, and expertise) on Chinese consumers' intention to purchase clothes endorsed by Korean celebrities. This study used reliability and validity tests and structural equation model analysis to explore the relationship between variables using SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 22.0. This study conducted an online survey (www.sojump.com) from August 10, 2020 to August 20, 2020 and collected 370 respondents. Results show that all constructs of celebrity endorsement positively affected purchase intention and that celebrity expertise had the strongest impact. With respect to the influence of demographic variables on the constructs, gender, age, and education had a significant effect on trustworthiness; gender and age had a significant effect on attractiveness; and income had an effect on purchase intention. Marketing executives should consider using Korean celebrities for different purposes in brand advertising. Particularly, celebrity expertise, such as experience, knowledge, and skills, should receive attention while publicizing to Chinese consumers. This study contributes to the academic and practical implications of Korean celebrity endorsement.

I. Introduction

China's clothing market is growing rapidly, and endorsements from local and foreign celebrities are emerging constantly. In the area of business, celebrity endorsement plays a vital role because it influences consumers' purchase decisions (Kraa, Osei, Cofie, & Quaye, 2018). Many countries use actors, actresses, entertainers, and sports celebrities to position a brand (Randhawa, Sharma, & Malhotra, 2015). In China today, most fashion industries or companies use celebrities for endorsement. In analyzing the current market situation, fashion marketers must use different famous personalities to associate themselves with their fashion brands to create unique identities and popularize the fashion company's brand or product. A celebrity image that is good and fits with the product leads to the credibility and effectivity of the brand (Abraham & Rajkumar, 2018). Celebrities are also effective because they are what many people aspire to be and are symbols of personal desire.

Celebrity endorsement influences consumers' behavior. Kooli, Habsi, and Abadli (2018) indicated that celebrity endorsement positively affects consumers' attitude and purchase behavior in certain Arab countries (Oman and the UAE). Abdulmajid and Abdul (2012) confirmed that endorser attractiveness and expertise influence consumers' attitude toward advertisement and purchase intention. Ibadunni, Olokundun, Ibadunni, Borishade, Falola, Salau, Amahian, and Fred (2018) revealed that celebrity image affects consumer brand loyalty, and celebrity worthiness influences consumer brand association in India. Srivastava (2011) showed that matching brand personality and celebrity personality increases purchase intention in India. Recently, IU, Jun Ji-hyun, and other stars have participated in the endorsement of a Chinese fashion brand, which has achieved extraordinary results. In addition to public media exposure, social media, such as Tiktok and Weibo, are constantly mentioned and imitated by consumers and affect their purchasing power. Especially in Tiktok, many Korean artists have opened official accounts to publicize their daily uploads. Even if

many Chinese consumers pay attention to Korean celebrities, few studies have shown the kind of behavior impact the endorsement effect of Korean celebrities in Chinese clothes has on Chinese local consumers. Moreover, the ever-changing Chinese consumers are certainly different from before, and studies on the influence of consumers' demographic variables on relevant factors must be conducted again.

Ultimately, this study focuses on the effect of celebrity endorsement on consumer behavior. Thus, this study mainly aims to examine the effect of Korean celebrity endorsement on the purchase intention of Chinese fashion brands in China. This study entails constructive suggestions for China's clothing industry and provides valuable suggestions and solutions on how to employ suitable Korean celebrity endorsement.

II. Literature Review

1. Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement is defined as a person with public recognition who stands up to publicize the products and products they represent (Hassan & Jamil, 2014). Organizations that spare no expense on celebrity endorsement are worth noting. Khan (2018) indicated that celebrity endorsement is an powerful strategy for marketers. Consumers perceive the brands endorsed by celebrities they idealize to be of high quality. Celebrity endorsement is one of the applied strategies in raising various types of fashion products because it helps corporations construct fashion awareness and gain acceptance by adopting celebrities.

The importance of celebrity endorsement has prompted several researchers to examine its effectiveness. To refer to the response of more extensive consumer groups to the endorsement effect of other countries' celebrities, this study refers to the relevant foreign examples. For example, celebrity endorsers increasing attitude toward luxury brands for sustainable consumption in the UK (Cuomo, Foroudi, Tortora, Hussain, & Melewar, 2019), enhancing consumers' purchase intention toward

SAMSUNG mobile phones in Ghana (Kraa et al., 2018), impacting advertisement attitude, influencing brand attitude in Yemen (Abdulmajid & Abdul, 2012), improving purchase intention and marketing effectiveness in Pakistan (Khan, 2018), enhancing product sales in Arab countries (Kooli et al., 2018), and influencing brand preference in Lagos State, Nigeria (Ibidunni et al., 2018). A model has been proposed in Hung, Chan, and Tse (2011) assumes how celebrity-worship leads to value-transfer. That, in turn, could influence the brand purchase intention using Chinese respondents' data. The outcome variables of celebrity endorsement are quite varied. Moreover, celebrity endorsement is divided into several dimensions. Each paper has different dimensions and questionnaire items, as shown in Table 1. Many Korean celebrities endorse brands in China recently. For example, IU (아이유) and Park Shin-hye (박신혜) partnered with and endorsed Hstyle (韩都衣舍), respectively, Lisa (블랙핑크 리사) endorsed the Meng Niu Group (蒙牛集团), Kim Soo Hyun (김수현) endorsed Semir (森马) brand, and Jun Ji-hyun (전지현) endorsed YISHION (以纯) in China, indicating that Chinese brands still have a special preference for Korean celebrities. Especially affected by the Korean wave, the country image of Korea is particularly high in the eyes of Chinese people, which leads to the high degree of Chinese consumers' preference for Korean products (An, 2018). The effect of Korean wave is most obvious in the clothing industry, in Sohn, Im, Shin, and Lee (2003) study, Chinese consumers have higher awareness and satisfaction of Korean clothing.

On the basis of the discussed theoretical research above, combined with the current business situation between China and South Korea, and considering the characteristics of Korean celebrities, the present study makes the following decisions. Celebrity endorsement is divided into four most commonly used dimensions (Table 1), namely, trustworthiness, attractiveness, congruency, and expertise.

1) Celebrity Trustworthiness

The trust paradigm in communication is the degree of

confidence and acceptability of the listener to the speaker and the information (Ohanian, 1990). The variable dimensions are named as "dependable," "honest," "reliable," "sincere," and "trustworthy." Moreover, terms such as good personality, acceptance, psychological security, and perceived supportive atmosphere are generally regarded as the favorable results of "trust". Ibidunni et al. (2018) showed the regression and correlation between celebrity endorsement and consumer brand preference. Lafferty and Goldsmith's (1999) results added to the evidence that "trustworthiness" and "expertise" lead to positive advertisement attitude, brand attitude, and purchase intention.

2) Celebrity Attractiveness

Despite the numerous published reports addressing physical attractiveness, the issue has never been clear. A review of this area indicates that the variable of attractiveness is not necessarily a single dimension and that countless definition is used to operationalize attractiveness. This dimension is also referred to as "attractiveness," "classy," "beautiful," "elegant," and "sexy." Attractiveness is the strongest factor of endorsing to enhance consumers' attitude toward advertising, which affects consumers' attitude brand, which in turn forms consumers' purchase intention (Abdulmajid & Abdul, 2012). Hassan and Jamil (2014) assessed consumer celebrity relationship and confirmed that attributes of Indian celebrity are not much important for the purchase intention of Pakistan consumers. The present study needs to reevaluate whether foreign celebrity endorsement can affect local consumers' purchase.

3) Celebrity Congruency

The term "congruency" is used in several research areas, particularly brand extension, co-branding, sponsoring, and endorsement (Fleck-Dousteyssier & Korchia, 2006). Congruency between the celebrity and brand is also demanded by consumers because it helps them easily assimilate the message being conveyed (Khan, 2018). Various terms have been used, namely, fit, link, and match-up effect. To analyze the match-up principle of

celebrities with brand endorsing, celebrities positively and significantly affect purchase intention. Srivastava (2011) indicated that celebrity–brand fit is a must. The celebrity/product fit, which is also called the “match–up,” refers to the harmony of the match between the celebrity endorser and the brand being endorsed. Similarities between the celebrity and the product would create cohesiveness (Abraham & Rajkumar, 2018).

4) Celebrity Expertise

Consumers consider brand expertise in choosing a celebrity endorser as an indicator of credibility in the

endorser and the brand, which improves the brand image of a product (Khan, 2018). Some clothing brands directly find their corresponding designers to speak for them, such as Tom Ford and Karl Lagerfeld, which is professional and persuasive. Abraham and Rajkumar (2018) indicated that consumers should believe that the brand ambassador has expertise. Consumers usually perceive information as expertise and trust the source; celebrities use the source for advertisement to give unbiased and objective information (Randhawa et al., 2015). As mentioned in a related study, Pakistan’s celebrity expertise regression results show positive and

Table 1. Celebrity Endorsement Dimensions from Previous Studies

Authors	Dimensions	Number of Items
Ohanian (1990)	Attractiveness	5
	Trustworthiness	5
	Expertise	5
Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999)	Attractiveness	2
	Trustworthiness	2
	Expertise	2
Fleck-Dousteyssier and Korchia (2006)	Expectancy	3
	Relevancy	3
	Congruency	3
Abdulmajid and Abdul (2012)	Trustworthiness	5
	Expertise	6
	Attractiveness	4
Hassan and Jamil (2014)	Physical Attractiveness	5
	Credibility/Trustworthiness	5
	Expertise	5
	Congruence	5
Kraa et al. (2018)	Personality	Unknown
	Popularity	Unknown
	Profession	Unknown
Kooli et al. (2018)	Trustworthiness	Unknown
	Popularity	Unknown
Cuomo et al. (2019)	Attractiveness	5
	Trustworthiness	5
	Expertise	5

significant effects on purchase intention, unlike Indian celebrities. Thus, local celebrities are considered to be knowledgeable. Adjectives such as “expert,” “experienced,” “knowledgeable,” “qualified,” and “skilled” have been used to measure this dimension (Ohanian, 1990).

2. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to planning to purchase something for future use. However, before this intention is a cognitive process that works, where several factors of consumer perception about a product or a source person matter. Day and Tsai (2013) indicated that consumers tend to choose the greatest perceived value of the product or service while making purchase decisions, and purchase intention can measure the possibility of a consumer to buy a product. In purchase intention, the main focus of the study is the attitude toward the source person—celebrity endorser (Hassan & Jamil, 2014). Cuomo et al. (2019) suggested that celebrity endorsement can positively influence consumers’ purchase intention of luxury brands. Purchase intention depends on an individual’s attitude toward the behavior and the subjective norms associated with it (Pradhan, Israel, & Sethi, 2014). In particular, the impact on Korean wave fans in K-pop, K-drama, K-food, K-fashion and other

fields has increased the purchasing intention of Chinese consumers for Korean fashion goods (Shen & Kim, 2018), suggesting that purchase intention is an outcome variable of the attitude or Chinese consumer perception about the clothes endorsed by Korean celebrities.

III. Methodologies

1. Research Model

The research model presented in Figure 1 originates from the inference of the literature review. Every cell represents a construct and the factor(s) of the construct. The arrow-headed line represents the causal relationship between the two constructs. Specific research questions are listed below.

Q1: How do demographic variables affect constructs?

Q2: How does Korean celebrity trustworthiness affect Chinese consumers’ purchase intention?

Q3: How does Korean celebrity attractiveness affect Chinese consumers’ purchase intention?

Q4: How does Korean celebrity congruency affect Chinese consumers’ purchase intention?

Q5: How does Korean celebrity expertise affect Chinese consumers’ purchase intention?

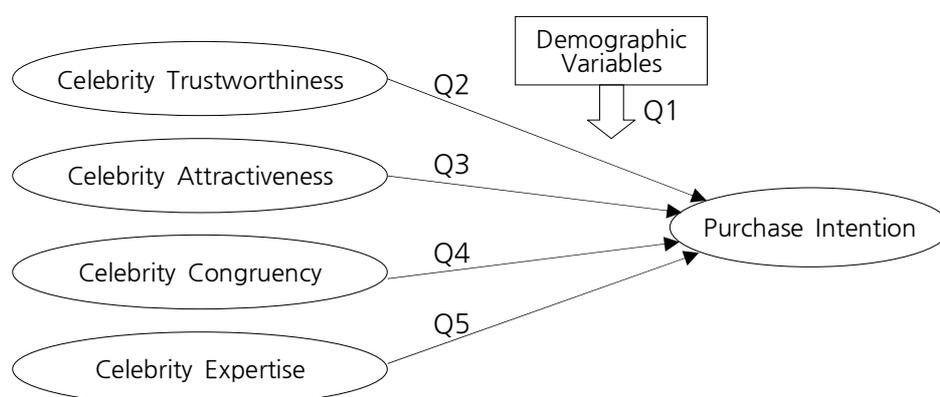


Figure 1. Research Model

2. Data Collection and Samples

A quantitative research approach was adopted for this study to examine the impact of Korean celebrity endorsement on Chinese consumers' intention to purchase clothes. A total of 370 data were collected from Chinese residents under the age of 30 years old, from August 10~20, 2020, using convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique. The reason is that Chinese consumers under 30 years old are more sensitive to fashion, familiar with Korean celebrities and have certain consumption capacity. An online survey (www.sojump.com) questionnaire with scenarios was distributed to Chinese consumers who voluntarily filled out the questionnaires. In order to prevent brand power influence, the questionnaire did not indicate which brand it was, but asked the respondents to recall the brand they knew. In other words, To reduce the effect error caused by different brands and celebrities, the participants must imagine the Chinese clothing brand endorsed by a Korean celebrity and then answer the questionnaire in sequence, which can reduce the extra impact of the brand power or celebrity differentiation. The front page of the questionnaire is as follows: "First, please recall the Chinese clothing brand endorsed by a Korean celebrity and mentally recite the celebrity's name and clothing products. Then, answer the question."

Half of respondents are male (50%, n=185), and the other half are female (50%, n=185). In terms of age, 32.7% (n=121) are 10~19 years old, 34.3% (n=127) are 20~29 years old, and 33.0% (n=122) are 20~29 years old, showing the uniform age distribution. The majority of participants completed undergraduate education (65.1%, n=241), the second largest group completed graduate education (22.2%, n=82), and the smallest group completed high school education (12.7%, n=47). Approximately 27.3% (n=101) of respondents have household income below 1,000,000 won, 40.3% (n=149) have it between 1,000,000 and 1,500,000 won, and 32.4% (n=120) have it over 1,500,000 won.

3. Measurements

The scale measurement from previous studies, which is reliable and valid, is used in this study. Celebrity endorsement is measured based on four credibility constructs: (i) trustworthiness, (ii) attractiveness, (iii) congruency, and (iv) expertise. Some constructs, such as trustworthiness (four items), attractiveness (four items), and expertise (four items), are measured on the basis of the studies Ohanian (1990) and Hassan and Jamil (2014). Congruency (four items) is obtained and revised from relevant studies (Fleck-Dousteyssier & Korchia, 2006; Hassan & Jamil, 2014). Moreover, the purchase intention of clothes that celebrities endorse is tested through four items that were expanded and were based on Cuomo et al. (2019). A five-point Likert scale is conducted and arranged in an orderly manner from strongly disagree (1 point) to strongly agree (5 point).

IV. Results

1. Reliability and Validity Test

Both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were conducted in sequence using SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 22.0 static systems. EFA was used to determine the factor structure of measure and scrutinize internal reliability in the research model. The results designate that Cronbach's alpha (0.89 through 0.94) for each factor is internally consistent (Nunnally, 1978). Then, CFA was used to test the validity of the data, and all sub-constructs were tested separately (trustworthiness, attractiveness, congruency, and expertise). The items on each scale were valid. The measurement model for the sample has the goodness-of-fit values of $X^2/df=2.394$, RMSEA=0.059, IFI=0.962, TLI=0.936, CFI=0.961, and GFI=0.906, indicating a sufficient level of acceptance. The average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability values were high at 0.69~0.94 and 0.91~0.95, respectively. The estimates were found to be between 0.78 and 0.92, which are deemed acceptable (Bryman & Bell, 2015), as shown in Table 2.

Moreover, Table 3 presents that, with regard to each

pair of potential variables, the AVE results for each variable were compared with square of the correlation coefficients between the two variables for testing discriminant validity. The square of the correlation coefficient was all lower than the AVE values, which accords with and satisfies the conditions of discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

2. Influence of Demographic Variables

Applying independent sample *t*-test and one-way ANOVA, this study examined the relations between demographic variables and constructs. Demographic variables include gender, age, education, and monthly income. In the celebrity trustworthiness construct, gender,

Table 2. Results of Validity and Reliability Testing

Construct	Scales	Standard Estimates	<i>t</i>	Cronbach's α	AVE	CR
Trustworthiness	The celebrity is dependable.	0.85	—	0.91	0.72	0.91
	The celebrity is honest.	0.88	21.71***			
	The celebrity is reliable.	0.78	18.23***			
	The celebrity is sincere.	0.87	21.51***			
Attractive	The celebrity is classy.	0.83	—	0.91	0.72	0.91
	The celebrity is beautiful.	0.91	21.91***			
	The celebrity is elegant.	0.84	19.70***			
	The celebrity has great charm.	0.81	18.39***			
Congruency	The celebrity is familiar with the brand.	0.92	—	0.94	0.81	0.95
	The celebrity fits the brand.	0.92	30.94***			
	The celebrity is suitable for the brand.	0.93	31.76***			
	The celebrity and the brand feel the same.	0.83	23.41***			
Expertise	The celebrity is experienced.	0.87	—	0.89	0.69	0.94
	The celebrity is knowledgeable.	0.85	21.19***			
	The celebrity is qualified.	0.78	18.34***			
	The celebrity is skilled.	0.81	19.16***			
Purchase Intention	I have a strong possibility to purchase the clothes that celebrity is endorsing.	0.78	—	0.91	0.71	0.94
	I am likely to purchase the clothes that celebrity is endorsing.	0.89	19.16***			
	I have high intention to purchase the clothes that celebrity is endorsing.	0.90	19.43***			
	I'm willing to purchase the clothes that celebrity is endorsing.	0.80	16.76***			

$\chi^2/df=2.394$; RMSEA=0.059; IFI=0.962; TLI=0.936; CFI=0.961; GFI=0.906; $p^{***}<0.001$

Table 3. Correlation Matrix for the Constructs

	Trustworthiness	Attractive	Congruency	Expertise	Intention
Trustworthiness	0.72 ^a				
Attractive	0.05 ^b	0.72 ^a			
Congruency	0.24 ^b	0.23 ^b	0.81 ^a		
Expertise	0.04 ^b	0.31 ^b	0.35 ^b	0.69 ^a	
Intention	0.14 ^b	0.27 ^b	0.31 ^b	0.50 ^b	0.71 ^a

^aAVE value of each variable, ^bSquared correlation coefficient between constructs

Table 4. Influence of Demographic Variables on the Constructs

Category		Trustworthiness	Attractiveness	Congruency	Expertise	Purchase Intention
Gender	Male	3.60A	3.20B	3.56	4.50	3.51
	Female	3.07B	3.68A	3.63	4.06	3.47
	F	32.20***	27.02***	0.58	0.03	0.20
	<i>p</i> -value	0.000	0.000	0.446	0.861	0.652
Age	10s	3.70A	3.03C	3.61	4.02	3.50
	20s	3.25B	3.62B	3.71	4.06	3.50
	30s	3.06C	3.66A	3.46	4.09	3.47
	F	15.75***	20.29***	2.26	0.33	0.04
	<i>p</i> -value	0.000	0.000	0.105	0.713	0.957
Education	High School	3.10C	3.57	3.65	4.02	3.38
	Undergraduate	3.30B	3.44	3.59	4.06	3.53
	Graduate	3.57A	3.37	3.58	4.05	3.43
	F	4.08*	0.73	0.10	0.09	1.18
	<i>p</i> -value	0.018	0.47	0.905	0.914	0.306
Income	Below 1,000,000	3.32	3.36	3.64	3.97	3.54B
	1,000,000~1,500,000	3.34	3.43	3.63	4.07	3.32B
	Over 1,500,000	3.35	3.52	3.51	4.11	3.65A
	F	0.03	0.89	0.74	1.33	7.02**
	<i>p</i> -value	0.961	0.411	0.476	0.265	0.001

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; Duncan test: A>B>C

age, and education pass the significant results. Males perceive more trustworthiness than females. The older the consumers are, the less they perceive trustworthiness. The higher the education level, the greater the perception of trustworthiness. Concerning celebrity attractiveness, females are perceived as more attractive than males. The older consumers are, the more they respond to the perception of attractiveness. Since ancient times, regarding

shopping behavior, men pay attention to trustworthiness, whereas women pay more attention to attractiveness, which is human nature. For the consumer groups of different ages, the younger the consumers are, the more they hope that they will not be deceived; thus, they pay great attention to trustworthiness. However, the older the person, the better the person is at judging whether a celebrity model is attractive or not. Regarding purchase

Table 5. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Standardized Regression Paths		Estimate	S.E.	t	Contrast
H1	Trustworthiness → Purchase intention	0.10*	0.03	2.04	Accept
H2	Attractiveness → Purchase intention	0.13*	0.04	2.54	Accept
H3	Congruency → Purchase intention	0.13**	0.03	2.57	Accept
H4	Expertise → Purchase intention	0.44***	0.05	7.87	Accept

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

intention, Chinese consumers with a monthly income of over 1,500,000 won have the highest purchase intention of clothes endorsed by a Korean celebrity, whereas the other people have a similar purchasing power. No significant results are found for other variables (Table 4).

3. Hypotheses Results

To examine the research model and questions, this study used the analysis of moment structure AMOS 22 and structural equation model. On the basis of the recommendation by Hair, Black, Anderson and Tatham (1998) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), this study assessed the model fit for overall fitness. The results show that $\chi^2/df=2.925$, RMSEA=0.069, IFI=0.919, TLI=0.930, CFI=0.945, and GFI=0.901.

The findings based on the standardized parameter estimates for the hypothesized associations between the research constructs are shown in Table 5. The relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention is statistically significant ($\beta=0.10$, $p < 0.05$). It suggests that the higher the consumers perceive celebrity trustworthiness, the more they intend to purchase clothes for endorsement. Likewise, attractiveness ($\beta=0.13$, $p < 0.05$), congruency ($\beta=0.13$, $p < 0.01$), and expertise ($\beta=0.44$, $p < 0.001$) positively and significantly affect the purchase intention of clothes for endorsement. Overall, constructs influence the purchase of goods. Celebrity expertise has the greatest effect on purchase intention than others.

V. Conclusion

This study aims to investigate the relationship between celebrity endorsement and the purchase intention of clothes endorsed by Korean celebrities targeted at Chinese consumers. The results of this paper are as follows.

First, about the influence of Chinese demographic variables on the Korean celebrity endorsement constructs, male respondents have more perception of trustworthiness than female respondents; the younger the age and the higher educational background of the respondents, the more they perceive more trustworthiness. Marketers who are targeting male, young, or highly educated Chinese consumers should focus on Korean celebrity trustworthiness and invite dependable, honest, reliable, and sincere celebrities. Regarding Korean celebrity attractiveness, female respondents have more perception of attractiveness than male respondents; the older the respondents, the more the respondents perceive attractiveness. Therefore, marketers who are targeting Chinese females or old consumers should focus on Korean celebrity attractiveness and invite classy, beautiful, elegant, and charismatic celebrities.

Second, Korean celebrity endorsement was divided into four dimensions (trustworthiness, attractiveness, congruency, and expertise), confirming a perfect equivalence in measurement (Hassan & Jamil, 2014; Ohanian, 1990). All four celebrity constructs positively and significantly affect purchase intention, contrasting with previous studies' results (Cuomo et al., 2019;

Goldsmith, 1999; Lafferty & Khan, 2018). Celebrity expertise has the most impact on consumption, it confirms the results of Cuomo et al. (2019) that the more expertise celebrities have on luxury goods, the more consumers will rely on celebrities' publicity of the products, and then consumers' intention to purchase luxury goods will also rise in the UK. The study suggests that clothing markets should continue using Korean celebrities to endorse clothing products aimed at the Chinese markets because celebrity endorsement significantly affects consumers' purchase intention. Especially celebrity expertise showed the biggest impact, suggesting that marketers should provide experience, knowledge, and skills to Korean celebrities when endorsing clothing products. The other results of this study would also positively impact companies' advertising budget and return on investment because Korean celebrities' trustworthiness, attractiveness, and congruency are effective. The result is slightly different from the findings of Hassan and Jamil (2014) that celebrity's attractiveness cannot affect Pakistan consumers' purchase of products with Indian endorsement. The reason may be that the nationality of celebrities is different, resulting in different consumption intentions.

The present study has some limitations, and recognizing these limitations should help refine future research efforts. This study was conducted with a sample of Chinese consumers in one country and focused specifically on Korean celebrity endorsement in the fashion industry. Therefore, the findings are not easily generalized to celebrity endorsement of other products or services. Future research is warranted to determine whether these results would be relevant to the endorsement of other products and identify if other countries' consumers respond similarly. Further research should be conducted to examine directly the nationality of the celebrity as a moderating variable.

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